

THE BUZZWORDS OF BIAS

"STATE OF
PALESTINE"

The "Illegal
Occupation"

"Occupied Palestinian
Territory" (OPT)

"SETTLER
COLONIALISM"

"SETTLER
VIOLENCE"

THE "1967 BORDERS"

"OCCUPATION"

"Apartheid
State"

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This edition of the *AIR* takes on some of the widely-used phrases and idioms that distort both media coverage and public discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. International law expert Amb. Alan Baker looks at the legal distortions and factual misrepresentations contained in commonly used buzzwords such as "Occupied Palestinian Territory", "1967 borders" and "illegal occupation". Also, American columnist Jonathan Tobin explores the reasons for the decades-long and ongoing effort to turn "Zionism", the 125-year-old modern struggle for Jewish self-determination, into a dirty word.

Also featured this month is Dmitriy Shapiro's review of the many ways the late Queen Elizabeth II interacted with, and inspired, the British and world Jewish communities. Plus, Amotz Asa-El looks at the final political configuration in Israel as the country moves into yet another election campaign, leading up to a vote on Nov. 1.

Finally, don't miss top terrorism expert Matthew Levitt's advice on countering Iran's international murder plots; Jason Isaacson on the amazing two-year journey of the Abraham Accords; Yoni Ben Menachem's profile of the emerging successor to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas; and Sheree Trotter's discussion of the worldview that connects the attack on Salman Rushdie and the conflict over Jerusalem's Temple Mount.

As always, we invite you to share your views on any aspect of this edition at editorial@aijac.org.au.

Tzvi Fleischer

ON THE COVER

Common buzzwords that skew the discourse on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Image: Arek Dybel/AIJAC)



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FROM THE EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN

COLIN RUBENSTEIN

THEODOR AND ABRAHAM

In late August, AIJAC joined representatives of Zionist organisations around the world in Basel, Switzerland, to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the First Zionist Congress, the body credited with launching the contemporary political movement to re-establish a Jewish state.

Today, the thriving fruit of that Zionist movement, Israel, remains the world's only country reborn through an ingathering of exiles, reconstituting a democratic state in the land where they became a nation so long ago.

The journey was arduous and the struggle long, giving deeper meaning to the expression "self-determination". From meagre beginnings, building by building, immigrant by immigrant, kibbutz by kibbutz, the pioneers known as "*halutzim*" purchased and redeemed land, drained malaria-infested swamps and miraculously revived Hebrew language and culture.

At the same time, the *halutzim* sought a peaceful engagement and dialogue with local Arabs, with mixed initial success. Sadly, these efforts ultimately failed, largely due to venomous incitement by influential muftis, built upon malicious lies and distortions.

Why did so many Jews choose to uproot themselves and enlist in a risky, collective, embryonic national project that, certainly in the early stages, resembled a pipe dream, unlikely to succeed?

On the one hand, modern Zionism, the brainchild of author and visionary Theodor Herzl, was an idea borne out of the Jewish suffering of 2,000 years of exile, statelessness, antisemitic persecution and pogroms.

Yet while Zionism was a response to antisemitism, it was in equal measure the product of the most forward thinking social revolutionaries and political theorists of its day – seeking to bring Jews together to reclaim a common destiny and recreate a Jewish polity that would combine tradition, modernity and innovation.

In hindsight, Herzl foresaw Israel as a "startup nation" generations before the concept existed. He didn't envision a Jewish utopia, but a country full of the nuances and complexities integral to every mature nation. In many ways, he was prophetic.

Yet even a visionary like Herzl might be impressed by the vast leaps that his dream for the future Jewish nation-state has taken toward fulfilling his hopeful vision over the last two years. Since the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020, the advance in relations between Israel and much of the Arab world – and the degree to which they herald full integration and genuine acceptance of Israel in the Middle East after all these years of rejectionism – have been nothing short of astonishing. As Israeli President Isaac Herzog recently noted, these transformative agreements have led to "a paradigm change in the Middle East" – and done so with amazing speed.

US-brokered normalisation agreements between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain were signed at the White House on Sept. 15, 2020, and later joined by Sudan in October and Morocco in December of that year.

Much of the security cooperation enabled through the pact was made against the backdrop of increasing Iranian aggression in the region, as well as Teheran's nuclear weapons ambitions. But the agreements have also led to blossoming economic ties that have nothing to do with Iran.

We have seen a free trade agreement inked between Israel and the UAE. Israeli tourism has soared in Dubai, and ushered in the establishment of a Jewish community servicing all the needs of Jewish visitors including synagogues, kosher restaurants and catering.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the pandemic, Israel has opened its doors to visitors from the UAE and hopes to eventually attract 100,000 visitors per year.

On the security front, in November 2021, Israel, the US, the UAE and Bahrain held a naval drill in the Red Sea, while in the same month Israel Aerospace Industries and the UAE's EDGE Group signed deals to work together on a broad range of defence industry projects.

This past February, Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz and Bahraini Minister of Defence Affairs Lt.-Gen. Abdullah Bin Hassan Al Nuaimi signed a historic security cooperation agreement that normalises defence relations between the two countries, with an eye towards increasing intelligence sharing, military-to-military training, and collaboration between both countries' defence industries.

With regard to Morocco, direct flights began in 2021, and people to people ties have burgeoned. Meanwhile, on the security front, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi and his Moroccan counterpart, Lt. Gen. Belkhir El Farouk, exchanged visits to Morocco and Israel this July and September, respectively.

The high level of security cooperation between Israel

and regional Arab countries made possible by the Abraham Accords has led to a US-sponsored regional air defence alliance, with a focus on the Iranian threat, that has already foiled Iranian attacks, as Gantz told reporters in June.

The rapid progression of closer ties between Israel and the signatories of the Abraham Accords over the past two years is a sign that the change in Arab attitudes towards Israel – once under the table and now out in the open – have undergone a decisive, enduring shift. It will almost certainly accelerate as more and more countries see the potential

benefits of a peaceful and prosperous shared future that comes with enhanced ties to Israel instead of clinging to the knee-jerk hostility of the past.

As the Abraham Accords widen the circle of peace between Israel and the Arab and Muslim worlds, we can only hope that the Palestinians, in their own best interests, also soon end their rejectionism, renew genuine negotiations, and accept a state entity living in peace side by side with Israel.

When that happens, all the children of Abraham can live in peace and prosperity, and Herzl's dream will be realised to its fullest measure.

AIR

AIJAC MOURNS BRIAN SHERMAN AM

AIJAC mourns the passing of Brian Sherman AM, the founding and long-standing Chair of AIJAC's Rambam Israel Fellowship program, and a man who played a huge role across Australia's sporting, entertainment, arts and Jewish communities. Sherman also served as funds manager for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, revived the finances of Network 10, was chairman of the Australian Museum Trust and founded the animal rights NGO Voiceless.

AIJAC's National Chairman Mark Leibler and Executive

Director Dr Colin Rubenstein said: "Brian Sherman was a unique figure whose relentless energy spanned so many different worthy causes as he strove to make Australia and the world a better place. We are proud to say that AIJAC, and especially our Rambam study visit program to Israel for politicians, journalists and other opinion leaders, greatly benefitted from his inspiration, generosity and dynamism.

"He was a trusted confidant, wise counsellor and loyal friend, and his loss will be deeply felt by everyone associated with AIJAC. May his memory be a blessing."

WORD FOR WORD

"Frankly, the information gap is bigger and bigger and bigger. We don't want to sound dramatic, but the reality is that it's going to be extremely difficult, and we will have to work very hard, and Iran will have to be very transparent."

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director-General Rafael Grossi on continued Iranian obstruction of IAEA monitoring of Iran's nuclear activities (*Iran International*, Sept. 12).

"I am here today to remind ourselves of the lessons that history teaches us and the great responsibility upon us to act with tolerance for building our community and society. We must take the brave step of building a bridge of true peace for the coming

generations."

UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed writing in the Yad Vashem guestbook during his first visit to Israel (*Times of Israel*, Sept. 15).

"There are some signs that it happened. If so, they should allow it to be investigated and researched."

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi comments on the Holocaust in an interview with US "60 Minutes" (*Jerusalem Post*, Sept. 19).

"Tonight I was honoured to sign the condolence book for HM Queen Elizabeth II... The Queen lived history, she made history, and the world will miss her. We also wish His Majesty King Charles III a peaceful and successful reign."

Israeli President Isaac Herzog on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (*Twitter*, Sept. 11).



SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

A SCANDALOUS WORLD CUP

Scandalously, the FIFA World Cup will kick off in Qatar this coming November.

I say “scandalously” for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the decision to award the World Cup to Qatar by the international soccer federation FIFA literally became a major scandal. There have been numerous bribery allegations against FIFA officials, and police investigations of them, since Qatar was awarded the tournament in 2010. FIFA President Sepp Blatter was essentially fired over corruption related to the Qatari and other recent World Cup bids.

Blatter has repeatedly conceded the decision to give the World Cup to Qatar was a “mistake”.

He’s right – the biggest scandal is that, unless one’s sole selection criterion is who is willing to spend the most money on the World Cup, it is hard to think of a country less appropriate as a host for that tournament than Qatar.

Leaving aside the weather issues, which forced this year’s World Cup to be played in November rather than the traditional northern summer, awarding the contract to Qatar was a guarantee that the stadiums and other infrastructure would be built by something very closely akin to slave labour.

Under the notorious *kafala* system for foreign workers in Qatar, workers are chained to their employers and condemned to unsanitary living quarters and meagre pay. Reports say thousands of these workers have been killed or severely injured while constructing the World Cup stadiums, with little or no compensation for their families back home.

While none of the Arab Gulf states are democracies, and all have serious human rights charges to answer, Qatar is arguably particularly horrendous in terms of its exploitation of foreign labour. In addition, Doha is the contemporary worst offender among Arab states in offering support for terrorist and extremist groups such as Hamas and the Taliban.

While the princes and officials in Doha can appear smooth and reasonable to Westerners with whom they interact, what the Islamist Qatari regime actually believes and promotes internationally was recently underscored by revelations regarding the public pronouncements of a diplomat representing the regime.

Qatar’s new Ambassador to the UN Human Rights Council, Hend Al-Muftah, has an appalling history of spreading antisemitism, homophobia, and conspiracy theories on social media.

As the NGO UN Watch has documented, Al-Muftah has, among other things:

- Written that “the Jews” focused their investments in industry and media, and thus “they dominated, tyrannized and ruled the world.” Also “American Zionist controls [sic] the U.S. media,” and “thus it is well-targeted for achieving their anti-Islam everywhere!”
- Insisted that she learned at “a young age that the Jews are our enemies!” and recalled fondly “our daily morning anthem from my childhood: Palestine is our country, The Jews are our enemies, And salute to the flag.”
- Called for the “expulsion of Jews from Palestine,” stressing this is “not only an important issue for the Palestinians, but our cause all, including you, me and us!” She also posted a video of a child reciting, “You sons of Judaism... By God... We will liberate Palestine, we will expel you and trample the last corpse of a cursed Zionist in Gaza with our honourable feet!”
- Endorsed an article by notorious antisemitic writer Dr. Mustafa Mahmoud, accusing “the Talmud tribe and the Protocols tribe” – i.e., the Jews – of infecting Western civilisation with “obscurity and decadence, cocaine, crack, nudity, sex and violence.”
- Repeatedly responded to mention of LGBTQI+ people with “May God curse them!”. She also referred to gay rights as “disgusting rights”, and,
- Spread conspiracy theories including that Israel actually created al-Qaeda and indeed “hangs over every terrorist threat”; recommended a video accusing the Mossad of being behind the Sept. 11 attacks; claimed that France is a country of “fake freedom” which is “killing the freedom of innocent Muslims in Mali”; and accused US President Obama of murdering “innocent Muslims” in Afghanistan.

This is the sort of person Qatar feels should represent it internationally – and indeed Amb. Al-Muftah does appear rather representative of the extremists in charge in Doha.

Together with the reality of how Qatar won the hosting rights, and the indefensible way the infrastructure for it was constructed, no one should watch the 2022 World Cup without a sense of disquiet, even horror, at where it is being played.

ANOTHER PA LEADER EXPOSES UNHINGED PALESTINIAN NARRATIVE

Following up on last month’s column detailing how numerous official sources affiliated with the “moderate” Palestinian Authority (PA) insisted on doubling down on a claim by PA President Mahmoud Abbas that the Palestinians had suffered “50 Holocausts” at Israel’s hands, here is another example of unhinged claims from an official PA spokesperson.

PA Presidential Advisor Mahmoud Habbash, in a sermon at a Ramallah mosque broadcast on official *PA TV* on

Sept. 9, gave this explanation for Israel's existence:

Prime ministers, ministers of defence, and foreign ministers in the European colonialist countries... met in London, at the beginning of the 20th century, in 1902 or 1903. [They said:] 'We must plant in the heart of this region an isolated entity, a nation that will be alien to the locals and their countries, but will be friendly to us. Let it be the Jews.'... They only used the Jews to accomplish colonialist, expansionist, and hostile goals.

He added: "Did you know that when the British occupiers left in 1948 – having handed our country over to those [Jewish] foreigners – they stole the deposits that the Palestinians had in the banks?" (*Translation by Middle East Media Research Institute.*)

Needless to say, both these claims are false and absurd. Yet this is what Palestinians are being told by even their "moderate" leaders. It's almost enough to make one despair of hopes for eventual peace.

AIR



David Suissa

THE JOY OF CONCRETE

There are two broad dimensions to life – the theoretical and the concrete.

This column is in the theoretical camp – it's words and ideas. If you're hungry or thirsty, no matter how great my words are, it won't help you. For that you'll need something concrete, like food or water.

That's why I don't get too worked up about those who hate Jews and Israel: Israel wins with the concrete.

Year after year, the haters bang their heads against the wall telling the world that Israel is the worst. But it must drive them nuts to see that after millions and millions of angry words attacking Israel over so many decades, that little Jewish state they dislike so much has been thriving like never before.

Think of all the BDS activists on college campuses who are literally obsessed with Israel. Year after year, they schlep their apartheid walls and scream to the heavens that "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free." And year after year, they don't get an inch closer to their goal.

Think of the NGOs who've been releasing reports for decades singling out Israel for special condemnation, or those hypocrites at the United Nations who will condemn Israel more than they do Syria, Russia, China, North Korea and every other nation combined.

Yes, all those words and lies may hurt and distort Israel's image, but then what?

None of those words will stop Morocco from accelerating its economic and diplomatic cooperation with Israel, or the Gulf states that are also part of the Abraham Accords

from embracing the many benefits of being close with Israel.

More and more countries have caught on that in spite of the propaganda they hear about Israel, it's in their interest to get along with the world's only Jewish state. They can take advantage of Israel's extraordinary array of innovations in fields like advanced medical care, agriculture, cybersecurity, AI, water technology, food security and much more.

Israel is far from perfect, but it succeeds by staying focused on the concrete, whether it's to correct or defend itself. To the dismay of its critics, it has become one of the more creative and innovative societies dealing with some of the planet's most urgent issues.

Antisemitism is indeed troubling; they don't call it the world's oldest hatred for nothing. But again, you have to feel a little sorry for the haters. How do you think they feel knowing that no matter how much anti-Jewish venom they spew, Jews continue to thrive and even laugh?

Take those famous "Jews will not replace us" haters from Charlottesville. Instead of writing a column or a Facebook post condemning the haters, as so many others did, proud Jew and comedian Elon Gold used them for one of his funniest bits:

We don't want to replace you. We just want to put braces on you ... we just want to manage your portfolio ... we don't want to replace you, we want to place you, in a 30-year fixed low interest mortgage ... we want to fit you for glasses, heal you, teach you, inspire you, make you laugh, represent you in a divorce, and she replaces you.

Take the *Jewish Journal's* story by Kylie Ora Lobell profiling Eli Beer, founder and leader of United Hatzalah of Israel. As he built one of the world's premier emergency services, with ambulance crews that show up in lightning speed, do you think Beer was slowed down in any way by Israel bashers?

There are thousands of Israelis like Beer who wake up every morning hoping to make the world a better place. The haters can't stop them.

Sixty-two years ago, a few months before he was elected President, John F. Kennedy saw a hopeful glimpse of the future when he spoke at a Zionist convention in New York City.

"The Middle East needs water, not war. They need tractors, not tanks, and they need bread, not bombs," Kennedy said. "The people of Israel have brought their blessings to people all over the world... Why should the countries of the Middle East, which need technical assistance, why should they be denied this opportunity to participate in a great source of future wealth for them and their people?"

