



# ROGUES RAMPANT

Putin invades Ukraine as a new nuclear deal looks set to empower Iran

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

The cover story for this month's *AIR* is the likelihood that a new Iran nuclear deal is about to be agreed on in talks in Vienna – and the potential implications.

Proliferation specialist Andrea Stricker explains why, despite rhetoric to the contrary, any new agreement is going to be even less effective than the badly flawed 2015 nuclear deal, while Israeli strategic analyst Brig.-Gen. (Res.) Yossi Kuperwasser looks at the potential regional consequences. Plus Jonathan Tobin argues, citing recent history, that media coverage of any such deal is likely to be problematic, and Colin Rubenstein links the handling of the Iran nuclear issue to the escalating international crisis caused by Russian naked aggression in Ukraine.

Also on the Ukraine crisis, an AIJAC staff-written piece explains why Israel initially took a relatively cautious approach to the issue, the plight of Ukraine's Jewish community is covered in a report by Sam Sokol and Nasya Shub, and American Jewish Committee head David Harris offers some insightful comments about such threatened Jewish communities and Israel's purpose.

Finally, don't miss Elliot Kaufman on the real reason groups like Amnesty International are so keen to falsely apply the apartheid label to Israel, and Anne Bayefsky on an openly biased UN commission set to be a part of the same dangerous trend.

We invite your thoughts on any aspect of this edition at [editorial@aijac.org.au](mailto:editorial@aijac.org.au).

Tzvi Fleischer

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EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN****COLIN RUBENSTEIN****ROGUES RAMPANT**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, literally trampling over that country's sovereignty, is the latest assault on the rules-based system that is the bedrock of global security and stability. The imposition of crippling sanctions on Russia is a crucial first step in bringing sufficient international diplomatic pressure to bear upon Russia to withdraw. However, imposing sanctions alone is not enough. Long-term resolve, determination and enhancing the credibility of Western deterrence will be required, at a minimum, to improve prospects of reaching any tolerable outcome, however tense, risky and costly the likely extended standoff will be for all parties involved.

What goes for Russian sanctions vis-à-vis Ukraine is equally true for sanctions on Iran over its illegal nuclear weapons program, as well as its state sponsorship of global and regional terror. Yet paradoxically, at the same moment US Biden Administration officials are scrambling to put in place sanctions to smother the flames of war in the throes of consuming all of Ukraine, the White House appears to be finalising a virtually pointless, short-term deal to remove sanctions and pave the way to a nuclear armed Iran. This is the equivalent of attempting to extinguish one fire, even while pouring petrol on another, and snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

Before negotiations began over Iranian nuclear violations, US President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken sensibly stressed the need for a "longer and stronger" nuclear deal. In doing so, they recognised the many loopholes that needed to be closed in the deeply flawed original 2015 nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – perhaps most urgently its sunset clauses, which are set to begin taking effect in 2025. They recognised that a short-term deal simply returning to the JCPOA, limiting Iran's nuclear enrichment for a few short years, can't possibly stop Iran's march to a nuclear weapon – and at best, only briefly delay it. And in doing so, they implicitly acknowledged that former President Donald Trump withdrew from a highly flawed deal in 2018.

While details of the reportedly impending deal with Iran had not been released at press time, judging from insider accounts, it definitely isn't stronger and longer than the JCPOA, but instead "bleaker and weaker". Worse, it appears to leave the US and its allies with almost no leverage to force Iran to return to the table to negotiate the better deal that Biden and Blinken acknowledge is sorely needed.

Even veteran members of Biden's own party are starting to question whether the Administration's increasingly one-eyed policy on Iran can work. "A year [into nuclear talks with Iran], I have yet to hear any parameters of 'longer' or 'stronger' terms or whether that is even a feasible prospect," US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Menendez said on Feb. 1. "At this point, we seriously have to ask what exactly are we trying to salvage?"

Sadly, the writing has been on the wall for some time and Iran appears to know it. Over the past year, the regime not only accelerated its violations of the JCPOA, it limited and blocked inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), thus preventing the world from knowing the details of Iran's activities with any confidence. And yet, to protect the talks, the US and its European allies still repeatedly refused to let the IAEA Board of Governors pass a resolution condemning Iran's obstruction of inspectors.

Meanwhile, the Biden Administration has also turned a blind eye to massive Iranian black market oil sales to China in violation of Washington's own sanctions.

Yet all the while, Iran has refused to even meet US negotiators face to face.



From every indication, the new deal will be weaker than the JCPOA, rewarding Iran for its violations of the original agreement by, for example, allowing it to retain the advanced centrifuges it built illegally, instead of destroying them. And of course, even in a best-case scenario, the deal will absurdly begin to phase out just months after it is fully phased in, thanks to the original JCPOA's sunset clauses.

As Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett rightly observed, "two things have happened since the original signing: The Iranians have made great strides in building their enrichment capability and time has passed."

Under a return to a watered-down JCPOA, Iran will be able to take full advantage of both of these realities.

What's more, sanctions relief and the release of frozen funds will flood Iran's coffers with tens of billions of dollars, enabling Iran to ramp up the activities of terror proxies such as Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Houthis. Moreover, any future reimposition of sanctions through the JCPOA's snapback provisions would be extremely unlikely, since the snapback option is set to expire in 2025.

And yet Teheran is pressing for even more: It reportedly wants existing investigations by the IAEA into clandestine Iranian nuclear activity closed; it wants non-nuclear sanctions to be removed, such as those on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps; and it wants the Biden

Administration to come up with ways to make it difficult, if not impossible, for a future US president to reimpose sanctions. These are outrageous red lines that, like Putin's non-starter demands over Ukraine, should never be up for discussion. But here we are.

**"While details of the reportedly impending deal with Iran [have] not been released... judging from insider accounts, it definitely isn't stronger and longer than the JCPOA, but instead 'bleaker and weaker'"**

Russia's actions in Ukraine are indeed arguably the most serious international crisis since the Cold War, and the world will suffer greatly if they are not addressed, at the very least, with determination, strategic wisdom, fortitude – plus real efforts to strengthen the

military capabilities and the credibility of US-led Western deterrence. However, much the same can be said about the Iran nuclear file. Abandoning efforts to contain the Iranian threat while focussing only on Ukraine and China's aggression would not only be a gross strategic error, but one also likely to counterproductively undermine efforts to shore up the rules-based international order by effectively confronting Russia's naked aggression, as well as China's wolf warrior activities.

AIR

### IN MEMORIAM: BARRY LUKS

The Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) mourns the passing of Barry Luks, who served diligently and conscientiously as chief archivist in the Sydney office of AIJAC for many years. Barry passed away suddenly after a brief illness on February 12, 2022. He is sorely missed by his friends and colleagues.

## WORD FOR WORD

"The views of Hamas and the violent extremist groups listed today are deeply disturbing, and there is no place in Australia for their hateful ideologies."

**Home Affairs Minister Karen Andrews on designating Hamas in its entirety as a terrorist organisation alongside several other groups (Media release, Feb. 17).**

"Come on, this is absurd."

**US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides responding to Amnesty International's report accusing Israel of "apartheid" (Twitter, Feb. 2).**

"[Palestinians] are treated as perpetual, passive victims of apartheid, devoid of any rights and agency. They [Amnesty] turn them into victims, into an object. This is neither true nor helpful. There is discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel, but they have rights, some in key positions; they are campaigning and influencing, and this should be recognised, appreciated and encouraged."

**Molly Malekar, Executive Director of Amnesty International Israel, criticising Amnesty's report accusing Israel of apartheid (Times of Israel, Feb. 21).**

"If the world signs the agreement again – without extending the expiration date – then we are talking about an agreement that buys a total of two and a half years, after which Iran can and may develop and install advanced centrifuges, without restrictions. According to the agreement, this would mean 'stadiums' of centrifuges. In return, the Iranians will currently receive tens of billions of dollars and the lifting of sanctions; that is a lot of money. This money will eventually go to terrorism in the area... In any case, we are organising and preparing for the day after, in all dimensions, so that we can maintain the security of the citizens of Israel by ourselves."

**Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett on the dangers of a new nuclear deal with Iran (BICOM, Feb. 21).**

If the IRGC [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] isn't a terrorist organization, what are they – a folk-dancing troupe?"

**Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid on the possibility of the US removing the terrorist designation of Iran's IRGC as part of a new nuclear deal (Jerusalem Post, Feb. 21).**

"An Israel fully integrated into the region will deliver huge benefits – not just for Israel but to the region."

**Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud at the Munich Security Conference (Jerusalem Post, Feb. 19).**



# SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

## AMNESTY'S DEMOCRACY "SMOKESCREEN"

Amnesty International says Israel is not really a democracy but an apartheid state.

The report the organisation released in early February accusing Israel of "apartheid" makes the following claims to address the obvious point that Israel is actually a democracy with full political and civil rights for all of its citizens:

"While Israeli laws and policies define the state as democratic, the fragmentation of the Palestinian people ensures that Israel's version of democracy overwhelmingly privileges political participation by Jewish Israelis. In addition, the representation of Palestinian citizens of Israel in the decision-making process, primarily in the Knesset, has been restricted and undermined by an array of Israeli laws and policies."

The first claim about the "fragmentation of the Palestinian people" is essentially an extremist claim that Israel can only be a democracy if it ceases being a Jewish homeland and becomes a Palestinian majority state. Apparently, as long as the following are not full citizens of Israel, this means Israel is not a democracy: Palestinians of the West Bank – who have their own Palestinian government and could have had their own state if their leaders had just been willing to say yes to reasonable Israeli offers; Palestinians of Gaza – which Israel does not rule over at all; and presumably Palestinian "refugees" from around the world, who Amnesty falsely asserts have a right of return to Israel. This is not really a claim about democracy, but the equivalent of chanting, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."

The second claim about Palestinian participation in the Knesset being "restricted and undermined" is simply a lie. There are no such "laws and policies" and Israeli Arabs – most of whom do not call themselves "Palestinians" – participate fully in the Knesset, as well as other aspects of Israeli governance. Currently, there are two Arab ministers and one deputy minister in the Cabinet, and an Islamist party in the governing coalition.

Amnesty's bizarre efforts to deny the existence of Israeli democracy were even more clear-cut in a train wreck of an interview conducted with Amnesty Secretary General Dr. Agnes Callamard and Amnesty Middle East and North Africa research and advocacy director Philip Luther by Lazar Berman of the *Times of Israel* on Feb. 2. Scrambling to defend the blatant double-standards and hyperfocus applied to Israel by Amnesty, Luther said that "the Israeli state" has "tried to create a smokescreen" around its sup-

posed apartheid policies, and in the same sentence mentions Israel's "democratic system", and "judicial institutions that of course then call the state to account," apparently as examples of this supposed smokescreen.

In other words, Luther, representing Amnesty, basically said Israel's obvious democracy and rule of law are a deliberate scam – a "smokescreen" – to cover up its true undemocratic nature.

So, do people who systematically and professionally measure democracy in countries around the world detect this supposed false façade of democracy in Israel that Amnesty now says exists?

No, definitely not.

The British-based *Economist* magazine has a record of being highly critical of Israeli policies. But in mid-February, the magazine's prestigious Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) published its annual Democracy Index, and Israel rated highly. It was ranked the 23rd most democratic nation in the world, with a score of 7.97 on the 10 point index. That places Israel ahead of several countries no one questions are democracies – including Spain, Italy, Belgium, Portugal and even the US – and barely behind traditional bastions of democracy, France and Britain, which scored 7.99 and 8.1 respectively.

Israel scored particularly highly on two of the five criteria which make up the Democracy Index – "Electoral process and pluralism" and "Political participation", and respectably in two others – "Functioning of government" and "Political culture". Its overall total was pulled down by a lowish score of only 5.88 in the Index's fifth measure – "Civil liberties." But that low civil liberties score is at least partly explained by laws in place to deal with Israel's constant state of conflict with terrorists from Gaza and the West Bank, as well as Iranian-sponsored groups operating from Lebanon and Syria. Without the laws and restrictions necessitated by these conflicts, Israel could well have been in the top 15, and even perhaps have given Australia – ninth in the world with an overall score of 8.9 – a run for its money.


The EIU's finding is consistent with the other major NGO which measures political and civil rights around the world, the US-based Freedom House. In its Global Freedom Index, Freedom House rates Israel as "Free".

So agencies which professionally and systematically measure democracy across all nations do not see the façade or "smokescreen" of democracy that Amnesty claims to have detected in Israel.

What this should tell us is that Amnesty's claims about Israel's democracy are themselves deliberately misleading. As Elliot Kaufman notes in this edition, it is clear Amnesty set out to find Israel guilty of apartheid – an apartheid the NGO claims to have only just discovered now, 74 years into Israel's existence, even though the report insists it has been in place since 1948. This is not because anything has



changed in Israel, but because of a trend that has spread among left-leaning NGOs to make such a claim since the 2001 Durban UN Conference Against Racism, when the NGOs in attendance, including Amnesty, agreed on an “Action Plan” to promote the “complete isolation of Israel as an apartheid state.”

Israel’s obvious democracy stood in the way of making such a finding. Amnesty had to find some way to explain it away and it did – by making the extreme and false claims in the report cited above, and by labelling it a “smoke-screen” – despite the evidence from people who actually research and compare democracies. Similar misleading claims are characteristic of the entire report. 



## DECONSTRUCTION ZONE

Yoseph Haddad

### AMNESTY DISTORTS MY ARAB IDENTITY

As an Israeli Arab who grew up in Nazareth, Amnesty International’s recent report tries to distort my identity. The 211-page document constantly refers to an “apartheid” against “Palestinian citizens of Israel,” making no differentiation between Israeli Arabs and Palestinians.

Palestinians live under the control of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank or under the control of the terrorist group Hamas in Gaza.

What about Israeli Arabs like me? We live under the democratically elected government of Israel with equal rights like any Jewish citizen.

I was born an Israeli, and I will remain an Israeli. I am entitled to all the same rights as any citizen of Israel. I was a soldier in Israel’s Defence Forces protecting the north of Israel, where most of the Israeli-Arab community lives, from terrorist rocket attacks by Hezbollah.

Not only that, but I was also a commander of dozens of Jewish soldiers. What kind of an “apartheid” would let Arabs give orders to Jews? The non-existent kind.

A recent report by the Israel Democracy Institute showed that the majority of Israeli Arabs do not, in fact, identify as Palestinian but as Arab or Israeli Arab. Only 7% of those surveyed even identify as Palestinian. A subsequent poll showed that 81% of Israeli Arabs prefer to live in Israel over living in the US or in any other Western country. I guess life isn’t that bad under “Israeli domination”, contrary to the lies Amnesty spreads about our lives in the only democracy in the Middle East.

Amnesty’s report includes numerous falsehoods and cherry-picks incidents that fit its narrative to delegitimise Israel. For example, Amnesty repeatedly mentions physical segregation between Arabs and Jews. Their “researchers” should visit an Israeli hospital where a Muslim Arab

woman can receive the best care from a Jewish doctor, or an ultra-orthodox Jewish child can be treated by an Arab doctor.

In our Arab-Israeli community, the majority of citizens want to live in peace with Jews. Many want to be, and already are, an integral part of Israeli society.

Instead of promoting cooperation and a vision for a better future, organisations like Amnesty International delegitimise the only democratic state in the Middle East, trying to brand it as an “apartheid” state.


Apartheid is defined as a system of discrimination or oppression based on race. So, let’s talk about it. Israel’s basic laws explicitly state that they protect against all discrimination and preserve the status of the State of Israel as being a Jewish and democratic state. Not Jewish, not democratic, but Jewish and democratic. That means that, since its establishment, this country has specifically protected the rights of religious and ethnic minorities by law.

Does that mean there’s no racism in Israel? Of course not, like in any other country – Israel has its problems that need fixing. In this sense, Israel is no different to any other Western democracy.

As for the Palestinians, the status quo of occupation is problematic, but still, it’s not based on racial discrimination, but rather on national conflict. A conflict that Israel has proven it would like to end on several occasions when it offered generous solutions for peace, before the Palestinians rejected them.

If Israel has a racial issue with Arabs, why did we then make peace with Morocco, UAE, Egypt, Jordan and Bahrain? Why then are there so many Arabs who are part of Israel’s Government, making decisions that impact every Israeli? Why are there Arab judges deciding on the fate of Israeli citizens in court?

I’ve been to South Africa myself, and I’ve seen with my own eyes how disgusting and soul-crushing the crime of apartheid is. This is part of the reason why I can’t stand by and let these lies be spread by organisations like Amnesty International for its own political gain. The accusation of “apartheid” is a serious one and should never be used as a political tool to demonise a country that you don’t like.

Amnesty International, stop disrespecting the history and victims of the actual apartheid regime in South Africa. Let’s instead work together with Arabs and Jews to resolve these conflicts in a peaceful way, instead of adopting the ideologies and lies that are repeated by extremists who don’t believe that Israel, the only Jewish-democratic state in the world, has the right to exist at all. 

*Yoseph Haddad is an Israeli rights activist. He is the CEO of Together – Vouch for Each Other, an NGO that aims to create a better understanding and cooperation between Israeli Arabs and Israeli Jews. © Jerusalem Post (jpost.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*



# ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

## GROWING APART

Malaysia's United Malay National Organisation (UMNO)-dominated Government, led by the grey, un-charismatic Ismail Sabri Yaakob, looks and sounds much like its UMNO-dominated predecessors. One could almost forget that the party that ruled Malaysia almost continuously since its inception recently had a period in opposition.

