

SOCGERED IN?

Inside Qatar's controversial and politicised World Cup

A TERRIBLE UN TRADITION

Australia's changing votes in the annual UN ritual of passing one-sided anti-Israel resolutionsPAGE 17

HATE MAINSTREAMED

Celebrities bring previously marginalised antisemitism out of the closetPAGE 27

BIBI & CO.

Netanyahu's efforts to form a new coalition government with some controversial partnersPAGE 21

MOTION SICKNESS

Ill-informed, counter-productive resolutions passed in SA parliamentPAGE 40



TARRAWARRA

ESTATE

311 HEALESVILLE – YARRA GLEN ROAD,
YARRA GLEN, VIC 3775 +61 3 5962 3311
WWW.TARRAWARRA.COM.AU

With Compliments

Besen Pty. Ltd.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This *AIR* edition looks at the politicised soccer World Cup which has just taken place in Qatar, a state with serious human rights problems and a proliferator of both intolerant Islamism and antisemitism.

Israeli reporter Ash Obel reports from Qatar on the efforts to suppress protests against the Iranian regime and in support of LGBTIQ rights, as well as the harassment of Israeli reporters there. Meanwhile, Seth Frantzman makes a strong case that Qatar made a deliberate decision to encourage and support pro-Palestinian protest as a distraction from the other World Cup controversies.

Also featured this month is a look at the UN's annual tradition of passing dozens of one-sided anti-Israel resolutions, and Australia's changing votes on these counter-productive resolutions, written by Justin Amler. In addition, both Colin Rubenstein and Alana Schetzer look at the concerning mainstreaming of antisemitic discourse, with once marginalised anti-Jewish claims now being voiced openly by high profile celebrities and becoming ubiquitous on social media.

Finally, don't miss our detailed coverage of the intense political horse-trading as Israeli PM-elect Binyamin Netanyahu seeks to form a governing coalition with some controversial figures, Fiamma Nirenstein on the world's new understanding of the Iranian regime and Israeli strategic analyst Dan Schueftan's look at the recent transformation of Israel's place in the Middle East.

As always, your feedback is invited at editorial@aijac.org.au.

Tzvi Fleischer

CONTENTS

FEATURE STORIES

SOCCERED IN?

ASH OBEL

Qatar's history of intolerance for gays, disregard for the rights of migrant workers, and the wider Arab world's longstanding rejection of Israel have reverberated throughout the competition **PAGE 12**

"PALESTINE" AS WORLD CUP DISTRACTION?

SETH FRANTZMAN **PAGE 14**

A TERRIBLE UN TRADITION

Australia's changing stance on Israeli-Palestinian resolutions
JUSTIN AMLER **PAGE 17**

NETANYAHU-LED COALITION TAKING SHAPE

BICOM & AIJAC STAFF **PAGE 21**

BEZALEL SMOTRICH'S FINANCIAL TRIALS

AMOTZ ASA-EL **PAGE 22**

THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS & ISRAEL'S COALITION

DAVID WEINBERG **PAGE 25**

AN AWAKENING ON IRAN'S AYATOLLAHS

FIAMMA NIRENSTEIN **PAGE 26**

JEWS ARE NEWS ON TWITTER

ALANA SCHETZER **PAGE 27**

FANS OF IRAN AND RUSSIA AT IT AGAIN

RAN PORAT **PAGE 29**

ESSAY: MORE THAN NORMALISATION

The new Mideast strategic landscape
DAN SCHUEFTAN **PAGE 31**



ON THE COVER

Supporters show a flag reading "Free Palestine" during the World Cup group match between the Netherlands and Qatar, at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, Qatar, Nov. 29, 2022. (Image: AAP/Ariel Schalit)



REGULAR COLUMNS

FROM THE EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN

COLIN RUBENSTEIN **PAGE 4**

WORD FOR WORD **PAGE 5**

SCRIBBLINGS

TZVI FLEISCHER **PAGE 6**

DECONSTRUCTION ZONE

MARK REGEV **PAGE 7**

ASIA WATCH

MICHAEL SHANNON **PAGE 8**

EUROPA EUROPA

ALEX BENJAMIN **PAGE 9**

BEHIND THE NEWS **PAGE 10**

STRANGER THAN FICTION **PAGE 11**

NOTED AND QUOTED **PAGE 35**

IN PARLIAMENT **PAGE 36**

MEDIA MICROSCOPE

ALLON LEE **PAGE 39**

THE LAST WORD

JAMIE HYAMS **PAGE 40**

HOW TO USE OUR INTERACTIVE EDITION

- Tap/click to return to the Contents page
- All listed articles link to their page.
- Best viewed in your desktop browser or the Books (iOS) or equivalent e-book reader app in portrait mode.



Australia/Israel Review

Published by the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC)

Editorial Chairman**Dr COLIN RUBENSTEIN AM****Editor-in-Chief****Dr TZVI FLEISCHER****Senior Contributing Editor****JEREMY JONES AM****Staff Writers****ALLON LEE, JAMIE HYAMS OAM, AHRON SHAPIRO, OVED LOBEL, JUDY MAYNARD, TAMMY REZNIK, JUSTIN AMLER****Publishing Manager****MICHAEL SHANNON****Correspondents****ISRAEL: AMOTZ ASA-EL
NEW ZEALAND: MIRIAM BELL
EUROPE: ALEX BENJAMIN****National Editorial Board****KEITH BEVILLE, RABBI RALPH GENENDE OAM, GARY HERZ, MIRIAM LASKY, STEVE LIEBLICH, RABBI JOHN LEVI AC, Hon. HOWARD NATHAN AM, IAN WALLER SC****AIJAC****National Chairman****MARK LEIBLER AC****NSW Chairman****PAUL RUBENSTEIN****Executive Director****Dr COLIN RUBENSTEIN AM****Director of International & Community Affairs****JEREMY JONES AM****Policy and Research Coordinator****Dr TZVI FLEISCHER****Executive Manager****JOEL BURNIE****Senior Policy Analysts****AHRON SHAPIRO, JAMIE HYAMS OAM, ALLON LEE****Policy Analysts****OVED LOBEL, JUDY MAYNARD, JUSTIN AMLER****Research Associate****Dr RAN PORAT****Multimedia Designer****AREK DYBEL****Digital Communications Producer****ALANA SCHETZER****Digital and Policy Analyst****TAMMY REZNIK****Events Coordinator****HELEN BRUSTMAN OAM****Administration****MELBOURNE: ROSEMARY SANDLER, RENA LANGBERG
SYDNEY: LOUISE DE MESQUITA****Israel Liaison****PETER ADLER****Founding Chairmen****ISADOR MAGID AM (OBM), ROBERT ZABLUD (OBM)****HEAD OFFICE****Level 1, 22 Albert Road,
South Melbourne, VIC 3205, Australia
Telephone: (03) 9681 6660
Email: aijac@aijac.org.au****SYDNEY OFFICE****140 William Street
East Sydney, NSW 2011, Australia
Telephone: (02) 9360 5415
Email: ldemesquita@aijac.org.au****SUBSCRIPTIONS****Please send all remittances, changes of address and subscription inquiries to:
Australia/Israel Review
Level 1, 22 Albert Road
South Melbourne, VIC 3205, Australia
Email: admin-aijac@aijac.org.au
ISSN No. 1442-3693
Print Post Approved – 100007869****www.aijac.org.au****FROM THE
EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN****COLIN RUBENSTEIN**

WHEN HATRED IS NORMALISED

Whether browsing through newspaper headlines or scrolling through Twitter, there is no escaping the grim reality that antisemitic hatred is again on the rise around the world, including here in Australia. In fact, it has broken into the mainstream in a way not seen in decades.

Experts say it's not so much that the oldest hatred is back. Rather, it simply never left, but today those who harbour antisemitic beliefs are becoming much less inhibited in shamelessly expressing and acting on them.

We're seeing this in popular culture. In late November, the North Melbourne Football Club drafted Harry Sheezel – set to become the first Jewish athlete to enter the AFL since 1999. An occasion which should have been a tribute to Australian multiculturalism was spoiled by numerous antisemitic slurs transmitted through radio talkback and comments online.

Meanwhile, in the United States, rapper Kanye West (now calling himself “Ye”), with almost 50 million followers on social media, recently became so brazen with his antisemitic views that he challenged his business partner and sponsor Adidas to drop his highly profitable personal line of shoes after he began threatening Jews on Twitter. To his surprise, the company eventually did, though only after intense public pressure. He then doubled down on his antisemitism in interview after interview, eventually praising Hitler and engaging in Holocaust denial.

Disturbingly, West's actions were defended by some celebrities and public figures, and similar ideas were spread by other celebrities such as basketball star Kyrie Irving.

Even more shockingly, West was later invited to a friendly dinner, alongside a white supremacist who has also spewed Jew hatred, with former US President Donald Trump at the latter's estate.

“I would characterise this as the normalisation of antisemitism,” Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the authoritative Anti-Defamation League anti-racism organisation, said of the meeting. “It has now become part of the political process in a way we hadn't seen before,” he stressed.

Greenblatt is right. Antisemitism is clearly evident across the political spectrum, and among those disengaged from politics altogether, from celebrities and athletes to the general public. The sad truth is that for some of these loathsome people, despising, defaming and denigrating Jews might be the only thing they have in common.

Ironically, it appears to be especially prevalent in so-called “woke” progressive circles – those who self-righteously claim to hold the moral high ground on opposing all forms of racism and discrimination. For them, to borrow the name of British comedian David Baddiel's best-selling book on antisemitism, “Jews Don't Count” in essence. The perverse logic that underpins this stems from their over-simplistic formulation that “racism equals prejudice plus power.” From there it supposedly follows that Jews, whom they perceive as innately powerful – an antisemitic trope in itself – cannot be victims of racism. Meanwhile, members of perceived weak groups – including African Americans, Muslims and Palestinians – cannot be victimisers.

This way of thinking has encouraged and facilitated the spread of antisemitism in many different directions, including among people of colour. It has also provided a safe haven for antisemitism among the most rejectionist Palestinian Arabs and their supporters in

their campaign against the very existence of Israel. This, in spite of the fact that Jews are ethnically diverse, indigenous to the land where they became a people and have historically been subject to relentless persecution by the same European peoples at the core of the key “woke” concept of “white privilege”.

The mainstreaming of antisemitism across much of the political spectrum is having dramatic effects on the well-being and safety of Jewish communities across the globe. There are huge increases in incidents of violence and harassment against Jews in many countries. Over 2020-2021, antisemitic incidents in the UK increased by 78%, in France by 75%, and in the US by 34%.

What can society do to derail this runaway train towards normalisation of antisemitism? The first step in dealing with the problem is forming a consensus around its definition. This can be tricky because Jews are simultaneously a religion, an ethnicity and a people that possess a national homeland, Israel. This is where the 2016 International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism has been so helpful.

The IHRA definition takes a common sense approach to the matter of antisemitism when it comes to Israel. While explicitly making it clear that Israel and its policies can be criticised like any other country, it recognises that some extreme forms of such criticism may be antisemitic. This seems obviously necessary – too many extremists today blatantly substitute the words “Zionists” or “Israel” for the


word “Jews” when spreading hateful tropes dating back millennia.

Shamefully, IHRA’s thoughtful and sensible approach has been misrepresented by the Palestinian lobby and its supporters, who allege it makes all criticism of Israel anti-semitic. It absolutely and explicitly does not.

We should all be grateful for the bipartisan support for the IHRA definition in Canberra. The Morrison Government officially embraced it and PM Anthony Albanese supported it while still in opposition. But there is more work to be done, and the need is urgent.

The single most urgent field to tackle is social media, where much of the cesspool of hate that has now burst into the mainstream originated and continues to fester (see p. 28). This is why AIJAC has joined 180 other non-profit and civil rights organisations in calling on Twitter to adopt the IHRA definition for purposes of content moderation.

Australian governments, federal, state and local, which have adopted the definition must also now do much more to implement that adoption across departments and agencies so it can be actively deployed to help identify antisemitism whenever it arises in our society.

Reducing, containing and marginalising antisemitism is important for the world, not only for the welfare of the Jewish people, because history has shown us that the moral decay that antisemitism represents may start with the targeting of Jews, but it almost never ends there. 