By all means, let's continue to fight antisemitism and work to improve Israel. But if it makes you feel any better, despite all the lies, the hate and the ugliness, the reality on the ground is that the Jews and Israel are still winning, and



the haters are still losing.

And those aren't just words.

AIR

David Suissa is Publisher & Editor-in-Chief of the Jewish Journal of Los Angeles. © Jewish Journal, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

DISTANT FRIENDS

With his administration barely two months old, new Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr is making his first foreign policy moves, reaffirming traditional ties in the region but also looking to deepen ties with a distant ally.

Like his predecessors, Marcos chose neighbouring countries from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as his first foreign destinations. Indonesia and Singapore exemplify the new Filipino President's aspiration to pursue an "independent" foreign policy. The de facto leaders of ASEAN in recent decades remain officially non-aligned, maintaining strategic ties with both the US and China.

Also high in the Marcos Administration's priorities is its long-standing relationship with Israel, which dates back 65 years to 1957, when Israel began providing capacity-building programs for Filipinos in agriculture. Embassies were opened in Tel Aviv and Manila in 1962.

The two countries are planning to increase cooperation after discussing agriculture, trade and economics, overseas Filipino workers in Israel, innovation and technology, defence and tourism in their 12th Joint Commission Meeting held in Manila on Sept. 5. The political dialogue was led by the Philippines' Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Alfonso Ver and Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Deputy Director General for Asia and the Pacific, Rafael Harpaz.

"The Israeli delegation emphasised building bridges of innovations between the two countries in the areas of agritech, watertech, cybersecurity, ICT and connectivity, and more. Also included in the agenda is the topic of counterterrorism and the expansion of the defence cooperation between Israel with the Philippines," the Israel Embassy in Manila said in a statement.

The delegations also discussed regional and international developments, particularly in the Middle East, Iran and the West Philippine Sea, according to local reports.

The expansion of bilateral defence and military relations was the focus of a recent meeting between Philippines Department of National Defence officer-in-charge

Undersecretary Jose Faustino Jr. and Ambassador of Israel to the Philippines Ilan Fluss. During their meeting, Faustino expressed a desire to further enhance logistics and procurement cooperation, and also appreciation for the invitations received by the Department to attend security-related conferences and summits in Israel.

Some prompt follow-up occurred with an anti-drone seminar, initiated by the Israeli Government, held in Manila on Sept. 12 and attended by members of various state forces, including the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police and the Philippine Coast Guard. Spruiking its "top edge" defence system, the Israeli Government brought in several state-owned and private companies to offer not only technologies but also to share "best practices, and Israeli experience."

Ambassador Fluss told reporters it was the "first major defence" seminar that Israel's Defence Attaché to the country held, which only proved the "close cooperation" between Israel and the Philippines.

Another key area has been counterterrorism, with both countries having the threat of terrorism posed by Islamic State-linked groups at the top of their list of security priorities.

When former President Rodrigo Duterte made his historic visit to Israel in 2018 – the first by a Philippine president since the establishment of bilateral ties – counterterrorism collaboration had been talked about as among the areas of cooperation on the defence side. Philippine National Police (PNP) personnel have already undertaken counterterrorism training conducted by Israeli police at PNP headquarters.

Among the military hardware purchased by the Philippines in recent years have been Israeli armoured vehicles, firearms like Galil and TAR-21, the Soltam M-71 155 mm howitzer used by the Philippine Army and Marines and Spike-ER missiles from Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, the first surface-to-surface missiles to be mounted on Philippine Navy ships.

A key acquisition of late is a small fleet of Israeli-made missile boats to help secure the Philippines' littoral zone – the area of sea that is close to the shore. With over 7,100 islands and continuing insurgent activity, this is a vast challenge.

The procurement of eight fast-attack interdiction craft-missiles (FAIC-Ms) from Israel Shipyards Limited for around US\$175 million (A\$260 million) is among the projects approved by former President Duterte in 2019 under the Horizon 2 List for the Revised Armed Forces of the Philippines modernisation program.

The 32-metre high-speed vessels are equipped with quick intercept ability, remote stabilised weapons and short-range missiles that are capable of delivering precision strikes against larger hostile craft and high-value targets on land and sea.

AIR



Miriam Bell

ACTIVIST IRE OVER IHRA

Joining the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) could be an important step forward in New Zealand's battle against the rise of antisemitism, but anti-Israel lobbyists are already trying to undermine any such plans.

New Zealand has been slow to join the 44-member alliance, which works to promote Holocaust education and also plays a role in combating antisemitism and Holocaust denial.

Australia became an observer in 2015, moving from observer to liaison in 2017, and became its 33rd member in 2019, but New Zealand only became an observer recently.

In June, the NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade (MFAT) announced the country's application to become an observer had been accepted, adding:

"New Zealand strongly believes that the international community must stand firm against every form of intolerance wherever it may be found. It is only through an understanding of the lessons of history that we can ensure atrocities such as the Holocaust never happen again."

The announcement came not long after the release of a study that revealed concerning levels of antisemitism and widespread ignorance about the Holocaust in New Zealand. Over the course of the COVID pandemic, there has also been a noticeable rise in antisemitic rhetoric from some quarters.

The move was welcomed by community groups including the New Zealand Jewish Council (NZJC), the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand, and the Holocaust & Antisemitism Foundation Aotearoa New Zealand.

NZJC President Stephen Goodman said that joining the IHRA gave the government a tool to help combat the rise in anti-Jewish sentiment.

Dangerous international conspiracy theories about Jewish people had been given momentum by the pandemic, he said. There had also been a concerning growth in Holocaust distortion, which included people wearing yellow stars to oppose vaccine mandates and accusing the Government of acting like the Nazi regime.

"Anyone who understands what occurred in the Holocaust understands this is not only a false and inappropriate comparison, but it belittles the suffering of Jewish people, and others, who were murdered by the Nazi regime because of their race and religion.

"The Jewish community congratulates and thanks the

Government for joining IHRA. It sends a powerful message that it is committed to protecting all New Zealand's ethnic minority communities," he added.

Holocaust Centre of New Zealand chair Deborah Hart is one of the experts in the country's recently announced IHRA delegation. On behalf of the delegation, she said they believe the IHRA is important to help fight racism against all peoples.

"We know that learning about the Holocaust teaches our young people and future leaders to look at one another with humanity and kindness. The Holocaust shows us how hate can start small and that we all have a responsibility to counter it.

"Our delegation will work globally to ensure the experiences of survivors and the memories of those who were killed are preserved, and the lessons of the Holocaust continue to be taught to avoid future genocides."

Becoming an IHRA member also signalled the Government's support for the work of the Holocaust Centre, and the delegates hoped that being part of the IHRA would lead to more students learning about the Holocaust, she said.

Hart added that the delegates hoped New Zealand would progress down the path to full membership.

Not everyone was happy with the Government's move. The Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa (PSNA) released a statement claiming that joining IHRA was a "weak, cowardly decision", and was undermining the fight against antisemitism and racism of all kinds.

It railed against the widely used IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism, and advocated for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel. "New Zealand should adopt the Jerusalem Declaration on Anti-Semitism and insist on Holocaust education in every school in the country as part of a comprehensive anti-racism education programme," it said.

Unfortunately, certain members of the pro-Palestinian movement, notably long-time activist John Minto, continue to have a high profile on this issue. According to Israel Institute of New Zealand Director David Cumin, chief Human Rights Commissioner Paul Hunt has agreed to consult with Minto on matters of antisemitism in New Zealand, for example.

Hart noted that Minto seemed to agree that Holocaust education was the antidote to growing racism, but she pointed out that adopting the IHRA's Working Definition of Antisemitism was a separate process to IHRA membership, which was first and foremost about such education.

"As John Minto's comments show, there is debate about what antisemitism is, and anti-Israel Government sentiment should never be a backdoor to hatred towards Jewish people in Israel or throughout the diaspora," she said.



BEHIND THE NEWS

ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

No rockets were fired at Israel between the end of Operation Breaking Dawn on Aug. 8 and mid-September.

There have been several attacks throughout the West Bank against both soldiers and civilians. On Aug. 29, two Israeli civilians were wounded by Palestinian gunfire after attempting to visit Joseph's Tomb in Nablus without coordinating this with the IDF.

On Sept. 4, Palestinians employing explosives and firearms ambushed a bus carrying IDF soldiers, injuring six and critically injuring the driver. The same day, four IDF soldiers were wounded in an IED attack. There were numerous other attacks that caused injuries as well as terror plots that were thwarted.

Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar announced on Sept. 11 that Israeli security services had stopped more than 300 "significant" terrorist attacks this year and made more than 2,000 arrests.

CONCERNS OVER RISING WEST BANK VIOLENCE

Ongoing clashes between Palestinian gunmen and the IDF in Jenin, Nablus and other towns and villages in the West Bank show no sign of easing. Tensions have heightened since Israel commenced intense counter-terrorism operations in response to a series of lethal attacks by Palestinians on Israeli civilians earlier this year, the Palestinian Authority (PA) having failed to quell the violence within its own territory.

On Sept. 14, while attempting to arrest two Palestinian suspects who had been approaching an Israeli military position, IDF officer Major Bar Falah, deputy commander of the elite Nahal reconnaissance unit, was killed when

the suspects opened fire. Both Palestinians, members of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party, were killed in the ensuing gunfight. One was a member of the PA security forces.

Many analysts say the PA is losing control of major sections of the West Bank, while the Iranian-backed terror groups Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad are urging on the violence and providing weapons and funding for it.

AIRSTRIKES ON SYRIAN AIRPORTS

On Sept. 6, airstrikes attributed to Israel caused major damage to Syria's Aleppo airport for the second time in a week. Runways were rendered unusable and storehouses bombed. The previous week's airstrikes had also hit targets close to Damascus Airport, which had suffered major damage in attacks earlier this year.

On Sept. 16, Syria's military stated that Israeli strikes had again hit Damascus Airport, as well as other sites around the capital, killing five soldiers and causing "some material damage".

Israeli analysts said the attacks were likely prompted by Iran's increasing use of Syria's airports to export weapons to its proxies, especially Hezbollah in Lebanon.

On Sept. 12, Israel's Defence Minister Benny Gantz identified ten sites in Syria that were previously scientific facilities, but which he alleged were being used by Iran to manufacture precision guided missiles in Syria for use by Hezbollah and other Iranian proxies.

IRAN'S NUCLEAR BREAKOUT TIME NOW ZERO

Analysis of two reports about Iran issued by the UN's International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) prior to its September Board of Governors meeting showed that Iran's breakout time (the time needed to produce enough weapons-grade uranium for one atomic warhead) is now effectively zero. Teheran can convert its stockpiles of highly enriched uranium (20%+) into the cores of at least three nuclear warheads within a month.

Research and development of enrichment and nuclear weapons processes continues, while the IAEA's ability to monitor Iran's atomic activity has also been reduced to almost zero, with most of the agency's cameras removed and months of surveillance footage in Iranian hands without the IAEA having access.

JCPOA TALKS HIT DEAD END

Negotiations to renew the 2015 Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA) appeared to reach a dead end in September, with most analysts saying any agreement looks extremely unlikely until at least after the US midterm election in early November. US officials described Teheran's response to the latest agreement proposal as a disappointing step backwards. Teheran is reportedly demanding an end to the IAEA investigation into Iran's forbidden nuclear weapons activities at several undeclared sites – a demand rejected by all other parties.

ALBANIA SEVERS RELATIONS WITH IRAN

Albania severed diplomatic relations with Iran in early September, expelling all diplomats and closing the embassy, after accusing Iran of a massive cyberattack on the Balkan nation on July 15. Albania also accused Iran of a second cyberattack more recently

against its Total Information Management System. The US imposed additional sanctions on Iran specifically related to the July incident.

Relations between Albania and Iran have long been strained because the former is the host country of the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK), an Iranian opposition group at war with the regime since falling out with Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers in 1979.

IRAQ INTURMOIL



Supporters of Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr (Image: Twitter)

Iraqi politics continues to descend into chaos. Armed followers of influential cleric Moqtada al-Sadr attacked the centre of government in Baghdad, the heavily guarded Green Zone, after he announced on Aug. 29 that he was withdrawing from politics. Iran-backed militias on the public payroll then attacked the protestors, and were in turn attacked by pro-Sadr militia. Two days of fighting resulted, leaving 34 dead and raising fears of a civil war, before Sadr ordered his followers to withdraw.

Sadr's followers control the largest bloc in the parliament, and his retirement announcement was prompted by Iraq's continuing failure to form any governing coalition since elections in October 2021. Sadr and allied parties have a majority in the parliament, but Iraq's corrupt Supreme Court, controlled by parties aligned with Iran, ruled that a super-majority of two thirds would be required to form government.

Meanwhile, reports say Islamic State has been re-establishing itself in some areas of Iraqi Kurdistan.

NEW IDF HEAD NOMINATED

With IDF Chief-of-Staff Gen. Aviv Kochavi nearing the end of his four-year term, Israel's Defence Minister Benny Gantz announced on Sep. 4 that Major-General Herzl (Herzi) Halevi would be his candidate to succeed Kochavi. Maj-Gen. Halevi is the current Deputy Chief-of-Staff, and previously served as head of the Southern Command and of Military Intelligence. He would be the first Orthodox IDF Chief-of-Staff if he is approved by the Appointment Committee and Cabinet.

Meanwhile, the conclusions of an IDF investigation into the death of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh were released on Sept. 5. The investigation found that there was a "high probability" Abu Akleh was accidentally shot by an Israeli soldier returning fire at Palestinian fighters, although it was impossible to be certain who fired the fatal bullet. It dismissed calls for a criminal probe, arguing there was currently

no evidence of any intentional misconduct.

PALESTINIAN TEXTBOOKS AGAIN UNDER SCRUTINY

As the new school year commenced, the Israeli NGO IMPACT-se conducted a review of schoolbooks and curricula currently being used in PA schools – with disturbing results.

IMPACT-se found that the Palestinian school curriculum has in fact become even more radical compared to previous years, continuing to use textbooks already criticised for inciting hatred against Jews and Israel whilst adding reworked educational material that calls for Jihad, violence, and incitement against Israel and Jews.

Members of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee criticised the UN's Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) over the use of these materials in its schools at a hearing on Aug. 31, with Chair David McAllister demanding "sustainable improvements".

STRANGER THAN FICTION

BANKING ON WAR

In the satirical movie, *The Mouse That Roared*, the rulers of the tiny country of Grand Fenwick decide that the way to resolve their country's seemingly insoluble economic problems is by declaring war on the US, surrendering, and then receiving US aid. Now the notion of using war as an economic panacea has seemingly received a modern twist, courtesy of Hezbollah luminary Bilal Naim, the assistant to Hezbollah Executive Council head Hashem Safi Al-Din and former head of Hezbollah's boy scouts.

Dr Makram Rabah, a history lecturer at the American University of Beirut, notes in a Sept. 2 article on the website of the Dubai-based television station *Al Arabiya* that there is a video circulating among Hezbollah activists in which Naim calls for war with Israel as the solution to Lebanon's cur-

rent disastrous economic situation.

Rabah notes that this call is not new – a common Hezbollah narrative over the past year has been that a war with Israel would re-awaken the interest of the international and Arab communities and result in money being pumped into Lebanon, as happened after the 2006 war.

However, Naim gives this a new twist by declaring Hezbollah should invade Israel specifically to rob its banks and take the billions of dollars in their safes, thus allowing Lebanon to break the Western and American "siege" that Hezbollah insists caused the country's economic disaster. Apparently, Hezbollah corruption and governing of the country for Iran's benefit had nothing to do with it.

As Rabah points out, apart from the sheer implausibility of Hezbollah fighters waltzing into Israel and emerging with all the country's money, banks no longer store masses of hard currency. Furthermore, the "axis of resistance" would hardly be able to traffic in Israeli shekels, anyway.

COVER STORY

BUZZWORDS OF BIAS

THE DISTORTED CATCHPHRASES OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Alan Baker

Over the years, states, leaders, international organisations, and the international and Israeli media have developed a tendency to endlessly repeat certain internationally recognisable catchphrases and buzzwords with the aim of dictating and influencing a distinct, partisan political narrative against Israel.

This tendency is becoming a permanent phenomenon and increasingly obstructs any genuine attempt to achieve reconciliation between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

The repetition of such phrases and terms in all and any discussion and reporting of events and developments in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is legally inaccurate and blatantly misleading.