Although the notionally reformist Pakatan Harapan government that preceded it spectacularly self-detonated, UMNO's return to power was helped by an alliance with the conservative Islamist Parti Islam seMalaysia (PAS).

A party whose primary goal has been the extension of shariah law, PAS was given a foreign policy role in the new Government through the appointment of its leader Abdul Hadi Awang as envoy to the Middle East. It appears Abdul Hadi has gone astray somewhat through an apparent promise of aid to the Taliban Government in Afghanistan.

Abdul Hadi met with the Taliban's permanent representative to the United Nations, Mohammed Suhail Shaheen, in Doha on Feb. 3. On the same day, the latter posted a message on Twitter about their discussions. "He promised [that] Malaysia will do what it can to assist the Afghan people in this critical time," Shaheen said.

Malaysia has not yet officially recognised the Taliban Government, preferring to move in concert with international partners in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Abdul Hadi insisted that any discussion about aid was in the context of Malaysia's donation to the UN for humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan, although it is noteworthy that his son, Muhammad Khalil, who is chairman of PAS's international affairs and external relations committee, tweeted his congratulations to the Taliban when the US and its coalition partners withdrew the last of their troops from Afghanistan.

Meanwhile back home, a PAS minister has drawn flak for appearing to endorse domestic violence in one of two short videos she posted to social media. Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff, the Deputy Minister for Women, Family and Community Development, said in a two-minute Instagram video called "Mother's Tips" that husbands are allowed to use a "gentle but firm physical touch" that is "educational" on "stubborn" wives.

"If she does not listen even after being advised and sleeping in different rooms, here we [husbands] can use 'soft but firm' physical touch that is educational, full of love and does not cause pain," Siti Zailah said in a video posted on Feb.

12. She also recommended that women make sure their husbands had eaten, prayed and were in a good mood before approaching a difficult subject to ensure harmony at home.

Such comments from PAS officials surprise no-one within Malaysia. It has long been the leading edge of the trend of Islamisation that has grown steadily for decades. In the 1990s, when PAS was UMNO's chief electoral rival, then PM Mahathir Mohamad and his then deputy Anwar Ibrahim Islamised the public sector, the military and higher education by reserving the most powerful positions for Malays, entrenching a gulf of resentment between Muslims and non-Muslims.

When Mahathir and Anwar later teamed up together under the banner of reform to defeat UMNO in the 2018 election, PAS was lured into an alliance with its former rival in 2019 in a pact called *Muafakat Nasional* ("National Concord"). While in opposition, the binding thread between the parties appeared to be a firm commitment to the "Malay agenda" and further Islamisation.

However, in government the alliance is revealed to be less about ideology than electoral convenience. Resurgent in recent state level polls, UMNO now has little need for PAS and appears likely to go it alone at the next general election. PAS, meanwhile, has announced a partnership with Bersatu (*Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia*) – the Malay-oriented party formed by Mahathir and now headed by former PM Muhyiddin Yassin – for the upcoming elections in the key state of Johor.

Likewise, the opposition multi-ethnic *Pakatan Harapan* coalition headed by Anwar appears to be in its death throes. Paralysed by internal differences on issues of leadership and strategy as well as mutual suspicion and personal acrimony, the latest blow-up has *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR), the moderate urban Malay-majority party headed by Anwar, dropping the Pakatan Harapan logo in favour of its own branding for the coming Johor poll.

Anwar is said to have a deep distrust of the ethnic Chinese-dominated Democratic Action Party (DAP) over a perceived lack of support for his leadership, and now believes his party's link with the DAP is responsible for PKR's disastrous results in recent state elections.

The feeling is mutual from the DAP, which has come to view Anwar as overly self-interested and having lost his ability to inspire voters and build a broad-based coalition.

It seems that within both the DAP and PKR, the only shared belief is a profound gloom about not just Johor but whether they can even mount any challenge to UMNO at the next general election.



Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff (Image: Instagram)





Miriam Bell

## PROTESTS BECOME ANTISEMITISM SUPER-SPREADER EVENTS

Anti-vaccine activists protesting outside New Zealand's Parliament are promoting their demonstration as peaceful, reasonable and non-threatening. But it is a highly divisive event which has the potential to be an antisemitism super-spreader.

Since the protest – which the vast majority of the population does not support – began, there have been multiple reports of antisemitic signs and graffiti. These have included a Nazi swastika painted on a statue outside Parliament and a ute with “Jewcinda” – a slur referring to New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern – scribbled across the cab. There have been frequent comparisons of vaccine mandates and public health restrictions to the Holocaust and Nazism, and misappropriations of the Star of David.

On social media, particularly platforms favoured by the protestors such as Telegram, antisemitic imagery and rhetoric have been circulating regularly. On *Counterspin Media*, an online channel affiliated with Steve Bannon, a controversial former advisor to Donald Trump, which has been broadcasting live from the protest and getting thousands of views, the hosts have been telling people to read the antisemitic forgery, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

And then there is the presence of well-known neo-Nazi and far-right activists at the protest. One *Counterspin* host, Kelvyn Alp, established an armed militia to try to overthrow the NZ government in the early 2000s. At the protest, he has encouraged demonstrators to storm Parliament and arrest MPs, while making multiple threats to kill MPs.

Members of Action Zealandia, the country's largest neo-Nazi group with reported ties to violent overseas extremist groups, are also present at the Wellington protest. They have been posting photos from Parliament grounds and sparked an investigation after posting footage from atop one of the Parliamentary buildings.

At a satellite protest in Christchurch, Kyle Chapman, the former leader of the National Front, and prominent white supremacist Philip Arps, who was jailed for sharing the livestream of the Christchurch mosque shootings, were present. Arps was earlier arrested in Picton on his way to Wellington, after allegedly saying he was heading to a “public execution”.

Protest organisers have dismissed these neo-Nazi connections, along with the threats, harassment, and aggressive behaviour directed at the general public, politicians and the media. They say these fringe elements do not

represent the bulk of those there.

But even if this is the case, a problem, which has been well articulated by many commentators, remains. That problem is association.

As *Stuff* political journalist Andrea Vance wrote: “Chant *hare krishna*, grow herbs, practice yoga and smoke the peace pipe all you like. The minute you pitch your tent next to a swastika, a noose swinging for politicians and journalists, and extremist Kelvyn Alp, you are aligned. Worse still, you are being exploited to cloak the fact this protest is being manipulated by extremists.”

Professor Paul Spoonley, who studies far-right groups, said there had been a surge in online hate and antisemitism in New Zealand over the last two years, but the threat of the protest was that it could renormalise antisemitism.

This would give a new generation access to the noxious ideas and theories of antisemitism and, for some, they would stick, he said.

“Groups like Action Zealandia and individuals like Kelvyn Alp are not ones to waste a good crisis. They would see the protest as a good opportunity to influence and recruit. That's the formula for the far-right – intercede in heightened situations and offer up their conspiracy theories as an explanation.”

Spoonley said the fact that many of the protestors were anti-authority and anti-government meant they were a natural constituency for the far-right to target. “I could see antisemitism in New Zealand getting a lot bigger because of all the people who have been exposed to what has been circulating at the protests, and it becoming the norm for them.”

Holocaust Centre of New Zealand Chair Deb Hart said it appeared fringe groups were latching on to the anti-vaccine mandate cause and trying to manipulate it. That was disturbing, but it was hard to say how accepted their messages would be by non-extremist protestors, she said.

Her concern is the distortion of the Holocaust and the trivialisation of the experiences of survivors through disrespectful and inaccurate comparisons of vaccine mandates to the Holocaust and Nazi Germany.

“It is a long bow to draw to compare the public health measures instituted to protect the public from a pandemic with the Holocaust. The intent is wholly different: even if you disagree with how they are doing it, the Government is trying to save lives as opposed to the Nazis who were trying to murder millions of people.”

Hart said people had the right to protest, but they did not need to cite the industrial extermination of six million Jews as a comparison while doing so.

These comparisons were insensitive and appalling, as was the disruption to this year's UN International Holocaust Remembrance Day event in Christchurch by anti-vaccination protestors, she added.

# BEHIND THE NEWS



## ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

No rockets were fired into Israel between Jan. 2 and late February.

A massive operation to smuggle weapons to Gazan terrorist groups was thwarted on Feb. 7.

On Feb. 8, three militants affiliated with the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade were killed by Israeli security forces in Nablus. Four retaliatory attacks against IDF troops and vehicles were claimed by the group and its allies from Feb. 9-14, but no casualties were reported.

On Feb. 18, a small Hezbollah drone crossed into Israel for 40 minutes and was reportedly able to return to Lebanon despite Israeli jets being scrambled and Iron Dome attempting to intercept it.

Statistics recently released by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center showed a total of 54 major Palestinian terrorist attacks occurred in 2021 in Israel, including shootings, stabbings, and vehicular attacks in which three Israelis were killed and 34 injured. This was a rise from 40 attacks the previous year. There were also 1,700 rock-throwing attacks and 350 fire-bombings.

## PHILIPPINES THWARTS HAMAS PLOT

On Feb. 15, the Philippine National Police claimed to have thwarted an alleged Hamas attempt to recruit local extremists to carry out terrorist attacks targeting Israeli tourists and Jews in the Philippines. A Philippines recruit had reportedly travelled to Malaysia several times over recent years to receive terrorist training there and meet with a senior Hamas figure to plot attacks. Sources name the Hamas operative as Fares al-Shikli, the alleged head of Hamas's Foreign Liaison Section.

## EGYPT REPORTEDLY STEPPING UP GAZA ROLE

Egypt is reportedly lifting its profile in Gaza and positioning itself as a regional peacemaker.

Egypt had previously adopted a hardline stance against Gaza's Hamas rulers, who are affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, after current President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi overthrew a Muslim Brotherhood government when he took over Egypt in 2013.

Following the conflict in May 2021 between Israel and Gaza, Egypt pledged US\$500 million (A\$691.5 million) towards Gaza's reconstruction.

According to Gaza's Housing Ministry, Egypt is currently subsidising construction of three towns in Gaza, which is expected to generate several thousand much-needed jobs.

Construction materials are entering the enclave through the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt. Control of the crossing, together with the promised aid, provides Egypt potential leverage over Hamas.

## FUNDING WITHDRAWN FROM PFLP-LINKED NGO

The Dutch Government and the British charity Oxfam have ceased funding the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), a Palestinian NGO with links to the terrorist group the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) — one of six NGOs designated by Israel as terrorist organisations because of these links in Oct. 2021.

The Dutch move followed a government investigation which found that 34 UAWC employees had been active in the PFLP between 2007 and 2020. The Netherlands had previously donated 21.5 million euros (A\$33.7

million) to the UAWC.

Oxfam, whose last payment to UAWC was in November 2021, was instructed to suspend its funding by the EU while it carries out its own investigation.

## SYRIAN MISSILE EXPLODES OVER ISRAEL

An SA-5 anti-aircraft missile exploded in the skies over the West Bank in the early morning of Feb. 9, setting off sirens and leaving some shrapnel in the area. In response, unconfirmed reports indicate the IDF attacked Syrian radar stations and anti-aircraft batteries in the Damascus area.

Analysts consider the main aim of Israeli airstrikes in Syria has been to undermine Iran's extensive presence in that country. New reports claim that, in addition to its large military presence, Iran has recently started to try to settle non-Syrian Shi'ites from across the Middle East on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights, close to the Israeli border.

## IRAN REPORTEDLY AWASH WITH OIL MONEY

Despite the continued application of oil sanctions imposed on Iran following the US withdrawal in 2018 from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear deal, Iran's oil exports increased by 40% in 2021. This represents approximately US\$25 billion (A\$34.6 billion) in revenue.

Approximately 75% of these exports are reported to flow to China, the rest going to Syria, Venezuela, Russia and other unknown destinations.

## IRAN'S MISSILE PROGRAM ADVANCES

Iran unveiled a new long-range, solid-fuel ballistic missile on Feb. 9



with the reported ability to hit Israel. The missile is called “Khaybar Sheikan”, an allusion to a battle in which Muhammad’s army defeated Jewish tribes in the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century.

In January, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps tested a new solid fuel rocket motor, ostensibly as part of its space program that experts agree is actually intended to develop solid fuel technology for intermediate-range and intercontinental ballistic missiles.

## VISITS SOLIDIFY ABRAHAM ACCORDS



Israeli PM Bennett with Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani (Credit: IGPO/ Flickr)

On Feb. 15, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett visited Bahrain where he met with King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa in the first visit by an Israeli PM to the country. Bennett also met with Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, who told him he was among friends in Bahrain, and other ministers. Bennett stressed that his goal was a “people to people” peace, adding, “By fostering this relationship in high-tech, in trade, in agriculture, in technology and many other areas, we can do great things together.”

This followed a Feb. 2 visit by Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz, who had also met the King and Crown Prince, and signed security agreements with Bahrain.

Earlier, on Jan. 30, Israeli President Isaac Herzog made the first ever visit by an Israeli President to the United Arab Emirates, where he met with the de facto ruler, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

## ISRAEL TIES GROW WITH MOROCCO AND SUDAN

Ties between Israel and Morocco are flourishing. In February, Israel’s Aerospace Industries agreed to a US\$500 million (A\$691.5 million) sale of its cutting-edge Barak MX missile and drone defence system to the Moroccan army.

In addition, during a visit to Morocco by Israel’s Economy Minister Orna Barbivai, the countries signed an agreement to expand trade and create joint business committees. Barbivai expressed hopes bilateral trade would increase from US\$70 million (A\$96.8 million) in 2021 to \$US500 million (A\$691.5 million) within five years.

Meanwhile, a presidential envoy from Sudan reportedly visited Israel during February to discuss boosting ties. In addition, the de facto ruler of Sudan, General Abdel-Fattah Burhan, publicly praised ties with Israel, tell-

ing Sudanese state-run TV on Feb. 12 that an exchange of intelligence with Israel helped Sudan’s security services dismantle militias inside the country.

## COVID IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINIAN AREAS

On Feb. 21, total cumulative COVID-19 deaths in Israel passed 10,000.

The Omicron surge continued, with 1,274,114 of the 3,576,923 total cases Israel has experienced occurring between Jan. 22 and Feb. 22. However, from a peak of 83,739 cases on Jan. 23, numbers have steadily fallen, and there were only 10,107 new cases on Feb. 22. Sadly, 1,589 deaths occurred between Jan. 22 and Feb. 22.

The surge was less pronounced in the Palestinian-ruled areas of the West Bank, with 119,628 cases between Jan. 22 and Feb. 22 and 382 deaths in that period. Gaza recorded 49,594 cases between Jan. 22 and Feb. 21.



## STRANGER THAN FICTION

### THE ALL-CONQUERING PALESTINIANS

Palestinian Authority PM Muhammad Shtayyeh seems to think that if you’re going to mythologise your own history, you might as well go big. On Jan. 9, on *PATV*, he claimed, “We are the people of the land and the children of its soil... We have defeated the Hyksos, the Romans, the Greeks, the Persians, the Tatars, and the Pharaohs.” (Translation by Palestinian Media Watch).

The Hyksos were a foreign dynasty that ruled Egypt in the 1600s and 1500s BCE until they were expelled by the returning pharaohs, and there is a theory that they were actually the Israelites. The Romans were driven out of Jerusalem by the Sassanids, from pre-Muslim Iran, in 613, allied with Jewish inhabitants.

The Greeks, or Seleucids, were defeated by the Jewish Maccabees, as celebrated in the Jewish festival of Chanukah.

The Persians were driven out by an alliance of Jews, Egyptians and Sidonians (from Sidon in Lebanon), but after a short period of autonomy, the Greeks conquered the area.

By Tatars, he probably means the Mongols, who raided the area and briefly stayed on occasions in the mid-to-late 13th century, but were quickly replaced by Mamluks, from Egypt, each time.

The Pharaohs were defeated by the neo-Babylonian, or Chaldean, empire.

It is unclear how Shtayyeh would explain that all of these disparate conquerors were really Palestinians, but his delusion had a more sinister follow up. He added, “We have defeated all the invaders who passed through the land of Palestine. On behalf of the martyrs we will defeat this hated occupation [Israel] that will leave our land.”

In other words, his fantabulous, fabricated history was simply a means for incitement, and an apparent call for the ethnic cleansing of Israelis from “Palestine”.

## COVER STORY

# A DISASTROUS DEAL?

## ANY JCPOA REPLACEMENT WILL BE WEAKER

Andrea Stricker

One of the top selling points of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran was that it was supposed to keep the Teheran regime at least 12 months away from having enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon. That interval is known as Iran's "breakout time."

The Biden Administration has spent months trying to coax Teheran back into the 2015 deal – formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – but senior US officials now acknowledge that they cannot secure an agreement that pushes Iran's breakout time back up to 12 months. During talks in Vienna, the Biden Administration reportedly expects to negotiate a breakout time of only six to nine months. The Israeli Government estimates an even shorter interval – four to six months.

What this means is that US President Joe Biden cannot bring back the JCPOA. He can bring back only a weaker deal – a JCPOA-minus – with all the flaws and loopholes of the original, but with even fewer and more transient restrictions on the Iranian nuclear program. And while the United States and its partners get less, the Islamic Republic is likely to get even more sanctions relief than the first time around.