“WORD FOR WORD”

“I just won’t accept any of that... I ultimately decide policy.”

Incoming Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu on the desire of some of his far-right coalition partners to limit LGBTIQ rights (*Times of Israel*, Dec. 4).

“At the current level of production of this enriched uranium, Iran has accumulated already enough material to have more than one [nuclear] device, if they chose to do that.”

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director-General Rafael Grossi (*CBS*, Nov. 20).

“I would not be negotiating with Iran on anything right now, including the nuclear agreement.”

Former US Secretary of State and presidential candidate Hillary Clinton (*CNN*, Dec. 1).

“By refusing to sing the anthem they’re actually joining a chorus, joining a chorus in Iran and around the world that has grown

steadily louder over the last two months.”

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong on Iran’s football team not singing the regime’s national anthem before its game at the World Cup in Qatar (*Sydney Morning Herald*, Nov. 22).

“The people of Iran deserve freedom and prosperity, and their uprising is legitimate and necessary to achieve their rights. I hope to see the victory of the people and the overthrow of this tyranny ruling Iran soon.”

Badri Hosseini Khamenei, sister of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in a letter published on Twitter (*Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 7).

“You have a right to resist this occupation... The West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip are what is left of what historically used to be Palestine... This language isn’t new, but it will help the international community to feel uncomfortable with the two-state solution.”

UN Special Rapporteur on Palestine Francesca Albanese appearing to endorse Palestinian violence when remotely addressing a conference organised by the Hamas-affiliated Council on International Relations (*J-wire*, Dec. 1).



SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

THE SPEED OF LIES

There is an old adage often attributed to Winston Churchill, “A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.”

If Churchill ever actually said this, he certainly didn’t originate it. The adage is centuries old, and is now generally sourced to a 1710 quote from the satirist Jonathan Swift: “Falsehood flies, and truth comes limping after it; so that when men come to be undeceived, it is too late; the jest is over, and the tale has had its effect...”

Swift’s version, emphasising that lies can have lasting effects that cannot be undone by later truth, is particularly apropos today in the era of social media, when lies can spread widely, instantly. This is especially true in the Israeli-Palestinian arena.



An image from the selectively edited footage of the Dec. 2 confrontation near Nablus (Image: Twitter)

A good example followed a terror attack at Huwarra, near Nablus in the West Bank, on Dec. 2. A 22-year-old Palestinian named Ammar Mefleh, armed with a knife, tried to break into the car of an Israeli couple and stab them. One of them was

an off-duty soldier, who pulled out a gun and wounded Mefleh. Mefleh then ran at a nearby Border Police officer and stabbed him in the face. Another officer tried to restrain and arrest Mefleh, but two Palestinians tried to pull him free. Mefleh managed to partially free himself and attempted to grab the officer’s rifle, which fell to the ground. The officer then shot him dead with a sidearm.

Footage released shows almost all of this, so there is no real dispute over the course of events.

But Palestinian social media accounts posted edited footage of the incident, making it appear the officer shot Mefleh for no good reason after a scuffle. And both official Palestinian media and Palestinian officials, including the office of PA President Mahmoud Abbas, insisted that Mefleh’s death was “a despicable crime of execution, which was committed by an Israeli soldier in cold blood.”

Sadly, these sorts of lies are the default claim spread in the Palestinian media whenever a Palestinian is killed while committing a terrorist attack – even when the evidence that the Palestinian initiated the violence appears undeniable.

But in this case, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, was deceived

by the Palestinian lie, spreading and magnifying it further. He tweeted that he was “Horried by today’s killing of a Palestinian man, Ammar Mefleh, during a scuffle with an Israeli soldier... My heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family. Such incidents must be fully & promptly investigated, & those responsible held accountable.”

The lie did its job, and the truth cannot really undo it, as Swift warned.

Sadly, this is a pattern in the UN’s agencies – Palestinian lies are often accepted as gospel without the need to check the evidence. Such lies have major consequences – claims that Israeli soldiers are murdering innocent Palestinian youths for no good reason “in cold blood” contribute to other young Palestinians deciding, like Mefleh, to carry out murderous attacks in the name of “revenge”. They too may end up dying, possibly taking Israeli civilians or soldiers with them, and the cycle continues.

Such are the speed and power of lies in the current age.

AL JAZEERA OPENLY CHEERS FOR TERRORISM AND CALLS FOR MORE

Many people remain convinced that Al Jazeera, the well-funded and slick TV network owned and paid for by the Qatari royal family, is a professional and trustworthy news source, despite exposé after exposé of the network’s blatant cheerleading for terrorism in general, and particularly against Israel. Even a media award by the terrorist group Hamas to the network, hailing its services to the “resistance” (meaning terrorism), hasn’t really dented its credibility in many circles.

A recent article that illustrates the sorts of things Al Jazeera says in Arabic is “A Palestinian Hat-trick in Ariel, and the scorer is 18 years old”, by Muhammad Khair Musa, a Palestinian writer, published by Al Jazeera on Nov. 21.

The story concerns a murderous terrorist attack on Nov. 15 near Ariel in the West Bank. A Palestinian youth named Muhammed Souf, armed with a knife, first stabbed a security guard and then attacked a crowd at a nearby gas station, stabbing three more people. He then stole the car of someone who had gotten out to try to help the wounded, rammed into some Israeli cars and ran over one person. He then got out, stabbed another person, stole another car, and rammed that into other cars before being shot dead by a soldier and an armed civilian.

He murdered three people – Tamir Avihai, Michael Laidygin and Motti Ashkenazi – and seriously wounded three others. All were civilians.

In the Al Jazeera article mentioned above, Souf is presented both as an absolute hero who scored a “hat-trick” by murdering three Jews, and someone who all Palestinians, and Muslims generally, have an obligation to imitate.

The article starts:

History will record for a long time that on Tuesday the fifteenth of November... a young man named Muhammad Souf, at the

age of eighteen ... executed an epic triple in the face of a heavily armed army, and he had nothing but a knife in his hand and a heart in his chest that did not fear death.

The article repeatedly praises his supposedly great achievement in making the “Zionist entity... taste terror.”

Musa ends by comparing Souf to the young companions of the prophet Muhammad, and says Souf sent a message to “the youth of the Islamic nation in general and the Palestinian people in particular,” namely, “You are the ones who bear the responsibility to renew the birth of these models.”

In other words, murdering Israeli civilians like Souf did is a religious obligation for Muslims.

Al Jazeera in Arabic routinely celebrates terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians, and calls for more murderous terrorist violence, thus deliberately aiding and abetting terrorism – a crime in most countries. It should be treated accordingly.

AIR



Mark Regev

75 YEARS OF SELF-INFLICTED INJURY

It is well known that on November 29, 1947, the Palestinian Arabs rejected the UN partition proposal that awarded them an independent sovereign state in the territory of British Mandatory Palestine. Less understood is that they not only harboured a deep ideological hostility to the concept of partition, but also opposed all other possible alternative compromises with the Jews.

For Zionists, the partition plan was undoubtedly flawed: the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) divided the homeland; allotted the Jews territory separated into three areas (two of them very small and the third largely desert); and internationalised Jerusalem, leaving the ancient capital outside the borders of the proposed Jewish state.

Nonetheless, the Jews celebrated the General Assembly's support for partition. For them, the UNSCOP plan's multiple drawbacks were mitigated by one overriding factor: the organised international community had endorsed the principle of Jewish statehood. Everything else was secondary.

Popular enthusiasm for the resolution can be seen in black and white footage shot contemporaneously: The Jews of Mandatory Palestine glued to their radios, listening to the live broadcast from Lake Success where the UN was meeting; marking down each UN member's vote in the “yes”, “no”, or “abstain” columns – and when the two-thirds majority was achieved, erupting in spontaneous jubilation, literally dancing in the streets.

While Jews in their thousands rejoiced in the UN vote, an important minority refused to be caught up in the enthusiasm. Underground commanders, the Irgun's Menachem Begin and Lehi's Yitzhak Shamir – both future Likud prime ministers – staunchly opposed partition.

So, too, did important elements in the labour movement: Yitzhak Tabenkin's United Kibbutz and Meir Ya'ari's Hashomer Hatzair – the former committed to the land of Israel, the latter championing a Marxist bi-nationalism.

Amazingly, the partition vote saw the two Cold War arch rivals, the United States and the Soviet Union, line up on the same side of the debate.

In contrast to the narrative portraying Israel as a colonialist implant, Jewish statehood received backing not merely from Western countries like the US, France, Australia, Canada and the Netherlands, but also from anti-imperialist Communist Bloc countries like Czechoslovakia and Poland, and the Soviet Union itself.

The Soviet UN delegate, Andrei Gromyko, in support of partition, declared: “The fact that no Western European state has been able to ensure the defence of the elementary rights of the Jewish people and to safeguard it against the violence of the fascist executioners explains the aspirations of the Jews to establish their own state.”

Concurrently, Great Britain, the Middle East's hegemonic colonial power, opposed Jewish independence and later provided military support to the Arab countries in their attack upon the nascent State of Israel.

Unlike the Jews, who heatedly debated the pros and cons of partition, the Palestinian Arab leadership did not entertain public doubts. Its united opposition to the UNSCOP plan was consistent with a longstanding hardline approach. A decade before the 1947 vote, the Palestinians turned down the British government's Peel Commission partition plan that awarded the Arab side some 75% of the territory.

It was not just a Jewish state, regardless of its size and borders, that was abhorrent to the Palestinians. They rejected both the UNSCOP majority report favouring partition, backed by eight of the committee's 11 members, as well as its minority proposal, supported by three members, which called for a federal unitary Palestine in which the Jews would enjoy an autonomous status. Apparently, any arrangement that protected the Jews' national rights was deemed repugnant.

As threatened by Arab UN representatives, the passing of UNSCOP's partition proposal led to an immediate escalation of Palestinian violence against the Jews. And in May 1948, when the British Mandate ended and the State of Israel was established, the surrounding Arab countries invaded in support of their Palestinian brethren.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Upon suffering diplomatic defeat in the General Assembly, the Arab world chose to overturn the UN's determination through the force of



arms. The ensuing bloodshed and displacement stemmed directly from that decision.

This upcoming May, the Palestinians will not be joining the Israelis in celebrating the 75-year existence of the Jewish state. Instead, they will mourn their *Nakba* (“catastrophe”). But perhaps they should recall, at a historic inflection point – as the Union Jack was lowered and the colonial power departed – when the opportunity for sovereignty was within reach, which side embraced partition, and which side rejected it.

Ultimately, had the Palestinian position been more pragmatic and moderate, they too could have been celebrating a diamond jubilee Independence Day alongside Israel.

AIR

Ambassador Mark Regev, formerly an adviser to the Israeli prime minister, is chair of the Abba Eban Institute for Diplomacy at Reichman University. © Jerusalem Post (www.jpost.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

WHATEVER IT TAKES

It took more than two decades and a few stints in prison but Malaysia’s perpetual prime-minister-in-waiting, Anwar Ibrahim, finally occupies his country’s highest political office. Yet the terms of his elevation are laced with compromise and the seeds of his potential downfall, if not from an Opposition determined to play racial politics, then from Anwar’s notional ‘unity government’ allies.

The Anwar-led Pakatan Harapan (PH) bloc secured 82 parliamentary seats at the polls, ahead of former PM Muhyiddin Yassin’s conservative Perikatan Nasional (PN) bloc with 73 seats, but not enough for a simple majority of 112 to form a government. The once-dominant Barisan Nasional (BN) delivered its worst-ever electoral performance, winning just 30 seats, but the efforts of Malaysia’s king, or Yang di-Pertuan Agong, in resolving the political impasse resulted in BN being ushered into an unlikely governing alliance with Anwar.

It’s hard to overstate how precarious this ‘unity’ government is. Anwar is compelled by circumstances to take on as his deputy prime minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, the president of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and a man who faces 47 counts of criminal breach of trust, corruption and money laundering charges. In doing so, he has compromised a core tenet of the Pakatan bloc, which campaigned against political corruption, but now has its old nemesis UMNO as a partner, the very party he had helped unseat in the 2018 general election on

an anti-graft platform. The question is how much Anwar will have to compromise on principle to retain power, especially with UMNO trying to keep its so-called “court cluster” of indicted politicians out of jail.