While such uses may emanate from ignorance as to the genuine meaning of such phrases and buzzwords and the actual facts and legal background of the various issues, it is more likely that they are deliberately intended to mislead the public.

The following are several examples of such false, misleading, and malicious catchphrases and buzzwords.

1. “STATE OF PALESTINE”

In fact and in law, no “State of Palestine” exists among the world’s sovereign state entities. Such a state has never existed.

While the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has, since 1974, held observer status in the United Nations as a recognised national liberation movement, its attempts to gain recognition as a fully-fledged, voting member-state of the UN have never been accepted. The Palestinian leadership has never been able to indicate to the UN Security Council that a Palestinian entity is a “peace-loving” entity that fulfills the universally recognised capacities for statehood.

The United Nations does not have the legal capacity to establish states, but only to admit states to membership upon the recommendation of the Security Council.

In attempting to bypass this hurdle, the Palestinian leadership has gradually extended and upgraded its observer status and even changed the denomination of its observer delegation to “Palestine”. This was achieved through initiating a series of political resolutions in the UN General Assembly, which were adopted by an automatic majority. However, such resolutions are not binding and not authoritative.

This Palestinian political exercise in the UN General Assembly culminated in 2012 in another non-binding and non-authoritative resolution, adopted by the same automatic political majority, to upgrade its status from an “observer entity” at the United Nations to a “non-member observer state”.

Since 2012, the Palestinian leadership has utilised this change in nomenclature without any legal authority, seeking to manipulate the international community into believing that it has achieved statehood and to represent itself as the “State of Palestine”.

But this fiction has not altered the fact that the Palestinian status in the United Nations remains that of an observer.



The “State of Palestine” does not and has never existed, in fact or in law (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

2. THE “ILLEGAL OCCUPATION”

In the course of more than 50 years of malicious repetition and deliberately misleading marketing, the expression “the occupation” has become universally synonymous solely with Israel’s presence in the West Bank areas of Judea and Samaria.

According to the international law and practice of armed conflict, a situation of occupation is not illegal. It is an accepted legal situation, a legal term of art referring to a provisional status of belligerency in which one sovereign power occupies, during an armed conflict, the territory of another sovereign power, pending an agreed resolution between the parties in conflict. Occupying powers have both obligations and privileges under international humanitarian law.

“Occupation” does not reflect the case with respect to Israel, whose status in the West Bank areas of Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip is unique (*sui generis*) since these areas had never been considered sovereign Jordanian or Egyptian territory. The territories legitimately came under the authority of Israel, while defending itself during a war imposed on it by its neighbours in 1967. The areas were not taken or acquired from states that held prior legitimate sovereign status or powers over the territory, and, as such, do not fall under the accepted definition

On the contrary, Jordan's presence and its 1950 annexation of the West Bank area had never received international recognition. Similarly, Egypt never claimed or represented that its military administration of the Gaza Strip prior to 1967 was its sovereign territory.

Thus, the implications and assumption of Israeli illegality are utterly flawed.

Regrettably, the term “the occupation” has been artificially tailored to attain a negative political connotation with respect to Israel – through repetitive international political manipulation. It is cynically used within the international community to defame and condemn Israel and to delegitimise its legal and historical claims regarding the territories.

With the willing and automatic support of a politically biased international community, the Palestinian leadership has even weaponised the term “occupation” as a means to question Israel’s legitimacy. It has transformed the international legal term “occupation” into a catchphrase “illegal occupation,” which governments, international organisations, diplomats, media, and human rights activists have blindly adopted in an attempt to recast Israel as an outlaw state. The result of such manipulation is that the term “the occupation” is generally misused to imply that Israel took control of and administers the areas illegally. Such misuse



The famous “green line” boundaries that differentiate Israel from Gaza and the West Bank have never been legal borders, but simply armistice lines. There is no such thing as Israel’s “1967 borders.” (Image: Shutterstock)

ignores legitimate legal and historical claims espoused by Israel and acknowledged by the international community concerning the permanent status of the areas.

The expression is used derogatively only concerning Israel, as if no other situation exists in the world where a state exercises authority in disputed areas. In its apparent fixation on Israel, the international community ignores such cases.

Since the West Bank areas of Judea and Samaria have never fallen under the accepted definition of occupation, they remain “disputed” between the parties pending an agreed, permanent settlement of their status. Both parties espouse claims regarding the areas and have agreed, pursuant to the internationally endorsed Israeli-Palestinian Oslo Accords (1993-95), to peacefully negotiate and resolve such claims. Pending negotiated resolution of these areas’ permanent status, the parties have agreed to divide the powers and responsibilities involved in their governance.

Therefore, the term “the occupation,” selectively and derogatively used against Israel, is flawed and has no legal basis. It runs contrary to the agreed Israeli-Palestinian negotiation process to resolve the issue of the permanent status of the territories and seeks to undermine legitimate claims regarding the territories.

3. “OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY” (OPT)

The phrase “Occupied Palestinian Territory” (OPT) is incorrect both factually and legally. The territories are neither occupied nor are they Palestinian.

While between 1967 and 1974, UN documentation used the term “Occupied Arab Territories”, this was artificially altered in UN resolutions and documents through politically motivated, nonbinding UN General Assembly resolutions and constant political repetition, and the term “occupied Palestinian territories” has gained prominence in international parlance since 1982.

There has never been any binding or authoritative international legal instrument, agreement, mandate, declaration, or resolution that determines that the West Bank areas of Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip are Palestinian. These territories have never been legally or formally designated as “Palestinian” territory. They were never part

of any Palestinian sovereign entity, which has never existed and were never taken from any Palestinian entity.

Nevertheless, the erroneous term “OPT” has become *lingua franca* within the international community.

On the contrary, pursuant to the 1993-95 Oslo Accords, the PLO and Israel have committed to negotiating the territories’ permanent status. If they themselves are committed to negotiating their permanent status, there can be neither logic nor justification in assuming that the territories are Palestinian. Hence the term “occupied Palestinian territory,” which appears in International Committee of the Red Cross and UN documentation and in declarations and statements by world leaders and international resolutions, and even in the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of July 9, 2014, regarding Israel’s security barrier, is redundant. It is nothing more than a political catchphrase that has never emanated from any genuine legal analysis.

Accordingly, any use or acceptance of the denomination “Palestinian territories” or “occupied Palestinian territories” in effect prejudices the outcome of those agreed-upon negotiations and contravenes and undermines the agreed commitments in the Oslo Accords.

4. “SETTLER COLONIALISM”

The use of this curious terminology by extreme left-wing and ostensibly progressive elements is nothing more than a shallow and dishonest attempt to manipulate inter-

national thinking. It is done by using outmoded, anarchistic, and quasi-intellectual templates taken from age-old colonial situations in an effort to transpose them onto the case of Israel.

Such templates bear no relation whatsoever to the situation in the Middle East.

Accusing Israel of colonisation is an attempt to fraudulently and artificially represent Israel in the same light as the European powers that colonised Africa and the Americas in centuries gone by. Such representation is absurd and an insult to intelligence.

This false and malicious accusation totally ignores the circumstances of the defensive war that brought about Israel’s acquisition of control of the territories in 1967.

It ignores and undermines those central UN resolutions and signed agreements calling for a negotiated settlement of the Middle East dispute.

It ignores that both the Israelis and the Palestinians have agreed to divide governance of the territories pending the outcome of the negotiations on the permanent status.

It also ignores the indigenous rights of the Jewish people in the area as well as the internationally acknowledged historical and legal claims of the Jewish people regarding the area, as recognised in such instruments as the 1917 Balfour Declaration, the 1920 San Remo Declaration, and the 1922 League of Nations Mandate instrument, and reaffirmed in Article 80 of the UN Charter.

The establishment of settlements by Israel in the territories, in accordance with its prerogatives under international law as the governing authority in the territory, cannot in any way be seen as any form of colonisation. The use of non-privately-owned public land for settlement or agriculture is entirely consistent with accepted international norms as long as the status of the land is not changed pending its final negotiated outcome.

Pursuant to the Oslo Accords, settlements are an agreed issue of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians to determine the permanent status of the territories, together with other issues such as borders, refugees, security, economic interests, and Jerusalem.

5. “SETTLER VIOLENCE”

This expression has taken on a life of its own as part of the accepted international phraseology seeking to vilify Israel. It attempts to establish a new and unique phenomenon of specially tailored violence that exists nowhere else, as if Israeli residents of settlements have developed their

“The term ‘the occupation,’ selectively and derogatively used against Israel, is flawed and has no legal basis. It runs contrary to the agreed Israeli-Palestinian negotiation process to resolve the issue”

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Violence by anyone, including the residents of Israel's settlements, is illegal and is to be condemned, prevented, convicted, and punished. However, to single out such acts by a small number of residents of Israel's settlements, and to turn this into a cynical, clichéd, and generalised expression intended to tarnish an entire group, belies any international logic and morals. It displays a distinct political bias that, in any other circumstance, would be considered the subject of censure.

6. THE "1967 BORDERS"

The widely repeated, legally flawed, and false call for Israel to "return to the 1967 borders" has become a staple component of the Palestinian narrative. This is even though no such borders ever existed, and there exists no agreement between Israel and the Palestinians calling for or agreeing to "1967 borders".

The lines from which Israeli forces entered the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967 were the 1949 Armistice Demarcation lines, which, as stated in the armistice agreements, remained temporary lines and not final political borders.

Following the 1967 war, UN Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) called for the negotiation of "secure and recognised boundaries," thereby formally affirming the international consensus that the 1949 Armistice Demarcation lines were never considered to be secure and recognised boundaries.

In the 1993-95 Oslo Accords, the PLO, in the name of the Palestinian people, and Israel committed to negotiating "the border issue" in the permanent status negotiations.

Bilateral borders cannot be imposed by false and misleading clichés, generated to establish false political facts. They cannot be imposed by the wishful thinking of partisan elements in the international community. It takes two parties to negotiate a border between them. Any serious negotiation on the border issue must consider the genuine and substantive security, historical, and demographic factors necessary to determine any freely negotiated bilateral border.

7. "APARTHEID STATE"

This false clichéd claim is increasingly repeated by the Palestinian leadership and by propagandists seeking to delegitimise and undermine Israel and represent it as an illegal and criminal entity.

The expression was initially advocated by Yasser Arafat and adopted by NGO groups at the discredited 2001 UN Conference on Racism at Durban. It attempts to deliberately misrepresent Israel's own constitutional and legal system and its administration of the territories in accordance with the norms and principles of international humanitarian law. It further misrepresents and undermines the mutual Israeli and Palestinian commitments in the Oslo

Accords, pending negotiated settlement of the permanent status of the territories.

As such, it attempts to establish a false and misleading equivalence with the former South African apartheid regime.

The adoption of this malicious claim indicates a lack of understanding and even utter ignorance of the racist nature and components of the accepted international definitions of the phenomenon of apartheid. It is no less indicative of an even further and more profound lack of understanding of the character of the state of Israel as an open, pluralistic, and democratic society.

The complete lack of any equivalence between Israel and its administration of the territories and the former apartheid regime in South Africa is so blatant that one can only assume that those employing such an equivalence are deliberately

and maliciously manipulating and misleading international opinion. In so doing, proponents of this claim seek to bring into question the very legality and basis of the state of Israel's existence and ultimately encourage the imposition of an international sanctions regime against Israel modelled on the actions against the former apartheid regime in South Africa.

The comparison of Israel to that regime under white supremacist rule has been utterly rejected by those with an intimate understanding of the former apartheid regime, especially experts from South Africa. Israel is known and accepted as a multiracial society, and its Arab population constitutionally enjoys complete equality and freedom of expression. It actively participates in the political process, elects its parliament (Knesset) members, and is represented in Israel's government, Knesset, and its Supreme Court. Each religious community in Israel has its own religious court system, applying Sharia, Canon, and Jewish law, respectively.

Israeli law regards Judaism, Islam, and Christianity as official religions and constitutionally ensures complete freedom and equality for all. This is unlike those Arab and other states where one religion is declared the state religion or Western countries where Christianity is considered the predominant religion. It is much unlike those Muslim countries such as Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, where certain areas, towns, and roads are restricted to "Muslims only" and where women are treated as second-class citizens and LGBT communities as criminals.

Inciting or practising racism in Israel is a criminal offence, as is any discrimination based on race, religion, sex,



Attempts to label Israel with the term "Apartheid" betray utter ignorance of both the racist nature of that concept in South Africa and its meaning in international law (Image: Alamy)

or gender. Israeli schools, universities, and hospitals make no distinction between Jews and Arabs.

CONCLUSION

It is high time that the international community, leaders, parliamentarians, media representatives, and international and regional organisations simply cease to allow themselves to be blindly manipulated and influenced by false clichés and buzzwords. Any serious and sincere consideration of the need to resolve the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians cannot rely on such catchphrases, which are generated and employed to maliciously dictate a false international narrative.

The above listing of false catchphrases and buzzwords is hoped to serve as an eye-opener for those who unthinkingly permit themselves to be manipulated.

AIR

Ambassador Alan Baker is Director of the Institute for Contemporary Affairs at the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs (JCPA) and the head of the Global Law Forum. He participated in the negotiation and drafting of the Oslo Accords with the Palestinians, as well as agreements and peace treaties with Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. He served as legal adviser and Deputy Director-General of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and as Israel's Ambassador to Canada. © JCPA (www.jcpa.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

THE 125 YEAR STRUGGLE OVER “ZIONISM”

Jonathan S. Tobin

The Zionist movement threw itself a party. The last week of August marked the 125th anniversary of Theodor Herzl's convening of the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. The occasion caused some controversy in Israel for what some think is the World Zionist Congress' lavish spending on a program that was unavailable to the public since most of it wasn't livestreamed. Whether or not those criticisms are fair, interest in the commemoration outside of the organised Jewish world seemed minimal. Indeed, other than as a photo opportunity for Israeli President Isaac Herzog to recreate Herzl's famous pose on the balcony of the Hotel Les Trois Rois looking out over the Rhine River, few paid much heed to the event.

Still, the 125th anniversary of modern Zionism is an apt moment for reflection on just how far Herzl's idea has gone since he willed it into

existence. Most importantly, it's vital for those who care about the fate of the Jewish people to understand a troubling conundrum that points to both Herzl's realism and where he was wrong.

Zionism enjoyed unprecedented success with the recreation of Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel right on schedule with Herzl's prophetic diary writings. The Jewish state he envisioned in both the short book he wrote the year before Basel — *The Jewish State* — and a futuristic novel he penned five years later — *Altneuland* (“The Old New Land”) — didn't merely come into existence, despite the scepticism and often bitter opposition of the non-Jewish and Jewish worlds. It thrived and grew into a regional superpower with a First World economy that is home to almost half of the world's Jews and grows stronger day by day.

Indeed, for many Israelis, the notion of a Zionist movement seems antiquated. They understandably think that Zionism is something you are reminded of when you visit a history museum. They see the state Herzl dreamed of as an incontrovertible reality and the conflicts of the modern Middle East — in which Israel has both enemies and allies — as far removed from the theoretical debates in which Herzl was forced to engage. From that frame of reference, the continued existence of some of the entities that trace their roots to Basel and even the argument about a Jewish state are like fossilised remnants of the 19th century stuck in amber.

However remote the events of August 1897 may seem to us, the presence of several hundred demonstrators outside the WZO event was a reminder that the debate about Zionism is not over. Israelis may think the idea of erasing their country from the map is a sick joke. But to the Palestinians, whose national identity is inextricably linked to their century-long war against Zionism, as well as the vast number of people around the world who — whether because of solidarity with fellow Muslims or leftist ideology — oppose Zionism, the goal of undoing



Israeli President Isaac Herzog re-enacts a famous pose by Theodor Herzl from the Congress at which he founded the Zionist movement in Basel in 1897 (Image: IGPO)

Herzl's vision is something they not only applaud but think can be achieved.

That this is so points directly to one flaw in Herzl's otherwise prescient understanding of the world in which he lived.

Though many in his time believed in the idea that progress was leading the Jews towards greater acceptance and freedom in the non-Jewish world, Herzl grasped that the arc of history was heading in a very different direction. He understood that the rising tide of antisemitism that was bubbling up throughout Europe in more enlightened places like France, as well as in reactionary authoritarian regimes like the Russian empire, wasn't going to be stopped by either assimilation or the forces of modernism. That led to his conviction that without a state of their own, Jews would not only continue to suffer from discrimination and violence but that their plight would grow worse.