Delaying Iran's breakout time is so important because, in the event of a crisis, the United States and its allies will need as much time as possible to persuade Iran that making a dash for nuclear weapons is too risky. While diplomacy is underway, Washington and its partners will also have to gather intelligence and – potentially – prepare for military strikes, so Teheran understands the price of defiance.

Why can't a revised JCPOA push Iran's breakout time back up to 12 months? The answer revolves around gas centrifuges, the machines integral to the process of enriching uranium. Iran's centrifuges have continually grown



The existence of Iran's new advanced centrifuges, such as these IR-6s, means Iran's "breakout time" to a nuclear weapon will remain quite short (Credit: Tampa Bay Times/ZUMA Wire/Alamy Live News)

in number and capability. The JCPOA did not stop this advance, and the Iranian regime has ruled out accepting additional restrictions.

Prior to the JCPOA, the breakout time was a matter of weeks. The JCPOA temporarily increased Iran's breakout time by limiting the size of its stockpile of enriched uranium and constraining the purity level of uranium the regime could produce. The deal also put temporary restrictions on the regime's use of faster centrifuges – initially, Teheran could only use its slowest model, the IR-1. Since the clerical regime began openly violating the accord in mid-2019, its breakout time has dropped back to a similar range.

Iran was able to reduce its breakout time so quickly because the JCPOA did not force it to discard or destroy its more advanced centrifuges, it required only that they be put in storage. The machines were kept under international monitoring but remained available for rapid deployment at a time of the regime's choosing. Moreover, Iran

could likely have redeployed these machines in only a few months. As part of any new deal, the Biden Administration and its European allies will reportedly permit Teheran to retain in storage – not destroy – hundreds of new advanced centrifuges it produced in violation of the JCPOA.

In 2015, the Obama Administration met its goal of extending Iran's breakout time to 12 months only by ignoring its ability to bring its advanced centrifuges out of storage. One former Obama official, Jon B. Wolfsthal, now admits that achieving a 12-month breakout time was merely a "political" goal. That point is not only clear in hindsight. In 2015, a paper I wrote with nuclear experts David Albright and

Houston Wood estimated Iran's actual breakout time under the JCPOA was closer to seven months.

Among the advanced machines Teheran stored away in 2015 and now uses for enrichment – per the latest data

reported by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN nuclear watchdog – are 1,044 advanced IR-2m model centrifuges at the main Natanz enrichment facility and 32 IR-2m machines at the Natanz pilot plant. Iran also reactivated and is enriching uranium in about 500 IR-4 models – many more

than the up to 164 stored IR-4 centrifuges that it possessed in 2015. (Higher model numbers indicate newer, faster versions.)

**“Under a JCPOA-minus, Teheran is likely to have already positioned itself only weeks away from making nuclear weapons material, fortified its economy with billions of dollars in sanctions relief, enhanced its missile program, and armed and funded its proxy militias”**

## WHAT HAPPENS IF THE JCPOA IS “REVIVED”?

Yossi Kuperwasser

The plausible outcome of any new nuclear agreement being reached between Iran and the United States is a matter of great concern, and rightly so, among Israeli and US lawmakers, as well as for Gulf state officials.

Such an agreement is dangerous because it would pave the way for Iran, in nine years, to secure the ability to produce a large arsenal of nuclear weapons without fear of having to cross a dangerous threshold, where it may be exposed to power moves that prevent it from doing so, and without the prospect of crippling economic sanctions.

The agreement does not guarantee International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) supervision anywhere and anytime; it has sunset clauses (allowing gradual removal of limitations on Iran by 2031); it fails to deal with ballistic missiles – the means by which nuclear bombs are launched; it does not oblige Iran to reveal the truth about the progress of the military dimension of its nuclear program ahead of finalising the deal; and the restrictions it details are to be gradually lifted – some have already been removed and others are due to be lifted soon.

Reviving the nuclear deal at this time would be even more dangerous, as it takes place after Iran has already marked significant achievements in the field of enrichment technology, which according to the agreement were only to take place a few years from now, and in its weapons program.

This means that it is virtually impossible to return to the original nuclear agreement. Moreover, a significant portion of the restrictions placed on Iran are slated to be removed anyway in early 2024 and early 2026.

Worse – all of this is taking place when it is clear that any hope that a new deal would lead to a change in Iran's subversive

policies is baseless; and all while Iran still refuses to provide details on four nuclear facilities revealed due to the nuclear archives exposed by Israel.

All this amounts to dangerous irresponsibility, especially as Iran grows stronger. It is clear that the tens of billions of dollars that will be made available to Iran will be used to continue arming Iran's proxies and paying for Teheran's efforts to expand its influence in the region – as well as increase its ability to threaten Israel directly or through its offshoots. This cash infusion will also alleviate the severe economic crisis in Iran, thus dousing any threat that might destabilise the regime.

Resuming an agreement under the current circumstances will be a huge boon for the extremist Islamist regime in Teheran, which it will undoubtedly present as evidence of its morality and the weakness of the West and Israel.

The US is aware of all these dangers and yet it is determined to advance the agreement, simply to delay the end and avoid the need for a confrontation with Iran.

The Biden Administration first tried to justify this policy by saying that reviving the deal would be the first step in negotiations with Iran that would lead to an improved accord, but this faint and illogical excuse has already been abandoned.

Israel's problem is that the US, which is showing a hesitant attitude towards Iran and in other contexts, is our most important ally. While efforts should be made to prevent negative repercussions on the Abrahamic Accords and to prepare to independently take action to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear state, such an undertaking will be much more difficult without American support.

AIR

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The JCPOA also allowed mechanical testing and computer modelling of advanced centrifuges, which negated most of the utility provided by temporary JCPOA restrictions on the manufacture and operation of advanced machines. According to the latest IAEA data, the regime is now enriching uranium in more than 200 IR-6 model centrifuges – its fastest and most reliable model – at the Natanz pilot enrichment plant. At the underground Fordow enrichment plant, the regime is enriching in nearly 200 IR-6 machines. Iran is also experimenting with enrichment in dozens of other advanced machines.

**R**eturning to the original JCPOA would not do much to fix this problem, since many of the accord's advanced centrifuge restrictions are poised to expire. In 2024, the deal permits Iran to begin manufacturing 200 IR-6 and 200 IR-8 centrifuges per year, and in 2027, it may install in the machines a key component called rotors, rendering them fully operational. In 2025, the JCPOA's procurement channel, which provides international oversight over Iran's nuclear-related imports, will end.

From 2027 to 2029, Iran may redeploy 2,500-3,500 IR-2m and/or IR-4 centrifuges. By the end of 2029, Tehe-

ran could have amassed a combined 2,400 IR-6 and IR-8 machines; a few hundred are enough to facilitate an overt or clandestine breakout. These machines will be in storage at Natanz and easily accessible if needed.

For all these reasons, it should come as no surprise that Biden's team does not believe it can push Iran's breakout time any higher than six or nine months. And that is likely

an optimistic estimate.

Moreover, due to Iran's efforts to restrict IAEA monitoring of its nuclear activities, the agency has not been able to monitor Iran's manufacture of advanced centrifuges since February 2021. Absent an intensive investigation, the agency may not be able to detect whether Teheran has hidden away untold stockpiles.

By 2031, when all JCPOA restrictions on uranium enrichment terminate, the deal itself will have paved Iran's pathway to the nuclear threshold. Thus, any "JCPOA-minus" that the Biden Administration finalises ultimately does little to address the Islamic Republic's nuclear threat.

Under a JCPOA-minus, Teheran is likely to have already positioned itself only weeks away from making nuclear weapons material, fortified its economy with billions of dollars in sanctions relief, enhanced its missile program, and armed and funded its proxy militias. With limited time to act and likely facing uncertain information about a breakout, an American president may be forced to choose between carrying out major military strikes or letting the regime go nuclear.

The US Congress should not stand by as the Biden Administration moves closer to lifting Iran sanctions in return for such poor terms. Instead, pursuant to the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, lawmakers should vote to prevent the Administration from lifting sanctions. Even if the vote falls largely along party lines and thus fails, it will send a message that a JCPOA-minus will end, and Iran sanctions will return, under the next Republican president. Washington is about to concede, once again, a massive uranium enrichment program to the Islamic Republic, when it should be negotiating the program's closure and removal while holistically addressing all other regime threats.

A weaker JCPOA does not offer enough non-proliferation value to sacrifice the significant amount of leverage the United States retains over Iran's economy. Biden should resurrect this leverage and cast aside the flawed accord in favour of pressuring Teheran into more comprehensive nuclear rollback. AIR

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Even US President Biden's team acknowledges that a new deal cannot restore the 12 month "breakout time" promised under the JCPOA (Credit: Whitehouse/Flickr)

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# CAN WE TRUST MEDIA REPORTING ON A NEW NUCLEAR DEAL?

Jonathan Tobin

In the spring of 2016, *The New York Times Magazine* published an article that was the Rosetta Stone for understanding media coverage of foreign policy during the presidency of Barack Obama. In a profile of then-Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes, the piece let the failed novelist turned speechwriter turned faux international relations expert explain how the Obama Administration helped sell a sceptical public and Congress on its signature foreign-policy accomplishment: the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

While the portrayal of Rhodes's trademark arrogance was the main takeaway from the feature, it also illuminated the process by which the White House marketed an indefensible policy. Rhodes boasted that the national press was so ignorant of the topic and so eager to parrot administration talking points that he had little trouble manipulating accounts of the negotiations with Iran and portrayals of what even its supporters had to admit was a flawed agreement.

Casting aside any pretence that what went on could be confused for actual journalism, what he described went beyond the usual process by which officials try to “spin” the news to the press. Instead of merely persuading writers to mimic pro-deal arguments, Rhodes did something that was referred to in the article as more akin to “ventriloquism”.

What another Obama White House colleague called their press “compadres” were the puppets in a shadow play that largely controlled how the accord was portrayed in mainstream outlets. The result was the creation of a “media echo chamber” in which Obama's narrative about the pact – the best possible option for the West and the only alternative to a war that no one wanted – was blindly accepted.

Given all that has happened since then, the events of 2015 may seem like ancient history. But a discussion of the process that Rhodes was candid enough to reveal is just as, if not more, relevant today than it was then.

There are two reasons for that. One has to do with the further decline in the mainstream press; and the other is the fact that the world is apparently about to get another, even weaker and more disastrous Iran nuclear deal shoved down its throat by the Biden Administration with the help of a pliant press corps.

Media bias used to be a controversial subject since most journalists, and especially those in leading corporate outlets, clung to the claim that they were largely objective even long after that ceased to be true. But the presidency

of Donald Trump caused a great many of them to cast aside any pretence of fairness and instead become openly partisan.

The willingness of publications and broadcasters to spend years reporting as truthful what were ultimately revealed to be inaccurate, if not entirely bogus, claims that the former president colluded with Russia to win the 2016 election was bad enough. But in 2020, the same outlets – abetted by even more powerful Big Tech firms in control of social media platforms – refused to report on legitimate stories about corruption involving President Joe Biden's son Hunter, lest any discussion of the charges undermine the effort to defeat Trump.

The bifurcation of the media, with those on the left reading, listening and watching one set of media and those on the right following different outlets, has been a crucial factor in fuelling the tribal culture war that largely characterises most contemporary US political discourse. Both political camps bear part of the blame for this ugly new reality. But the willingness of outlets like the *Times*, *CNN* and *MSNBC* to ignore stories that embarrass their political allies while the *Wall Street Journal* and *Fox News* highlight them makes any consensus about important topics impossible.



Legacy media like CNN failed to report accurately on the JCPOA in 2015, and the partisan nature of the media has only worsened since then (Screenshot)

If legacy media is only willing to shine a light on administrations when they oppose them, then not only does that undermine their credibility but results in a citizenry consistently robbed of the information it needs in order to properly evaluate crucial issues.

That was certainly the case in 2015 when the “echo chamber” failed to adequately report about what was actually in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – or JCPOA, as the deal was formally named – as opposed to what Obama's aides wanted Americans to think about it. Had they done so, Obama and then-Secretary of State John Kerry might not have been able to get away with portraying a deal that actually effectively *guaranteed* that Iran will get a nuclear weapon once its weak provisions expire at the end of this decade, as preventing that outcome. They would realise that it did not give Teheran's theocrats a chance “to



get right with the world,” as Obama put it. Rather, it actually ignored their illegal missile program and status as the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism and then gave it the financial wherewithal to continue with both in an even more dangerous fashion.

Today, the challenge for the media is to honestly evaluate the Biden Administration’s claims about Trump’s Iran policy that it has reversed. But the same echo chamber is again at work. Players involved with the first agreement are now dutifully regurgitating claims that Trump’s efforts to address the deal’s shortcomings by withdrawing from it in 2018 and then applying “maximum pressure” to the regime to get it to return to the negotiating table was a failure that could never have succeeded, as if Rhodes himself was still pulling their strings.

If another even weaker Iran deal is soon to be concluded, Americans deserve more than partisan spin about an agreement that is likely to make the world an even more dangerous place than the one that Obama originally concluded. But because liberal journalists went into the tank for Obama, against Trump and now stand for Biden, a large portion of consumers of the news won’t get the information they need.

The price of a partisan press isn’t just paid by journalism’s growing credibility gap. Media bias on this scale is a devastating blow to democracy that all too many of those who claim they are worried about the peril to our form of government will never recognise.

AIR

*Jonathan S. Tobin is editor-in-chief of JNS (Jewish News Syndicate). ©JNS.org, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## HOW TO STOP IRAN’S PROXY TERRORISTS

**Bradley Bowman, Joe Truzman & Ryan Brobst**

The United States sent F-22 fighter jets to the United Arab Emirates on Feb. 12, following last month’s Houthi missile attack on an Emirati base hosting American troops. While the added firepower is a welcome development, such deployments will not deter the Houthis or other Iranian proxies unless the hardware is reinforced by coordinated action by the US, Israel, and Arab partners.

Recognising that Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis have the same benefactor and share many of the same goals, methods, and weapons is an essential prerequisite for developing a more cooperative and effective regional response. That response should include the US, Israel,



Hezbollah (top) and Houthi forces (Credits: Shutterstock/Maad Ali/ZUMA Wire/Alamy Live News)

Saudi Arabia, and the UAE sharing technical information on Iranian weapons, especially the rockets, missiles, and drones that all three proxies operate. This could include sharing intelligence about the smuggling routes Teheran uses to deliver weapons to proxies and the financial vehicles Iran uses to fund its proxies. Israel and Gulf Arab states, along with US Central Command, should also build on recent progress related to combined military exercises. There are specific opportunities associated with the recurring Noble Dina, Blue Flag, and Iron Union exercises.

Teheran has long used terrorist groups to attack, undermine, and control other regional governments, such as with Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Houthis in Yemen. Iran would rather its adversaries remain divided and distracted, attempting to respond unilaterally and without holding Teheran accountable for the actions of its proxies. To be sure, the origins and attributes of the three terrorist groups vary. They also come from various religious backgrounds, be it Sunni like Hamas, Twelver Shi’ite like Hezbollah, or Zaydi Shi’ite like the Houthis. But they share many similarities thanks to their links to the ultra-radical regime in Teheran, to which the three terrorist groups owe much of their resilience and lethality.

Consider, for example, the fact that Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis are united in their desire to kill Americans, Israelis, and often other Arabs.

The Houthis have attacked US forces on at least two occasions. In 2016, the Houthis fired anti-ship cruise missiles



at the *USS Mason*, a Navy destroyer operating in international waters near Yemen. The Houthis attacked American forces again in January by launching ballistic missiles at the Al Dhafra Air Base, which houses US forces. Notably, Hezbollah and Hamas praised that Houthi attack, while Israel condemned it and expressed support for Abu Dhabi.

Hamas and Hezbollah, both US-designated foreign terrorist organisations, have been more successful than the Houthis in killing Americans. Indeed, Hamas has killed dozens of US citizens, while Hezbollah is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Americans.

Israelis, of course, have suffered at the hands of Iranian-supported terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah too. That hostility is not surprising given that the founding principles or documents of both groups call for the destruction of Israel. The Houthi slogan of “Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse the Jews, Victory to Islam” aligns with Hamas, Hezbollah, and their common patron, Iran.

Lately, the Houthis have been particularly prolific in attacking Saudi Arabia, more than doubling their attacks against the kingdom in the first nine months of 2021.

The longer Washington and its partners fail to effectively address the flow of Iranian weapons to the Houthis, the more they will fight and refuse to negotiate in good faith, conditions in Yemen will worsen, and the group will become a more significant regional threat. January’s Houthi missile attacks suggest this is already happening.

The weapons Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis use reveal their connections to Iran. Iran has supplied or attempted to supply each group with the 9M133 anti-tank guided missile, the C-704/802 anti-ship cruise missile, and 122mm Katyusha rockets. They also all use variants of the Iranian Ababil-T drone and the Fajr-3/5 rockets.

In May 2021, Hamas publicly thanked Iran for supplying military support during the terror group’s war with Israel earlier that month. The support enabled Hamas and other Iran-backed factions in Gaza to launch more than 4,360 rockets at Israeli civilians during the 11-day conflict. If it were not for Israel’s Iron Dome air defence system and bomb shelters, those attacks could have killed thousands of civilians.

But that barrage pales in comparison to what Hezbollah could unleash on Israel; thanks to Teheran, Hezbollah is estimated to have at least 150,000 rockets and missiles.