In the lead-up to polling day, Anwar was unequivocal. “Any form of coalition will be a major setback because you are having a coalition with essentially racist or Muslim fanatics,” he said, also stating that the 60-year reign of UMNO and BN had led to corruption, nepotism and cronyism.

Not only must Anwar placate his own loyal Pakatan supporters, many of whom are dismayed at his taking on board UMNO, but he must also satisfy the disparate parties within his coalition, most of whom are traditional adversaries, with differing ideologies and electoral constituencies.

To Anwar’s right flank is the official Opposition, Muhyiddin Yassin’s Malay-centric PN, whose senior partner is the rural Islamist Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS) – with 43 seats, now the largest single party in the 222-seat parliament. PN’s strategy is to play directly to its obvious constituency, the Malay heartlands.

This was already in evidence during the campaign. Hiving off Malay support from UMNO, PN supporters spread hostile racial posts on social media and continued attacks on the ethnic Chinese-dominated Democratic Action Party (DAP), a core member of Anwar’s coalition. PN leader Muhyiddin accused Pakatan of a ‘Christianisation’ agenda for Malaysia (although he claimed he was taken out of context), while PAS President Abdul Hadi Awang was noted for accusing the DAP of being communists, citing its alleged atheism and “promotion” of LGBTQ rights.

One PAS MP allegedly went even further. An audio recording emerged of a woman who had claimed there was Israeli influence in the appointment of Anwar Ibrahim as prime minister. In the recording, which went viral on Twitter, the woman alleged that PAS MP Hassan Saad told her that his party had secured enough votes to form the government, but Anwar had “contacted Israel and foreign powers” to interfere in his appointment.


Anwar immediately responded, issuing an ultimatum to Hassan to provide written confirmation that he was not involved in the matter. Anwar also demanded that the audio recording be retracted. According to the *New Straits Times*, Hassan has denied any involvement with the recording.

PH communications director Fahmi Fadzil said the party would take strict measures and lodge police reports against any slander hurled against it. “We won’t take any action over criticism but we draw the line at slander, for instance, being linked to Israel,” he said.



Anwar: Malaysian PM at last, but under compromised conditions (Image: Twitter)

The repeated invocation of the Israeli or Jewish boogymen is one of the more resilient features of Malaysian political culture, but in an ironic footnote, one of its most notable progenitors has ingloriously departed the political scene.

Perhaps the biggest surprise rout in the election was that of 97-year-old former PM Mahathir Mohamad, who came in fourth in a five-cornered fight in his constituency of Langkawi. The former giant of Malaysian politics suffered the further indignity – like his 57-year-old son and political heir Mukhriz – of losing his campaign deposit by failing to obtain more than one-eighth of the votes cast. 



Alex Benjamin

A BRIDGE TO AN UGLY PLACE

I'm writing this column from cold Sofia, Bulgaria, where I'm attending a conference of Prosecutors General and religious leaders from across Europe titled "Stop Hate Speech".

The conference is a first for me. I was raised on the idea of the separation of church and state. Moderating a panel of religious leaders addressing a room full of the sharpest legal minds in Europe, it was fascinating to watch these two very different groups find common cause.

But even more unusual was that in the middle of often tough and painful discussions of examples of antisemitism, and the case law for dealing with them, there were asides: some speakers were openly making reference to the World Cup. Light-hearted rivalries would always appear, pantomime boos and cheers prevail and everyone would become an armchair national team manager after the business cards were exchanged and small talk began.

To me, this kind of national patriotism is a good thing. A love of country and what it stands for, wearing a tie in national colours or gentle chiding of another country's lack of prowess on the pitch brings people together and breaks down barriers (who knew that that stern-looking Minister of Justice is married to a Brazilian and loves soccer?). It is inclusive – everyone can be a supporter, and anyone will hug anyone after a goal.

Nationalism, on the other hand, can often be chauvinistic and exclusive and based on a narrow sense of what constitutes a nation and who can be part of it.

Let us look at British patriotism and nationalism for a minute. British patriotism is the Royal Family, fish and chips (or tikka masala), and the multi-faceted nature of the country where anyone can be a citizen and all are welcome as long as they respect some basic shared values.

British nationalism, on the other hand, is usually almost

exclusively white and tied up in notions of the noble traditions of 'pure-blooded' British people being eroded by immigration and foreign influence.

Patriotism can be a good thing, but exclusivist nationalism is something that we must always be wary of. And yet, the crossover between friendly patriotism and exclusivist nationalism in Europe, once narrow, is getting wider year after year.

In times of uncertainty, of economic hardship, where some are suffering or have been left behind in terms of education and opportunity, discontented individuals will often look for something or someone to blame. A bridge is opened between love of one's country and its traditions and ethnic exclusivism and resentment aimed at the foreign "other". And an increasing number of politicians across Europe are adding more lanes to this bridge.


In July 2022, Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán said, "We [Hungarians] are not a mixed race and we do not want to become a mixed race." Two days later in Vienna, he "clarified" that he was talking about cultures and not genetics. To be honest, I'm not sure this distinction makes the slightest difference to me as a Jew. It still sets off alarm bells.

And Italy's Georgia Meloni? She is a bit cleverer than Orbán, whose ethnic nationalism is as naked as a nudist colony. In her victory speech in late September, the new Italian PM quoted G.K. Chesterton. "Chesterton wrote, more than a century ago," she said, "Fires will be kindled to testify that two and two make four. Swords will be drawn to prove that leaves are green in summer." That time has arrived. We are ready."

Chesterton was an English writer, probably most famous for his Father Brown comedy-drama detective stories.

Yet Chesterton also spoke openly and often about the "Jewish problem". They "control other nations as well as their own," he said – and he wanted British Jews to be deported to Palestine (where they "should live in a society of Jews, should be judged by Jews and ruled by Jews. I am an Anti-Semite if that is Anti-Semitism"). If they were to continue walking "these rolling English roads", he said, they should be made to wear "Arab dress" so "we should know where we are."

I'm not sure what is worse – the blatant in-your-face exclusivist nationalism of Orbán, or the more urbane Georgia Meloni quoting seemingly innocuous writers whilst sending covert signals to those attracted to and aware of Chesterton's ugly and exclusivist side.

What I am sure of is that 'Stop Hate Speech' conferences are exponentially growing these days across Europe, and that the bridge I referred to earlier is being reinforced, widened, and extended. The friendly patriotism of the World Cup is increasingly a once-in-four-year outlier – whereas hate-filled nationalism is increasingly celebrated every day on a continent that should know better. 



BEHIND THE NEWS

ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

One rocket was fired from Gaza into Israel on Dec. 3, prompting Israeli retaliatory strikes.

Bomb attacks at two bus stops in Jerusalem on Nov. 23 killed two Israelis and wounded about 20 others. On Nov. 29, a West Bank vehicular ramming injured a female soldier. There were numerous other attacks in the West Bank that caused no serious Israeli casualties.

On Nov. 23, an Israeli Druze man critically injured in a car accident was snatched off life support in a hospital in Jenin by Palestinian terrorists. It remains unclear if he was alive at the time or not. His body was returned 30 hours later following military and political pressure by Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the Druze community.

Sweeping Israeli counterterrorism raids across the West Bank continued, with weapons confiscated, numerous terrorist suspects detained and several others killed in shootouts with the IDF. The IDF says this months-long program of raids has thwarted around 500 attacks and resulted in the detention of more than 2,500 terror suspects since late March.

Shooting attacks have exponentially increased in 2022, and approximately 150 Palestinians have been killed this year, mostly in shootouts with the IDF or while carrying out attacks.

The IDF also recorded a massive increase in settler violence against Palestinians in 2022, with more than 830 incidents compared to 446 in 2021.

“MAN-MADE CAVITY” FOUND UNDER GAZA SCHOOL

On Nov. 29, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) announced it

had identified what it called “a man-made cavity” underneath one of its schools in Gaza.

Hamas, which rules Gaza, has built an extensive underground tunnel network to facilitate the movement of its militants and to store weapons, much of it under civilian homes and buildings.

There have been previous discoveries of tunnels and/or weapons stores at UNRWA’s Gaza schools in 2014, 2017, 2020 and 2021.

IRAN ACCELERATES HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM PRODUCTION

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed on Nov. 23 an Iranian announcement that Teheran has started producing near military grade 60% enriched uranium at the Fordow underground nuclear plant. This is in addition to the ongoing manufacturing of similar fissile material at Natanz since April 2021. The IAEA also reported that Iran has recently tripled its capacity to enrich uranium to 60% purity, which is technically very close to the 90% used in nuclear weapons.

Teheran also started construction of a new nuclear power plant in early December. The building of the Ka-roon 300-megawatt facility, near the Iraqi border in Khuzestan province, is expected to take eight years.

IRANIAN DRONES TO BE BUILT IN RUSSIA

On Nov. 19, the *Washington Post* reported that Iran and Russia had concluded an agreement for the latter to mass produce Iranian “suicide drones” inside Russia. Hundreds of Iranian drones have already been used by Moscow to attack Ukraine and reports say Iran is also directly sup-

plying more drones, body armour and ballistic missiles to Russia.

Iran also reignited its tanker war against Israel on Nov. 15, hitting the oil tanker *Pacific Zircon*, indirectly owned by an Israeli billionaire, with what intelligence officials said was a Shahed-136 suicide drone fired from an Iranian base, causing damage but no injuries.

IRAN ALLEGEDLY BEHIND ANTISEMITIC ATTACKS IN GERMANY

German security forces reportedly believe Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has orchestrated a series of antisemitic terror attacks in Germany.

According to a report in the political magazine *Kontraste*, the IRGC is believed to be behind a string of attacks against German synagogues in mid-November, including shots fired at a synagogue in Essen, the firebombing of a synagogue in Bochum, and an attempted arson attack at a synagogue in Dortmund.

A German investigator was quoted as saying, “We’re talking about state terrorism here.”

IRANIAN WORLD CUP PLAYERS, FANS DEFY THREATS TO SUPPORT PROTESTS

The families of Iran’s World Cup football team were reportedly threatened with “imprisonment and torture” by members of the IRGC if players failed to “behave” appropriately at the tournament.

This followed the team’s refusal to sing the national anthem before its Nov. 21 match against England in a sign of solidarity with the mass protests currently roiling Iran. Following the threats, Iranian players sang the anthem rather half-heartedly at their



The Iranian soccer team's solidarity with protesters earned them threats against their families (Image: Twitter)

next match.

Meanwhile, some Iranian World Cup fans sang Iran's pre-revolutionary anthem in the stands, while others carried Iranian pre-revolutionary flags to the stadium, but were barred from entering by Qatari officials.

Mass protests and general strikes against the regime have continued across Iran, despite an estimated 15,000 Iranians arrested and more than 400 killed so far by security forces.

There are also growing concerns regarding the regime's use of capital punishment against protesters. According to the Iran Human Rights NGO, more than 500 people have been executed in Iran this year, far exceeding the 314 last year.

The first execution connected with the recent wave of protests occurred on Dec. 8, and at least ten other arrested protesters have reportedly been sentenced to death.

HEZBOLLAH CHEMICAL WEAPON MISSILES

Saudi media reported on Nov. 20 that Hezbollah, Iran's proxy terror organisation in Lebanon, has stockpiled hundreds of missiles with warheads armed with the chemical weapon thionyl chloride. According to the report, 110 Fajr missiles and more than 300 Fateh missiles armed with chemical warheads are being stored by Hezbollah near Lebanon's border with Syria.

North Korean scientists mounted the missiles with the toxin while in Syria, supervised by an Iranian expert, said the report, before they were transferred to their current location in Lebanon.

DEALS TO DEVELOP ISRAEL'S ANTI-MISSILE TECHNOLOGY

On Dec. 5, Israel's Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and US aerospace giant Lockheed Martin announced the signing of an agreement to manufacture a high energy laser weapon system (HELWS). The US corporation's involvement would focus on developing a variant for the American and international markets.

The system, called Iron Beam, uses laser beams to intercept rockets and missiles, and would complement existing Israeli missile defence systems, such as Iron Dome.

Rafael is also in the running for a contract with the Pentagon after a successful demonstration of its Drone Dome, a defensive system that detects, identifies, tracks and then

downs unmanned aircraft.