Neither Herzl nor the Basel Congress invented Zionism – the concept of a Jewish state or the idea of the inevitability of the return of the Jews to their land. Contrary to those who wrongly claim that Judaism is merely a religion and that opposing Israel's existence has nothing to do with antisemitism, the connection to the land of Israel is an integral part of Jewish faith and part of the daily liturgy. The longing for Zion is as old as the Jewish people, and the hope of returning to it had sustained Jews throughout millennia of exile. What Herzl did do was mobilise and organise a movement that made the realisation of those hopes possible.

Days after the Congress concluded, Herzl wrote in his diary: "At Basel I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today, I would be greeted by universal laughter. In five years perhaps, and certainly in fifty years, everyone will perceive it." Given that the UN partition resolution that mandated the creation of a Jewish state was passed in November 1947, just over 50 years later, Herzl was proven right. It came too late to save the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust, who would have had a place of refuge had Zionism achieved its great victory earlier. Yet that proved just how correct Herzl's sense of urgency had been.

There is, however, one element of the problem that Herzl didn't understand. He was right to see homelessness and the lack of political power as elements that would lead to tragedy. Yet he also wrongly believed that once a Jewish state had been created, antisemitism would dissipate. While Zionism gave the Jews a badly needed mechanism with which to defend themselves, it could not eradicate the virus of Jew-hatred.

Antisemitism has not only survived but thrived in the last 125 years as it attached itself like a parasite to a variety of different political movements – fascism, Nazism, com-

munism, and in our own day, Islamism and woke neo-Marxism – all of which have helped perpetuate hate for Jews. Instead of eliminating the *raison d'être* of antisemitism, Israel has become the focus of it.

Anti-Zionism is not merely masquerading as something other than that hatred; it is the essence of 21st-century antisemitism. Its premise is not only to deny rights to the Jews that no one would think of denying to any other group. It is the mechanism by which intimidation, delegitimisation, violence and terrorism against Jews are rationalised and justified.

That is why Jew-haters demonstrate against a commemoration of Basel, as well as calling for the abrogation of every milestone along the path to Jewish statehood – the 1917 Balfour Declaration and the 1947 Partition Resolution. Their global BDS movement aimed at stifling the Israeli economy has largely failed. Nevertheless, it has provided a framework by which Jew-haters can not

only organise themselves but do so while pretending to be advocates for the human rights of Palestinians, whose goal is to eliminate Israel.

It has also allowed the same world body that authorised Israel's creation – the United Nations – to be the stronghold of those who believe not unrealistically that they can libel Zionism as racism and eventually isolate and ultimately destroy the Jewish state.

That is why advocacy for Zionism – the national liberation movement of the Jewish people – is not only relevant today; it is absolutely necessary in order to preserve not just Herzl's legacy, but to fight back against a movement whose goals could only be achieved through the genocide of Israel's seven million Jews.

Though Herzl was wrong to think that a Jewish state would solve the problem of antisemitism, he was right to believe that one was necessary, as well as a just solution to the plight of Jews in Europe and the Middle East where they would never be fully accepted as equals or safe.

Long after the rebirth of Jewish sovereignty in Israel has become a reality, it may seem odd that we must continue to discuss the right of the Jews to their state. The triumph of Zionism was something that few Jews or non-Jews thought was possible in 1897. Yet as unthinkable as the destruction of the Jewish state is today, the fact that hundreds of millions, if not billions, of people believe its destruction is a good idea points to the persistence of antisemitism. Just as important, it should remind all people of goodwill – Jews and non-Jews alike – of the necessity for continued Zionist activism.

AIR

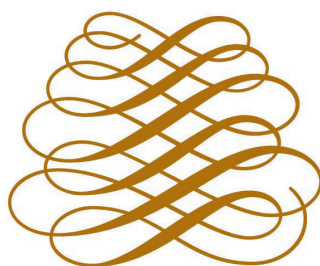


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Queen of the Jews?

The Jewish history of Queen Elizabeth II

Dmitriy Shapiro

Following her death on September 8, Jews around the world are reflecting on the consequential 70-year reign of Queen Elizabeth II, and what she meant for the Jewish community.

Shortly after the news was announced, Britain's Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis released a video in which he expressed condolences from the Jewish community throughout the Commonwealth.

Mirvis said that the Queen embodied "the most noble values of British society" and was a "rock of stability" in an ever-changing world, and that she had a warm relationship with the Jewish community.

According to Mirvis, she was particularly committed to interfaith relations and Holocaust remembrance.



British Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis (Screenshot)

"I recall how on one occasion, she showed me and my wife items of Jewish interest and value in her private collection in Windsor Castle, including a Torah scroll rescued from Czechoslovakia during the Holocaust," he

said. "Her affection for the Jewish people ran deep, and her respect for our values was palpable."

The Queen's interest in supporting Holocaust survivors also extended into her charitable work, becoming the founder and patron of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) in 2005, four years after attending the first Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001. The trust is a government-established and funded charity to promote and support Holocaust Memorial Day.

"The Jewish community is really in mourning along with the rest of the United Kingdom. We really feel that we have lost, I think someone described her as the grandmother of the nation," Olivia Marks-Woldman, Chief Executive of the HMDT, said in an interview with *JNS*. "She's been there all our lives – seven decades."

The late Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote about the Queen's attendance at the 60th-anniversary commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz in 2005, where she met with Holocaust survivors. While usually at the end of her appearances she was ushered away by her staff to adhere to her schedule, Queen Elizabeth refused to leave. She remained, speaking individually to the large group of people.



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II: Her life and leadership meant a great deal to many people, including Jewish communities (Image: Shutterstock)

One of her attendants told Sacks that they had never seen her stay so long after a scheduled departure.

"She gave each survivor – it was a large group – her focused, unhurried attention. She stood with each until they had finished telling their personal story. It was an act of kindness that almost had me in tears," wrote Sacks. "One after another, the survivors came to me in a kind of trance, saying: 'Sixty years ago I did not know if I would be alive tomorrow, and here I am today talking to the Queen.' It brought a kind of blessed closure into deeply lacerated lives."

"A steadfast friend of the Jewish community"

Marks-Woldman said that the Queen's patronage was very significant both for the survivors and for the recognition of the Holocaust.

"You can imagine survivors who have been through the worst horrors and being persecuted to the point of attempted annihilation, and then for Her Majesty the Queen to say, 'I want to honour your work,' means an enormous deal," she said. "But it also sends a very, very important message to the non-Jewish world – and particularly at a time of Holocaust distortion and denial, which has been growing over the past many years – to have Her Majesty the Queen say, 'I think Holocaust commemoration and education is so vital that I will become a patron of this trust. I will attend the very first national commemoration.'"

The Queen also invited Holocaust survivors to her garden parties and bestowed them with honours such as the British Empire Medal (BEM), Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) and Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE), which she said means that the Queen greatly values their impact.

As Queen Elizabeth got older and was no longer able to attend as many functions, she stopped being a patron to so many charities and had her family take a larger role. The patronage of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust was transferred in 2015 to her son, now King Charles III, and in 2020, Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, now Prince

of Wales, and his wife, Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, now Princess of Wales, attended the Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony.

Marks-Woldman said that many Holocaust survivors told her that the Queen was the embodiment of the welcome they found in the United Kingdom with the possibilities and opportunities for them to rebuild their lives.

“I came to the UK as a child survivor of the Holocaust in 1947, and I remember the excitement surrounding the Queen’s coronation,” Holocaust survivor Joan Salter said in a news release from the HMDT. “For someone who came from so much upheaval and trauma, the Queen has been an important symbol of wisdom and stability for me. My thoughts are with King Charles III and his family at this difficult time.”

British-Israeli Michael Dickson, Executive Director of StandWithUs Israel, tweeted that the “Jewish citizens of the British Commonwealth will deeply mourn” the Queen’s death.

“She was a steadfast friend of the Jewish community throughout the many decades of her reign,” he tweeted.

Dickson also noted in other tweets the Union Jack being displayed throughout Israel – land once administered by Britain – including on Tel Aviv’s City Hall and in the Old City of Jerusalem.

She never visited Israel

Still, her reign was not without controversy in the Jewish world.

A particularly sore point was that, despite her visits to many countries throughout her long reign, including Middle East and North African countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan, and countries with very poor human-rights records, she never visited Israel.

Her avoidance of Israel in her travels is believed to be at the behest of the British Foreign Office, according to the *Jerusalem Post*, which feared her visit could possibly spark a backlash from Britain’s Arab allies.

While King Charles has visited Israel on a few occasions unofficially (when he was a prince) and her late husband Prince Philip visited his mother’s grave on the Mount of

Olives, the first official visit to Israel by a member of the royal family was made by Prince William in 2018.

Still, she welcomed Israeli dignitaries who came to visit her, including Israeli Presidents Chaim Herzog – the father of Israel’s current President Isaac Herzog – as well as Ephraim Katzir and Ezer Weizman.

She also conferred a knighthood on former President Shimon Peres in 2008. She conferred knighthoods on a number of prominent British Jews and raised former Chief Rabbis Immanuel Jakobovits and Sacks to the peerage, giving them noble titles.

AIR

Dmitriy Shapiro is the Washington, D.C., correspondent for the Jewish News Syndicate (JNS). © JNS (www.jns.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

MERGERS, SPLITS AND DEALS IN ISRAEL’S POLL RUN-UP

Amotz Asa-El

The dice – six of them – have been cast. With Israel’s 25th general election – the fifth poll in three and a half years – six weeks away, the 11 parties with viable chances of entering the Knesset have registered their final candidate lists following intense wheeling and dealing. Some improbable bedfellows have been brought together and some natural partners have been kept apart.

On the face of it, the protagonists in this partisan bargaining scramble were the smaller parties on both the left and the right, as the two largest parties, Opposition Leader Binyamin Netanyahu’s Likud and (acting) Prime Minister Yair Lapid’s Yesh Atid (“There is a Future”) have neither split up nor enlisted new allies.

However, as the road to the premiership for both men depends on the success of prospective coalition partners, they actively intervened in other parties’ negotiations, with Netanyahu proving more successful in these interventions than Lapid.

The centrist Lapid tried to persuade the left-wing Labor and Meretz to run jointly. Currently occupying a combined 13 of the Knesset’s 120 seats, polls suggest both parties are struggling to fully retain their voters, some of whom may prefer a larger party, mainly Lapid’s Yesh Atid, whose current 17 seats are forecast to swell to around 25.

Meretz leader Zehava Galon agreed to the merger idea, but Labor leader Merav Michaeli refused, even though the two women are known to be personal friends. Michaeli, the Transport Minister in the outgoing Government, said



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she believes both parties will cross the electoral threshold of 3.25%, and a joint ticket would actually leave them with fewer seats than running separately.

There is logic to her argument, considering that the two parties tried running jointly in 2020 and garnered a mere seven seats, about half of the total the two parties won running separately two years later. However, analysts believe Michaeli is driven less by this tactical argument and more by a long-term strategic quest to restore Labor's long-lost role as a central player in Israeli politics.

Whatever her thinking, Michaeli turned down Lapid's request.

Meanwhile, at the opposite end of the political spectrum, Netanyahu managed to put out two fires among Likud's satellite parties.

Unlike Lapid's effort to create a new alliance, Netanyahu's task was to prevent two existing alliances dissolving.

The first such threat came from the far-right Religious Zionism Party, whose junior component, *Otzma Yehudit* ("Jewish Power"), headed by ultra-nationalist provocateur Itamar Ben-Gvir, threatened to run separately from his party's senior component, the National Union, headed by former transport minister Betzael Smotrich.



Far-right provocateur and Knesset member Itamar Ben-Gvir (Image: Twitter)

Ben-Gvir, a former student of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, whose party was outlawed for its racist platform before his 1990 assassination in New York, has earned a reputation as a provocateur since his teens. Now 46, Ben-Gvir is a lawyer who advocates expelling "disloyal" Arab citizens and likes to surface at Arab-Jewish flashpoints and feed on and exacerbate tensions that the security forces are trying to tamp down.

Encouraged by polls that indicated he could win up to nine seats, Ben-Gvir threatened to run independently if his party didn't get to select half the united party's candidates. Fearing such a breakup would leave one of its two halves outside the Knesset, thus wasting votes that could otherwise support a Netanyahu-led coalition, Netanyahu invited Ben-Gvir and Smotrich, separately, to his home in Caesarea. There, he brokered a deal to give Ben-Gvir half of the first ten candidates on Religious Zionism's united electoral list.

Recognising Ben-Gvir's status as a far-right firebrand on the margins of public legitimacy, Netanyahu avoided being photographed with him when Ben-Gvir visited his home. Nonetheless, Netanyahu's efforts to deploy Ben-Gvir for his own political goals are clear — just as he paved the path for Ben-Gvir's entry to the Knesset in the last election when he engineered the original union of far-right parties that became the Religious Zionism list, which also includes the anti-LGBTQI+ religious extremist faction Noam.

With his nationalist flank thus secured, Netanyahu turned to his ultra-Orthodox allies, where the United Torah Judaism party (UTJ), Likud's strategic ally for 45 years, also seemed ready to split.

Established 110 years ago in Poland, the party was built as, and remains to this day, a loose alliance between Hassidic dynasties and anti-Hassidic ultra-Orthodox sages, all united by their rejection of secularism and strong opposition to Israel's compulsory military draft being applied to their communities.

Anti-secularism is for them not only an abstract philosophy, but also implies a staunch refusal to teach secular subjects in the schools run by these communities. Under Israeli law, that means that these schools must make do with 55% of the per pupil state budget that is given to schools that do teach a core curriculum that includes English, science and maths.

However, earlier this year, one of the Hassidic communities, the Belz, reached a deal with the outgoing Government whereby its schools would begin teaching the core curriculum and receive government funding accordingly. For the anti-Hassidic factions of UTJ, this was considered intolerable, mainly because the Belz negotiated with the Government directly and independently, without the participation of other ultra-Orthodox groups.

Because of this dispute, the Hassidic and anti-Hassidic halves of UTJ were ready to run separately until Netanyahu entered the fray. He promised UTJ leaders that if he won power, he would grant all ultra-Orthodox schools the Education Ministry's full budget allowance, regardless of what they teach or do not teach.

In addition to the small-party wheeling and dealing that involved Lapid and Netanyahu, there was also much manoeuvring in three other corners of the political system that unfolded without the involvement of either of the two.

On the far left, the Joint List alliance of three predominantly Arab parties has split, after its most radically

"Eleven parties with viable chances of entering the Knesset have registered their final candidate lists following intense wheeling and dealing. Some improbable bedfellows have been brought together"

anti-Zionist component *Balad* (an acronym for “the National Democratic Alliance”), seceded and decided to run independently due to disagreements over its share of candidates in the amalgamated list. At this writing, polls have yet to be conducted taking into account this development, but most pundits doubt Balad will receive enough votes to pass the electoral threshold.

On the other side of the spectrum, the right-wing Zionist Spirit party also broke up, as its hastily assembled alliance between two of the outgoing Government’s most hawkish ministers fell apart six weeks after their joint ticket was unveiled.

Headed by Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked, longtime ally of former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett – who is sitting out this election – Zionist Spirit was joined by Communications Minister Yoaz Hendel, who jumped ship from Justice Minister Gideon Saar’s New Hope party after the two reportedly didn’t get along.

Shaked and Hendel hoped to attract the so-called “soft right,” a nationalist but liberal electorate which is displeased with Netanyahu’s legal entanglements, and with his verbal broadsides against the judiciary and the media.



Opposition Leader Binyamin Netanyahu has boosted his electoral chances by brokering deals among his political allies (Image: Alamy Stock Photo)

The pair promised to push for a broad government that would include Likud, and thus prevent another premature election. Polls, however, suggested they were unlikely to cross the electoral threshold.

Shaked decided to announce that she would accept the prospect of entering a government headed by Netanyahu, despite his ongoing trial on corruption charges. This prompted Hendel, a journalist and historian, to bolt her party and announce

he will not run in this election.

Part of the reason this union did not succeed is that the political position it tried to stake out – right-wing but unhappy with Netanyahu – is already largely occupied by Hendel’s previous ally, Gideon Saar.

For his part, Saar joined with Defence Minister Benny Gantz’s Blue and White party in July to form the National Unity party, and the pair was joined in August by Lt. Gen. (ret.) Gadi Eisenkot, who succeeded Gantz as IDF Chief of Staff, and before that served as Gantz’s deputy.