Iran’s additional efforts to provide its terrorist proxies with anti-ship cruise missiles are particularly worrisome. Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis each operate near vital military and commercial waterways. Hamas has recently experimented with undersea drones to threaten offshore infrastructure and vessels in the eastern Medi-

terranean not far from the Suez Canal. Hezbollah damaged the *INS Hanit*, an Israeli Navy corvette, in 2006, and the group could easily target other vessels. Houthis have already targeted shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Combined with Iran’s own capabilities in the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz, Teheran and its proxies can threaten several of the world’s most important maritime chokepoints.


The three terrorist groups also have shown a disdain for human rights, emulating Iran’s example. Hamas and

Hezbollah commonly use torture to interrogate Palestinians and Lebanese they detain, while the Houthis maintain an extensive prison network rife with abuse. All three organisations recruit child soldiers to fight their battles, with Hamas operating military training camps for minors and Houthi commanders openly bragging about their

use of children.

Revealing their disregard for other Arabs, the Houthis, Hamas, and Hezbollah each use innocent neighbours as human shields. Each group habitually hides weapons caches and offensive weapons in or near apartment buildings, schools, or other civilian areas.

During the May 2021 conflict, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which Teheran also supports, made extensive use of human shields. In one example, footage shared by pro-Hamas channels shows rockets being launched at Israel from neighbourhoods in Gaza.

By using terrorist proxies, the regime in Iran is attempting to attack its neighbours while concealing where the blow came from and escaping the consequences. Washington, Jerusalem, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, and other regional partners should recognise that these terrorist attacks all bear Teheran’s fingerprints. Better to address the puppet master together than fight its puppets alone. 

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# Russian Roulette

## Israel's initially cautious stance in the Ukraine crisis toughens up

AIJAC staff

Amidst the, by and large, unified Western condemnation and imposition of sanctions in response to the Russian recognition of two puppet entities in eastern Ukraine, and the start of what looks like a large-scale invasion to occupy Ukraine and oust its democratically-elected Government, the Israeli Government initially took a cautious, almost neutral, position.

The carefully crafted statement released by Israel's Foreign Ministry on Feb. 23 said Israel "supports the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of Ukraine."

It went on to say, "Israel shares the concern of the international community regarding the steps taken in eastern Ukraine and the serious escalation in the situation... Israel hopes for a diplomatic solution which will lead to calm, and is willing to help if asked."

The Israeli statement also expressed concern for Israeli citizens and the Jewish community in the affected regions, offered to supply humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and promised that Israel would "engage in dialogue with its partners on ways to get the diplomatic efforts back on track."

What was notably missing from the statement was any direct condemnation of Russia, which was not mentioned by name.

By the following day, as Russia's actions against Ukraine intensified, this stance became untenable, and Jerusalem did condemn Russia. Foreign Minister Yair Lapid issued a statement calling the Russian attack "a grave violation of the international order" and also said, "The Russian attack all across Ukraine is a serious violation and Israel condemns it. Israel has known conflicts and war is not the way to resolve them. One can still stop and settle the disputes."

Israel's initially cautious and low-key approach to Russia's aggression against Ukraine was guided by two overarching factors – as explained by former Israeli Ambassador to Australia Mark Sofer: Russia's role in Syria and the large Jewish communities in both Russia and Ukraine.

Another factor Israel has to take into account is the family ties Jews from the former Soviet Union living in Israel have with people in both Russia and the Ukraine, he also noted.

"Israel is caught frankly between a rock and a hard place," Sofer told Indian English-language outlet *WION* on Feb. 22. "On the one hand, we are very, very much part of the Western ideology and the Western approach to the international arena. But on the other hand, we have extremely important vital national interests both with Ukraine but also not less importantly... with Russia, which is an enormous player in the Middle East, especially in Syria, where it's the only sort of 'responsible adult'."

He noted the only alternatives to Russia in Syria were

"terrorist movements", "Assad, who has been butchering his own people" and "Iranian troops with boots on the ground."

Sofer explained that Israel has "vested interests with both sides" of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, including "the Jewish communities, both in Ukraine and in Russia, and the families, the millions of Russian and Ukrainian Jews living in Israel."

For the aforementioned reasons, Israel has "adopted and will continue to adopt, as much as possible, a middle path here," Sofer said. "We're not a player in the Ukraine-Russia dispute by any means, but we have a lot to lose. You know there's a well-known saying: when two elephants fight, the grass always suffers. And here we are clearly the grass."

Israel was hoping that international diplomatic efforts to resolve the standoff without any further escalation would pay off, he said, because "we're going to be collateral damage here if a conflict breaks out."

As a result of the considerations noted by Sofer, Israeli officials were initially circumspect when it came to Russia. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett reportedly barred ministers and officials from commenting about the crisis publicly.

Before the extent of Russia's invasion became clear, Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid also cited the Jewish communities in Ukraine and Russia as well as the Russian presence in Syria as reasons for caution, saying he had to be "more careful than any other foreign minister in the world."

"Our border with Syria is, for all intents and purposes, a border with Russia," Lapid noted.

Lapid also insisted the US understood Israel's predicament. "This is where the special relationship [with the US] comes



Recent years demonstrate that Israel has significant vested interests and established ties with both Ukraine and Russia (Credit: IGPO/ Flickr)



into play. They understand this because they understand us. We have a mutual vocabulary, a language that we share.”

Prior to the invasion, Lapid said Israel “will have to consider” going along with sanctions.

Other Israeli officials, including Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee chairman Ram Ben Barak, had also expressed hopes that Israel would not be forced to take a position – but the clear underlying assumption was that, if the current crisis continued, Israel would have to support US-led sanctions, while trying to do so discreetly to minimise the chance of provoking Russia.

“In the end, if we ever have to choose a side, we will pick the American side,” said Diaspora Affairs Minister Nachman Shai, commenting on Lapid’s initial remarks before the extent of the Russian invasion was clear. He added, “It is clear that in this story, our heart is with one side, with the Americans. We are trying, and I think we are doing it well, to manoeuvre between all the forces involved without taking a clear public stance, with the hope that the crisis will end without fire, without casualties and without a military confrontation.”

Israel does have a long-standing diplomatic tradition of caution and attempting to remain uninvolved in international disputes involving Russia, dating back to even before Russia’s intervention in Syria in 2015. In 2014, for instance, Israel abstained from a US-led resolution to condemn Russia’s annexation of Crimea at the UN. In 2018, Israel declined to join a unified Western response against Russia over the attempt to assassinate Sergei Skripal in the UK. Indeed, former Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu was one of only two leaders to attend Russia’s Victory Day parade in Moscow later that year.

There is also the issue of Russian political influence in Israel, with an entire party within the current governing coalition, Avigdor Lieberman’s Yisrael Beiteinu, dedicated to Jews from the former Soviet Union, among whom are several senior current and former Israeli officials and public figures.

Meanwhile some Russian Jewish oligarchs, such as Roman Abramovich, have been giving lavishly to Jewish and Israeli causes and institutions, from Yad Vashem and settler groups, to hospitals, universities, and arts-related projects, including funding Israel’s Genesis Prize. Abramovich was even granted Israeli citizenship and lived in Tel Aviv.

Ram Ben Barak and Defence Minister Benny Gantz previously worked with a US-sanctioned Russian oligarch, Viktor Vekselberg, to establish a security and technology startup called Fifth Dimension. This ultimately failed, reportedly in part due to sanctions.

Overall, while Israel had understandable reasons for its initially cautious stance regarding Russia, and attempting to minimise any Russia blowback while quietly supporting Western sanctions, it is highly unlikely that any aspect of that stance can remain viable now that Russia has launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

## UKRAINE’S JEWS BRACE FOR SHORTAGES, ANTISEMITIC PROVOCATIONS

Sam Sokol & Nastya Shub

As Russian troops began moving into eastern Ukraine following Moscow’s official recognition of two break-away separatist enclaves on Feb. 21, local Jewish leaders expressed concern not only that their constituents could be displaced by renewed fighting, but that the Kremlin might attempt to use antisemitic provocations to delegitimise their country.

Speaking to *Haaretz* from the eastern city of Dnipro, Rabbi Meir Stambler, the chairman of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine, said that he was more worried about the possibility of antisemitic provocations carried out by Russian agents than a full-scale war.

“We were never concerned about security, but now we are worried that the situation might change, so that’s why we are working on safety precautions for all the rabbis, communities, schools and synagogues,” Stambler told *Haaretz*. “They want to [accuse] Ukrainians of being antisemites or fascists.”

Russian media was filled with false reports of anti-Jewish persecution during the early days of conflict between Russia and Ukraine, with Russian President Vladimir Putin warning in March 2014 that the “rampage of reactionary forces, nationalist and antisemitic forces going on in certain parts of Ukraine” might necessitate a military intervention and Jewish leaders in turn accusing the Kremlin of staging antisemitic incidents for propaganda purposes.

More recently, top Russian officials have accused Ukraine of carrying out a “genocide” in two breakaway separatist enclaves in the east of the country.

But while Stambler didn’t believe that a full-scale invasion, and its concomitant refugee crisis, were likely, he said that his organisation was also preparing to distribute emergency food kits to 20,000 Jewish families across the country.

“I don’t know exactly what will happen but we believe in God and we pray. I don’t believe something will happen but we have to make sure we take care of the Jews who decided to stay here,” he said.

Rabbi Stambler was one of several Ukrainian Jewish leaders who have said that they are preparing emergency plans to evacuate and house large numbers of refugees should the conflict escalate into all-out war.

Chief Rabbi Yaakov Bleich said that while Ukraine is much better armed and prepared than when the conflict

with Russia broke out in 2014, a serious escalation could see a new wave of refugees fleeing the fighting.

“In the Jewish community we have contingency plans to accept refugees in the west if people need to leave. Our community is preparing a large complex in Zhytomyr, 100 kilometres west of Kyiv, for people who may want to evacuate voluntarily and in case we have refugees from the east,” he said. “We didn’t have that in 2014, we weren’t ready for it.”



Ultra-Orthodox Jews praying in Uman, Ukraine (Credit: Shutterstock)

While communal leaders had said that local Jews were determined to stay, a sense of insecurity and uncertainty had begun to spread.

Ilya, a Jewish businessman from Kyiv who asked that his last name be withheld for security reasons, said that people have been growing nervous.

He was one of thousands of Jews living in Kyiv who received a pre-recorded voice message from local Rabbi Moshe Azman in mid-February, inviting them to take shelter at Anatevka, a refugee centre he built outside of the city to house war refugees in 2016, should they need to flee the capital.


Rabbis from all denominations have taken the lead in not only calming the growing fear in the community but in “gathering needed things such as medication, warm clothes and everything that might be needed in the case of the war,” Ilya said.

“I’ve received dozens of messages from Russian Jewish friends in Moscow saying ‘sorry about this, we don’t want a war, we didn’t vote for Putin.’”

Speaking by telephone from rebel-controlled Luhansk, Anna said that “the most terrifying part is uncertainty, not knowing what comes next.”

There is great “fear of the unknown and of the bombing. I was here in 2014. We didn’t have gas, water, or communications for more than two months. I hope it won’t be as long this time around but it still causes great anxiety.”

“At the moment I can’t say that people are leaving” but “some people are slowly packing to be ready to evacuate,” she said. “But one-two strikes and they will leave straight

away. Especially those who lived through 2014. For now we are sitting, observing and waiting for what comes next.” 

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## UKRAINE’S JEWS AND THE MEANING OF ISRAEL

David Harris

**A**s the crisis targeting Ukraine unfolds, with nail-biting tension from day to day, some countries are quietly planning for the prospect of millions of refugees.

While not all surrounding nations would necessarily welcome large numbers seeking safety, and as the refugees themselves would face the daunting prospects of dislocation, anxiety, and uncertainty, for one potential group – Ukrainian Jews – there are much clearer, and more reassuring, possibilities, should they feel compelled to leave.

The reason is simple: Israel exists. It is ready to help any Ukrainian Jews who feel at risk, and it is preparing for their reception and resettlement.

Those Jews would not be compelled to live in temporary, threadbare camps, as could occur elsewhere, nor would they have to wait on endless lines in the hope of being permitted to enter a new country permanently at some later point.

And that, in today’s world, is an essential meaning of Israel. While for some Jews, most notably in the United States, Israel has become little more than a distant land or political hobby, for other Jews, including in Ukraine, Israel represents nothing less than a lifeline, a sanctuary, and a haven.

Alas, it wasn’t always so. When Adolf Hitler gave Jews the chance to leave in the 1930s, there was no Israel. Instead, Jews had to rely on the goodwill of other nations. The result? Perilously few chances to relocate, so Jews, including my parents, were trapped.

When 32 countries assembled in 1938 for the Evian Conference, it was clear that, despite the gathering’s lofty aim of assisting endangered German and Austrian Jews, few were prepared to lift a finger, invoking all kinds of bogus rationales to mask widespread hostility towards Jews. The tragic 1939 saga of the SS *St. Louis*, carrying more than 900 Jewish refugees, powerfully illustrated the impenetrably high walls Jews faced at the time.

But once Israel was reborn in 1948, Jews no longer

had to beg, plead, and cajole to find new homes – whether they were Holocaust survivors stuck in Displaced Persons camps in Germany and Austria, or fleeing violent mobs and chronic persecution in Arab lands, or fearful of the spread of communism and resurgent antisemitism in eastern Europe.

No, it wasn't always easy. Israel had few resources at the time and had to focus on ensuring its survival in an unwelcoming region. And there were social tensions among various communities who had lived very different lives prior to their arrival in the Jewish state. But, with time and effort, progress was made. The country's population grew, its economy developed, social integration occurred, and democratic institutions took root.

Years later, I was a witness to the meaning of Israel for Ethiopian and Soviet Jews. I saw up close the lengths to which Jerusalem went to rescue these beleaguered Jews and offer a new beginning in a land where, as Jews, they would neither be defenceless nor subjected to the whim of ruthless leaders.

This was brought home to me most vividly in January 1991, as Iraqi Scud missiles were being fired at Israel and millions of Israelis were rushing with gas masks again and again to sealed shelters, fearful those missiles carried chemical warheads. I was there. I stood on the tarmac as planes arrived from the USSR with Jews looking to escape Soviet uncertainty.

Israel never closed its doors, even in that fraught time. It never told the would-be arrivals to return another day when all was quiet and no more Scud missiles were raining down. Instead, Israel welcomed them, issued them gas masks and gave them instructions on how to use them, and sent them to absorption centres. There, they would find a place to live, food on the table, language lessons, school for their children, and vocational training – oh, and shelters to rush to when the sirens sounded, signalling more incoming projectiles from Iraq.

In decades of visiting Jewish communities around the world, I frequently witnessed this basic understanding of Israel's meaning; this recognition that Israel was about way more than a particular policy or leader; this enduring, and often metaphysical, connection to a distant land that wasn't just another country on the map; and this sense that a day could come when their own security would be jeopardised and Israel might become their new home.

There are as many as 300,000 Jews living in Ukraine today. Whatever happens in the weeks and months ahead, they know they don't have to face the prospect of homelessness. And that's because, thankfully, Israel is a reality.

AIR

David Harris is the CEO of American Jewish Committee (AJC). This article originally appeared in the Times of Israel ([www.timesofisrael.com](http://www.timesofisrael.com)). © AJC, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

## THE MOTIVE BEHIND “APARTHEID ISRAEL” CHARGES

Elliot Kaufman

Amnesty International is the latest anti-Israel organisation to make headlines by using the word “apartheid”. But lots of people dislike Israel and make false claims about it. What makes this claim notable? Why has it started to catch on?

The human rights group's report, “Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity,” isn't intellectually rigorous. The version distributed to reporters in advance claimed that a “system of apartheid originated with the creation of Israel in May 1948 and has been built and maintained over decades.”

After critics noted that this was an attack on Israel's very existence and creation, Amnesty expunged the “originated” clause from the final version, although the claim still appears in the conclusion: “Israel has established and maintained an institutionalised regime of oppression and domination of the Palestinian population for the benefit of Jewish Israelis – a system of apartheid – wherever it has exercised control over Palestinians' lives since 1948.”

It gets stranger still. Amnesty asserts that it doesn't seek to argue that any element of Israeli apartheid is “the same or analogous to the system of segregation, oppression and domination as perpetrated in South Africa between 1948 and 1994.” Not even *analogous*? Then why use the word “apartheid” at all?

Muddled from the start, the report leads off by rehashing a long-running dispute over a few properties in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Jerusalem. Jordan seized the land from Jewish owners in 1948, when it occupied east Jerusalem and expelled every Jew, but in 19 years Jordan never got around to transferring the title to the Palestinians who moved in. Nevertheless, Israeli courts have offered a compromise whereby these Palestinians could avoid eviction and stay as tenants, with protected status, while paying a low rent to the Jewish owners. Under pressure from Ramallah, the Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah rejected the compromise. Apparently, this is leading evidence of apartheid.

Under a normal understanding of the term, this makes no sense. But Amnesty defines apartheid as when “serious human rights violations are committed in the context, and with the specific intent, of maintaining a regime or system of prolonged and cruel discriminatory control of one or more racial groups by another.” These terms are clay in the hands of the left. One could easily imagine them being applied to modern-day America.





Amnesty actually admits Israel's treatment of Palestinians is not analogous to the situation in apartheid South Africa, where blacks were legally unequal and segregated (Credit: Shutterstock)

If “apartheid” isn’t being used to convey its well-known meaning, maybe the purpose is to achieve its well-known effect. Apartheid states are beyond the pale, the modern version of *hostis humani generis*, enemy of all mankind.