ISRAELI PRESIDENT HERZOG VISITS GULF

Israeli President Isaac Herzog travelled to Bahrain on Dec. 4, the first ever visit by an Israeli president to that nation. Herzog, whose delegation included representatives of Israel's economic and trade sectors, met with Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad al Khalifa.

The following day, Herzog visited the UAE, where he met with President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, assuring him that support for the Abraham Accords, normalising relations between Israel and Arab states, is part of Israel's national consensus. They discussed increasing Israeli-UAE collaboration, particularly in the climate and space sectors.

STRANGER THAN FICTION

TOO MUCH BIAS IS NOT ENOUGH

On Nov. 30, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) passed five ridiculous anti-Israel motions as part of its annual cavalcade of such motions (for more information, see page 17).

As usual, the motions passed easily, with small numbers of principled countries opposing, larger numbers of somewhat less principled countries abstaining, and the UNGA's automatic pro-Palestinian majority voting in favour. On the bright side, it appeared more opposed or abstained than in past years.

Despite the lop-sided results in his favour, Palestinian Authority (PA) Foreign Minister Riyad Al-Maliki was far from happy, directing his ire – and hypocrisy – at countries not supporting the motions.

He demanded that they “stop their double standards, and their... encouragement of the occupation authority in its crimes.”

This is particularly ironic given the PA relies on a blatant double standard, by which

Israel is treated differently to every other country, to get these motions passed. As for encouraging crimes, it's harder to think of a better example than the PA's generous payments to terrorists and their families.

He accused those opposing the motions of “contributing to weakening the international system.” What weakens the international system is the UN's disproportionate and discriminatory hyper-focus on Israel, while allowing genuine human rights abusers a free pass.

He then gave his prescription for a resolution – dismantle the “settler colonial occupation and apartheid regime,” create a Palestinian state and allow the “return” of refugees to Israel.

So having blasted countries for weakening the international system, he basically called for the destruction of Israel rather than showing willingness to negotiate a two-state peace, as the international consensus requires.

If this performance doesn't demonstrate how the UN's bias against Israel simply encourages Palestinian intransigence, and is therefore completely counterproductive to peace, it's hard to imagine what will (Translation from Elder of Ziyon).

COVER STORY

SOCCERED IN?

INSIDE QATAR'S POLITICISED WORLD CUP

Ash Obel

DOHA, Qatar – Strolling through Qatar's capital, it is impossible to escape posters bearing the words “Now is all”, relentlessly plastered on public transportation, in supermarkets, on street signs and in stadiums.

The official slogan for the World Cup, those three distinctly ambiguous words nonetheless seem to embody the mission the Qatari authorities hoped to fulfill by hosting the soccer tournament: focus on the glittering stadiums, world-class athletics and festive fan experience – just don't think too much about how we got here.

Despite those efforts, Qatar's history of intolerance for gays, disregard for the rights of migrant workers, and the wider Arab world's longstanding rejection of Israel have reverberated throughout the competition.

Though tainted with the stench of alleged corruption, soccer's governing body FIFA framed its awarding of the tournament to the rich Gulf petrostate as an attempt to promote soccer in the Arab world, where the sport's popularity has been growing steadily for decades.

Unlike previous competitions, the Arab world was well represented at the Middle East's first-ever World Cup. In Doha's central thoroughfare, Souq Waqif, the majority of fans were clad in the green and white of Saudi Arabia, the red of Tunisia and Morocco and even a few in the maroon of Qatar.

On the pitch as well, Arab teams excelled, with Morocco becoming the first ever to reach the quarterfinals, and then semi-finals, after Saudi Arabia pulled off a memorable upset win over Argentina in the opening days of the



Qatar has spent vast sums of money on the World Cup, and not surprisingly, is determined to use the tournament to launder a national image tarnished by human rights abuses, intolerance and growing extremism (Image: Alamy)

tournament.

After that shock win, social media was flooded with videos showing Arab people celebrating in tribal camps pitched in sandy deserts, coffee shops, or parading through urban streets and alleyways. They were not only in the streets of Riyadh and Jeddah, but Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Amman and Hebron as well. Truly an Arab World Cup, delivered as promised.

Alas, not all in the region were invited to join the celebrations. The cold shoulder toward Israelis at the tournament, especially those, like myself, reporting for Israeli publications, was unexpectedly harsh.

With the rapid development of healthy diplomatic relations between Israel and some Arab states in recent years, plus Qatar's decision to allow Israeli visitors and direct flights from Tel Aviv, I and many other Israeli reporters on the ground in Doha were lulled into thinking those positive developments would extend to the Arab street here. It was not to be.

Instead, Israeli journalists were routinely shunned, hectorated or even threatened. Many became the unwilling protagonists in videos circulated proudly on Arabic social media showing fans berating them with insults as they tried to go about their jobs. As one Qatari fan sharply put it, Israelis “are not welcome here.”

For me, one not particularly dramatic incident in the FIFA Media Centre in downtown Doha nonetheless crystallised the rejection. Taking a short break from work, I struck up a conversation with a Yemeni journalist as we both took in a soccer match being broadcast on a large screen.

Together we analysed the match, compared our experiences in Qatar and reminisced about the iconic moments of past tournaments. After five minutes, he asked me who I wrote for. Hearing the answer, his face went pale, and with more than a hint of embarrassment, he simply turned away from me, whispering something in Arabic to his friend beside him, with the word “Israeli” clearly audible.

For all the geopolitical conflicts that may have existed between the home countries of reporters in that room, whether it be Russians and Ukrainians, North and South Koreans or Saudi Arabians and Iranians, an interaction with me, simply because of the name of my publication [*Times of Israel*], was the dialogue beyond the pale. The word “Israel” turned me from a human and a friend into an enemy in a second.

According to a *Haaretz* report, tournament organisers instructed stadium security teams to confiscate any flags not belonging to either of the two nations competing in the match. Staff, however, were told that the Palestinian flag was an exception to the rule, and should be permitted to enter all stadiums, despite the Palestinian team not making it to the World Cup.

NOT JUST ISRAELIS

It is these contradictions that have pushed and pulled my perception of the 2022 World Cup. Fans from the briefly unified Arab world celebrating their on- and off-field success together, but to the exclusion of others: Not just Israelis, but also LGBTQ fans and of course the reported 6,500 people unable to enjoy dazzling soccer because they died building the very colosseums the games are being played in.

Speaking to just a handful of Qatar’s nearly three million migrant workers, (though, admittedly, not any in the construction industry,) it was difficult for me to gauge the true feelings and realities of a workforce whose rights and treatment became a major source of consternation

surrounding the World Cup.

Qatar is not exactly renowned as a bastion of free speech, and migrant workers are likely wary of the repercussions of speaking out against their hosts, so encounters must be taken with more than a pinch of salt, but those I spoke to seemed to express a genuine positivity about life in Doha.

While some voiced minor criticisms, notably regarding the oppressive summer heat, most extolled the relatively high wages and what they said was an absence of crime in the country.

“Though tainted with the stench of alleged corruption, soccer’s governing body FIFA framed its awarding of the tournament to the rich Gulf petrostate as an attempt to promote soccer in the Arab world”

Under a baking sun in Doha’s drab outer suburbs, Rashid, a migrant worker from a town near New Delhi in India, explained that his wages, earned operating a cafe in a Doha mall, supported him comfortably, with enough left over to send to his elderly parents back

home so they did not have to worry about income.

With a beaming smile, Rashid said he has been able to save enough money to establish a family in the near future, adding confidently that he and his anticipated brood would call Doha “home forever”.

Around the corner, Sanaa from Rabat, Morocco, generously offered me free shawarma from the restaurant she manages, serving the exclusively migrant population living in the surrounding apartment towers. While she does plan to return to her homeland after a five-year stint in the Gulf, Sanaa assured me that “life was good” in Doha. She felt safe as a woman in the country, where an unforgiving authoritarian penal system keeps criminal activity to a minimum.

Most of these workers, however, are employed under the “kafala” sponsorship system, which is used extensively throughout the Gulf and parts of the Middle East. The kafala structure allows employers to maintain extremely high levels of control over their employees, including by confiscating their passports. Employees are housed in



Estimates are that as many as 6,500 foreign workers have been killed building World Cup infrastructure, though Qatar admits “only” 400 to 500 (Image: Flickr)

overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, and made to work long hours in unsafe summer temperatures. Critics of the system have labelled it akin to modern-day slavery.

According to the *Guardian*, 6,500 construction workers were killed building World Cup infrastructure up to 2021. Qatari authorities had previously reported the number to be just three, but last week updated their count to “between 400 and 500” people.

In recent years, Qatar, in conjunction with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has enacted legal reforms granting workers more control over their employment conditions, but the ILO says workers “still face challenges”, and further improvement is needed.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino has often boasted that without the lure of hosting the prestigious tournament, workers’ rights in Qatar would have remained stagnant and inhumane.

It’s hard to believe, though, that workers and human rights were uppermost in the minds of the 22 FIFA Executive Committee members who voted in 2010 to award the competition to Qatar, 16 of whom have been indicted or investigated for alleged corruption or malpractice. While no corruption has ever been directly linked to Qatar, and the Gulf state was cleared by FIFA’s independent ethics committee after a two-year inquiry, widespread allegations of graft and vote-buying have tainted the 2022 World Cup from its earliest days.

Before each match, a giant gold replica of the iconic World Cup trophy is wheeled into the middle of the pitch, the central feature in a hypnotic pre-game display featuring flashing lasers, ferocious bursts of fire and rhythmic music.

Around the world, vast numbers of people, Israelis included, tune in to every match, watching the spectacle with bated breath and intense excitement.

But behind the entrancing lights and beneath the shiny skyscrapers, there’s no mistaking the sight of a tiny oil-rich state seizing the moment to try to launder its image. “Now is all”.

AIR

© Times of Israel (www.timesofisrael.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

“PALESTINE” AS WORLD CUP DISTRACTION?

Seth J. Frantzman

Over the first week of December, there were increasing reports of anti-Israel sentiment among some people at the World Cup in Doha, as well as some incidents where people waved Palestinian flags.

The recent trend of reports about anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian views suddenly appearing at the World Cup seems conveniently linked to Qatar’s desire to distract attention from its own human rights abuses and critique over its crackdown on Iranian protesters and on gay rights symbols.

Let’s take a look back at the trajectory here.

When the competition began, there was a lot of buzz about various issues fans confronted. For instance, as far back as 2020, reports had said rainbow flags would be permitted at the World Cup. However, since the sporting events began, there has been a crackdown on any support for gay rights.

The Associated Press reported in November that “in the days ahead of the opening games, the captains of seven European teams were prohibited from wearing multi-colored ‘One Love’ armbands during World Cup matches in support of LGBTQ rights. Homosexuality is illegal in Qatar.”

Another issue in Qatar was the concern over workers’ rights. The *Guardian* reported last year that 6,500 migrant workers had died in Qatar since the World Cup was awarded to the small kingdom. Qatar later admitted that several hundred workers had died in construction related to the event.

Qatar has tried to deflect and shift criticism. It quickly moved away from the idea of being inclusive, seeking to crack down not only on rainbow armbands, but also going after Iranian protesters who dared oppose the Iranian regime.

Then it began its messaging campaign against the West.

Pacific Group of Companies

P O BOX 400
SOUTH MELBOURNE, 3205, AUSTRALIA

TELEPHONE: (03) 9695 8700

Its supporters put out statements about how Westerners were being hypocritical for criticising Qatar, and that the West should first deal with its own colonial past. Then the narrative began that it was “Islamophobic” or “anti-Arab” to criticise Qatar. The West was accused of being “Eurocentric” and “Orientalist”.

Qatar’s team was quickly knocked out of the Cup, losing to the Netherlands at the end of November. “Qatar becomes the first World Cup host to lose all three group matches, the last one 2-0 to the Dutch,” reports said.

For a country like Qatar, which pays for positive media coverage to enhance its image around the world, the unprecedented criticism around the World Cup was embarrassing.

From banning alcohol in stadiums, and gay rights, migrant workers’ rights, and its poor showing on the field, it was time for Doha to go on the offensive. Accusing the West of hypocrisy and racism was only one part of the Qatari agenda. Anti-German cartoons and other slogans have appeared in recent days, also designed to mock Germany for critiquing the West Asian country.