National Unity is currently predicted to win up to 15 seats. However, unlike the staunchly secularist Yesh Atid, which ultra-Orthodox leaders perceive as an enemy, Gantz has no bad blood with the rabbis and is also traditional in his personal life. This could become crucial if Netanyahu’s

conservative alliance, despite all his efforts to shore up its various elements, ends up failing to gain a majority of 61 lawmakers – a realistic scenario according to polls.

Pundits suggest Netanyahu’s ultra-Orthodox allies will likely refuse to let him drag Israel into a sixth election within less than four years if the election again leads to stalemate between the pro- and anti-Netanyahu blocs. In such a case, these parties will likely seek to impose a unity government in which the top job will be rotated and Gantz would serve first as prime minister. He would then be succeeded by Likud’s leader two years later, by which point Netanyahu’s trial will hopefully have ended, one way or another.

If this scenario eventuates, it would mean that Netanyahu’s interventions to broker the internal affairs of other political parties, while remarkably effective, would ultimately have been for nought.

AIR

TWO YEARS OF TRANSFORMATION

Jason Isaacson

After decades of disconnection, denial, and distrust, two years of normalised and remarkably warm relations between Israel and two Arab Gulf states have shown how ready the Middle East was – and is – for fundamental change.

Who would have predicted that even before the ceremonial signing of the Abraham Accords on the White House lawn – by Foreign Ministers Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates and Dr. Abdullatif Al-Zayani of Bahrain, then-Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel, and then-US President Donald Trump – the first of dozens of memoranda of understanding would be announced between Gulf and Israeli companies and government entities?

Who would have predicted hundreds of thousands of tourists being welcomed in countries they were so recently forbidden to enter; that packed flights of national airlines would be transiting daily between Tel Aviv and Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Manama – through Saudi airspace; that kosher restaurants would open (and thrive) in Dubai, and that hotels in Abu Dhabi would be instructed to provide kosher options on their menus?

Who would have predicted the security cooperation agreement reached between Israel and Bahrain, less than 17 months after mutual recognition, or the defence cooperation agreement that preceded it – the first between Israel and an Arab state – that was signed during a visit

by Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz to Morocco in November 2021, less than a year after bilateral relations were announced, or the free trade agreement concluded in record time between the UAE and Israel?

Far from public view, the foundation for these and other breakthroughs was laid by a cohort of Arab and Israeli visionaries, along with a small circle of policy analysts



Then Israeli PM Naftali Bennett with Bahraini leaders: Who could have predicted how far relations would progress in security and economic terms in two short years (Image: Flickr)

in US and Middle East think tanks and civil society advocates for regional peace, who saw the emerging outlines of strategic transformation years, even decades, ago.

It had been clear for years – and brought into sharp relief by both the rise of al-Qaeda and ISIS, and the political upheavals of 2010-11 – that the Arab status quo was inhibiting progress and incubating extremism across the Middle East and North Africa. More innovation, openness, recognition of diversity, opportunity for women, and regional cooperation would raise living standards and counter the appeal of radical ideologies.

It was equally clear that attempting to isolate the region's greatest non-hydrocarbon-based success story, Israel, rather than seeking to integrate it and partner with it, was a colossal missed opportunity. While sympathising with the cause of justice and political rights for the Palestinians – the justification for their long-closed door to Israel – Arab leaders grew increasingly frustrated with the fractured and ineffective Palestinian leadership, less inhibited about expressing that frustration to each other and to outsiders, and more and more open to discreet explorations of trade and other forms of cooperation with Israel.

It was also apparent, in meetings I and my American Jewish Committee colleagues had with Arab officials and analysts a decade ago, how profoundly perceptions of the US role in their region had changed after the unipolar heights of the early post-Cold War period. There was a sense that Washington, by declining to stand with Egyptian

President Hosni Mubarak against the reformist throng in Tahrir Square in 2011, had revealed its unreliability, and its naïveté, regarding the intentions and methods of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Negotiations with Iran several years later over its nuclear program – negotiations to which no regional player was a party – deepened suspicions in Arab capitals.

Sharing and openly expressing those same suspicions were the leaders of Israel, a country that had proven again and again its will and capacity to confront extremists, and to take extraordinary risks to neutralise threats.

Partnering with Israel, transforming the Jewish state from pariah to potential ally, grew increasingly attractive to wise regional leaders – as did the prospect of reaping political benefits in Washington from breaking the seemingly impenetrable logjam to Middle East peace.

What could be seen over the horizon a decade or two ago – and pitched by that cohort of daring believers as the likely yield from new relations, including technology sharing in a range of sectors,

educational exchanges, public health and environmental cooperation, joint water and energy projects, and billions of dollars in trade and investments – has been the stuff of almost daily headlines these last two years.

Also envisioned early on, but not routinely in the headlines, was the growing security relationship between Israel and its Abraham Accords partners, a bulwark against Iranian aggression. It does not need to be in the headlines: the enemies of regional peace and stability know the game has changed.

In advance of US President Biden's visit to Israel and Saudi Arabia in mid-July, there was speculation that he would announce a new security architecture for the region, focused on the multiple threats posed by Iran and its proxies, and that Israel would be one of its pillars. That his trip ended with no such announcement does not mean this "architecture" wasn't discussed, or that military and intelligence units of countries with growing ties and facing common challenges aren't cooperating. It does not mean that the US Central Command, which incorporated Israel



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into its area of responsibility one year ago, is not tasked with coordinating regional air defence; CENTCOM chief Gen. Michael Kurilla made Israel's cutting-edge partnership clear in his recent visits to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

The foresight and courage of Emirati and Bahraini leaders two years ago set the Middle East on a new path toward greater opportunity, greater prosperity and greater security. These leaders were ready for fundamental change. As the bold leaders of other states assess the advantages to their people and to the cause of peace to be gained by further regional integration – and we know these assessments are well under way – the successes of the Abraham Accords' first two years are sure to multiply. AIR

Jason Isaacson is Chief Policy and Political Affairs Officer of the American Jewish Committee. This article originally appeared in the Times of Israel blogs. © American Jewish Committee, reprinted by permission, all right reserved.

A SUCCESSOR TO ABBAS?

Yoni Ben Menachem

The Palestinian Authority's (PA) succession battle has gone into high gear. Hussein al-Sheikh, confidant and designated successor of 86-year-old PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, has begun an essential process of taking over the Fatah movement in the territories.

Al-Sheikh plans to take control of the Fatah leadership by convening the Eighth Fatah Conference, which will elect the movement's institutions. Through internal elections, al-Sheikh aims to remove several of his rivals from the leadership and thereby pave his way to becoming Fatah's official candidate in the presidential elections once Abbas leaves the political stage.

On Aug. 29 al-Sheikh met with all the Fatah secretaries in the West Bank to discuss the urgent need, as he sees it, to hold the Eighth Conference and make the necessary changes.

In recent days, senior Fatah activists considered al-Sheikh associates had pressured Abbas to set a date for the conference. Initially scheduled for March 2022, it was postponed because of constraints arising from disputes over the composition of the delegation.

The Seventh Fatah Conference was held in 2016.

Ahmad Hilles, a member of the Fatah Central Committee from Gaza, said the issue of convening the conference would be on the committee's agenda the next time it meets. That meeting, he stated, will still occur in 2022 because it is a national necessity.

Hilles was reiterating al-Sheikh's public exhortation a

few days earlier. Al-Sheikh is recruiting the younger Fatah generation in the territories to his side, promising promotions to gain their support.

Abbas, for his part, has already recently taken several measures to strengthen al-Sheikh as his successor. He appointed him Secretary-General of the PLO Executive Committee and appointed other associates to the committee who will bolster support for al-Sheikh.

Abbas also appointed his associate Rawhi Fattouh as head of the Palestinian National Council. He is expected to seek additional legitimacy for al-Sheikh in the Fatah institutions.

Al-Sheikh is considered Abbas' most loyal confidant, and senior Fatah officials say he promised to tend to the needs of Abbas and his family members after his retirement. Abbas' two sons own a vast economic empire, part of it in the Palestinian Authority, and al-Sheikh vowed that no harm would come to it.



President in waiting? Mahmoud Abbas' designated successor Hussein al-Sheikh (Image: Twitter)

Fatah officials also say al-Sheikh intends to weaken two main rivals in the succession battle by removing them from the movement's power centres in the internal elections. One is Tawfiq al-Tirawi, former head of West Bank Palestinian intelligence and a Central Committee member. A report by a PA investigative committee accused him of corruption and nepotism. Another candidate, Marwan Barghouti, is the architect of the terror of the Second Intifada, serving five life sentences in an Israeli prison.

Barghouti is a member of the Fatah Central Committee and a bitter adversary of Abbas and al-Sheikh. Nevertheless, Palestinian opinion surveys show that he has public support as Abbas' possible successor.

Last year, Barghouti announced his intention to run in the upcoming PA elections. Abbas and al-Sheikh asked the Biden Administration and Israel to make sure he would not be freed in any new prisoner exchange with Hamas, explaining that he was a terrorist who would undermine the PA's security coordination with Israel and the United States.

Another move al-Sheikh is planning is utilising the

Eighth Fatah Conference to appoint his associate, General Majid Freij, as a member of the Fatah Central Committee. He also wants to appoint other associates, such as Adnan Ghaith, Governor of the Jerusalem district, and Ahmad As-saf, Palestinian Communications Minister, to high positions in Fatah.

The assessment in Fatah is that al-Sheikh will soon bring about the convening of the Eighth Fatah Conference. Abbas had already given his consent in principle, and the PA succession battle could escalate dramatically and violently. The Palestinian street fears an uptick in assassinations in the West Bank because al-Sheikh's political rivals have armed militias in different locales.

The Israeli defence establishment is watching from afar and not intervening in the succession contest. Fatah officials say, however, that Israel supports Hussein al-Sheikh's measures.

AIR

Yoni Ben Menachem, a veteran Arab affairs and diplomatic commentator for Israeli radio and television, is a senior Middle East analyst for the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (JCPA). © JCPA (www.jcpa.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

CONTENDING WITH TEHERAN'S TERROR PLOTS

Matthew Levitt

In mid-August, the US Department of Justice charged an Iranian national based in Teheran, Shahram Poursafi, with plotting to kill former US National Security Advisor John Bolton. A member of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Poursafi reportedly agreed to pay US\$300,000 (A\$446,000) to have Bolton murdered, and offered US\$1 million (A\$1.48 million) for another murder-for-hire plot – this one apparently targeting former Secretary of State and CIA Director Mike Pompeo. (The individual “hired” to kill Bolton was a cooperating human source for the FBI.) The FBI described Poursafi as a “uniformed member” of the IRGC, adding that he was “assessed to allegedly be working on behalf of” the IRGC's Qods Force when he hired individuals in the US to carry out these murders.

The affidavit underpinning the criminal complaint reads like an espionage novel. For many, the idea that Iranian operatives have recruited agents in the United States to assassinate former US government officials near their suburban Maryland homes or their DC offices is a bit hard to digest. It seems too fantastic to be true.



IRGC operative Shahram Poursafi (left) and his intended victim, former US National Security Advisor John Bolton (Images: FBI/ Flickr)

But in fact, Iran has a long track record of carrying out assassinations, abductions, and surveillance operations targeting American and other Western interests around the world, including in the United States. I maintain a database of Iranian foreign operations, which, while incomplete, currently includes 105 cases spanning the 43 years since the Iranian revolution in 1979. Limiting the analysis to the past decade, the numbers remain alarming. Out of 62 cases I have tracked over the past decade, 23 operations targeted Iranian dissidents, 28 cases targeted Jews or Israelis, 20 targeted diplomats, 14 targeted specifically Western interests, and six targeted Persian Gulf state interests. These took place all over the world, including 18 plots in the United States.

Notably, the first external assassination plot carried out by agents of the Islamic Republic of Iran took place in Bethesda, Maryland, just outside Washington, DC – the same general area where Poursafi plotted to kill Bolton over the past few months. In July 1980, Iranian agents recruited David Belfield (aka Dawud Salahuddin), an American convert to Shi'ite Islam, to assassinate former Iranian diplomat Ali Akbar Tabatabai in Bethesda, Maryland. Such plots increased in the 1990s, with a senior US counterterrorism official stating in 1997 that the US government had “solid information” to underscore its assessment that Iran had been responsible for an estimated “50 murders of



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political dissidents and others overseas” since 1990.

Iran continues to target Iranian dissidents, with a focus on the activities of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), also known as the Mujahideen e-Khalq. In July, the group cancelled a planned summit in Albania, where the group is now based, after receiving warnings from authorities about a possible Iranian threat. Iranian operatives have conducted surveillance of NCRI activities in the United States, as well.

In November 2019, two Iranian agents – one a dual Iranian American citizen and the other an Iranian living in California – pleaded guilty to carrying out surveillance of US nationals who are NCRI members. The Iranian agents attended NCRI rallies in New York City and Washington, DC. During the course of their investigation, FBI agents had one of the operatives under surveillance in Chicago as he took photographs of the Hillel Center and Rohr Chabad Center, two Jewish institutions at the University of Chicago.

More recently, Iran dispatched agents twice over the past year to target Iranian American human rights activist Masih Alinejad, who lives in New York. In July 2021, the Justice Department indicted four Iranian intelligence officials, along with a co-conspirator and California resident, for conspiring to kidnap Alinejad in New York and forcibly abduct her to Iran. According to US authorities, the Iranian intelligence official who led this plot also directs a network of Iranian operatives that has targeted other victims in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates.

Remarkably, the public exposure of this plot and the significant media attention it drew did not deter Iran from pursuing a still more brazen plot targeting Alinejad. In early August, Alinejad’s door camera captured footage of a man standing on her front porch taking photos or video with his phone. Responding to his suspicious behaviour, police arrested him when he failed to stop at a stop sign

and was found to be driving without a licence. When they searched his car, police found a suitcase with a loaded AK-47-style assault rifle with the serial number removed and \$1,100 in cash.

My study of Iranian external operations plotting identifies several key trends about the nature of these activities. It also reveals that such activities are on the rise – especially those targeting Western interests and/or carried out in Western countries.

First, Iran sees external operations targeting its perceived enemies – be they, among others, political dissidents; regime critics; Jews; American, Israeli, European, or Gulf officials involved in activities countering Iran’s malign behaviours – as a cost-effective means of protecting the revolutionary regime in Teheran. In the eyes of Iranian leaders, such plots are a proportionate and reasonable response to support for Iranian dissident groups or actions like the January 2020 targeted killing of Iranian Qods Force Gen. Qasem Soleimani. Indeed, the Bolton and Pompeo plots appear to have been intended as retaliation for the Soleimani hit.

Second, Iranian assassination, surveillance, and abduction plots continue unabated despite the negative publicity

that accompanies the arrest of Iranian operatives. This was true in the case of Masih Alinejad in the United States, but elsewhere as well. After an Iranian diplomat and several other operatives were arrested across Europe for a plot to bomb a July 2018 NCRI rally in Paris, Belgian prosecutors explicitly tied the plot to Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security, whose tasks “primarily include the intensive observation and combatting of opposition groups inside and outside Iran.” The Iranian diplomat was convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison for his role in the plot, yet over the next three years Iranian agents pursued some 26 plots across multiple continents.

Most significantly, the data suggests that Iran aggressively pursues international assassination, abduction, terror, and surveillance plots, even at times and in places that are particularly sensitive. With the exception of a 23-month period following the 9/11 attacks, when Iran actively sought to avoid getting caught up in the “war on terror”, Iranian operatives and proxies have carried out operations even during periods of key negotiations. As illustrated by these recent plots, this includes pursuing operations – including operations in the United States – even in the midst of negotiations over a possible return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). This was also the case during and just after the original negotiations over the original JCPOA under the Obama Administration.



Masih Alinejad: The New York-based Iranian dissident has been twice targeted by Iranian agents over the past year (Image: Flickr)

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Statistics reveal a clear uptick in IRGC murder plots abroad since the assassination of key IRGC commander Qasem Soleimani in 2020 (Image: UPI/Alamy Live News)

The uptick in Iranian external operations predates the targeted killing of Soleimani, but that event seems to have significantly increased the risk of Iranian retaliation.

According to my database (which, although not comprehensive, is representative of the number of Iranian foreign operations), 23 of the 105 total Iranian foreign plots I have tracked since 1980 have occurred since Soleimani's killing in January 2020 – representing an extraordinary increase in the number of incidents.