Think about it: Hostile critics could claim instead that Israel is undemocratic or oppressive, but there are plenty of autocracies out there, and mostly we leave them alone. Even dictatorships that slaughter their own people are each welcomed at the United Nations and given a vote – and sometimes a seat on the Human Rights Council. But for the crime of apartheid, South Africa was effectively expelled in 1974 by the UN General Assembly, a decision without precedent in UN history and probably a violation of the UN Charter.

It happened anyway because apartheid is one of the capital crimes of the international system. Its practitioner was boycotted, made into a pariah and fought until it dismantled the system.

Boycott, marginalisation and even violent resistance follow from the apartheid label. In 1975, a year after South Africa’s diplomatic credentials were rejected, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference sought to expel Israel from the UN as well. This failed, but as a consolation prize, the UN passed the “Zionism Is Racism” resolution.


This diplomatic offensive was the new stage in the Arab war against the Jews, after military force had failed for the last time in 1973. In 1982 the General Assembly recommended “all Member States to cease forthwith... all dealings with Israel in order to totally isolate it in all fields.” In Resolution 37/43, also passed in 1982, the General Assembly grouped Israel with South Africa and affirmed “the legitimacy of the struggle... by all available means, including armed struggle.”

Who today would deny that the African National Congress had a right to fight Pretoria? The same was meant to apply to Palestinian Liberation Organisation terrorism against Jerusalem. The UN reaffirmed this right to armed struggle many times, thwarting general treaties against terrorism. The OIC insisted that “anti-Israel militants be exempted,” reported the *Washington Post* in November 2001.

Whereas the sponsors of Resolution 37/43 had their eyes open, Amnesty International’s leaders doubtless have their eyes shut. But by invoking apartheid to single out Israel as an enemy of mankind, Amnesty implicitly rejects Israel’s right to exist and authorises violent resistance to destroy it.

With an idea of the stakes, supporters of Israel rush to defend it from the apartheid charge. But in this strange game, the only winning move is not to play.

Forget “War Games” [the 1983 film in which a computer almost starts a nuclear war thinking it is playing a game before concluding “A strange game. The only winning move is not to play”]; this is the lesson of Kafka’s *The Trial* (1925). Josef K., standing in for the Jews, is told that he is on trial, though for what, he can’t comprehend. His mistake is to mount a defence. An accusation that isn’t the product of disinterested reason won’t be refuted by recourse to it, and to defend oneself is to acknowledge the legitimacy of the court. The beauty of Zionism is that Jews can finally have their own court and no longer be made to stand before the biased judges of centuries past, protesting their innocence of imagined crimes when all parties know a guilty verdict is assured in advance.

Amnesty International and a dozen UN bodies would love nothing more than to preside as arbiters in this latest trial of the Jews. We are lucky that they have no power to compel Israel’s participation. But if the apartheid charge were to stick, rallying an international boycott and authorising renewed armed resistance, who’s to say the Jews couldn’t be paraded into court one more time? 

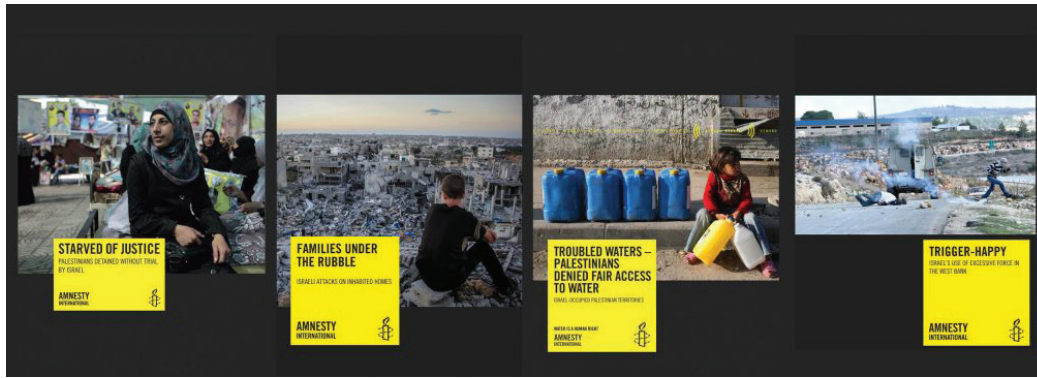
*Elliot Kaufman is the letters editor at the Wall Street Journal. © Wall Street Journal, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL’S “WOKE RACISM”

Adam Levick

If the 280-page report published by Amnesty International accusing Israel of ‘apartheid’ was a person, we’d say that he doesn’t have an honest bone in his body.

Whilst both the *Economist* and Freedom House have assessed the Jewish state as a liberal democracy, with the former ranking Israel’s democracy score higher than even the United States, Amnesty, like other so-called human rights organisations which have embraced the radical left’s malign obsession with Israel, offered what can fairly be described as a conclusion in search of evidence.



Amnesty publishes report after report denying any agency to Palestinians, reflecting “woke” ideology that patronisingly treats a disadvantaged group as powerless, eternal victims (Image: Amnesty International)

Their report is riddled with errors of omission, fact, law and basic logic.

To cite just a few errors:

- Amnesty charges that Arab citizens of Israel can’t access state land in Israel. The charge is false – Israeli-Arabs have the same access to state land as any other Israelis.
- Amnesty claims that Palestinians, and their millions of descendants, possess a legal “Right of Return” to Israel. In fact, there is no such right in international law.
- Amnesty portrays Palestinian residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in east Jerusalem as being “ethnically cleansed”. However, all that’s happening is that several dozen Palestinian families face *possible* eviction due to their failure to pay rent for decades.
- Amnesty claims that “2.5 million Palestinians live in Israel and East Jerusalem, restricted to enclaves that make up 3% of the entire area.” Again, this claim has been shown to be a fabrication. [see <https://tinyurl.com/not3percent>]

• Amnesty even questions the legitimacy of Israel’s security measures designed to prevent the flow of weapons into Hamas-controlled Gaza, when even a United Nations investigation, for instance, declared its naval blockade “legal”.

But, arguably, even more egregious than its counter-factual allegations against Israel is the near absence of any context on the Arab wars, Palestinian terrorism and Palestinian leadership’s repeated rejection of peace offers which have led to the current territorial, political and security situation.

In fact, searching for the words “terror” or “bombing” or

“suicide” or “stab” or “stabbing” reveals that in the entire 280-page report there is not a single mention of any particular Palestinian terrorist attack against Israelis. The 1,377 Israeli victims of Palestinian terrorism since September 2000 are erased from the moral and political equation.

And this is illustrative of a problem with Amnesty’s report few have explored –

a denial of agency to Palestinians. Their document seems predicated on a view of the Palestinians and Israelis in a manner that American authors and social psychologists Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff characterised as “The Untruth of Us Versus Them: *Life is a battle between good people and evil people.*” Such a Manichean framing invariably leads to a patronising view of the Palestinians, treating them as eternal victims – a dynamic described by American academic John McWhorter as “woke racism”.

**T**ellingly, at the end of Amnesty’s report there are dozens of bullet point recommendations for ameliorating the problems it outlined, almost all of which are directed towards what Israel should do to solve the “human rights violations” it outlined. Some of these recommendations, such as allowing for the unlimited Palestinian right of return, would, for all intents and purposes, mean the end of the Jewish state.

So, what’s asked of the Palestinians? As you can see below (excerpted from p. 276 of the report), essentially nothing. The only thing demanded of Palestinians is that they assist Amnesty in its delegitimisation campaign and smear of Israel:

#### 7.2.2 PALESTINIAN AUTHORITIES

- Document as necessary and in line with international standards the discriminatory impact of Israel’s system of apartheid against the Palestinian population in the OPT to provide evidence of such impact to relevant international courts and other bodies.
- Ensure that operations and any type of dealings with Israel, primarily through security coordination, do not contribute to maintaining the system of apartheid against Palestinians in the OPT.

There are no demands that Hamas, the terrorist group that rules Gaza, disarm and accept Israel’s existence. There are no calls for the Palestinian Authority to, for the first time in 16 years, hold elections and begin the process of building functioning and transparent democratic institutions in preparation for statehood. There’s no admonition of Palestinian leaders for their promotion and glorification of terrorism, or their culture of antisemitism. Nor is there

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the suggestion that they should pursue peace and co-existence with Israel.

In the 200,000 plus word report, the word “coexistence” isn’t used once (except to cite an NGO named Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality). The word “peace” is only used either to reference the NGO ‘Peace Now’, or in contexts unrelated to the word’s meaning as it relates to the Israeli-Palestinian quest for “peace” or a “peace agreement”. The term “two states” isn’t used at all.

Of course, making peace with Israel is the only effective way to end the conflict and improve the lives of both Palestinians and Israelis. But, to acknowledge such an intuitive truth would require ceasing to infantilise Palestinians, and treating them instead as we treat all adults – as moral actors whose bad decisions inevitably lead to bad outcomes.

AIR

*Adam Levick serves as co-editor of CAMERA UK. He has published reports on antisemitism at the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, and op-eds at publications such as the Guardian, the Independent, the Irish Examiner, the Algemeiner, JNS and the Jewish Chronicle. © Times of Israel (www.timesofisrael.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## THE UN’S EGREGIOUS ACTS OF COMMISSION

Anne Bayefsky

The United Nations has created a Star Chamber targeting the State of Israel. The inquisition was devised by the UN Human Rights Council last May and funded by the UN General Assembly at the end of December. The three members appointed to the new “Commission of Inquiry” make a mockery of the most elementary preconditions of fairness and legitimacy.

The identities of the inquisitors are Navi Pillay of South Africa, Miloon Kothari of India and Chris Sidoti of Australia. Pillay was named chair, hence the fitting epithet of the UN offensive: “Pillay’s Pogrom”. The three were appointed in July by then-council president Nazhat Shameem, a lawyer from Fiji. With funding now assured, the “Inquiry” is under way.

The “Inquiry’s” founding resolution was crafted at the behest of Islamic states and what the United Nations calls the “State of Palestine”. It spells out a number of fantastically broad tasks connected by one overarching goal: to turn the Jewish state into a global pariah.

Internationally recognised credentials for any such inquiry demand “independence”, “impartiality” and “objectiv-



Navi Pillay: Commission chair and long-standing supporter of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel (Credit: UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferre)

ity”. Even the United Nations calls these prerequisites “of paramount importance”. Hence, a close look at the records of the “Inquiry” members, as compared to the “Inquiry’s” assigned tasks, is compulsory.

The first task assigned was to investigate “all underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict, including systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial or religious identity.”

Pillay, who was UN High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2008 to 2014, has an answer to task number one – already. The flagship enterprise of Pillay’s tenure was resurrecting the UN’s antisemitic hate-fest held in Durban in 2001 and reaffirming the slander of the racist Jewish state. Since then, she’s been preaching, “help end decades of Israeli oppression of the Palestinian people... recognized as apartheid.”

As for the task of identifying root causes, Pillay’s got that covered. In her own words: “The occupation continued to be the main cause of widespread violations of Palestinians’ civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.” “At the heart of so many of the problems plaguing the Israel-Palestine situation,” she once contrived, was “that the Israeli Government treats international law with perpetual disdain” – not the perpetual disdain of law and life by Palestinian rejectionists, racists, terrorists and enablers.

Fellow “Inquiry” member Kothari has also finished “Inquiry” task number one – prior to the inquiry. A former UN “expert” himself, he’s already reported on “the practice of ethnic cleansing and expulsion of land-based people and communities, as has historically been the case in Palestine.” And the root cause: the affront of Jews living in the Jewish homeland. Or in his words, “Israel’s long record of... implantation of settlers prior to and since its establishment as a State.”

“Inquiry” member Sidoti brings a whole new meaning to “independence”. Sidoti is “a close friend and ally” of the Palestinian Human Rights Commission created by a



“Presidential Decree” of Yasser Arafat, and is still delivering advice to the Palestinian Authority on Palestinian laws and policies.

Sidoti also “provides strategic guidance and advice” to the “Australian Centre for International Justice (ACIJ).” His NGO has an answer lined up to task number one: “Israel is also subjugating... Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line... under an institutionalised regime of racial domination and oppression, which amount to the crime against humanity of apartheid.”

The second task of these inquisitors is to “investigate ... all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and all alleged violations and abuses of international human-rights law,” without a firm start or end date.

**“These are not ‘inquirers,’ and this is not a ‘commission of inquiry’. They are hired guns on a global hit job”**

Done and done. Pillay spent six years as High Commissioner reporting on what she called Israeli violations and abuses. On her way into office in 2008, she said: “1.5 million Palestinian men, women and children have been forcibly deprived of their most basic human

rights... in direct contravention of international human rights and humanitarian law.” On her way out of office in 2014, she fulminated about what she called “the ongoing, routine abuses and human-rights violations committed against the occupied population.”

Pillay cited for her conclusions the work of “my staff” at her UN office – the same UN office staffing today’s “Inquiry”.

A third “Inquiry” task is to “make recommendations, in particular on accountability measures.” In another time-saver, Pillay’s already told the Human Rights Council that her top choice is “referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court.” And she wants the free flow of Iranian weapons, dual-use materiel and terrorists, in and out of Gaza – or as she puts it: “Israel must allow the free movement of goods and people into and out of Gaza and between Gaza and the West Bank.”

One more “Inquiry” task is to “make recommendations on measures to be taken by third States to ensure... that they do not aid or assist in the commission of internationally wrongful acts.”

Done, done and done. Pillay’s already urged third states to engage in boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel: “I hope that the Palestinian struggle to end colonization gains... momentum, especially in the civilian campaign of BDS, Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.” Kothari has already said – in a UN press release, no less: “I also urge the international community ... to reconsider the continuation of military cooperation with Israel.” Sidoti’s NGO has already recommended “asset freezes

against Israeli government officials and entities” and issued a call for “immediately imposing a comprehensive two-way arms embargo on Israel.”

With a job description to discover systemic discrimination and human-rights violations in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the United Nations chose “independent”, “impartial” and “objective” inquirers who have made careers of discovering systemic Israeli racism and criminality. Tasked with making recommendations on accountability following their findings, the UN appointed a Queen of Hearts and two knaves – “sentence first, verdict afterwards.”

These are not “inquirers,” and this is not a “commission of inquiry”. They are hired guns on a global hit job – a con with life-threatening implications and an assignment no decent lawyer – or human being – would take. But then, that quality is not a UN qualification. AIR

*Dr. Anne Bayefsky is the Director of the Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust, and President of Human Rights Voices. Reprinted from the Jewish News Syndicate (JNS). © JNS.org, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## ISRAELI GAS FUELS ENERGETIC DIPLOMACY

**Amotz Asa-El**

**E**ager to prevent a renewal of global war, six European countries decided in 1951 to jointly regulate the production and distribution of coal and steel. War, said then French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, would thus become “not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible.”

The European Coal and Steel Community later morphed into the Common Market which eventually became the European Union, whose founders’ journey eventually progressed from economic harmony to the brink of political fusion.

In the Middle East, any such evolution remains a distant dream. However, Israel’s newfound Mediterranean gas fields are generating not only billions in cash, but also unpredicted diplomatic gains.

Israeli energy prospectors first found gas in 1999 off the shore of Ashkelon, north of Gaza. The modest finds in those waters were soon followed by vast discoveries further north, some 100 kilometres west of Haifa, where a cluster of fields collectively constituted the world’s largest gas discovery in more than a decade.

The deposits were so large that they could fully supply Israel’s energy needs for 150 years, and inject an annual US\$2 billion (~A\$2.77 billion) into its national coffers.

Moreover, geologists said Israeli waters had much more gas in store, and possibly also oil.

Israel thus faced regulatory dilemmas for which it was not prepared.

The most urgent challenge was taxation. The original law had energy producers paying the government a mere 12.5% tax for every shekel they earned. After a heated public debate, it was decided to add to the royalties a 20-50% tax on profits that would rise progressively after a company pumped gas worth 1.5 times its original investments.



Israeli PM Bennett with his Greek and Cypriot counterparts: Energy cooperation has brought Israeli ties with these countries to new heights (Credit: IGPO/ Flickr)

A second dilemma was the danger of so-called “Dutch Disease”, in which large and sudden income from natural resource exports first spikes local wages and then sparks an exodus away from other local production lines, which in turn fans unemployment.

To pre-empt such a scenario, Israel created a sovereign wealth fund that would syphon off the royalties, invest them abroad, and trickle the earnings from these investments back into the state budget, where they would be used only for social purposes, such as education and health.

A third dilemma concerned the extent to which the gas would be exported, with social activists demanding a ratio that would leave most of the gas at home, and thus cut energy costs for Israeli households. The government ultimately decided to cap exports at 53% of the gas produced.

There were also environmental concerns raised by some Israeli groups that had to be addressed by the government.

Hovering above all these discussions was the ownership dilemma, with activists warning of the danger of political favouritism and economic dominance by the companies that were given licences to exploit the new gas fields. The government therefore left the biggest field to the consortium that found it, while diluting that company’s stake in another field and tendering out other fields to competing firms.

Israel’s gas industry was thus regulated, and revenues began rolling in. In the first half of last year, the Israeli government gained NIS 561 million (~A\$244 million) in royalties, 17% more than for the comparable period the previous year.

This new fixture of the Israeli economy obviously entails major strategic consequences.