It appears that the growing anti-Israel sentiment in Qatar may have been a manifestation of Doha’s need to distract attention from other issues. Why would Palestinian flags suddenly make an appearance even as police in the country appear to be cracking down on Iranian dissidents who dare show off flags or any kind of protest slogan? It appears that officials have given the go-ahead and that this is a phenomenon.

In the beginning, Israeli journalists appeared to be welcomed, and then suddenly reports of “Arab fans confronting Israeli media” became a talking point. CNN says Israeli journalists had a “chilly reception”. Al Jazeera, which is backed by Qatar, even has a photo essay called “Palestinian flags fly high at World Cup.” How come the flags didn’t fly high in mid-November when the games were set to begin?

Does it seem well timed that suddenly stories emerge about the need to “confront” Israeli journalists? Qatar is an authoritarian regime that closely controls media and every aspect of society. Clearly, nothing happens in Qatar without authorities knowing about it. That’s why pressure was put on Iranian dissidents.

While some of the pro-Palestinian voices are surely authentic, it seems that the timing of the supposedly anti-Israel antics of a few people is well placed to move the media spotlight from abuses of gay rights and migrant rights, to discussing Israel. This is a well-known pattern in the region. Attacks on Jews and “anti-Zionist” rhetoric have often been used by extremists and authoritarian regimes for the last 100 years.



Qatar has cracked down on all political expression at the World Cup, as well as displays of flags not belonging to participating teams – with one exception. Pro-Palestinian demonstrations and Palestinian flags are welcome (Image: Twitter)

The sudden “chilly” reception for Israeli journalists may not be something that just happened. There is no chilly reception for Russian state media, even though Russia is engaged in a brutal war against Ukrainians. No other issue in the world seems to motivate a chilly reception.

For instance, even though Qatar has hosted extremists who are anti-India, there are no chilly receptions for Indian journalists. For example, Indian media reported in November that a fugitive preacher wanted for hate speech was in Qatar giving religious lectures. Yet his presence hasn’t led to major media reports of any anti-India incidents during the sporting events.

This is why the singling out of Israel seems to be, at least partially, choreographed.

There is no doubt that many people in the region are pro-Palestinian. However, there is also a quiet attempt in Qatar to try to contrast itself with other Gulf states such as Bahrain and the UAE, both of which hosted Israel’s President this week. Doha wants to have this Janus-face of appearing moderate and welcoming and inclusive, while also stoking and fanning anti-Israel views.

This Janus-face has existed for many years. During the Gulf crisis, when Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states cut ties with Qatar, Doha worked to burnish its image, hosting several Jewish leaders and even hinting that it might one day normalise ties with Israel.

Now that story has faded. Today, Iranian media is celebrating the supposed “hatred of Zionists” that is on display in Qatar. Perhaps it’s not so much “hatred” as the need to move the story from Doha’s track record to make it seem like Qatar is doing something for the Palestinians.

AIR

Seth J. Frantzman is Senior Middle East Correspondent and Middle East affairs analyst at the Jerusalem Post. © Jerusalem Post, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.



With Compliments



SPOTLIGHT RETAIL GROUP

Level 6, 111 Cecil Street, South Melbourne VIC 3205 Australia

spotlightstores.com

anacondastores.com

harrisscarfe.com.au

mountaindesigns.com



QUALITY APARTMENTS BUILT FOR A LIFETIME



- Meriton Suites
- Apartments for sale
- Apartments for rent

meriton.com.au



MERITON

Sydney | Gold Coast | Brisbane



A Terrible UN Tradition

Australia's changing stance on Israeli-Palestinian resolutions

Justin Amler

There is a yearly tradition that takes place in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) each November and December. It is a tradition in which the same old messages, the same old lies and the same old tired fabrications are regurgitated *ad nauseam*. It is a tradition that asks the 193 member states to suspend their belief in a world of logic and rationality, and instead adopt a world of fantasy and make-believe.

Each year, like a finely tuned Swiss clock, around 22 anti-Israel resolutions are presented at the United Nations General Assembly. Sometimes the words differ slightly, or a clause might be introduced, but it is essentially the same resolutions repeated every year. They have been termed 'zombie resolutions' in the past for their propensity to simply never die!

And they are not meant to die, because the point of them is to not actually resolve the conflict, but to prolong it. Sponsored originally by the Soviet bloc and the Arab states, today perpetuated by the automatic vote of most developing nations in support of the Arab and Islamic blocs, they do not exist to serve the interests of Middle East peace but rather to serve as a springboard to demonise Israel and to launch persistent, unfounded attacks against the Jewish State.

Of the many resolutions though, there are eight in particular that we should discuss and analyse further, because these are the ones on which Australia's voting record has varied over the years, often depending on the government of the day.

1. APPLICABILITY OF THE GENEVA CONVENTION RELATIVE TO THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIAN PERSONS

Key Quote:

Demands that Israel accept the de jure applicability of the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and that it comply scrupulously with the provisions of the Convention;

The point of this resolution is to apply the Fourth Geneva convention rules and obligations to the areas of the West Bank and the Gaza strip. The Geneva Conventions

apply in all cases of declared war, or in any other armed conflict between nations.

There are strong legal arguments why this convention doesn't apply to the West Bank and Gaza – namely, the convention applies only to territory captured from high-contracting parties to the convention, and Israel captured the West Bank from Jordan, which never had recognised sovereignty over the areas. They were certainly never "Palestinian territory", as the resolution claims.

However, those arguments are ignored.

Nevertheless, despite the 'demands' of this resolution, Israel still *voluntarily* applies the humanitarian provisions of the resolution in these areas.



The UN General Assembly has a "tradition" of passing up to 22 one-sided resolutions condemning Israel every year – much more than the rest of the world combined (Image: Shutterstock)

In the years from 1996 to 2003 under the Howard Liberal Government, Australia had voted for this resolution, but between 2004 and 2007 it changed its vote to abstain, recognising that these areas are, at best, disputed.

From 2008 to 2012, under the Rudd and Gillard Labor Governments, Australia reverted to supporting this resolution, but when Tony Abbott (Liberal) took power in 2013, it changed again to abstain, which has been the case since then.

It remains to be seen what the Albanese Labor Government will do, but as of Dec. 5, the resolution hasn't been reintroduced in the current sitting session.

2. THE RIGHT OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE TO SELF-DETERMINATION

Key Quote:

Urges all States and the specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations system to continue to support and assist the Palestinian people in the early realization of their right to self-determination.

This resolution is a classic example of applying a world-wide standard to the principle of self-determination and yet singling out Israel. It accuses Israel of impeding the right of Palestinian self-determination by the construction of its security barrier in the West Bank to stop terror at-

tacks. But the resolution omits all mention of the Palestinian obligations under the Road Map to dismantle terrorist networks before a state can even be created. It also doesn't mention the lack of education for peace in Palestinian school curricula and public discourse. Even the European Union, which is the single largest donor to Ramallah, has raised concerns about incitement in Palestinian education.

To support this resolution essentially means to ignore all the Palestinian incitement, and obligations to dismantle terror infrastructure and educate their people towards a peaceful future.

Australia first supported this resolution from 1996 to 2003, before abstaining from 2004 to 2008. It once again supported it from 2009 to 2017, before abstaining from 2018 onwards.

Unfortunately, in the 3rd Committee vote on Nov. 17, a vote held prior to the General Assembly vote, Australia switched its vote to in favour on this unfair resolution once again.

3. THE STATUS OF JERUSALEM

Key Quote:

Recalling the Security Council press statement on Jerusalem of 17 September 2015, in which the Council called, inter alia, for the exercise of restraint, refraining from provocative actions and rhetoric and upholding unchanged the historic status quo at the Haram al-Sharif...

Expressing its concern about the Israeli excavations undertaken in the Old City of Jerusalem, including in and around religious sites...

This resolution strongly implies that the Israeli administration of Jerusalem hinders freedom of religion. This is an absolute distortion of reality.

To understand why this accusation is wrong, we must understand what occurred prior to Israeli administration.

During the period between 1948 and 1967, when the eastern area of Jerusalem, including the Old City, was illegally occupied by Jordan, a cultural destruction of Jewish holy sites took place.

The Jordanians expelled all Jewish residents, destroyed 58 synagogues and looted their contents.

They turned Jewish religious sites into chicken coops and animal stalls.

They also ransacked the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives, where Jews had been buried for over 2,500 years, desecrating Jewish graves and using the smashed tombstones as building material.

Under Article VIII of the Israel Jordan Armistice agreement of 1949, the Jordanians were supposed to grant 'free access to the Holy Places and cultural institutions, including the use of the cemetery on the Mount of Olives,' but

purposely, and in absolute and flagrant violation, refused to do so.

Under Israeli control, all faiths have access to the city and enjoy full freedom. The only major limitation actually applies only to Jews, who are unable to pray freely on the Temple Mount, due to it being left under the administration of the Islamic Waqf religious trust, which Israel

allowed to retain control after it liberated the city in the 1967 Six Day War.

The resolution ignores all that history and only uses the Islamic term of "Haram al-Sharif" for the Temple Mount, completely eliminating any Jewish connection to what is Judaism's holiest site.

Historically, Australia supported this resolution from 1996 to 2003. From 2004 to 2010, it abstained. It then supported it again from 2011 to 2012 before abstaining from 2013 to 2017. It has then voted against it from 2018 onwards. Canberra should continue this principled stand from a purely moral perspective, because to agree to this resolution is to support a completely false narrative presented by the Palestinians.

We have not yet seen this specific resolution come up in the current UN session.

4. PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Key Quote:

Emphasizing the importance of the safety, protection and well-being of all civilians in the whole Middle East region, and condemning all acts of violence and terror against civilians on both sides,

Reiterating its concern over the negative developments that have continued to occur in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, including the large number of deaths and injuries, mostly among Palestinian civilians, the construction and expansion of settlements and the wall, acts of violence, vandalism and brutality committed against Palestinian civilians by Israeli settlers in the West Bank...

The purpose of this resolution is to reaffirm the "illegality of Israeli settlement activity" including in Jerusalem. The language used is redundant as it mirrors other motions, while blaming Israel alone for the lack of peace.

References to terror fail to name the perpetrators such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Only Israel is explicitly criticised. It also ignores all Israeli peace deals offered throughout the years from Oslo to Camp David in 2000 to the Olmert deals in 2008, and the Palestinian rejection of those deals.

From 1996 to 2017 Australia abstained, but in the last few years, from 2018, it has voted no, accepting that this resolution was not balanced or fair, condemning Israel

while demanding nothing of the Palestinians, and, in doing so, making a two state peace more difficult to achieve. It is regrettable then that Australia has changed its vote once again and abstained on the resolution on Nov. 30 during the current UN session.

5. PALESTINE REFUGEES AND THEIR PROPERTIES AND REVENUES

Key Quote:

Reaffirms that the Palestine refugees are entitled to their property and to the income derived therefrom, in conformity with the principles of equity and justice

Calls once again upon Israel to render all facilities and assistance to the Secretary-General in the implementation of the present resolution;

This resolution affirms that Palestinian refugees are entitled to their property and the income derived therefrom. However, once again, it is a one-sided resolution that ignores the claims of around 900,000 Jewish refugees who were expelled or forced out of homes in the Arab world, and generally deprived of all their property.

By saying that the Palestinian refugees are entitled to their properties, the resolution implicitly endorses a Palestinian “right of return” whose practical effects means the end of Israel, as it would be overwhelmed by the number of Palestinian “refugees” entering the country. This is the antithesis of the ‘two states for two peoples’ formula for peace.

It’s also important to dive a little deeper to understand the actual definition of what exactly a refugee is.

The UN signed a convention of refugees in 1951, which defined a refugee as someone who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

However, UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) came up with a unique definition applied only to Palestinian “refu-

gees” – a person “whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict” – including all their descendants!

Because this definition applies only to Palestinians, and no other people on Earth, it means that they will always be refugees irrespective of whether they become citizens of other countries. This is the reason why, while Arabs who left their homes during the Israeli War of Independence in 1948 totalled around 700,000, the number of Palestinians considered refugees today totals around 5.6 million and growing.

This resolution nonsensically implies support for the “return” of 5.6 million Palestinians, but ignores completely the 900,000 Jewish refugees and their property.