Iran typically seeks to carry out its operations with some measure of deniability. To that end, it often employs dual-nationals, proxies, and criminals to carry out key tasks. But recent events underscore how Iran also still deploys its own nationals to carry out or oversee operations. In the plot to murder Bolton, Poursafi told his operative that he did not want any money getting traced back to either of them, and the two engaged in various types of operational security when communicating. But when the source asked Poursafi what would happen if the murder were attributed to Iran, Poursafi seemed unfazed and said not to worry because his group (the IRGC) would take care of it.

All of which begs the question, why does Iran engage in such aggressive activities, even at times of sensitive negotiations, and even if it will be exposed as the culprit? The answer is that Iranian officials believe they can do so at little to no cost.

Iran perceives the potential benefits of such operations to be high, while the costs of getting caught are low and typically temporary. While sanctions are often imposed, they are also often later lifted. And jailed perpetrators are somewhat regularly released in prisoner exchanges. The one thing that could really impact Iran's decision-making calculus – diplomatic isolation – has been nearly impossible to achieve given parallel efforts to negotiate a nuclear deal and concerns that Iran could retaliate with even more bellicose militant activities in the region and beyond.

The one time the international community did circle

the wagons and impose coordinated diplomatic costs on Iran was after a German court found Iran responsible for the 1992 attack at the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin – in which Sadeqh Sharafkandi, the head of an Iranian Kurdish opposition group, was murdered. Following this incident, several European countries briefly withdrew their ambassadors from Teheran, but they soon returned. And while a few of the attackers were arrested and convicted, the Iranian leaders implicated in the attack were never held to account. And some, like Ali Akbar Velayati, went on to hold still higher positions and play roles in additional terrorist plots.

Law enforcement actions such as the latest ones are important, even when there is little chance of apprehending the accused, who in this case remains in Iran. But indictments and financial designations are insufficient responses to such activities – especially when planned on American soil. At a minimum, the response of America and its allies should include diplomatic isolation, travel bans preventing family members of Iranian leaders from studying abroad or going on Western shopping sprees, and other actions that impose tangible costs on Iranian decision-makers. AIR

Matthew Levitt is the Fromer-Wexler Fellow and Director of the Reinhard Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. This article was originally published on the Lawfare website. © Lawfare (www.lawfareblog.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

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AN AUSTRALIAN PREACHER'S HOMOPHOBIC RANT

Ran Porat

The popular Australian Muslim Facebook page, followed by 2.5 million people, has in the past promoted extremism, antisemitism and martyrdom. On Aug. 29, the page published a lecture by an Australian Muslim preacher, praising it with the words: “A brilliant lecture on LGBT from a tradi[tion]alist Islamic view in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah [Islamic traditions] and not in accordance to liberals or secularists or modernists who want to compromise and water down their beliefs.”

The preacher so warmly recommended is none other than Abu Bakr Zaoud from the extremist Ahl As-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah (ASWJ, “the family of those following the ways of the Prophet and his companions”). This local branch of an international fundamentalist Salafi organisation is regarded as one of the most radical Muslim groups in Australia. In 2018, and again earlier in 2022, AIJAC exposed the antisemitism, calls for jihad against Israel, and radicalism of ASWJ generally and of Zaoud personally.

The title of Zaoud's English-language lecture this August at a Sydney mosque was “From illegal to legal and the untold dangers of homosexuality”. The video of the lecture was uploaded online accompanied by an apologetic message: “DISCLAIMER: Those who challenge the normalcy and equivalence arguments of LGBTQ advocates are predictably met with the jamming tactic of being labeled [sic.] bigots, haters, and homophobes so as to pre-empt reasonable debate. Disagreeing with LGBTQ sexual practice is neither an enticement of harassment, phobia, nor violence, but the expression of opinion firmly grounded in medical

literature.”

As far as publicly known, Zaoud is not a medical professional. And examining his words in the lecture, it is hard to see how they can be understood in any other way than as not-so-disguised homophobia and hatred.

HOMOSEXUALITY IS “THE OPPOSITE OF INTELLECT”

Zaoud opens his speech by what sounds like welcoming gay people in the audience. “I am aware that there could be among us homosexuals that are sitting or people that have these urges. And I say to these people that you are more than welcome to stay with us,” he says. But his true intentions are quickly revealed as quite different: “We want to educate you on this topic. We want to share intellectual points and proofs from the Koran and the word of [the prophet Muhammad]... this knowledge that we share gives you the ability to make correct decisions in life.”

Speaking about the different gender identities generally accepted today in the West and about same-sex marriage recently becoming legal in several countries (including Australia), Zaoud argues that today “Sexual deviation has

become a widespread matter.” He later protests that “the rest of us are slowly being forced to accept all of this and to support all of this as well.”

According to Zaoud, these processes are a result of humanity losing its modesty. Someone in this state “is a person whose heart has died. As a result, you will find him doing whatever he pleases and whatever his desire calls him to.” After presenting several quotes from Islamic scriptures and traditions, Zaoud concludes that the Prophet was worried and concerned about “homosexuality spreading among his Ummah [Islamic Nation].”

“The first point is how did homosexuality go from being illegal and a crime punished by law,” asks Zaoud. “How did it go from that to becoming decriminalised, and became legal, and now it's legally recognised by the majority of the world. How did this happen?”

His answer: “First and foremost, keep in mind this, any evil that goes from evil to something good, there is definitely the hands of the *Sheitan* [Devil] at work.” The Devil, explains Zaoud, “decorated the sin” of homosexuality by firstly “chang[ing] the name. Homosexuality is called love. Love is love with a rainbow colour, he decorates the deed, decorates the sin and people bit by bit find themselves immersed in these kinds of sins and acts.”

The next stage is to normalise the sin. “It's continuing. This normalisation process does not stop. Everywhere you go, and in schools, it's in your face. This is all part of the normalisation process.” Supporters of gay rights are “patient upon their falsehood. They are patient upon the evil. [...] every single year there's a pride March!” laments Zaoud.

“Homosexuals are dangerous because they are sexually insatiable and know no borders, says Zaoud”

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“In Islam”, explains Zaoud, homosexuality is referred to as “the immoral shameless vulgar act and deed.” It is “THE immoral deed, meaning all the meanings of immorality are found in homosexuality. All the meanings of vulgarity are found in homosexuality.”

Moreover, in the Koran, continues Zaoud, there is reference suggesting “a link between this deed and the intellect of a person.” Quoting Islamic traditions, Zaoud describes homosexuals as people “immersed deeply into a drunken state of confusion. They are blinded by their drunkenness, with drunkenness affects what? It affects the intelligence of a person.” It is “the complete absence of the intellect, when the mind is not thinking rationally. And this happens when a person allows his desire to overcome his intellect. A person has a desire and has an intellect, and when the desire overrides and it overcomes the intellect. Now a person is in a state of drunkenness.”

“And this is the case of the homosexuals. The mind is not thinking rationally. They would commit the immoral ... based on their *Shahowa* [lust] and not based on the intellect.” Since male and female private parts are designed for reproduction, “anyone who uses his organ for other than the purpose [for which] it was created, you’re not using your intellect,” concludes Zaoud. When homosexuals are using these and other organs (talks about the anus) not for their biological purposes, “there is confusion. There is misguidance. There is deviance.”

HATING GAYS

Zaoud reviews the history of recent changes in legal and social norms that led to homosexuality being normalised, being consistently critical of gay rights advocates. For example, describing the 1969 Stonewall Riots by pro-gay activists in the US, Zaoud says that “the one who’s upon falsehood doesn’t have an intellectual argument. If he doesn’t get what he wants, he’s going to get it with violence.”

Protesting what he describes as acceptance and advertisement of homosexuality among Muslims, Zaoud warns that “in Islam, the deed is *Haram* [forbidden] and supporting the deed is just as bad.”

Homosexuals are dangerous because they are sexually insatiable and know no borders, says Zaoud. “He doesn’t have a limit, a person who commits homosexual sexuality. Just one doesn’t satisfy him. You find two, three, four, or five, perhaps on the same night, this is what *Haram* does. And you will never be satisfied and you’ll never be fulfilled no matter what a person says.”

Zaoud complains bitterly that respect for single-gender

families is taught and promoted at schools, sports events etc. “I’m not a lawyer. I’m not here to advocate your cause and I’m not here to defend for your rights. I don’t support this. I don’t believe in this.”

“As a Muslim, how do we feel about homosexuality? Very simple”, explains Zaoud quoting from Islamic traditions: “I have passion, an extreme hate for your sin” (he does later sanctimoniously say that hating does not justify violence).

Next on Zaoud’s agenda: “the untold dangers of homosexuality [...] There are major sexual and psychological health risks that a person needs to be aware of if he was to engage with the action of homosexuality.”



Preacher Abu Bakr Zaoud: Legalising homosexuality is “the hands of the *Sheitan* [Devil] at work” (YouTube screenshot)


“Did you know that anal penetration is the most riskiest (sic) form of sexual behaviour that a person can conduct? It is the most riskiest [sic] form of sexual practice.” Zaoud lists at this point diseases such as hepatitis, HIV, HPV, STD, anal cancer and even monkey pox that he argues are mostly related to homosexuality.

To warn people of the dangers of homosexuality,

Zaoud ‘jokes’, “I believe that on every rainbow flag [the LGBTQI+ flag], there should be a picture up the top... of a person with anal cancer,” and the crowd bursts out laughing. “This is serious”, smiles Zaoud. “This is a warning... there should be a picture just to warn the people as to what will happen, what you are going down in. This is a path of no return. There is no cure. There is no treatment for these matters.”

In addition, cautions Zaoud, there is “the punishment of Allah, the curse of Allah, the punishment that a person exposes himself to in the grave, in the afterlife before Allah... These people distorted the natural disposition of the human being.”

In the conclusion of his speech, Zaoud ridicules divisions and disagreements within the LGBTQI+ community as proof that this group is being weakened. “This won’t last. It will not last so long as we have believers upon the truth.”

ASWJ’s Abu Bakr Zaoud is spreading hatred of the other and fear against members of Australian society. His messages are clearly not acceptable or in line with Australian values of respect of the other and social cohesion, and he needs to be clearly marginalised for his extremism. 

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THE BIBLIO FILE

Gold Meir: Feminist?

The Only Woman in the Room: Golda Meir and Her Path to Power

Pnina Lahav, Princeton University Press, Sept. 2022, 376 pp., A\$62.99 (A\$56.09 ebook)

Amy Spiro

Was Golda Meir a feminist? Were you to have asked the former Israeli prime minister – the first and still only woman to hold the job – the answer would likely have been no.

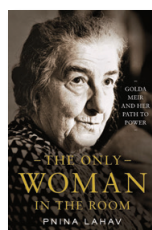
Throughout her lengthy career as an activist and politician, Meir, who served as Israel's leader in 1969-1974, largely eschewed the label, despite having shattered Israel's glass ceiling. Meir was so ahead of her time that almost 50 years later, nobody has managed to follow in her footsteps. But she also shied away from fully

embracing the women's rights movement, often viewing it as an impediment to other goals.

Now a new book from academic Pnina Lahav, titled *The Only Woman in the Room: Golda Meir and Her Path to Power*, seeks to re-examine Meir's legacy through the lens of her gender and better understand how being a woman shaped her history, affected her decision making and influenced how she was viewed.

"She was blamed for the [Yom Kippur] war, she was blamed for other things, people didn't like the way she looked, people didn't like that she was old," Lahav told *Times of Israel* in a phone interview from her home outside Boston.

"I wanted to look and see what was the truth here... and I came out with a feminist perspective, that a lot of what she did depended on the fact that she was a woman, and she was raised with the expectations of gender stereotypes, with the division of gender roles in society," said Lahav.



Lahav, an Israeli-born emeritus law professor at Boston University, didn't want to write just another biography of Israel's fourth prime minister – whose life story is already well-trodden ground. In fact, she wanted to push back against some of the claims made by many of Meir's biographers.

"They claimed that she was not a feminist and that nothing in her career was related to feminism," said Lahav. "So I begin my book by pointing out that if she were a boy she would have studied [in school as a young child]. And it would have changed her life."

From there Lahav traces Meir's life and career with an emphasis on her groundbreaking position as a woman in what was undoubtedly a man's world.

"At every step in her political career, whether she articulated it or not, she had to account for male discomfort with having assertive women in the public square," wrote Lahav in the book.

Long before she became prime

"As Labour Minister, Meir pushed through legislation granting women maternity leave paid for by the government. Yet she was also a strong advocate for the traditional family unit and a defender of motherhood and traditional values."

minister at age 70, Meir lived a life that did not fit the expected narrow path of marriage and motherhood for a girl born in the late 19th century.

As a young single woman, she obtained an illegal abortion in Chicago. After marriage, she waited seven years before having children. When her children were young, she left but did not

divorce her husband, and moved to an apartment in Tel Aviv without him. She conducted a number of extra-marital affairs with married men, and regularly left her children in the care of others while she worked gruelling hours.

As Labour Minister, Meir pushed through legislation granting women maternity leave paid for by the government. Yet she was also a strong

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Golda Meir: A complex woman who succeeded in Israeli politics at a time when it was grossly sexist, but refused to term herself a feminist (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

advocate for the traditional family unit and a defender of motherhood and traditional values.

“Golda was a woman of contradictions,” wrote Lahav. “While she did not lead a traditional family life, she nevertheless retained a soft spot for the ideal.”

This contradiction is perhaps best seen in a 1972 interview that Meir granted to Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, which Lahav cites. The reporter asked Meir how she felt about the common refrain that she was the “only man” or “ablest man” in David Ben-Gurion’s cabinet.

That phrase, Meir replied, was one “I’ve always found irritating, though men use it as a great compliment. Is it? I wouldn’t say so. Because what does it really mean? That it’s better to be a man than a woman, a principle on which I don’t agree at all.”

But just a moment later, Meir denounced the burgeoning feminist movement as “those crazy women who burn their bras and go around all dishevelled and hate men. They’re crazy. Crazy.” She also claimed to

Fallaci that “to me the fact of being a woman has never, never, I say, been an obstacle.”

Those statements, Lahav argues in her book, “contained significantly more hyperbole than truth.” She suggests, instead, that Meir did not herself believe such things, but rather felt that she herself could not “stray too far from the Israeli consensus.” Lahav claims instead that Meir viewed women’s liberation as “a lovely idea but it lacked political support. For the foreseeable future at least, the glass ceiling was there to stay.”

Lahav notes herself, however, that her claim that Meir truly did support women’s liberation lacks “direct evidence”. Such supposition is dotted throughout the book, representing perhaps wishful thinking for a revisionist history.

The author repeatedly leans on speculation and circumstantial evidence rather than corroborated facts to re-examine Meir’s life. The phrases “it would not be farfetched”; “one might also wonder”; and “it is

not fanciful to imagine” detract from its otherwise fact-based claims.


“You don’t know what she might have thought if she didn’t write it down,” Lahav said of the missing pieces. “You have to think carefully about what you think happened here.”

Lahav noted that Meir did not write a wealth of letters throughout her life and career, leaving many questions unanswered and motivations unknown.

“The question is how do you know what she thought? You have to tell the reader honestly, ‘I don’t know exactly what she thought, but here is what I think and here is what I know.’”

It is impossible to examine Meir’s legacy without noting that close to 50 years later, Israel has never had another female prime minister. Some critics, including Lahav, lay some of the blame with Meir, who did not use her ground-breaking position in power to nurture or promote other female politicians.

As prime minister, Meir did not appoint a single woman to her cabinet, remaining, quite intentionally it seems, “the only woman in the room.” She sparred fiercely with Shulamit Aloni – the woman who later became the second-ever female minister in Israel – to the point where she intervened to keep her out of the Knesset by placing her in an unrealistic spot on the Alignment party list, a now-classic move in Israeli politics.

“I blame her for not seeing how important it is to be active in promoting women,” Lahav said. “[Her ministers] had this gender blindness, and she went along with it. It’s not that she was against women, she was not anti-feminist, but she wanted women to fight for their place in society, in a society which made it almost impossible to fight for a place.” 

Amy Spiro is a reporter and writer with the Times of Israel. ©Times of Israel (www.timesofisrael.com), reprinted by permission, all right reserved.





ESSAY

A Clash of Worldviews

From Rushdie to the Temple Mount

Sheree Trotter

The Aug. 12 attack on renowned author Salman Rushdie at an Arts event in Chautauqua, upstate New York, sent shockwaves through the literary community. Stabbed by a man incensed by the perceived insult to Islam in Rushdie's 1988 novel *The Satanic Verses*, the attack was a stark reminder of a clash of worldviews – the dissonance between those who embrace Western values of free expression and those whose religious sensibilities drive them to violence over a perceived insult.