Militarily, the Israeli Navy, previously tasked mostly with challenging Iran, containing Hamas in Gaza, and patrolling Israel’s shores, is now also tasked with securing gas rigs. As a result of this latest assignment, Israel purchased a flotilla of tailor-made corvettes from Germany for €430 million (~A\$678 million).

**D**iplomatically, however, the gas fields have generated priceless gains.

The most obvious foreign beneficiaries of Israel’s gas discoveries were its two veteran peace partners, Egypt and Jordan.

A deal signed in 2015 to supply US\$1.2 billion (A\$1.66 billion) worth of Israeli gas to Egypt was expanded in 2019 to an agreement for the supply of US\$15 billion (A\$20.8 billion) worth of gas over 15 years. A similar deal was signed with Jordan in 2016, for the sale of US\$10 billion (A\$13.9 billion) worth of gas over ten years.

The gas is transported to both destinations through pipelines, one running east from the Jezreel Valley across the northern Jordan Valley, the other under-sea from Ashkelon to El Arish in the Sinai.

The other major international connections Israel sought in the wake of the gas findings were with Europe.

A deal signed in 2020 in Athens between the leaders of Israel, Greece and Cyprus laid the groundwork for the construction of a 2,000-kilometre pipeline from Israeli and Cypriot waters through Crete to the Greek mainland, proceeding to Italy across the Adriatic Sea.

Known as the East-Med Project, the venture was backed by the US and EU, and was presented by its signatories as a vehicle for regional stability that “is not aimed against any other country” – as then Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said.

That statement is, of course, debatable despite Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades’ insistence that “any state is welcome to join [the venture] provided it respects our territorial sovereignty and rights.” This was a thinly veiled reference to Turkey, which in 2018 claimed drilling rights in what others regard as Cypriot and Greek waters.

Currently, the East-Med project appears to be suspended, after the Biden Administration privately communicated to Israel, Greece and Cyprus in January that it had withdrawn its support for East-Med, citing economic viability and environmental issues. The Israeli Govern-

ment has not commented on the American stance, and is believed to be continuing to pursue the project, realising the Ukraine crisis underscores western Europe's need for non-Russian gas.

At any rate, the economic and political ties the plan helped spark – in terms of unprecedentedly strong Israeli relations with Greece and Cyprus – are very much alive and well.

Lurking beyond these ties are Turkey's broader relations with the parties to the East-Med project.

Turkey has been occupying a slice of Cyprus since 1974, and has been Greece's strategic nemesis since the downfall of the Ottoman Empire a century ago. Israel, meanwhile, has increasingly found itself at loggerheads with Turkey since the rise to power of its President Recep Tayyip Erdogan 19 years ago.

The emergence of the East-Med alliance was a setback for Ankara, which found itself left out of a multilateral economic banquet being prepared at its doorstep by three countries it had antagonised for years.

Moreover, as if to add insult to injury, Turkey's industrialised economy is thirsting for oil and gas – which exists in abundance among the East-Med's threesome and across the Arab world that Turkey once ruled, but is largely absent from Turkey itself.

Worse yet, Turkey's economy has been sliding in recent years into a major crisis, underscored by 48% inflation and 13% unemployment, accompanied by the Turkish lira's loss of more than half its value over the past year alone.

This is the backdrop against which Erdogan is now trying to retreat from his hostility toward Israel, which culminated in the withdrawal of his ambassador from Tel Aviv in 2010, after ten Turks were killed aboard a ship that tried to break Israel's naval blockade of Gaza.

Relations between the two countries later improved after Israel granted the casualties' families a US\$21 million (A\$29.1 million) compensation deal, but the countries remained strategically estranged, especially in comparison with the pre-Erdogan era when Ankara and Jerusalem were close military allies.

Now Erdogan is changing his tune.

What began with a phone call to Israel's President Isaac Herzog after his election last year was followed by several more calls, including a condolence call after the death of Herzog's mother, Aura, in January.

Another took place late last year, when Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett called Erdogan to thank him for the unconditional release of two Israelis arrested after innocently photographing an Ottoman palace used by Erdogan in Istanbul that tourists are forbidden to photograph.

This telephone diplomacy produced an invitation for a formal visit to Turkey by Herzog, now scheduled to take place in March.

Clearly, there is new thinking in Ankara concerning

Israel's place in Turkish geopolitical strategy, and equally clearly this thinking is largely driven by Israel's new energy clout – and Ankara's stated hope that Israeli gas will flow to Europe via Turkey.

Lastly, and even more improbably, Israel's gas is impacting its relations with Lebanon.

What began with a Lebanese attempt to claim ownership of Israeli offshore gas fields near the Israel-Lebanon maritime border in the Mediterranean, generated indirect talks between Beirut and Jerusalem through American mediation. The talks are now reportedly likely to produce a maritime demarcation agreement soon.

Israeli defence sources reportedly believe that Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, realising he is being blamed for Lebanon's worsening energy crisis, has given the Lebanese Government a green light to proceed with the deal, despite Nasrallah's history of rejecting all relations with Israel.

Earlier this year, reports claimed that gas supplies destined for Lebanon via Jordan and Syria will actually be, at least in part, Israeli. Lebanon denied the reports, but many Lebanese don't believe the denials.

And even before this latest commotion, in September 2020, Egypt, Israel, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority launched a new framework, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, which seeks to coordinate maritime gas prospecting, exploitation and marketing in the region.

Turkey, which is conspicuously missing from this group, may now be seeking a place within it through a rapprochement with Israel.

Like the coal and steel that helped end western European wars, and unlike oil, which helped fuel Middle Eastern wars, gas may now be sowing seeds of, if not peace, at least normalised relations between former adversaries. AIR

## STUDY REVEALS STARK IGNORANCE ON AUSTRALIA AND THE HOLOCAUST

Naomi Levin

**A**fter the Holocaust, an estimated 36,000 Jewish survivors came to make Australia their home. These arrivals tripled the size of the existing Australian Jewish community, according to a new report by the Gandel Foundation and Deakin University, and made an indelible mark on the broader Australian community.

Their experiences are mostly well-known to their



families and the Jewish community, but this new study has found that non-Jewish Australians are not as familiar with the details of the Holocaust, and especially not those parts of its history most relevant to Australia and its development as a nation.

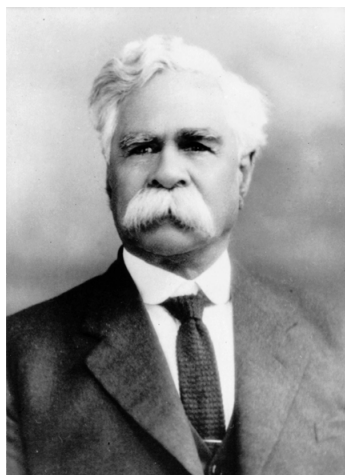
To coincide with International Holocaust Remembrance Day on Jan. 27, the Gandel Foundation and Deakin University published the *Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness in Australia Survey*.

This research is full of insights, headlined by the finding that one in four Australians have little to no knowledge about the Holocaust.

However, this article will focus on the report's important finding that, despite the Holocaust being, in the words of the researchers, "part of the Australian story", most respondents had very little knowledge of Australia's connections to the Holocaust.

One part of the survey sought to gauge awareness of three key events linking Australia to the Holocaust. The first was the arrival of the *HMT Dunera* in 1940 with 2,542 German, Austrian and Italian "enemy aliens" aboard, many of them German and Austrian-born Jewish refugees. After a perilous journey, the passengers were interned on their arrival, until the British Government conceded they posed no threat, and they were released into the community or returned to the UK. Many of the passengers went on to make important contributions to Australian society.

Of those surveyed, 57% did not know anything about the *Dunera* episode, while a further 26% provided an incorrect answer when asked about it.



Indigenous elder William Cooper  
(Image: Wikimedia Commons)

A second key event referred to by researchers was the actions of William Cooper, an Indigenous elder, who, one month after the Kristallnacht pogroms in Germany in 1938, led a delegation to the German Consulate in Melbourne to protest against violence against German Jews. At the time, Cooper and his delegation were turned away. However, in 2020, Felix Klein, the German Commissioner for Jewish

Life and the Fight Against Antisemitism, issued an official apology to Cooper on behalf of the German Government. The apology was symbolically accepted by Indigenous elder Dr Lois Peeler.

Of those surveyed, only 15% knew about William Cooper's remarkable protest.

The third key event respondents were asked about was Australia's response to the Evian Conference, an interna-

tional meeting convened in France in 1938, and attended by 32 countries, in a failed attempt to address the problem of German and Austrian Jewish refugees wishing to flee persecution by Nazi Germany. Asked to accept Jewish refugees, Australia's delegate to that conference infamously told conference organisers that "as we have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one."

In 2018, Liberal and Labor MPs apologised in Parliament for Australia's "indifference" 80 years earlier. Liberal MP Stuart Robert, now Minister for Employment in the Australian Government, asked that the apology be formally presented to Yad Vashem and kept alongside the text of Australia's statement from 1938.

Of those surveyed, just 11% knew about Australia's approach to the Evian Conference.

Drawing on these results, the study's authors recommend that more be done to research and distribute resources to address gaps in Holocaust knowledge, especially as it relates to Australia.

Writing in the *Australian Jewish News* (Feb. 11, 2022), Dr Hilary Rubinstein, editor of the Victorian edition of the Australian Jewish Historical Society's *Journal*, explained there is already a mass of historical research on Australian connections to the Holocaust, including documentation on Australians of all political stripes who opposed the Nazi regime and advocated for Jewish refugees.

Monash University's Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation also has a database of more than 180 memoirs published in Australia by Holocaust survivors. They chronicle the experiences of Holocaust survivors from Czechoslovakia to China who went on to build a new life in Australia.

While it is reassuring to know that the knowledge is available, it needs to be disseminated. Why? As the study's authors note: "Australians' understanding of their own country's connections to the Holocaust is poor. This may lead to the impression that the Holocaust is of no relevance in the Australian context."

The Gandel Foundation study recommends additional efforts to address gaps in knowledge, including on Australia's connection to the Holocaust, via the programs offered at local Holocaust centres, through teacher professional associations and by developing relevant teaching materials.

Not only does the Holocaust continue to be of relevance to Australians as an acknowledgment of its role in the "Australian story", but as historical amnesia and historical ignorance grows, Holocaust denial and distortion blossom. In addition to the other strong reasons for doing so, teaching Australians why the Holocaust is relevant to them is one essential key to minimising the spread of Holocaust distortion, as well as an important step in reducing the growing prevalence of antisemitism in the community.



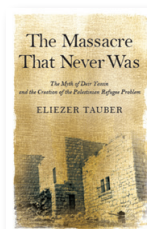
## THE BIBLIO FILE

# Of Myths and Massacres

### The Massacre That Never Was

**Eliezer Tauber**, Koren Publishers, 2021, 336 pp., A\$59.50

**Seth Mandel**



In April 1948, Deir Yassin was an Arab village of about a thousand residents. It was captured then by Jewish forces seeking to break the siege of Jerusalem during the war for Israel's independence. Most of the fighting was done by the underground soldiers of the *Irgun* and *Lehi*, with assistance from the *Haganah*, the official fighting force of the Jewish establishment. A truck-mounted loudspeaker blaring a warning for residents to flee the village fell into a trench that had been dug by villagers. The result was a bloody house-to-house battle with a high death toll.

That much everyone agrees on. But how high was the death toll? How many of the Arabs killed were combatants? What were the circumstances under which they died? All that has been the subject of much dispute. Interestingly, the testimonies of the Jews and Arabs who were at Deir Yassin that day are consistent with each other. Meanwhile, a narrative was formed about Deir Yassin in the public imagination – one that portrays Jewish troops as rapists and child-murderers. How to correct the record?

That was the task Eliezer Tauber, an influential Middle East historian and former dean at Bar-Ilan University, set for himself. It was simple but ambitious: He would comb through the eyewitness testimony in Hebrew and Arabic to identify every single

fatality and how each person died.

Tauber succeeded. The book that resulted, *The Massacre That Never Was*, came out in Israel in 2018. It is indisputably the authoritative account of the battle that began the morning of April 9, 1948.

Western readers have had to wait four years for a translation from the Hebrew. Why? Well, one university press in America told Tauber that “we could sell well to the right-wing community here but we would end up with a terrible reputation,” as journalist Shmuel Rosner reported in 2018. Koren Publishers admirably stepped into the breach and, by publishing *The Massacre That Never Was*, has not only done the historical record a genuine service but has also exposed the cowardice of the publishing houses that refused to touch Tauber's groundbreaking work for fear of offending the leftists and Arabists who dominate Middle Eastern studies.

The background to the Deir Yassin tragedy is this: Palestine's Arab population declared war on the nascent Jewish state as soon as the United Nations approved its plan to partition Mandatory Palestine into two countries, one Jewish and one Arab, in November 1947.

Jerusalem was surrounded by hostile Arab villages, and the British, who favoured the Arabs, remained in control until the expiration of the

Mandate in May 1948. Jerusalem was thus cut off from the other Jewish towns and put under siege. To prevent starvation and mass murder, Jewish forces had to pacify or conquer the villages surrounding the road to Jerusalem. Arab attacks on the road made it impossible to resupply the Jews of Jerusalem with food and arms.

Deir Yassin was one such place.

Haganah intelligence overestimated the number of Arab fighters who would be present in Deir Yassin – and vastly underestimated the firepower awaiting Jewish forces. So while Jewish forces outnumbered their Arab counterparts, those forces did not have sufficient weaponry; they went into battle with mere pistols or malfunctioning machine guns. The villagers also built firing positions and, crucially, impassable trenches, one of which disabled the vehicle carrying the warning loudspeaker.

Further complicating matters was the fact that Irgun and Lehi commanders relied on runners instead of radios to communicate, and the siege of Jerusalem meant that the Jerusalem branches of the underground had become operationally independent from their central leadership.

Chaos reigned. The first Jewish forces to enter the village accidentally gave away their position when they mistook Arab guards for Jewish soldiers. The guns of the Jewish forces proved largely useless against the stone structures of the village, which meant they had to blast their way into (and sometimes through) houses with explosives. They did so only after warning the inhabitants at each home; Arab survivors confirmed the individual warnings.

The Arab side added to the confusion. Women took part in combat, including as snipers. Some male fighters were disguised as women. Some male combatants attempted to mix in with convoys of female prisoners. And Arab snipers shot Arab prisoners who were helping transport the wounded.

Still, most of the villagers (around 700) were able to flee. In the end,

101 villagers were killed in the battle according to Tauber's exhaustive process, which involved cross-listing genealogical records with fatality lists from researchers and village leaders over the course of decades. Tauber was able to ascertain the circumstances in which 84 were killed. Of those 84, "61 were killed under battle conditions." The majority were men, though some of the women killed were combatants as well. There was no evidence of rape at all.

**A**rab survivor testimony confirms these findings. So what led British Chief Secretary of Palestine Henry Gurney to say the atrocities were so shocking that Bergen-Belsen "pales beside them"? What made UN High Commissioner Alan Cunningham claim that "women and children were stripped, lined up, photographed and then slaughtered by automatic fire"?

There was fault on the Jewish side, to be sure: One Irgun officer (who was not at Deir Yassin) at first inflated the number of Arab casualties, thinking that would serve as a psychological victory over the Arabs. But the man most responsible for the lies of Deir Yassin was Husayn al-Khalidi, Secretary of the Arab Higher Committee.

"We must make the most of this," Khalidi told Arab journalist Hazzim Nusayba. "I think we should give this the utmost propaganda possible because the Arab countries apparently are not interested in assisting us." According to Khalidi, the Arab authorities were therefore "forced to give a picture... we had to exaggerate a little bit so that maybe the Arab countries would become enthusiastic to come and assist us."

Khalidi instructed a group of survivors to participate in the ruse, telling them, "We want you to say that the Jews slaughtered people, committed atrocities, raped, and stole gold."

The scheme panicked the Palestinian Arabs. "We cannot bear that our

women should be raped," local leaders responded. Remarkably, it was the people of Deir Yassin who tried to put the genie back in the bottle.

"There were no rapes. It's all lies. There were no pregnant women who were slit open. It was propaganda... so Arab armies would invade," one testified.

"Frankly speaking, I never heard from them anything about any incident of sexual assault," said another.

It wasn't just sexual violence that the survivors of Deir Yassin pooh-poohed. "I believe that most of those who were killed were among the fighters and the women and children who helped the fighters," one survivor said. Another recalled: "They did not kill women. They did not kill small children. Only men above the age of 15 or 16." A third: "I did not see them actually slaughtering women or children in front of me."

Perhaps no piece of anti-Zionist propaganda backfired on the Palestinians with greater force than the myth of Deir Yassin. They effectively depopulated themselves from the area.

"The other villages started to leave one after the other, without resistance, out of fear and apprehension of another similar massacre," a survivor wrote a few years after the battle. According to a Palestinian researcher who interviewed survivors in the 1990s, "the Deir Yassin affair was the main cause for the 1948 exodus."

Palestinian officials blamed the Deir Yassin rumours for causing "the collapse of armed resistance," as families throughout the country fled and soldiers ran back from the front to protect their families who were staying put. As many as 700,000 Palestinian Arabs went to Gaza or Jordan.