From 1996 until 2017, Australia supported this resolution; however, in the last three years, it has abstained, going some way to recognising how unfair and one sided it actually is. Sadly, that course appears to have now been reversed, as in a recent 4th Committee vote on Nov. 11, Australia once again supported this biased and unhelpful resolution.

6. PERSONS DISPLACED AS A RESULT OF THE 1967 AND SUBSEQUENT HOSTILITIES

Key Quote:

Endorses, in the meantime, the efforts of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to continue to provide humanitarian assistance...

This is similar to the previous resolution in that it “reaffirms the right of all persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities to return to their homes or former places of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967.”

It also stresses the “necessity for an accelerated return.”

This resolution, like the others, ignores the efforts Israel has made in various peace offers throughout the years. It calls for Palestinian refugees to return to Israel without any peace deal or negotiated settlement, thereby prejudging all future efforts.



WESTERNPORT
MARINA

GREAT BY DAY – MAGIC AT NIGHT
MORNINGTON PENINSULA

PHONE (03) 5979 7400

EMAIL: clientservices@westernportmarina.com.au



While talking about 1967 hostilities, it fails to provide any kind of context, including the fact that Israel fought a defensive war against the surrounding Arab nations which led to the situation.

It also endorses UNRWA, which propagandises for the legally baseless and peace-destroying Palestinian “right of return”.

As in the previous resolution, Australia supported this resolution from 1996 until 2017, before abstaining from 2018 onwards, again showing some understanding of the problematic nature of the resolution.

As of Dec. 5, this specific resolution had not yet come up in the current UN session.

7. THE SYRIAN GOLAN

This resolution talks about how the UNGA is “deeply concerned” that Israel has not withdrawn from the Golan, which it says is under occupation since 1967.

As with other resolutions, there is no context provided.

This resolution is completely oblivious to the massacres that have taken place in Syria during its brutal civil war, and ignores the security implications for Israel and its citizens should the Golan Heights come under the control of the Syrian regime of the wanted war criminal Bashar al-Assad.

It ignores the security situation prior to 1967, when the Syrian military would use the strategic position of the Golan Heights to fire indiscriminately on Israeli civilians in the valley below these heights. It also completely ignores Syria’s contribution to the self-described “war of annihilation” in which it actively and enthusiastically participated in 1967 that led to its loss of this territory.

Calls are also made only on Israel to negotiate with Syria and Lebanon, without equivalent demands on those other countries.

The idea of Israel giving away its territory, thus endangering its citizens, to a regime run by a war criminal that massacres its own citizens and has shown zero interest in peaceful coexistence – and today has no effective control over much of its own territory – is absurd.

From 1996 until 2017, Australia abstained on this vote. Since 2018, it has voted against this resolution. Fortunately, Australia has kept those principles intact as it has once again voted against this resolution in this UN session.

8. OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN

Key Quote:

Calls upon Israel to desist from imposing Israeli citizenship and Israeli identity cards on the Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan, and from its repressive measures against the population of the occupied Syrian Golan;

This resolution is effectively redundant given the Syrian Golan resolution.

It essentially says that all Israeli action to “alter the

character and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan” is considered null and void.

The same objections to the Syrian Golan resolution apply here and it once again neglects Syria’s sponsorship of terrorism and the fact that the Syrian regime is headed by a wanted war criminal. It also falsely claims that Israel is oppressing and imposing Israeli citizenship on the 25,000 Arab residents who live there – a complete lie. These residents are completely free to decide to keep their Syrian citizenship or adopt Israeli citizenship at their own discretion.

Interestingly, Australia supported this resolution from 1996 until 2017, but has chosen to abstain in the last three years rather than voting against it as it did on the Syrian Golan resolution above. In the 4th Committee vote on Nov. 30, prior to it being sent to the General Assembly, Australia has indicated it will continue this trend by abstaining once again.

CONCLUSION

It is abundantly clear that the disproportionate number of UN General Assembly resolutions that are passed against Israel is due to a general, unhealthy obsession with the Jewish state at the UN. Hundreds of resolutions have been passed against Israel over the years – while far fewer have been passed criticising some of the worst human rights abusers on the planet. Indeed, some, such as China, are virtually never criticised.

In last year’s 76th session of the UN General Assembly, 14 resolutions were passed denouncing Israel, while only five were passed denouncing all other countries in the world. And while not all resolutions have yet made it to the General Assembly this year, this trend is continuing, with 15 resolutions already passed denouncing Israel, versus 13 for all the rest of the world combined.

But what is clear is that these resolutions do nothing to promote peace or to bring about the two-state outcome that much of the world believes is the answer to resolving the conflict. Instead, these resolutions exist only to demonise Israel and call into question its very legitimacy among the nations – and thus make the Palestinians, who have already walked away from three serious two-state peace offers, even less willing to negotiate and compromise.

Countries like Australia, with its reputation as a fair-minded and honest broker, should uphold and adhere to our own principles – including bipartisan support for a genuine negotiated two-state resolution – and not be pressured into joining in the cesspool of relentless hatred launched against the Jewish state at the UN, year after year, at the expense of any such hopes.

Unfortunately, Australia’s negative change of vote on some of the resolutions will be counter-productive to Australia’s own long-standing sensible bipartisan foreign policy goal of seeking to contribute to a negotiated two-state resolution.

NEW NETANYAHU-LED COALITION TAKING SHAPE

BICOM and AIJAC staff

On December 1, Israeli Prime Minister designate Binyamin Netanyahu's Likud and Bezael Smotrich's Religious Zionism party reached an agreement in their coalition negotiations, paving the way for a new Netanyahu-led government to take office within the next few weeks with a likely majority of 64 seats in the 120-seat Knesset.



Netanyahu (left) with Smotrich (second from right), and other representatives of the Religious Zionism party (Image: Twitter)

- The sides appear to have reached an understanding over the recognition and provision of services to West Bank settlement outposts hitherto illegal under Israeli law (and referred to euphemistically as 'newer settlements'). These unauthorised settlements are set to be connected to water and electricity supplies within two months, and those built on "state land" legalised within a year.
- Smotrich will head an expanded Finance Ministry in rotation (after two years) with Shas leader Aryeh Deri, who will be appointed to both the Health and expanded Interior Ministry briefs. After rotation, Smotrich will get these portfolios. Netanyahu denied Smotrich the coveted defence portfolio, but instead will expand his party's influence over some aspects of West Bank policy.
- The Defence Ministry will retain the offices of Civil Administration in Judea and Samaria and Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, which oversee Israeli governance in the part of the West Bank that is under complete Israeli control, labelled Area C under the Oslo Accords. Crucially, however, a Religious Zionism MK – likely either Orit Stroom, Smotrich himself, or a combination – will oversee both offices and wield considerable influence over settlement policy.

- Religious Zionism will also control the Immigration and Absorption Ministry (with Ofir Sofer the likely minister) and the chairmanship of the Knesset's Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee (likely to be held by Simcha Rothman).

OTHER CABINET POSITIONS

The senior roles of defence, foreign, and justice minister will be selected from within the Likud and are expected to go to Yoav Galant, Amir Ohana and Yariv Levin respectively. The Education and Transport Ministries are likely to be headed by Likud MKs Eli Cohen and Miri Regev.

- The ultra-Orthodox Shas party will control the Religious Affairs and Welfare Ministries.
- Jewish Power party leader Itamar Ben Gvir will be named national security minister and receive an expanded public security portfolio, including authority over Border Police operating in the West Bank.
- Noam Party Chairman Avi Maoz will assume a "Jewish Identity" role in the Prime Minister's office and will also oversee the Education Ministry's external programming and collaborations.
- The previous Negev, Galilee and Periphery Development Ministry will likely see its brief divided in two, with a Negev and Galilee portfolio handed to Jewish Power and responsibility for the periphery portfolio subsumed to the Interior Ministry under Shas control.

CONTEXT

The successful negotiations represent a major achievement for Religious Zionism.

Its oversight of West Bank civilian policy and control of the Immigration and Absorption Ministry and the Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee portfolio could prove crucial to the chances of implementing some of its most controversial legislative ambitions, including:

- Changes to the Law of Return, including the removal of the "Grandfather Clause" (which allows anyone with a Jewish grandparent to immigrate to Israel. This change is expected to be opposed by Netanyahu) and also cea-

with compliments



Alceon
Investment, corporate finance and capital

Phil Green
Trevor Loewensohn
Morris Symonds

Sydney • Melbourne • Brisbane • Perth

Tel: 02 8023 4000
www.alceon.com.au

sing recognition of non-Orthodox conversions for the purpose of immigration.

- Increased building in settlements and clamping down on illegal Palestinian construction in Area C of the West Bank.
- Judicial reform, likely to include allowing a Knesset override of Supreme Court rulings.
- Barring the indictment of a sitting prime minister (the so-called ‘French Law’, which is very relevant for Netanyahu who is standing trial for several alleged fraud and breach of trust allegations) and also providing immunity from criminal prosecution for other ministers.

Netanyahu has sought to calm international concern over the far-right members of his new coalition by claiming that policy will reflect a traditional Likud approach. “Defence”, he said in a recent interview, “is not merely... preventing incoming missiles. It’s also deciding on policies that could be quite inflammatory. I’m trying to avoid that.”

Netanyahu has also made comments designed to reassure international and domestic audiences that despite the dominance of religious parties in the coalition, Israel will remain guided by secular traditions in forming its laws: “Israel is not going to be governed by Talmudic law,” he said.

Likud and the ultra-Orthodox United Torah Judaism (UTJ) party were able to reach an interim coalition deal on Dec. 6. The deal struck reportedly specified that UTJ head Yitzchak Goldknopf will oversee the Construction and Housing Ministry and UTJ MK Moshe Gafni will chair the Knesset Finance Committee. The party will also receive control over the Jerusalem Affairs and Heritage Ministry.

However, at press time, there were reportedly still differences between Likud and UTJ over demands by the latter for promises the government will back the UTJ’s legislative agenda, including commitments to fully fund ultra-Orthodox schools even if they don’t meet state core curriculum requirements (teaching math and English for example); a doubling of budgets for religious seminaries for men; and legislation protecting gender segregation at public events.

Likud MKs were also said to be angry that Religious Zionism and Shas had been so well rewarded at the expense of their own party.

The announcement of Maoz’s new roles has prompted concern from Diaspora leaders and LGBTQ organisations.

- The former are worried over Maoz’s proposals to annul recognition of non-Orthodox conversion and to restrict the right to *Aliyah* (immigration to Israel) to only those who can prove they have at least one Jewish parent.
- The latter fear that Maoz will use his educational remit to promote an anti-LGBTQ agenda, having been vocal in opposing LGBTQ rights and having promised to end Jerusalem’s annual Pride Parade (Netanyahu quickly re-

sponded by promising the Parade will be held as usual).

- Outgoing Education Minister Yifat Shasha-Biton recently lamented that “a man for whom hatred is his vocation is going to control the materials that get taught at schools.”

LOOKING AHEAD

The breakthrough with Smotrich initially appeared to make it possible Netanyahu would be able to present a government to President Isaac Herzog by Dec. 11, the initial deadline under the mandate to form government Netanyahu was given on Nov. 13.

However, Netanyahu instead requested that Herzog trigger a two-week extension, giving him until Dec. 25 to ensure not only that all posts are filled and the coalition’s agenda coordinated, but also that legislation necessary for the government’s formation can be passed. Herzog granted Netanyahu only ten days, until Dec. 21.

Aryeh Deri’s appointment will require the Knesset to pass new legislation – already prepared by Shas – clarifying that a suspended sentence does not meet the threshold of moral turpitude required to bar someone from ministerial service. Deri received a suspended sentence after pleading guilty to a tax charge earlier this year.

Legislation will also be required to allow Itamar Ben Gvir to assume the additional responsibilities over police he has been promised as national security minister.

To pass this legislation, the incoming coalition bloc will first need to take over the parliamentary process by electing a new Speaker of Knesset. Netanyahu confidant Yariv Levin was temporarily given the speakership on Dec. 12, but is expected to resign after a few weeks to take up a cabinet post, and be replaced by another Likud MK. AIR

© Britain-Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved. AIJAC staff also contributed to this report.

THE FINANCIAL TRIALS OF BEZALEL SMOTRICH

Amotz Asa-El

With thousands of marchers threatening to physically prevent Israel’s retreat from the Gaza Strip back in the summer of 2005, police arrested four demonstrators who allegedly planned to block inter-city traffic.