The worldview clash is not confined to the literary world. Indeed, this is the same clash we see played out annually in Jerusalem, particularly on the Temple Mount, and often with grave consequences.

My first visit to the Temple Mount's vast esplanade took place on an early winter morning. The magnificent arches cast long shadows in the soft morning light. My fellow Kiwi travellers and I had time for a quick perambulation and a few phone snaps to remember the moment before heading off for another tightly packed day of activities. The elevated position afforded a seldom-seen view of the Old City and surrounding districts. The quiet, peaceful atmosphere contrasted with the scenes of tension often associated with this most holy of sites.

The Temple Mount, known as *Haram al-Sharif* by Muslims, has deep religious significance for both Jews

and Muslims.

If Jerusalem is the crown of Jewish history and longing, then the Temple Mount is the foremost jewel in that crown. It is the most sacred site in Judaism. It is considered the site of Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice. It is also the location of the two Jewish temples: Solomon's, which according to biblical sources, stood from the 10th century BCE until 586 BCE, and the Second Temple, 515 BCE to 63 CE.

For Sunni Muslims, *Haram al-Sharif* is their third holiest site after Mecca and Medina. It houses two major shrines, the Dome of the Rock built in the late 7th century, over the rock from which Muhammad is said to have ascended to heaven, and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, built in the early 8th century, the largest mosque in Jerusalem.

Given the great religious significance of the Temple Mount to both Jewish and Islamic traditions, it is not surprising that it has been a focus of much tension. Indeed, it has become almost a yearly event for violence to break out on the Temple Mount, particularly as the time of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan approaches. 2022 was no exception.

Fuelled by allegations that a handful of Jewish zealots were seeking to perform the sacrifice of a goat somewhere on the Temple Mount in observance of the Passover holiday,

Palestinian activists rallied their forces to "defend the Al-Aqsa Mosque." Large stones were hurled from the Temple Mount onto the Jewish prayer area at the Western Wall below. Weapons were gathered and stored in the Al-Aqsa Mosque in preparation for the riots of the subsequent days.

Israeli security forces stringently uphold the 'status quo' on the Temple Mount and have never allowed religious Jews to hold such ceremonies, which would be seen as highly provocative. On this occasion, the police arrested six Jews who were suspected of planning a Passover ritual on the Mount.

The "Al-Aqsa is in danger" claim has a long history, dating back at least to the early 20th century when the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, employed the trope to fire up passions.

Indeed, according to Israeli journalist Nadav Shragai:

Husseini's behavior did not stem from religious faith alone. He concocted the "Al-Aqsa is in danger" libel as part of the building of the Palestinian national ethos, which in those days was still in its earliest stage. He identified the points of ostensible overlap and competition over the holy places of the two religions, emphasized them, and used them as fuel for the fire. The higher its flames rose, the better his purposes were served. (Source: The 'Al-Aqsa Is in Danger' Libel: The History of a Lie, Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, 2012)

Alongside the propagation of this trope to fuel tension, Palestinian leaders have also attempted to erase the Jewish history of Jerusalem, overwriting it with their own narrative. Palestinian spokespeople have sought to de-Judaize the Mount, the Western Wall, and Jerusalem in general.

Indeed, the revisionism goes so far as to deny the Jewish Temples ever existed, even though they are attested by numerous archeological findings, in addition to written sources. While this may be difficult to believe for

anyone with even a passing knowledge of Jerusalem, such disinformation is fully embraced by many in the Arab and Muslim world, having been promulgated for decades by Muslim leaders.



The status quo on Jerusalem's Temple Mount is outdated and unjust, but a clash of values makes it impossible to change (Image: Shutterstock)

The current status quo at the site is largely traceable to Israel voluntarily relinquishing control of the Temple Mount following its recapture in 1967. The famous announcement “The Temple Mount is in our hands!” by the paratroop commander Mordechai Gur during the Six Day War was soon followed by Defence Minister Moshe Dayan’s decision to forbid Jewish prayer and worship on the Mount and to leave the Mount and its management in the hands of the Muslim *Waqf* (religious trust). Dayan hoped to avoid any possibility of religious conflict by granting Islam ongoing religious sovereignty. He sought to limit the Arab-Israeli conflict to the territorial-national level. As a secularist, Dayan completely underestimated the power of mingling religion with national, territorial and political goals.

Dayan maintained the ‘status quo’ which had governed the Temple Mount since Ottoman times. It regulates a range of activities on the mount, including access, hours of prayer, ritual, ceremonies, religious or otherwise, rules of dress and conduct, administrative regulations and management, the character of the site, and police and security protocols. Any shift to any aspect of these

arrangements could ignite a violent conflagration.

Israeli diplomat and international law scholar Ambassador Alan Baker has recently argued regarding the Temple Mount status quo that:

A status quo that perpetuates an ancient and outdated social structure that no longer exists, that practices religious discrimination and denies or restricts rights of worship, should logically no longer be relevant and should not be maintained in modern international society. It is distinctly and blatantly incompatible with accepted international norms and concepts of equality, human rights, freedom of religion and worship, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, tolerance, understanding, and cooperation.

Baker is certainly correct in his assessment that the ‘status quo’ system indeed is out of step with international norms and values of human rights, freedom and tolerance. These are Western values that have been considered part of the bedrock of civilised society. But we are dealing here with a clash of worldviews. The strength of religious feeling that drives Muslim passions regarding the Temple Mount cannot be assuaged by such Western sentiments.

Israeli Arab cleric Sheikh Raed Salah is considered by many to be Haj Amin al-Husseini’s modern-day successor. Salah has revitalised the “Al-Aqsa is in danger” libel, incited violence, and promised to redeem Al-Aqsa “in fire and blood.” Salah’s vision is expansive. He speaks openly of “the global caliphate whose capital is Jerusalem,” which will be “the last stage in the history of the Muslim nation until the End of Days.”

Many Western commentators view the Israel-Palestinian conflict through the lens of power relationships. Thus, Israel is the powerful state actor exerting overwhelming force over hapless Palestinian refugees. And in line with current theories, the

weaker party is automatically granted innocence while the stronger must of necessity be the villain. Such interpretations fail to understand the intransigence of Palestinian leaders, who are not merely rejecting “land for peace” deals, but ultimately any accommodation with Israel and the broader West. At the same time, Western powers attempting to impose “solutions” (i.e. further Israeli concessions), and “social justice” activists standing in solidarity with Palestinians, achieve little of value. Such actions affirm Palestinians in their uncompromising, maximalist demands and stand in the way of progress towards peace.

Israeli politicians hope that by improving opportunities for Palestinians they may mitigate some of the hardships that help fuel aggression. More broadly, improved relations with neighbouring countries via the Abraham Accords offer a different paradigm for the ongoing conflict. Meanwhile, on the ground, two fundamentally opposing visions continue to jostle for supremacy. Israel is compelled to increase security measures to keep civilians safe as political and religious leaders exploit the religious sensitivities surrounding the Temple Mount.

It would seem that Salman Rushdie, Moshe Dayan and Ambassador Alan Baker all share a common worldview, one that values freedom and human rights. Their adversaries reject those values. They are driven by a religious, apocalyptic vision that brooks no compromise toward those with whom they disagree.

Forging effective solutions first requires a correct diagnosis. Until Western leaders recognise the fundamental forces driving the conflict, we can expect little change.

AIR

Dr. Sheree Trotter is Co-Director of New Zealand's Indigenous Coalition for Israel, Co-Director of the Israel Institute of New Zealand and a co-founder of the Holocaust & Antisemitism Foundation Aotearoa NZ.

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THE MONTH IN MEDIA

A ROYAL CALLING

Media coverage of Queen Elizabeth II's passing and the ascension of Charles to the throne inevitably saw a smattering of references to Israelis and Palestinians.

On Sept. 9, *SBS Radio* "Arabic24" Executive Producer Sylva Mezher was quoted on the broadcaster's website saying there was a "huge outpouring of emotion" from listeners calling into the program's morning talkback segment.

The website said this included "callers from the Palestinian community, who expressed disappointment and sadness at the Queen's passing before the 'putting in place of a fair and final outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.'"

On Sept. 10, News Corp papers reported that King Charles had "expressed his wish to be a peacemaker ahead of a trip to Israel and the West Bank in 2020."

OFF KEY

A feature in the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* (Aug. 27) on visiting conductor Zubin Mehta, who is neither Jewish nor even an Israeli citizen, noted his 60-plus year relationship with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra (IPO).

The profile said, "the dirt dished by music critics could hardly be more challenging than the responses in Israel whenever he ventured support for a two-state solution. 'I've spoken my mind, the main politicians know what I think,' he says. 'None of these politicians could ever get rid of me. One or two tried and there was an uproar. Nobody touches Mehta!'"

Calling for a two-state solution is not controversial in Israel. Mehta's criticism has mostly concerned Israeli settlement building in the West Bank.

Israeli respondents to Mehta's criticism have overwhelmingly been respectful, acknowledging his extraordinary support for Israel since he first conducted the IPO in 1961.

In 2003, Mehta conducted the IPO in the carpark of a Jerusalem market that was the target of suicide bombings. He has been highly critical of the boycott Israel movement and condemned Hamas for firing at Israeli towns and cities.

In a 2012 interview, Mehta said of international criticism of Israel that "most of it is unfair. Part of it is fair."

A THAW POINT

An *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sept. 5) report on burgeoning unofficial ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia incorrectly claimed that "Saudi Arabia and its Gulf neighbours shunned the Jewish state in solidarity with the Palestinians expelled to create it."

The reality is that Saudi Arabia's hostility to the Jewish state was cemented well before any Palestinian Arabs were displaced – most were not expelled, and many fled without ever seeing an Israeli soldier – in the 1948 war.

Not only did Saudi Arabia vote against the 1947 UN Partition Plan that would have divided Mandatory Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish state, which would have meant no Palestinian Arabs being displaced, but it also sent fighters to attempt to destroy the nascent Jewish state.

NO CRIME, NO PUNISHMENT

An Israeli finding that there was a high possibility one of its soldiers accidentally killed Al Jazeera journalist

Shireen Abu Akleh during a firefight in Jenin in May was given the ABC treatment.

Middle East correspondent Tom Joyner's report on *ABC TV* "Mornings" (Sept. 6) asked, "How is it that a Palestinian American TV journalist covering an Israeli military raid in the occupied West Bank is shot and killed while doing her job? Shireen Abu Akleh had been wearing a helmet and a clearly marked press vest."

Joyner did not bother to provide any answer. For that, viewers needed to read an *Associated Press* report on the ABC website which stated that an "Israeli official said the soldier's vision from inside the vehicle was 'very limited', causing Ms Abu Akleh to be misidentified in a split-second decision." It might also have noted that she was more than 150 metres from the nearest Israeli soldiers at the time she was killed, so any markings would have been very difficult to see.

Joyner also said that "Palestinian officials... blame Israel for the killing." They did more than that. As the *AP* report noted, "Palestinian officials... accused Israel of intentionally killing Ms Abu Akleh." Joyner's report ended with a statement that "Israel says it will not launch any criminal investigation into the matter, meaning essentially that no soldier nor anyone in the country's military command will face any punishment."

In contrast to Joyner's report, *SBS TV* "News in Arabic" (Sept. 6) included Israel's explanation of why no one deserves to "face any punishment", namely, because "there is no suspicion of a criminal act that justifies the opening of a criminal investigation by the Military Police."

"News in Arabic" also said that in July, "the Israelis spoke of the difficulty of determining the source of

the bullet that killed [Abu Akleh] even though a United Nations investigation [that month] confirmed her death by an Israeli bullet.”

In fact, no impartial investigation “confirmed” any such thing. Initially, the Palestinian Authority had refused to hand over the bullet for analysis. When the bullet was eventually released for analysis, US ballistics experts said it was too badly damaged to draw any conclusions.

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Channel 10's briefest of brief

reports (Sept. 6) on Israel's findings about Abu Akleh said, “Despite wearing body armour with her press credentials visible, an unidentified Israeli soldier shot her in the head. The Israeli army says she was shot by mistake.” No, the Israeli army said if Abu Akleh was killed by a bullet fired by an Israeli soldier, it was because of limited visibility.

Channel Nine's website (Sept. 6) butchered *AP's* report, stating that “In a briefing to reporters yesterday announcing the results of its investigation into the killing, a senior military official said a soldier opened fire after mistakenly identifying Shireen Abu

Akleh as a militant.”

Cut out from the unedited *AP* report was this qualifier by the Israeli spokesperson that, “‘We know that he fired, but it could very well be that this happened from other fire,’ he added.”

FRENCH FOREIGN REGION

By choosing to continue to use Arabic language news content from *France24*, *SBS TV* “News in Arabic” has repeatedly incorrectly informed its viewers that Tel Aviv is Israel's capital.

According to “News in Arabic” (Aug. 23), threats made by Hezbollah



IN PARLIAMENT

Senator **James McGrath** (Lib., Qld) – Sept. 8 – “Israel is a beacon of liberal democracy... Israel exists in a permanent state of war, not because it is an aggressor. But it is a victim... of history... of hatred... of historical antisemitism. Yet, Israel is anything but a victim... all her people, Jewish, Christian, Orthodox, Druze, Muslim, nonbeliever – are free...”

Senator **Hollie Hughes** (Lib., NSW) – Sept. 6 – “Last week I was... in Israel, hosted by the wonderful organisation known as AIJAC... Whilst in Ramallah... this monument we were looking at was to commemorate ‘the suicide bombers who had killed Jewish civilians’. These people were being immortalised... the fact is that the Palestinians have a policy that is colloquially known... as ‘pay for slay’.”

Senator **Hughes** – Sept. 7 – “Fouad AbuGosh has worked for the ABC... last year AbuGosh warned that ‘there is a great Zionist project to dominate and control all Arabs in the region’. That sounds very anti-Israel to me. Is that the view of the ABC?... In April... Abu Ghosh tweeted: ‘This is how the Nazis treated the Jews, maybe it's time for...!!!!’ To me, that is up there with one of the most appalling things you could possibly say.”

Josh Burns (ALP, Macnamara) – Sept. 5 – “I move that this House: ... (2) acknowledges the importance of Holocaust remembrance... (4) calls on all states and territories to follow the lead of Victoria and New South Wales and make Holocaust education... mandatory...; and (5) condemns: (a) antisemitism in all its forms, in line with the IHRA working definition of antisemitism, and resolves to combat it...”

The following comments were made speaking to the above motion:

Allegra Spender (Ind., Wentworth) seconding – “Today, as we are seeing a worrying number of antisemitic incidents reported in our schools and universities, combating antisemitism and

Holocaust denialism has never been more important... We also need meaningful implementation of the IHRA definition of ‘antisemitism’ in our universities. There are still too many antisemitic motions passed by student bodies...”

Assistant Defence Minister **Matt Thistlethwaite** (ALP, Kingsford Smith) – “In 2022, we’re reminded all too often of the need to continue to fight against antisemitism and other forms of bigotry.”

Angie Bell (Lib., Moncrieff) – “I was disgusted during... federal elections to see swastikas and racial slurs graffitied across election materials. I wish I could say it was an isolated incident, but indeed it was not.”

Attorney-General **Mark Dreyfus** (ALP, Isaacs) – “The battle against ignorance and antisemitism is not the responsibility of state and territory governments alone. Tackling racism and prejudice – including antisemitism – is everyone’s responsibility...”

Monique Ryan (Ind., Kooyong) – “Antisemitic incidents are disturbingly common in this country. They are worsened by ignorance – ignorance we have to continue to fight on every front.”

Mike Freedlander (ALP, Macarthur) – “I was shaken to my core when I heard about the antisemitic comments and statements that have occurred around Australia in the last 12 months.”

James Stevens (Lib., Sturt) – “It is depressing to hear stories about a lack of awareness of the Holocaust. It is disgusting to see some of the very recent examples of antisemitism and the glorification of Nazism...”

In the South Australian Parliament, Opposition Leader **David Speirs** (Lib., Black) asked on Sept. 8 – “... will the Premier join with the opposition in condemning the publication of antisemitic statements in the Adelaide University student newspaper *On Dit?*”

Premier **Peter Malinauskas** (ALP, Croydon) – “I most certainly welcome this question... because it does present a powerful opportunity for this parliament to condemn antisemitism in all its forms.”

leader Hasan Nasrallah against Israel were “heard in Tel Aviv”.

The following day the program reported on Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan meeting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and again incorrectly referred to Tel Aviv as Israel’s capital.