The lies also inspired reprisals. Jews defending Kfar Etzion surrendered to Arab invaders, who slaughtered over a hundred of them anyway, some chanting "Deir Yassin, Deir Yassin." Similar chants could be heard from attackers who ambushed a convoy of Jewish medical staff en route to Hadassah hospital, killing nearly 80.

What happened after Deir Yassin was emblematic of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the whole. The Jews are falsely accused of atrocities their enemies actually carry out – with intent. Global powerbrokers amplify the lies. Jewish lives are taken. Universities, publishing houses, and news media censor the facts so only the lie remains.

All of it hurts the Palestinian national cause in whose name the actions are supposedly taken. But that, of course, is a sacrifice Israel's enemies are willing to make, as Tauber's extraordinary book makes crystal clear.

AIR

*Seth Mandel is the editor of the Washington Examiner magazine. © Commentary magazine (commentary.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*







# ESSAY

## Pakistan's Proliferation

And how Israel tried to save the world from it

Oved Lobel

Israel's unilateral exploits against the nuclear weapons programs of its regional adversaries – known as “the Begin Doctrine” – are the stuff of legend, be it bombing Iraq's nuclear reactor in 1981; destroying Syria's secret nuclear reactor being built by North Korea in 2007; or the campaign of assassination, cyber-warfare and sabotage across Iran to obstruct its nuclear advances.

But there is one operation that has received substantially less coverage until recently: Israel's operation to disrupt Pakistan's nuclear weapons program and dismantle its global proliferation ring, the so-called ‘AQ Khan network’.

That network is named after Abdul Qadeer Khan, the Pakistani scientist and national hero feted as the “father of the bomb” who died in October 2021. If Israel's efforts to halt this network had succeeded, not only would Pakistan have been stopped from getting nuclear weapons, but in all likelihood, so too would North Korea – while Iran's ongoing nuclear program would never have gotten off the ground, and the same can be said for the abortive nuclear programs of Libya and Syria.

As reported in early January by the Swiss daily *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, citing archival documents from Switzerland and the US, Israel's Mossad was likely behind a campaign of bombings and

intimidation in the 1980s targeting a network of European-based companies and individuals working to build Pakistan's nuclear program:

*“A few months after the unsuccessful intervention of the American state department in Bonn [then-capital of West Germany] and Bern, unknown perpetrators carried out explosive attacks on three of these companies: on February 20, 1981 on the house of a leading employee of Cora Engineering Chur; on May 18, 1981 on the factory building of the Wälischmiller company in Markdorf; and finally, on November 6th, 1981, on the engineering office of Heinz Mebus in Erlangen. All three attacks resulted in only property damage, only Mebus's dog was killed... The explosives attacks were accompanied by several phone calls in which strangers threatened other delivery companies in English or broken German. Sometimes the caller would order the threats to be taped. ‘The attack that we carried out against the Wälischmiller company could happen to you too’ – this is how the Leybold-Heraeus administration office was intimidated. Siegfried Schertler, the owner of VAT [Vakuum-Apparate-Technik – a German company doing business in dual-use technology with Pakistan] at the time, and his head salesman Tinner were called several times on their private lines. Schertler also reported to the Swiss Federal Police that the Israeli*

*secret service had contacted him. This emerges from the investigation files, which the NZZ was able to see for the first time.”*

This is confirmation of Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clarke's investigative reporting on Mossad's intimidation campaign against the AQ Khan network in Europe in their 2007 book *Deception*. According to Levy and Scott-Clarke, beginning in early 1981 – before Israel's bombing of Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor – a group calling itself the Organisation for The Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in South Asia claimed bombings in Germany against Mebus and Albrecht Migule and in Switzerland against Eduard German, managing director of CORA. After being threatened again two months later, CORA reportedly ended its relationship with Pakistan.



Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan: Pakistani scientist and global super-proliferator (Image: Wikipedia)

As Levy and Scott-Clarke detail further, Swiss police also linked the bombings to other front groups, including The Committee to Safeguard the Islamic Revolution and The League for Protecting the Sub-Continent, which were targeting or threatening Khan's suppliers throughout Europe. One Italian company, Alcom Engineering, received a threatening letter and backed off its deals with Khan, while another key figure in the network, Peter Griffin, was personally threatened in a bar.

The authors report Israel planned a pre-emptive strike on Pakistan's nuclear facilities at Kahuta around the same time as the bombing of Osirak. Since 1981, India had been planning a strike against Kahuta to halt

the weapons program, and in 1983 Indian officials secretly travelled to Israel to purchase electronic warfare equipment to overcome Pakistan's air defences around the facility. After threats by Pakistan, Israel offered to launch the strikes from two Indian airbases, an operation which then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi signed off on in March 1984. The US, however, leaked the plans to Pakistan and put extreme pressure on Israel, which backed down.

In fact, what *Deception* makes clear is that US complicity, across political parties and administrations, supported Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. At first, the US falsely certified repeatedly that Pakistan was not building a nuclear weapon and could not deliver it; after Pakistan built and tested one, the US moved onto the useful fiction that A.Q. Khan was part of a rogue network of proliferators, never a plausible narrative given the fact that Pakistan is a police state. Indeed, the network was run entirely by Pakistan's military regime and intelligence services and personally overseen by then-President Zia-ul-Haq, as very clearly demonstrated by Levy and Scott-Clarke.

**B**y pretending the nuclear issue did not exist as an irritant in the relationship, the US was able to forego sanctions on Pakistan and partner with it in Afghanistan, first against the Soviet Union and then against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, issues it prioritised over nuclear proliferation. This would prove to be a fatal error of judgement, as Pakistan's double game in Afghanistan – where it was the key backer of the Taliban and also protected Al-Qaeda – would ultimately lead to a transnational terrorism campaign against the West and eventually the 2021 retreat of the US from Afghanistan – delivering the country straight back into the hands of the Taliban.

Worse, however, is that this devil's bargain led more or less

directly to the Iranian and North Korean enrichment programs. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* report notes how a delegation from the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran (AEOI), including then chief of Iran's nuclear energy commission Masoud Naraghi, began meeting with the Pakistani proliferation network in Switzerland and the UAE in 1987.

The Pakistanis, primarily out of anti-American and Islamist ideological zeal with a touch of financial desperation, gave the Iranians centrifuges, enrichment plant plans and reportedly even weapons designs, which if true would dramatically reduce the already drastically reduced timeframe for Iran to quickly build and deploy nuclear weapons. Pakistan also reportedly began training Iranian nuclear scientists. Zia's military deputy General Mirza Aslam Beg, who became Chief of Army Staff following Zia's death, openly bragged about the relationship.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) had a long and close – if occasionally competitive – relationship with the Pakistani military, and Beg claims a senior IRGC delegation, including future and now late leader of the Quds Force Qassem Soleimani, came to visit Pakistan in 1989, where Soleimani was allegedly trained.


Overseeing the 1987 meetings, according to Levy and Scott-Clarke, was IRGC Brigadier General Mohamed Eslami. Iran's nuclear weapons program has long been intimately tied to the IRGC, and its late chief Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, assassinated by Israel in Iran in November 2020, was reportedly a senior IRGC officer himself.

Reports say that Israel successfully hacked into Iranian-Pakistani communications and, according to former IDF Chief of Staff and Defence Minister Moshe Ya'alon, begged the United States throughout the 1990s to intervene. Failing to convince the US to act on what the CIA had long known about Pakistani proliferation to Iran, out of frustration, the Mossad

ultimately leaked the information on Iran's Natanz enrichment facility to the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK) front group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), whose spokesperson Alireza Jafarzadeh revealed it publicly in August 2002. While to be taken with a grain of salt, NCRI sources, including Jafarzadeh himself, told Levy and Scott-Clarke that Beg offered the IRGC an entire nuclear warhead, or at least blueprints, and that an abortive deal was signed for four devices.

Pakistan also proliferated its enrichment technology to North Korea, leading to the other great nuclear weapons proliferation challenge facing the West. Libya's nascent program, thankfully dismantled before it was fully established, was also the work of Pakistan. Shockingly, Pakistan tried to sell Iraq's Saddam Hussein a nuclear weapon and enrichment facility plans as well, even as it was building Iran's program and simultaneously relying on Saudi Arabian largesse.

Unfortunately, largely because of US pressure, incompetence and myopia, Israel's actions did not halt all of this nuclear proliferation at its root in Pakistan. Instead, North Korea became a fully-fledged nuclear weapons state thanks to Pakistani assistance, and then attempted to build a nuclear reactor for the Assad regime inside Syria, once again leaving it up to Israel to unilaterally act to halt what would have quickly become a Syrian nuclear weapons program.

And all the while Iran barrels towards nuclear threshold status. Indeed, given the lack of visibility into the program, reports of weapon designs being passed directly to the IRGC and Iran's current obstruction of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors – as well as its long-standing failure to adequately address IAEA questions about the 'Possible Military Dimensions' of its program – it may well already have crossed the nuclear threshold, as its Pakistani benefactors did long ago. 



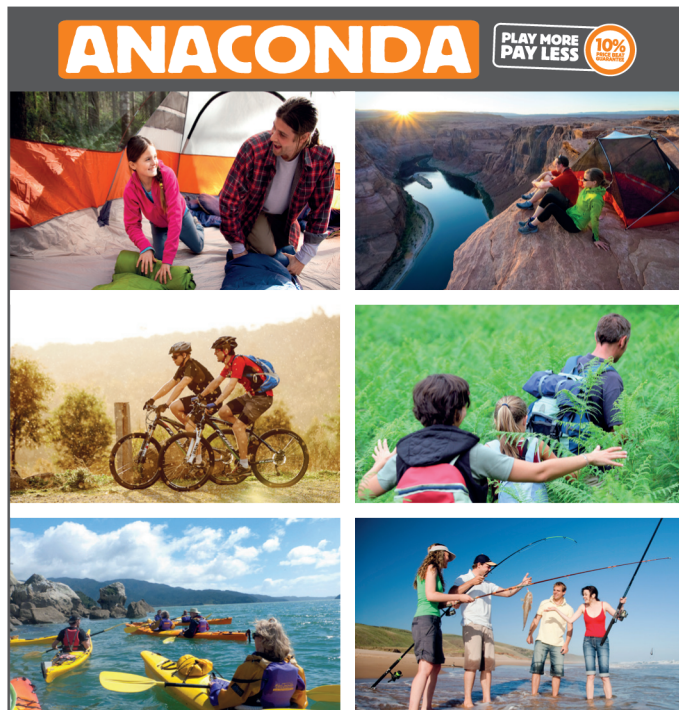
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# NOTED AND QUOTED

## THE MONTH IN MEDIA

### WINGING IT

The Australian Government's announcement on Feb. 17 that, following a bipartisan recommendation by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, it intends to designate the entirety of the Palestinian Islamist terror group Hamas, not just its so-called separate military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, as a terror organisation, was widely reported. So was the simultaneous announcement of plans to also add the neo-Nazi US-based National Socialist Order to the terrorist group list.

The ABC's coverage of Hamas' coming proscription appeared to be mostly limited to a short item on *NewsRadio* (Feb. 17) which noted that the decision will bring Australia into line with "the United Kingdom, the US, Israel and others."

The ABC added that "the political branch of Hamas holds a majority in the parliament of the Palestinian National Authority." Whilst technically true, elections were last held in 2006 and the Parliament has not sat since it was disbanded by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in 2007, which seems relevant.

The bulletin said Home Affairs Minister Karen Andrews explained that the law only targets people and organisations actively supporting terrorism. Andrews was quoted saying "there is more work that will be done by the Attorney-General in particular, in relation to the listing of Hamas and potentially other organisations to make sure that the rights of those people who are not supporting terrorist organisations are not impacted."

### FAR FROM EDEN

The SBS website reported the Hamas announcement on Feb. 17

with a lengthy article filed the next day by SBS reporter Eden Gillespie – who signed but subsequently removed her name from the controversial #dobetteronpalestine open letter in May 2021, calling for the media to prioritise the Palestinian narrative.

Gillespie's article focused almost solely on critics of the listing worried that "it would make life harder for Gazans and sweep up ordinary Palestinians in counterterrorism laws."

Academic Ben Saul – who has a long record of one-sided criticism of Israel whilst downplaying Hamas and Fatah criminality and human rights abuses – was quoted calling the move "broad and excessive". Saul also warned the move would "punish two million Palestinian civilians who rely on Hamas as their government," and, absurdly, said potentially street sweepers, teachers and nurses working for the Hamas Government could be considered terrorists under Australian law.

The article also whitewashed Hamas, which was falsely described by Gillespie as a "Palestinian political and militant movement based in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that opposes Israel's claim to these areas and is dedicated to the establishment of an independent state."

Also quoted was Queensland academic Tristan Dunning claiming an update of the Hamas Charter in 2017 removed the antisemitism in Hamas' original document, and falsely asserting Hamas now supports a two-state solution.

Actually, Hamas still opposes Israel's existence and seeks its violent destruction, a point repeatedly made by its leaders on a near daily basis – and made clear in the 2017 document Dunning purported to cite.

Gillespie also incorrectly claimed

that "Gaza has been under a naval blockade and land siege since 2007 by Israel, which controls who and what gets in and out of the area." The text was subsequently amended to "naval and land blockade."

The blockade is of course also enforced by Egypt, a fact that Gillespie failed to include when updating the piece.

Also quoted was local criticism from pro-Palestinian lobby group the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) of the listing, claiming that it would "damage Australia's capacity to play a constructive role towards peace in the Middle East."

### COMPLAINT DEPARTMENT

On Feb. 15, *ABC Radio National* "Breakfast" devoted precious air time to promoting a clearly frivolous complaint lodged with the Australian Human Rights Commission by APAN vice-president Nasser Mashni, arguing that Australia's pro-Israel foreign policy causes Australians of Palestinian heritage to experience discrimination.

According to ABC reporter Max Chalmers, who signed the #dobetteronpalestine open letter, Mashni's only example of discrimination was by a school teacher who had allegedly "compared his son" to Islamist terrorists after a Paris terrorist attack.

Chalmers said "Mashni sees it as part of a broader experience of discrimination he and his children have faced in Australia."

Except this is a fallacious conflation of totally different issues. The offensive and inappropriate insult to Mashni's son about Islamist terrorists has no possible connection to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (the Paris attack was committed by ISIS), or to

the Australian Government's policies towards Israel.

With sound effects of bombs exploding, Mashni's lawyer said part of the complaint related "to an official statement of the Australian Government during the May 2021 Israel bombing of Palestinian civilians in Gaza. And...the continued official advocacy on behalf of Israel, to help Israel avoid trial at the International Criminal Court."

Chalmers said the suit would assert the Australian Government must "say clearly that Israel is an occupying power and to acknowledge when it breaches international law" and the

failure to do so has "had a huge impact on his family."

University of Newcastle international law expert Amy Maguire expressed scepticism that the complaint would succeed because "these things don't happen through discrimination complaints. They happen through political processes."

AIJAC's Joel Burnie was also quoted disagreeing "that Australia's foreign policy is... strictly tilted one way. And secondly, I don't believe that Australian foreign policy negatively impacts the life of a Palestinian Australian living in Australia." Burnie explained that the Australian Government "has a

position that it would like all conflicts to cease and for both sides to show restraint and for both sides to come to some type and some form of peaceful and negotiated ceasefire and outcome."

SBS reporter Eden Gillespie covered Mashni's legal suit in an online article on Feb. 16, and failed to include any balance to Mashni and his lawyer spruiking their complaint.

## WHITE NOISE

Controversial and ill-informed claims by popular US actor and talk show host Whoopi Goldberg that the Nazi program to exterminate the



## IN PARLIAMENT

Prime Minister **Scott Morrison** (Lib., Cook) – Feb. 2 – asked by a journalist, "Amnesty International says Israel is committing apartheid. As a close ally, will you condemn Israel and will we, Australia, reassess its relationship with Israel..?," responded "Australia has been one of the closest and strongest friends of Israel of any nation...other than the United States...No country is perfect. There are criticisms made of all countries, but I can assure you that Australia and my Government, in particular, will remain a staunch friend of Israel."

Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs Senator **Penny Wong** (ALP, SA) – Feb. 2 – Statement: "The [Amnesty] report's findings are concerning, and we expect the government to review it closely, assess the situation on the ground, and make representations about Australia's view. Labor does not agree with the use of the term 'apartheid'. It's not a term that's been found to apply by any international court and is not helpful in progressing the meaningful dialogue and negotiation necessary to achieve a just and enduring peace... To be a credible voice we must call out human rights violations wherever they take place."

The following extracts are from the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee, Feb. 16:

Senator **David Fawcett** (Lib., SA) – "I found [The Amnesty report] quite offensive and poorly considered for them to use the word 'apartheid'."

Senator **Eric Abetz** (Lib., Tas.) – "The *Economist* ranks Israel as the world's 23rd-most democratic country and more democratic than Belgium, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus and the United States, so one wonders where Amnesty International gets off on this. Have we made any representations to Amnesty International to the effect that, if they want to be considered as a credible organisation pursuing genuine issues of human rights, they might like to ensure that they don't engage in such inflam-

matory misinformation, which clearly defies the objective facts in relation to Israel?"

Foreign Minister Senator **Marise Payne** – "...we have also joined a number of international partners in rejecting the characterisation of Israel [as apartheid]. Australia has been explicit... as have Germany, the UK, France, the United States and others, and I do not agree with, cannot support and would not consider an accurate representation, frankly, the comments that Senator Lines...made in the Senate last week."