The four were later released without charge, and three of them were soon forgotten. For the fourth – a short, bearded, 25-year-old law student named Bezalel Smotrich

— those heady days would mark the start of a meteoric political career that is now reaching a climax. He is set to become the next treasurer of the Jewish state.

Though he personally represents a relatively small party of mostly Modern Orthodox settlers, Smotrich led a federation of three such parties into November's election. They won a combined 14 of the Knesset's 120 seats, becoming the third largest party in the Knesset after incoming Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's Likud and departing Prime Minister Yair Lapid's *Yesh Atid* ("There is a Future") party.

Under the name of Smotrich's own faction, Religious Zionism, the three-party federation emerged as the incoming coalition's second largest member after the vote. Yet the three parties which had run together under the "Religious Zionism" banner immediately split following the election and negotiated deals to join the incoming coalition government separately. Nonetheless, their combined leverage was such that their political booty is going to be very substantial. Smotrich's share of that booty is set to make him the second most powerful man in Israel's 37th government.

That alone would be a remarkable feat for a man who only entered the Knesset seven years ago, and earned fame — not to say notoriety — for his outspoken conservatism and hawkishness. Over the years, Smotrich has made headlines for helping organise a "beast parade" of goats and donkeys in 2006 to protest Jerusalem's gay pride march; for quipping, "I am a proud homophobe," during a meeting with high school students in 2015 and for torpedoing Netanyahu's attempt to include an Arab-supported Islamist party in his coalition half a decade later.

Smotrich's new position comes after a stint as transport minister in Netanyahu's previous cabinet, an 11-month tenure during which the energetic and eloquent lawyer seems to have proven himself to be an efficient executive. Displaying a grasp of detail that outspoken ideologues often lack, Smotrich created a car-pool lane in the coastal highway, extended the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem fast train and linked public transportation ticketing to smartphones.

Now, however, the 42-year-old father of seven and son of a communal rabbi will be expected to tackle issues far larger than buses and trains.

Overseeing a budget of some \$A253 billion and an economy of roughly \$A733 billion, Israel's finance minister or treasurer [*Ed. Unlike in Australia, finance minister and*

treasurer are interchangeable words for the same post in Israel] wields enormous power, both economically and politically. Two of Israel's 14 prime ministers — Levi Eshkol and Ehud Olmert — proceeded to the premiership from the Treasury. Two others, Shimon Peres and Netanyahu, were first prime ministers and then served as finance ministers for a time before returning to the top job.

Still, the finance minister's power is a function not

only of their office but also of their political clout. In Smotrich's case, this clout will likely be precarious.

Ideally, as far as both the economy and the minister are concerned, the treasurer would represent the ruling party, and also be powerful within it. That was the case, most memorably, with Levi Eshkol, who served as finance minister for 11 consecutive years (1952-1963). During that time, he was Labor's power broker and also enjoyed party leader David Ben-Gurion's total trust.

Conversely, in 1981, Menachem Begin's finance minister, Yigal Hurvitz, was ultimately compelled to quit after just 13 months because he belonged to a small party and lacked the authority to impose painful budget cuts on other ministers at a time when inflation was spiralling out of control.

Smotrich will arrive at the Treasury in an entirely different economic era.

Israel today boasts the developed world's fastest growth rate this century, as well as some of the lowest inflation, debt, and unemployment levels, and average per capita incomes and per capita foreign currency reserves that are amongst the highest in the world. The Jewish state is now a mature economy that has emerged almost unscathed from



Bezalel Smotrich – the controversial politician set to be Israel's next treasurer (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

With Compliments
Danny & Danielle Taibel
CHARLESTON'S
FINE ART AUCTIONS

P O Box 2117
Rose Bay North, NSW 2030

Tel: (02) 9318 2680
info@charlestons.com.au



the past three years of pandemic disruptions and political turmoil.

Even so, Smotrich faces some formidable challenges, most crucially soaring housing prices which, having climbed 177% since 2008, make it almost impossible for young families to buy a home. While the factors driving this problem are uniquely Israeli – reflecting high demographic growth and scarce urban real estate – Smotrich will also face global inflationary pressures caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

To be effective on these fronts, he will have to wield authority over the rest of the government's ministers, and his prospects in this regard appear bleak. Some of Likud's law-makers are openly complaining about what they see as the excessive power that Netanyahu is handing to coalition partners like Smotrich at their expense.

As they see things, Netanyahu should have reserved the Treasury for a member of the ruling party, the way Labor did throughout its decades of heading Israeli government.

Netanyahu is aware of this political undercurrent in his own party, and in fact has his own account to settle with Smotrich, who was recently taped saying that Netanyahu "is trouble", is "a liar", and that he "will not stay here forever" because "at some point he will be convicted" [*Ed. a reference to Netanyahu's ongoing trial on corruption charges which he vehemently denies.*].

Netanyahu's wary or even hostile attitude toward Smotrich became apparent shortly after the election, when in response to Smotrich's demand to be made defence minister, Netanyahu refused to meet him for several days, and when the PM-elect finally did meet him, it was only in order to flatly reject Smotrich's demand.

This may explain why the deal he struck with Smotrich

is that the Religious Zionism leader will be treasurer for only half a term, after which he will rotate with Shas party leader Aryeh Deri, who will then bequeath Smotrich the Interior Ministry.

This unusual arrangement's financial impact notwithstanding – markets appreciate stability and dislike uncertainty – it is also odd programmatically. Deri and Smotrich

represent diametrically opposed attitudes toward public spending.

Deri, whose voters are largely less educated and lower income earners, wants the Government to distribute plastic cards allowing the purchase of food at subsidised prices to "the needy".

Smotrich, by contrast, is a staunch believer in deregulation, low taxation, and "small government". What he will do

with Deri's tax-and-spend demands remains to be seen. Ordinarily, Smotrich could ask Netanyahu to support him in such a confrontation, because, in principle, the prime minister-elect fully shares Smotrich's Thatcherist economic approach. The problem from Smotrich's standpoint is that, politically, Netanyahu may prefer to see Smotrich weakened and Deri strengthened.

Deri in fact has emerged as Netanyahu's most trusted ally, both in terms of his loyalty and in terms of his great political experience, which harks back to the Shas leader's first ministerial appointment, way back in 1988, the same year that Netanyahu first entered the Knesset.

This will be the broader context Smotrich will face as he seeks to deal with the implications of Netanyahu's campaign promise to "freeze all mortgages" (though Netanyahu may have partially backtracked on this promise). This idea, Netanyahu's response to rising interest rates that caused home buyers' monthly loan payments to increase substantially, stands in opposition to everything Smotrich stands for economically.

Freezing mortgages would, in Smotrich's view, and also according to most economists, be problematic legally, fiscally and financially. Legally, it would require intervening to change the signed contracts between home buyers and banks; fiscally it would entail billions in budgetary spending to finance what would effectively be subsidised home buying; and financially, it would distort the market mechanisms that price housing and credit according to supply and demand.

What Smotrich will do in the face of these political and economic challenges is anyone's guess. However, what can be safely assumed is that the outcome, whatever it is, will be a remarkable new phase in a surprising and controver-



Aryeh Deri: Veteran powerbroker, and designated interior minister and then treasurer – if he can overcome some legal hurdles (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

With Compliments



sial career that began 17 years ago outside Gaza, where Smotrich the ideologue was arrested, and Smotrich the politician was born.

AIR

THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS AND ISRAEL'S NEW COALITION

David M. Weinberg

The many planned reforms of Israel's incoming government in the security, defence, diplomatic and religious arenas – of which I am mostly supportive – are going to create difficulties for Israel's foreign relations.

Much has already been written about the concerns in Washington and liberal Diaspora Jewish communities. It appears that Israel is under the microscope in Arab capitals too, specifically in the palaces of its new Abraham Accords partners.

In a recent series of meetings with think tank colleagues in the Gulf, I discovered deep disquiet about the emerging Israeli government coalition. To them, “tolerance” is the key concept behind the Abraham Accords, and they expect to see this reflected in Israeli government policy. Below, I will try to explain what they mean by “tolerance”.

My Emirati and Bahraini interlocutors are not opposed to any of the incoming government's likely policies in principle. Nor in the longer term do they rule out the extension of Israeli sovereignty to parts of the West Bank (along the lines of, say, the Trump peace plan). After all, some of these moves are internal Israeli matters, and others, like Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount, stem from principles of tolerance and religious freedom that are treasured by the Gulf Arabs.

But the key, they say, is not to act like a bull in a china shop. If Israel starts building settlements in the West Bank with abandon – gets into what might be seen as trigger-happy live fire confrontations with Arab, Bedouin and Palestinian stone-throwers leading to a sharp rise in casualties – or barrels into the Temple Mount with wholesale changes in security and prayer protocols without attempting to conduct a respectful dialogue on this with the Arab world, then the Abraham Accords could suffer.

No Abraham Accords country is going to break relations with Israel or end intelligence and defence coopera-

tion, especially against Iran. And many areas of cooperation – from environmental and agricultural cooperation to scientific, space and business partnerships – will continue apace. But Arab countries may feel it necessary to de-emphasise their ties with Israel in public and distance themselves loudly from the government in Jerusalem.

One Gulf colleague warned that the Saudis in particular stand at a tricky moment. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman could be ready to take significant new steps towards Israel. That is certainly the hope of incoming prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who has specified an Israeli breakthrough in ties to Saudi Arabia as one of his top priorities.

But I was warned that the Saudis could be forced into retreat if Israel acts “incautiously and intolerantly”. The first step away from Israel that the Saudis might take is a withdrawal of their permission for Israeli, Bahraini and Emirati airlines to fly over Saudi Arabia on routes to and from Israel. This would be a gigantic step backward that would severely impact the development of Israel-Gulf ties, and of course, tourism. I consider this a stark warning.

This brings me back to the Abrahamic concept of “tolerance”. What the Gulf Arabs are trying to do is redefine the identity and global image of Arab Muslims based on

a discourse of genuine tolerance and ideological moderation. They explicitly reject the discourse of hatred (of the West and of Israel) that lies at the root of extremist strains of Sunni and Shi'ite Islam.

Moreover, Gulf Arabs see Israel's blend of tradition with enlightenment as a role model for their own societies. After all, Israeli society and the societies of the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco cherish their strong family,

ethnic, cultural and religious identities while appreciating modernity. They uphold proud nationalist sentiment and a broad-minded approach to advanced education, interna-



Israeli President Herzog in Bahrain in early December: Israel's gulf state partners want the new Israeli government to emphasise “tolerance” (Image: Amos ben Gershom/GPO)

With compliments from



**Sandra & Barry
Smorgon
Family**



SANDBAR
INVESTMENTS



tional brotherhood and regional cooperation. And they all seek peace.

Consequently, the Arab leaders of Abraham Accords countries need to see Israel expressing tolerance, actively pursuing accommodation with Israeli Arabs and seeking peace with the Palestinians, too. They are not wedded to the archaic Oslo-era two-state paradigm, nor do they care about satisfying every extremist Palestinian demand. What they do care about is an approach of dialogue and tolerance.

They want to see Israel pursuing Jewish-Muslim channels of reconciliation, not angry altercations; opportunities for at least informal (“track two”) diplomacy with the Palestinians, not confrontation; and avenues for practical teamwork, not squabbles.

They expect that Israel will pursue dialogue with Israeli Arab leaders on matters of internal governance and with the broader Arab world on matters relating to sovereignty and especially Jerusalem.

How this squares with the current rejectionist policies, absolute hostility to Israel and even raw antisemitism of the Palestinian leadership, is unclear. How can Israel be expected to make progress with Mahmoud Abbas and his cronies, never mind with Hamas leaders? How can Israel forcefully roll back the mafia-style Bedouin protection rackets in the Negev, which it must, without some degree of confrontation? So I told my Gulf colleagues to temper their expectations.

Furthermore, I told them that Israel will firmly assert its sovereignty and governance in the face of Israeli Arab and Palestinian lawlessness. That is what most Israelis expect of their new government.