On Sept. 8, a report by “News in Arabic” of the status of talks over Iran’s nuclear program twice implied Tel Aviv is Israel’s capital.

Underlining the absurdity of this practice, the same report included footage of US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides stating – in Jerusalem – that the US will not “tie Israel’s hands, so it can defend itself against Iranian aggression.”

LIMITED APPEAL

Hamas’ execution of five unnamed Palestinians in Gaza, two of whom were accused of collaborating with Israel in 2009 and 2015, was a low priority for Australian media.

On Sept. 4, variations of an *AP* report of the executions ran on the websites of regional papers the *West Australian* and the *Canberra Times*. The *Guardian Australia* covered it on Sept. 5. The *AP* story noted that “rights groups in the past have questioned fair-trial standards in the military and civilian courts of the Islamic militant group” and that Hamas has issued 180 death sentences and followed through on 33 of them.

The executions were discussed on *SBS Radio* “Arabic 24”’s weekly cross to its Palestinian correspondent (Sept. 5.)

PLAYING GAMES

In the *Daily Telegraph* (Aug. 24), Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) co-CEO Alex Ryvchin lambasted Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for claiming that Israel had inflicted 50 Holocausts on Palestinians when asked to condemn the massacre of Israeli athletes by Pal-

estinian terrorists at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games.

Ryvchin explained that “The actual Holocaust involved the destruction of a people in purpose-built factories of death and across thousands of killing sites across Europe. The global Jewish population is still yet to reach its pre-war numbers. The Palestinian population has grown fivefold since the 1960s.”

He asserted that “Abbas knows exactly what he is doing. He understands that an abiding source of support for Israel comes from an appreciation of the Jewish quest for security and a home of their own arising from their people being hunted and murdered in their millions... if he destroys the language used to describe these events, the events themselves will lose meaning.”

Ryvchin also expounded on Palestinian leader Haj Amin al-Husseini’s considerable efforts to assist the Nazi genocide against Jews during the Second World War.

In the *Weekend Australian* (Sept. 10), columnist Christopher Allen accused President Abbas of squandering an opportunity to “to be diplomatic, conciliatory, perhaps to reassert the justice of his cause, and yet acknowledge that times had changed and affirm his commitment to peaceful solutions” by refusing to condemn the Munich atrocity.

Like Ryvchin, he too said the “Holocaust was a unique historical event, and genocide – of which it is the most appalling example – has a very specific meaning which must not be cheapened by hyperbolic abuse.”

On *ABC Radio National*, “The Wrap” (Sept. 11) dedicated 50 minutes to reviewing the Munich massacre.

FOLLOWING THE CROWD

The phenomenon of NGOs and activists creating news stories was seen in action in late August.

In early May 2022, Israel’s Su-

preme Court ruled that the up to 1,000 Palestinians illegally squatting on a sparsely populated area of the West Bank called Masafer Yatta, long designated an IDF firing range, can be evicted and their unauthorised buildings demolished.

For whatever reason, three whole months after Israel evicted a small number of Palestinians and demolished their temporary buildings, in late August media organisations, including the ABC, descended on Masafer Yatta and stories about the subject appeared in numerous outlets internationally around the same time.

ABC Middle East correspondent Allyson Horn filed a television report (Aug. 28) and an online article co-authored with ABC fixer Fuad Abu Gosh – whose anti-Israel views have recently been exposed (see p. 39).

On TV, the newsreader’s introduction said, “the area has just been legally declared an Israeli military firing zone, after a two-decade court battle.” Actually, the question of legality was confirmed by courts in the late 1990s.

Horn’s TV report included one Palestinian saying, “We were not given any time to take our belongings out,” but media reports from May confirm Israel gave ample notice ahead of the demolitions

Horn said the UN says “forced evictions of Palestinians here would be a breach of international human rights law” but “the... army... told the ABC the land was uninhabited at the time of the military declaration and that the Palestinian petitioners were not permanent residents of the area”.

Missing was the fact that in the 1990s, there was evidence “residents” who claimed to live in the area actually had permanent homes in the nearby Palestinian town of Yatta, while the Palestinian Authority had encouraged and supported Palestinians to move into the closed military zone and illegally build there.

NO CHARGE?

Media coverage of the 12-year prison sentence handed down by an Israeli civilian court to Mohammed el-Halabi, the former World Vision head in Gaza who was convicted in June of siphoning millions of dollars of aid money to Hamas, mostly failed to include any of the available evidence that convicted him as revealed in the court judgment.

Former World Vision CEO Tim Costello was quoted in an *AAP* story on the *Canberra Times* website (Aug. 30), calling the sentence a “shocking injustice” and insisting Halabi was an innocent man framed by Israel for ideological reasons.

A news brief in the *Australian* (Aug. 31) included the pertinent facts that Halabi was convicted of giving Hamas “tonnes of steel”, being a member of a terrorist group, financing terrorist activities, transmitting “information to the enemy” and possessing a weapon.

On Aug. 20, *ABC TV* “The World” crossed to ABC Middle East correspondent Allyson Horn who made a bizarre attempt to contextualise the argument made by Halabi’s lawyers that the case was politically motivated. According to Horn, “what I mean by that is there is this... long-running disagreement between Israel and Hamas. The two sides do not like each other” – a strange way of describing Hamas’ genocidal ambitions against Israel and Jews.

MO LAUGHING MATTER

Guardian Australia columnist Arwa Mahdawi’s review (Sept. 1) of a *Netflix* television comedy called “Mo”, featuring Palestinian American comedian Mo Amer, was full of her usual bile.

According to Mahdawi, “You can’t even say the P-word without it causing problems... being Palestinian means constantly being told you don’t exist or being accused by certain pro-Israel voices of being antisemitic simply because you assert that you do exist.”

AIR readers may recall that Mahdawi said similarly absurd things in a *Guardian Australia* column in March 2022. As “Noted and Quoted” pointed out at the time, given the vastly disproportionate column space the *Guardian* and many other media organisations devote to Palestinian allegations against Israel, no one could possibly believe or argue Palestinians don’t exist.

Interestingly, “Mo” has actually been criticised by some pro-Palestinian activists for humanising Israelis.

SEEING RED OVER RED LINES

In the *Daily Telegraph* (Sept. 6), *AI-JAC*’s Colin Rubenstein warned that the purported nuclear deal being negotiated with Iran crosses numerous red lines that would give Iran sanctions relief and let it “become if not a fully-fledged nuclear-armed power, then, at minimum, a nuclear threshold state able to weaponise at a moment’s notice, and thus able to enjoy the full strategic and status advantages of being a nuclear power.”

The *Australian* Foreign Editor Greg Sheridan warned (Aug. 20) that the “Biden administration seems weirdly determined, no matter what Iran does, to negotiate an exceptionally weak nuclear safeguards agreement with Tehran. Trump tore up the last such agreement. It too was weak and lifted sanctions on Iran while allowing the Persian power to legitimise its nuclear industry and enrich uranium, all in exchange for a promise not to pursue nuclear weapons.”

Sheridan noted that “many serious analysts believe [that for] Tehran hatred of the US and Israel is more important than anything else... it cannot be moderated through engagement or definitively derailed through sanctions.”

DEAL WITH THE DEVIL?

Earlier, in the *Age* and *Sydney Morn-*

ing Herald (Aug. 15), British journalist Stephen Pollard said the near fatal stabbing attack on novelist Salman Rushdie shows that negotiations to revive the nuclear deal with Iran must stop, given that Teheran still supports the *fatwa* [religious decree] issued by regime founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini against Rushdie.

Pollard wrote, “The BBC was reporting... that the Iranian government had ‘distanced itself’ from the *fatwa*. This is a grotesque distortion... Ali Khamenei, who succeeded Khomeini as supreme leader in 1989, has repeatedly reaffirmed the *fatwa*.”

He lambasted the 2015 nuclear deal and noted that “astonishingly, one of the proposals for the new deal is that Iran can put its advanced centrifuges into storage rather than destroying them. And which country has been charged under the deal being negotiated in Vienna with ensuring that Iran does not behave under the new deal as it did before? I promise I am not joking: Russia.”

A WOMB WITH A VIEW

Interviewed in the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* “Good Weekend” magazine (July 30), demographer Paul Morland noted that Israel was one of the few countries outside of sub-Saharan Africa to buck the trend against falling global birth rates.

Asked to discuss if religion plays a role in the fact that “Israeli women have nearly three times as many children as Singaporean women, although they’re just as educated,” Morland correctly noted that, “in Israel, even secular people have a relatively large number of children.”

He added that “we have to learn something from the societies which have succeeded in modernising while maintaining above-replacement fertility rates. People have to believe in something, including their country or people, and want to sustain it, and/or love the idea and reality of bringing new life into the world.”

MEDIA MICROSCOPE

Allon Lee

IN A FIX

An important light has recently been shone on the employment by media outlets of Palestinians and Israeli Arabs with toxic views on Israel and Jews, as fixers and journalists to assist in news gathering about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

On Sept. 5, the *Australian Media* Editor James Madden reported on nasty anti-Israel social media posts by Fouad Abu Gosh, who has worked for the ABC as a news producer and fixer since 2014.

Abu Gosh's name has appeared periodically over the years in the *AIR*, including in this edition of "Noted & Quoted" (see pg. 37) and in February 2022, when he received a co-credit with the ABC Middle East correspondent Tom Joyner for an online article about convicted Palestinian terrorists that was gussied up as a love story, and minimised their crimes.

According to Madden, "in October last year, Abu Gosh warned that 'there is a great Zionist project to dominate and control all Arabs in the region!!'" and "in April this year, he posted a screenshot of Israeli police detaining an unidentified civilian, and added a comment: 'This is how the Nazis treated the Jews, maybe it's time for....!!!!'"

Madden's article noted that Abu Gosh's Twitter page stated he is a "Middle East producer for Australian Broadcasting Corporation, opinions are mine and ABC's," which "contravene[s] ABC Managing Director David Anderson's directive for ABC employees to make it clear posts or likes are 'personal view[s] and do not reflect the views of the ABC.'"

Madden asked the ABC to comment if it was "concerned about the nature of Abu Gosh's social media posts" but, "despite repeated requests for follow-up comment... *The Australian* received no reply. Attempts to contact Abu Gosh directly were unsuccessful."

Despite the lack of public comment on the issue from the ABC, Madden reported that Abu Gosh's Twitter page was deleted subsequent to his contact with it regarding Abu Gosh.

AIJAC's Colin Rubenstein was quoted in the story saying, "These revelations about extreme and offensive views and what can be described as activism by a key ABC employee are deeply concerning and should be addressed by editorial management given the ABC's statutory obligation to ensure its news and current affairs content is fair and balanced."

"Australian Media Editor James Madden reported on nasty anti-Israel social media posts by Fouad Abu Gosh, who has worked for the ABC as a news producer and fixer since 2014"

Discussing Abu Gosh later that day with Madden's *Australian* colleague Sophie Elsworth on his *Sky News* program, Chris Kenny said of the tweets, "We always see this. [The ABC] always are anti-Israel." Concurring, Elsworth said,

"David Anderson, the Managing Director of the ABC, said he would not be tolerating bad behaviour on social media. But yet again, this is another example and a shocking example, Chris, of where staff are getting away with very poor behaviour online and the ABC doing

absolutely nothing about it."

On Sept. 8, a report in the *Australian Jewish News* on Abu Gosh quoted an ABC spokesperson saying the broadcaster was "reviewing [his] social media activity... The ABC has clear policies on employees' personal use of social media, and if a breach of the policy is found to have occurred a range of actions can be taken."

Earlier, on Aug. 21, Madden had reported on the work done by Gaza-based Palestinian fixer Fady Hanona for SBS, ABC and the *Guardian*.

Hanona was recently fired by the *New York Times* after his antisemitic social media posts were exposed.

These posts included Hanona saying he would be "so happy" about "killing [Jews] and burning them like Hitler did."

Madden reported that a *Guardian* spokesman said it "published one piece of video journalism by the freelance journalist you mention. We have no plans to work with him in future."

According to an ABC spokesman quoted, Hanona "garaged an ABC car in Gaza and carried out ad hoc logistics work for stories in Gaza. He is not an employee and the ABC hasn't aired any stories by him."

SBS told Madden that *SBS Radio* "Arabic24" "used Mr Hanona as a stringer from Gaza... [but] we won't be working with him going forward."

In fact, Hanona had been *SBS Radio* "Arabic24's" correspondent reporting weekly from the "Palestinian territories" under the byline of "Fady Hossam" every Monday for seven minutes. AIJAC has documented instances on "Arabic24" where Hanona used language inappropriate for an SBS journalist and made factually incorrect claims during May 2022, when small groups of Jews visited the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif.

A *Sky News* report (Aug. 22) on Hanona said SBS was asked for comment but it "has not replied".

THE LAST WORD

Jeremy Jones

THE ON DIT AFFAIR

Until a few weeks ago, very few people would have heard of Habibah Jaghoori.

A student of journalism, she has been contributing to, and later co-editing, the Adelaide University Student Union's newspaper, *On Dit*, over the past three years.

Her novel sentence structure and fast-and-loose attitude to conventional grammar and syntax make reading much of her writing a challenge.

Nevertheless, her opinions and beliefs are easy to understand, if difficult to digest.

A piece published in August concluded, "Free Palestine and Death to Israel," and was posted on Facebook with the additional slogans "Glory to the Intifada. Glory to the Resistance."

In April, she claimed Israel is "a product of Capitalism's chokehold on land sovereignty, self-determination and freedom," telling readers of her opposition to dialogue or peaceful pursuit of Palestinian aims. She signed off, "Glory to the Intifada! InshAllah it will be merciless."

"Dirty and anti-human behaviour is the culture of Israel," she wrote, adding, "In Ramadan especially, Israeli forces will make it their mission to tear Palestinian families apart by killing their children."

Her social media postings also include condemnation of human rights activists in Iran, support for Iranian government brutality and celebration of the permanent Iranian Islamic Revolution.

She includes in her biography that she worked for the Iranian radio station *Call to Islam*, which is on the more fundamentalist side of the innately fundamentalist Iranian media spectrum.

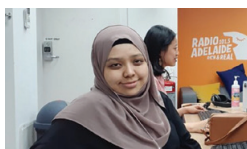
After her bullying and threatening "Death to Israel" article, it came to light that she had also attempted to stop Australia's main Jewish student organisation, AUJS, being "established and affiliated onto my campus."

She claimed, "Someone from the clubs committee has reached out to me saying that they will vote against AUJS (the Jewish Students Union) if there is a statement from a Jewish official." So, whom did Jaghoori approach to be her co-conspiring Jewish official? That well-known "Jewish leader",

"Rabbi Linda Goldstein, Chief Rabbi of Gaza."

As David Lange wrote on his *Israellycool* website, "this person who writes 'Death to Israel' is so ignorant and stupid, she believes Gaza... has a 'Chief Rabbi'!" ("Rabbi Linda Goldstein" is a parody twitter account).

When she became the object of some relatively mild on-line rebukes over this absurdity, Jaghoori responded, in her particular variation on the English language, "The false Rabbi who reached out to me is an honest mistake but that is so not the point. The point is Israel is a genocidal and apartheid state and Free Palestine."



Fired: *On Dit* editor Habibah Jaghoori (Image: Twitter)

Ms Jaghoori was supported by the Students' Representative Council, after a disgraceful debate in which hate speech and bullying of pro-Israel students was defended. The members of the SRC and others who supported Ms Jaghoori will need to deal with their culpability, having outed themselves as bullies and supporters of an Iranian shill.

Both sides of the South Australian Parliament condemned the *On Dit* piece. Opposition Leader David Speirs noted, "In the same week that extremists defaced Adelaide's Holocaust Museum, Jewish students at Adelaide University were stunned to see a majority of their elected SRC representatives supporting the position of the author, who repeatedly shouted the statement 'death to Israel' at a meeting." Premier Peter Malinauskas said the discussion "presented a powerful opportunity for this parliament to condemn antisemitism in all its forms."

Jaghoori was dismissed from her *On Dit* position on Sept. 13 by the Student Union (the publisher of *On Dit*). The Student Union also voted to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism – evidence that the body sought to act responsibly and protect Jewish students from group defamation, harassment and worse.

But, in an abrogation of moral responsibility, the University administration hasn't yet called out Jaghoori's behaviour or done anything to protect the victims of recent poisonous developments in the atmosphere on campus.

The University administration has thus demonstrated a lack of will or ability to protect Jewish students, and a gross failure of leadership in confronting hate speech. They should be ashamed.

AIR



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