Foreign Affairs spokesperson Senator **Janet Rice** (Greens, Vic.) – "Given the clear recommendations relating to trade and investment with... Israel provided by the UN Security Council, the UN Human Rights Council and international NGOs such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, has DFAT sought any external legal advice concerning issues associated with trade and investment with Israel?"

Senator **Kimberley Kitching** (ALP, Vic.) – "...the Israeli prime minister was this week visiting Bahrain, so I think that's very good."

Deputy Senate President Senator **Sue Lines** (ALP, WA) – Feb. 8 – "The Amnesty International report...confirms that Israeli policies against Palestinians fit the definition of the international crime of apartheid. We are witnessing these policies enacted on a large scale through mass seizures of Palestinian land and property, forcible transfers, drastic movement restrictions and the denial of nationality and citizenship. It's also seen on an individual level, through forced family home expulsions and discriminatory judicial processes. The report follows a long list of other institutions and human rights organisations... that have... confirmed that the policies of successive Israeli governments constitute apartheid... Amnesty International is calling on Israel to dismantle this cruel system, and the international community must pressure it to do so."

Senator **Penny Wong** – Feb. 14 – the Australian: "[Senator Lines' speech] does not reflect the position of the Labor Party... Labor is a strong friend of Israel."

Jews during World War II was not about “race” but simply “white on white violence” were reported on by TV, radio, print and online news sites.

In the *Guardian Australia* (Feb. 7), *Observer* columnist Kenan Malik said Goldberg’s comments illuminate “the way we look at racism (and at Jews) in the present. They also tell us something about what we’ve forgotten about racism in the past. Racism today is viewed primarily through the lens of ‘whiteness’ and of ‘white privilege’.” It is something that white people dish out. And something from which non-whites suffer.”

He said, “Jews today are seen as white and privileged and so [are] incapable of being victims of racism. It’s a perspective that has led some on the left to become blind to antisemitism. It’s also led many, like Goldberg, to deny the relationship between racism and the Holocaust.”

Historically, Malik said, “race has never been simply about black and white. It’s a concept that has been used to deem certain people biologically incapable or unworthy of being equal. Over the past 200 years, not just black or Jewish people, but Irish, Slavs, even the working class have, at various times, been viewed as racially distinct and inferior...justifying the practice of unequal treatment – that is, of racism. And of genocide, too.”

He lamented that Goldberg had been suspended from her talk show for two weeks, saying that her comments came from “misunderstanding” not from “malice”.

## HOLY MOSES

In the *Spectator Australia* (Feb. 12), New Zealand commentator Juliet Moses was less charitable towards Goldberg, criticising her post-apology interview with USTV host Stephen Colbert where the actor said the Holocaust was about white people “fighting each other”.

Moses called this “an astonishing description” which “impl[ies] that

there is an equivalence between the Nazis and their victims who, while mounting some remarkable resistance, most famously in the Warsaw ghetto, were overwhelmingly murdered through being burned in synagogues, shot in ditches, stricken with typhus, starved and gassed.”

Earlier, *Sunday Age* columnist Parnell Palme McGuinness (Feb. 6) said classifying Jews and increasingly “people of Asian heritage” who are “the highest-earning racial and ethnic group in the US” as white “highlights the uncomfortable fact that ‘success’ is now the definition of whiteness used by people trying to weed out discrimination.”

## HARD LABOR

With a federal election fast approaching, the Australian Labor Party’s (ALP) position on the Israeli-Palestinian dispute came under renewed scrutiny.

In contrast to the ALP leadership’s silence on a local campaign to pressure artists to boycott the Sydney Festival after it solicited and received a small grant from the Israeli embassy in Canberra, Labor Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Senator Penny Wong disagreed with Amnesty International’s absurd report’s characterisation of Israel as apartheid in its treatment of Palestinians and Israeli Arabs. Her comments were reported by the *Guardian Australia*, the ABC (Feb. 2) and the *Australian Financial Review* (Feb. 3), amongst other outlets.

Labor leader Anthony Albanese was criticised on Feb. 10 by News Ltd columnist Andrew Bolt, who wrote that “in 2014, Albanese... hunted with his pack, accusing Israel of ‘collective punishment’ of Palestinians in Gaza and telling it to stop firing back – firing back, that is, at the Hamas terrorists who run Gaza, had fired first, and had kept firing rockets they’d hidden among the population, to create martyrs for propaganda.”

## LABOR PAINS

An inflammatory speech in the Senate by Labor’s Senator Sue Lines deploying the Amnesty International report to condemn Israel, fueled on-going media focus on the party.

On Feb. 13, *Sky News* host Sharri Markson interviewed former Labor MP Michael Danby and former Australian Ambassador to Israel and current Liberal MP Dave Sharma, who both criticised Senator Lines.

An article by Markson on Lines in the *Australian* the next day quoted AIJAC’s Colin Rubenstein condemning the Amnesty report, adding that “regrettably, there is a small group of Labor MPs, including Senator Lines, who seize on any opportunity to demonise, vilify and misrepresent Israel.”

Media commentator Rita Panahi used her eponymous program on *Sky News* (Feb. 2) to highlight current and former federal Labor MPs who have a track record of criticising Israel.

Panahi’s list included Graham Perrett, Senator Anne Urquhart, Josh Wilson, former Tasmanian Senator Lisa Singh, and former West Australian MP Melissa Parke. A somewhat unfair inclusion was senior MP Tanya Plibersek, who in 2002 accused Israel of being a rogue state, but has subsequently and consistently moderated her stance.

On Feb. 17, speculating on what an Albanese government’s foreign policy might look like, the *Australian* accused the ALP of “doublespeak in relation to Israel, the Middle East’s only real democracy.”

The editorial noted, “Albanese says he supports” Israel but “his silence about the anti-Israel boycott that disrupted the Sydney Festival – after organisers approached the Israeli embassy and accepted a \$20,000 grant – was a bad sign that in government, the party’s rabid pro-Palestinian wing would hold sway.”

Peta Credlin also used her syndicated News Ltd column (Feb. 20) to



highlight Lines' misplaced apartheid attack on Israel.

## STRAW MAN

In the *Australian Financial Review* (Feb. 2), commentator Gideon Rachman lumped former Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu into a group of world leaders including Egypt's President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi and Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who admire Russian "strongman" Vladimir Putin for "his ruthlessness, his willingness to use violence, his macho defiance of 'political correctness' and his autocratic style of leadership."

According to Rachman, "Netanyahu...another self-styled tough guy, relished trips to Russia to discuss geopolitics with Putin. His 2019 re-election campaign featured a poster of the Israeli leader shaking hands with Putin, under the slogan 'Netanyahu: In a league of his own'."

The comparison is highly dubious. Israel is a democracy. Russia and Egypt don't hold free and fair elections and Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy.

Netanyahu, who has always played a hard brand of politics, won power and ultimately lost power fairly through the ballot box.

As for his relationship with Putin, the heavy Russian military presence in Syria means that Israeli leaders need to maintain good relations with Moscow, in order to be given the latitude needed to neutralise the threat from Iranian and Hezbollah assets there. There was nothing nefarious about Netanyahu highlighting his ability to do so as part of his re-election campaign.

## FLIGHTS OF FANCY

In the *Australian Financial Review* (Feb. 2), former Australian Ambassador to China Geoff Raby questioned the presumption that Beijing is a strategic threat which seeks to

"undermine liberal democrac[ies]" like Australia using espionage and recruiting agents of influence.

According to Raby, "no one should sensibly deny that China is seeking, by sharp and soft power, to influence politics in the West. But so are many other major states. The top three for funded junkets provided to Australian politicians are Israel, China and US." This is of course incorrect – unlike with China, it is not Israel that pays for any such visits by Australian politicians, but instead local Australian groups.

## LACK OF AUTHORITY

A flurry of face-to-face meetings between senior Israeli and Palestinian officials is a sign that the Palestinian Authority (PA) "is in desperate need of Israeli help," according to the *Australian* (Feb. 11).

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who has not faced elections in 15 years, is beset by questions of "legitimacy" and a surge in popularity on the West Bank of the "Iran-backed Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorist groups that rule Gaza," it said.

Praising the new Israeli Government's "willing[ness] to dig the PA out of the hole it is in" the paper said, "Abbas and the PA are paying the price for their mindless refusal, for 14 long years, to sit down and talk peace with Israel."

"Unconditional negotiations", it stressed, "remain in the best interests of Israelis and Palestinians."

## COVID TRUTHS

Indifference, not Israel, is the main reason vaccination rates in Gaza and the West Bank have stalled, according to an *SBS TV* "World News" report (Feb. 10), despite baseless claims blaming Israel made last year by some NGOs that were in turn highlighted on the ABC.

SBS reporter Gary Cox said 43% of Palestinians in Gaza are fully vaccinated, a figure that rises to 60% for

Palestinians living on the West Bank.

These figures are considerably higher than the regional average of 35%, Cox noted.

A Palestinian doctor interviewed explained that "The problem is, many still don't see the urgency. Schools are not abiding by the policy to vaccinate."

Regional factors cited by Cox for the appalling vaccination rates included "Vaccine hesitancy, shortages and roll-out roadblocks are driving up numbers across the Middle East."

## HEZBOLLAH ON ICE

On Feb. 17, *SBS TV*'s new 15-minute nightly Arabic-language news bulletin aired a slick propaganda video from Hezbollah of its fighters training in snow-covered mountains in Lebanon, including by firing at targets marked with blue Stars of David.

The newsreader gushed that the video released by the "media arm of Hezbollah... displays the combat prowess of their fighters."

SBS failed to point out that Australia, the Arab League and many countries, list Hezbollah as a terrorist group.

Earlier, on Jan. 27 *SBS TV* "World News", Gary Cox reported on violence between Palestinians and Israeli settlers near the former settlement of Homesh, following the December murder of settler Yehuda Dimentman by Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

The report said Israel dismantled Homesh in 2005 but despite roadblocks and Israeli law preventing settlers visiting and rebuilding there, settlers attend a Jewish seminary, aka a yeshivah, there.

Whilst this is accurate and rogue settlers are determined to rebuild the settlement, the report somewhat misrepresented the nature of the yeshivah, which was never shown. There are no permanent structures at Homesh – only a series of tents and demountable buildings that the Israeli army repeatedly tears down.

# MEDIA MICROSCOPE

Allon Lee

## NO AMNESTY

Media coverage of Amnesty International's report smearing Israel as an apartheid state was largely a one-day wonder – apart from the *Canberra Times*, which dined out on the issue for a week.

ABC Middle East correspondent Tom Joyner had multiple stories and interviews on TV and radio over the 24 hours following the report's release on Feb. 1, which all seemed to place great emphasis on the fact other NGOs had previously accused Israel of apartheid.

An article on the Amnesty report ran on SBS's website on Feb. 2 from the broadcaster's Rayane Tamer – who is a #dobetteronpalestine letter signatory – and Naveen Razik. It paraphrased a rebuttal from Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, stating Israel “is the only democracy in the Middle East, has long committed to international law, is open to criticism, has a free press and a strong and independent judicial system that represents Arabs as well as ethnic Jews.” Yet SBS TV “World News” later that day only included Lapid's suggestion the report was motivated by an anti-Jewish agenda.

Apart from *Channel 10*, commercial TV evening news bulletins ignored the report.

*Sky News Australia's* current affairs programs were overwhelmingly critical of the report. Zionist Federation of Australia's Jeremy Leibler was interviewed by *Sky News Australia* on Feb. 2, as was the *Australian's* foreign editor Greg Sheridan, who shredded the report's claims.

On Feb. 4, the *Canberra Times* ran Jeremy Leibler's op-ed which made the point that “If Israel is an apartheid state, no one told George Karra. He's a Palestinian-Israeli judge in Israel's Supreme Court. Or Issawi Frej, a Palestinian-Israeli cabinet minister. Or Hossam Haick, a Palestinian-Israeli professor whose groundbreaking research has made him a superstar in the international nanotech space.”

The *Canberra Times* ran an op-ed from the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network's Noura Mansour on Feb. 5, which cited as an example of the Jewish state's supposed racism a law which limits the right of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza who marry Israeli Arabs to automatically become residents of Israel. In fact, this temporary law – which has recently lapsed and is not currently in effect – was passed during the Second Intifada after some Palestinians used such marriages to carry out terror attacks.

On Feb. 7, the *Canberra Times* ran a screed from pro-Palestinian activists Randa Abdel-Fattah and Sara Saleh chiding

Amnesty for not also denouncing Zionism – the idea that Jews are entitled to self-determination in their homeland – as racism.

An op-ed in the *Canberra Times* on Feb. 9 by AIJAC's Colin Rubenstein stated that “Amnesty actually admits Israel has no resemblance to apartheid-era South Africa, where blacks were legally unequal and under enforced segregation from whites across all aspects of society. But

determined to find Israel guilty of apartheid nonetheless, it invents a definition of apartheid largely derived from an almost forgotten 1973 Soviet-sponsored anti-apartheid treaty... Amnesty's legally absurd definition of apartheid basically

makes any state with a national ethnic identity or lingering problems with discrimination against minorities guilty of apartheid – in other words, most countries.”

The *Canberra Times* published a long letter on Feb. 11 responding to Rubenstein from Amnesty International Australia's Sam Klintworth.

On Feb. 9 the *Australian* ran a letter from Klintworth responding to a piece published on Feb. 2 from Executive Council of Australian Jewry co-CEO Alex Ryvchin.

Ryvchin's article had said, “the report redefines apartheid to little resemble the crimes in South Africa... [which involved] exclusion from schools, professions and public office, segregated toilets and restaurants, and voting prohibitions... Stand on a street corner in Israel and make up your own mind... in Haifa... see Arab-Israeli students in hijabs socialising and studying alongside Jewish-Israeli peers. Forty-one per cent of Haifa University's students are Arab-Israeli.” Ryvchin also detailed recent scandals involving racism, sexism and bullying behind the scenes at Amnesty, including the head of the gender unit being forced out after complaining that Amnesty was partnering with an organisation which defends and promotes ISIS and the Taliban.

Klintworth's letter said, “anecdotes of people having positive personal experiences are not equal to compelling evidence.”

On Feb. 7, *Sky News Australia's* website published AIJAC's Ahron Shapiro who wrote “extreme criticism of Israel is the primary litmus test” human rights organisations use to prove their progressive credentials. He said applying “critical race theory to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict” is “far-fetched”, given “over half the Jews in Israel are people of colour and the story of European Jewry is one of relentless... persecution.”

**“Media coverage of Amnesty International's report smearing Israel as an apartheid state was largely a one-day wonder – apart from the *Canberra Times*”**



## Jeremy Jones

Being student politicians, the hundreds of delegates gathered in the meeting hall took themselves very seriously.

It was an exemplary opportunity to virtue signal.

Delegates would propose a resolution, it would be seconded and would be passed by an automatic majority of organised far-leftists and their often-disorganised fellow travellers.

Rather than follow the submitted agenda however, the first countries condemned for a variety of human rights abuses, failings and/or imperfections all began with the letter “A”.

The offences condemned ranged widely – concerning the status of women, integration of minorities, incarceration rates of those with disabilities, persecution of trade unions – and were not presented in any ranking of seriousness or urgency.

Then the countries beginning with the letter B came under attack, then those starting with C.

Some of the organisers of this conference realised something was askew. They were alarmed when countries which were generally reserved for praise, such as Cuba, were subjected to condemnation.

What had happened was this: the foreign policy resolutions submitted in advance of the session essentially attacked Israel, and just Israel, for a variety of alleged sins and evils. Some delegates thought this was unreasonable.

So they picked up a small handbook on human rights distributed by a prominent global NGO which took pride in its ability to note that no country was perfect and that documenting and combatting actual crimes against human-

ity was more important than demonising any individual alleged perpetrator nation.

The more political of the

student politicians eventually realised that a session set up to attack Israel had been hijacked and were able to regain control of the ship, but the conference eventually condemned human rights in every country in the world with names beginning A to F (bad luck for Finland, good luck for Guatemala) and, of course, Israel. In the process, it held itself up to ridicule.

At another student conference in the 1980s, delegates representing Iraq joined student unionists from Asia and the Pacific to talk about international affairs.

The Australian students were generally political radicals in their early 20s, while the far older Iraqi delegates were representing their government.

An observer who had been distributing literature from an international NGO asked permission to put a question to the delegations and, when approved, said to the Iraqis "Why does your student union support your gov-

ernment killing communists?"

The Chair, an Australian far-leftist, scrambled to apologise to the Iraqis for the rudeness of the questioner, but the leader of the Iraqi delegation calmly explained why he thought this was a fair question and was happy to have the opportunity to explain the threat of communism to Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

The student communists and their allies in a number of the other delegations applauded the Iraqi – a stunning example of hypocrisy and moral cowardice.

In both the above stories, the NGO which was once the best source of reasoned, non-partisan and non-polemic human rights commentary, and brave enough to confront defenders of human rights abuses face-to-face, was Amnesty International.

Today, that organisation, which at one time was able to bring moral clarity to the issue of Prisoners of Conscience and be a major force in exposing, rather than exemplifying, hypocrisy, has exposed its current politicised unseriousness with a poorly researched and even more poorly argued defamation of Israel, declaring it guilty of apartheid (see pp. 22-24). This is not just a sad indictment of contemporary Amnesty International, but a tragic loss to the vital work of global human rights advocacy.



In the past, Amnesty International did unique and valuable work – its politicisation and self-destruction is a tragic loss (Image: Amnesty International)



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