At the same time, I assured them that Israel will do so without racist incitement and delegitimising rhetoric, and without crude demonstrations of its power, but rather with finely calibrated tools and from an approach of maximum willingness to conduct dialogue. I trust that I am right. AIR

David M. Weinberg is a senior fellow at The Kohélet Forum and Habithonistim: Israel’s Defence and Security Forum. © Israel Hayom (www.israelhayom.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

AN AWAKENING ON IRAN’S AYATOLLAHS?

Fiamma Nirenstein

It is about time the media and the international community woke up to the fact that the Iranian regime is an oppressive, violent tyranny that loathes women, dissidents and anyone who does not conform to its theocratic ideology.

This awakening apparently required the mass killing of unarmed protesters, including children. But at least it is happening. Indeed, it has become clear to all in the weeks since the Iranian uprising began that the ayatollahs believe the survival of their regime is more important than the lives of their own people.

All of this should have been clear decades ago, but thank goodness, international attention is finally being paid, though it is uncertain whether it will have an effect.

There are those of us who have long known the true face of the Iranian regime, and have denounced it for years. Ever since 1979, when the Ayatollah Khomeini and his theocratic revolutionaries seized control of Iran, it has been obvious that the regime considers freedom, democracy and the West a nuisance that it will eventually destroy with the coming of the “Mahdi” [*Ed. the messianic figure in Islamic eschatology*] and a resulting apocalyptic war.

This religious fantasy has driven the regime’s imperialist ambitions and, through terrorism and warmongering, set the entire Middle East on fire. Let no one labour under the delusion that this theocratic imperialism will remain confined to the Middle East.

Moreover, the regime’s ferocious antisemitism has made it the only country that sits in the United Nations and systemically and relentlessly threatens another member state – Israel – with genocide.

Iran itself is a wonderful country. Its people are ancient, cultured and heirs to the great civilisations of Persia. This only makes it more painful to see such sights as LGBTQ individuals being hanged from cranes in public squares, which is not even to mention the tens of thousands who have been executed by the regime for all manner of reasons over many bloody decades.

According to the Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights (IHR) and France’s Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM), executions in Iran rose 25% last year, following the election of Ebrahim Raisi to the presidency. As I write this article, 21 people are still awaiting execution.

This regime, with its Revolutionary Guards at the helm inside and outside its borders, along with its prox-

**Ensure your pets
are always protected**

Cover their health
with Australia’s #1
rated Pet Insurer

PRODUCT REVIEW 2017 AWARDS WINNER



**Bow
Wow
Meow**
PET INSURANCE

Get a quote at
bowwowinsurance.com.au
Or call 1800 668 502

ies Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis, will never deviate from its ultimate goal. As long as it exists, it will pursue its desire for domination and death.

What is needed, obviously, is regime change. The tyranny of the ayatollahs must be overthrown, preferably by its own people. But in the meantime, there must be a shift in the international arena. When Raisi was inaugurated, representatives of Hamas and Hezbollah sat alongside representatives of the European Union. This coddling of tyrants and terrorists must end.

The United States still aims to sign a nuclear deal with the Iranian regime, which would, at the moment, be a horrendous mistake. US President Joe Biden is not only ignoring the forces of freedom rising up across Iran, but also the doors to the Sunni Muslim world that have opened due to mutual recognition of the Iranian threat. None of the Sunni

of Iran's brave dissidents, and tolerate this evil regime no longer.

AIR

Fiamma Nirenstein was a member of the Italian Parliament (2008-13), where she served as vice president of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the Chamber of Deputies. Currently, she is a fellow at the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs (JCPA) and is the author of the recent book Jewish Lives Matter: Human Rights and Anti-Semitism, published by the JCPA. © Jewish News Syndicate (www.jns.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

“JEWS ARE NEWS” ON TWITTER. WHY?

Alana Schetzer

Despite being just 0.2% of the world's population, Jews are news, especially on Twitter.

In the past three months, Jewish and Israel-associated words have trended daily – sometimes multiple times daily – on the social media platform, which was recently taken over by Tesla CEO Elon Musk.

“Jewish”, “Jews”, “The Jews”, “Israel”, “Holocaust”, “antisemitism”, “Yiddish”, “Hebrew”, “American Jews”, “Tel Aviv”, “Jerusalem” and “Jews in Hollywood” are just some of the trending words and phrases that have been all but unavoidable on Twitter for months.

This began well before music icon Kanye West started so prominently spewing antisemitic hatred, commencing on October 9, and also well before Israelis went to the polls on Nov. 1. It has continued since.

The fact that this consistent trend has been apparently occurring largely outside of any major stories in the news cycle superficially seems bizarre. However, when you consider how much antisemitism and the world's obsession with Israel have gone mainstream in 2022, it becomes much less so.



Conspiracy theory outlets, like the US-based Infowars, have helped fuel an explosion of anti-Jewish comments on social media (YouTube screenshot)



French President Emmanuel Macron (left) greets Iranian dissidents Masih Alinejad, Ladan Boroumand, Shima Babaie and Roya Pirayi on Nov. 12 (Screenshot)

nations want Biden's policy of offering Iran billions of dollars to sign an agreement the ayatollahs have no intention of honouring.

There are some encouraging signs that the situation may be changing. French President Emmanuel Macron recently met with four Iranian dissidents and took a strong public stand against the regime's violence. The UN finally voted to establish a commission to examine the regime's human rights violations. The Foreign Minister of Italy cancelled a bilateral meeting with his Iranian counterpart. Most importantly, Biden appears to be far less eager to renew the nuclear deal in the wake of the protests. As former Israeli Ambassador to the US Ron Dermer said in his latest “Politically Incorrect” podcast, there is now the possibility of forging a wide international consensus against the ayatollah regime.

This regime has enjoyed impunity for long enough. It uses fear of war and terrorism in order to torture the region and suppress its own people. The international community should learn the lessons of decades of coddling China and Russia, which have pocketed the money and used it to build ever-greater military power. This same policy has long been pursued in regard to Iran, but the international community should now follow the lead

Israeli journalist, social media expert and activist Emily Schrader believes that this trend – and antisemitism in general – can be at least partly explained by “envy”.

“Jews are disproportionately successful as a community in the Western world and unfortunately a by-product of this is envy,” she explains. “A huge part of antisemitism is motivated by envy and that often manifests in antisemitism.”

“When it comes to Twitter, Jews, LGBTQI+ and women are among the most targeted groups on the platform and this is directly related to the fact that oppression of these minorit[y] groups is not accepted in society... those with bigoted beliefs take to Twitter where they can express that hate without the consequences they would face if they behaved violently towards Jewish people. Unfortunately, in the long term this normalizes antisemitism in person as well.”

A survey of tweets that mention any of the above trending words shows some involving an intense mix of vile antisemitic hatred, racism, and conspiracy theories, others that involve uneducated statements and stereotypes, and thirdly, tweets from passionate Jewish activists and allies attempting to both educate the public and hit back against this ongoing wave of hatred and racism.

However, the latter group is being swamped in that wave, just in terms of sheer numbers.

Twitter has long been a largely hostile environment for Jewish people; in September, a peer-reviewed study from the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism (ISCA) revealed that antisemitism has been on the rise, and that between 2019 and 2020, an antisemitic tweet was published every 20 seconds.

Most of them involved conspiracy theories about the Holocaust, the Middle East and “Jewish global dominance”. In 2020 alone – during the global COVID-19 pandemic, which inspired a new wave of deranged antisemitic conspiracies – anti-Jewish tweets rose to total 14% of all tweets posted.

“Social media has become the largest medium for antisemitic narratives, which can radicalise individuals and lead to violence,” the ISCA report said. “Coronavirus has only exacerbated the challenge posed by hatred against Jews and antisemitic conspiracy theories.”

ISCA is now focusing its research on identifying the sources of these tweets, which it says appear to largely originate from neo-Nazi groups, anti-Zionist groups and state-sponsored activities from Iran and other countries.

Schrader adds that while antisemites have long been able to peddle their abuse and conspiracy theories online while hiding behind a veil of anonymity, the increasing mainstream visibility of antisemitism has evolved to the point where this is changing.

“That hate has increased over time and created a reality where Jew-hatred is normalised. This cycle will continue until social media platforms develop better ways to cope with hate speech against Jews and other minorities,” she says.

Since Musk bought Twitter in a controversial \$US44 billion takeover, finalised in October, antisemitic tweets have reportedly spiked. The Network Contagion Research Institute – which monitors online hate and disinformation – has called it a “prolific surge”. It stated that “terms associated with Jew are being tweeted over 5,000 times per hour” and that “the most engaged tweets are overtly antisemitic.”

The obsession with Jews on Twitter appears also to be a symptom of what is happening in the real world; over the past three years, there have been record spikes in antisemitic incidents globally, including physical attacks. Over 2020-2021, antisemitic incidents in the UK increased by 78%, in France by 75%, and by 34% in the US.

Moreover, several current and former United States federal officials have stated that antisemitism on Twitter is actually fuelling verbal and physical attacks against Jews.

In late November, more than 180 non-profit and civil rights organisations (including AIJAC), signed an open letter to Twitter, calling on it to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism. The definition, which has been taken up by dozens of governments across the world, including Australia and the United States, is a vital tool in supporting governments, businesses and organisations to combat antisemitism.

Schrader stresses there “absolutely” is a problem with antisemitism on Twitter, adding that its own policies are either not being enforced or are being enforced “selectively”.

“Social media platforms have an opportunity to educate the public about the toxic hatred of antisemitism instead



Social media expert and activist Emily Schrader (Screenshot)

With Compliments
gleneagle
securities

Level 27, 25 Bligh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

www.gleneagle.com.au

of simply removing content or banning users. As a private company, they can flag or downgrade content based on the promotion of antisemitic or hateful speech. This would be a much better alternative than censorship in most cases,” she urged.

AIR

AUSTRALIAN FANS OF IRAN AND RUSSIA AT IT AGAIN

Ran Porat

Regular *AIR* readers would recognise Dr. Tim Anderson from his role as the Australia General Coordinator of the Iranian propaganda network, Al-Tajamu. Anderson is a fervent anti-Israel activist and a fan of Hezbollah and the regimes ruling Iran, Syria and North Korea.

APPLAUDING IRAN’S “ACHIEVEMENTS” REGARDING WOMEN

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Anderson has become one of Moscow’s mouthpieces in Australia, repeating Russian propaganda and attacking the US and the West in every possible medium and media outlet.

Meanwhile, since widespread protests broke out in Iran in September, Anderson has been using social media to share the ayatollahs’ narrative that the protests against mandatory veiling laws and the regime more generally are “riots [that] had nothing to do with women.” As a regular guest on Russia’s propaganda network *RT* and Iran’s own *Press TV*, he reiterates messages that originate from officials of the Putin and Khamenei regimes.

Anderson heads the Centre for Counter Hegemonic Studies (CCHS), a quasi-academic institute which is yet another platform for disseminating his pro-Iran, pro-Russia and anti-Israel content.

For example, like Anderson himself, the centre hosts the official Iranian report into the death of Iranian woman Mahsa Amini, and the protest that followed her death on September 16. This report insists she died of an existing brain disorder and was never struck by morality police while in custody as was widely reported, while all the protests were initiated and orchestrated by foreign governments and terrorists.

Meanwhile, as the women of Iran have been fighting bravely for basic freedoms, the CCHS website proudly published a report titled “Achievements of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Improving the Status of Women and the Family.” Toeing the same line, CCHS also published “Iranian Hijab: Working-class symbol in an anti-imperialist class war”, sourced from the Hezbollah-affiliated network, *al-Mayadeen*.

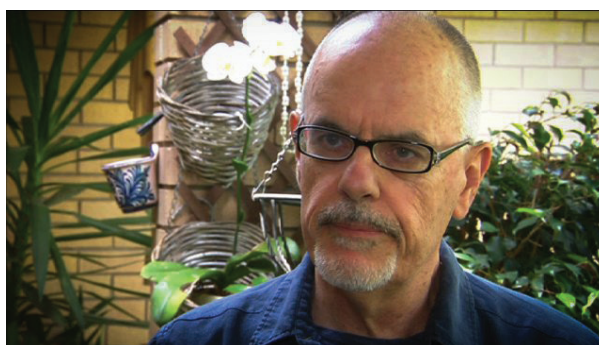
The editors of the CCHS website also don’t seem to mind breaking Australian law. In a blatant violation of copyright laws, they have published the full text of the 2018 book by renowned Israeli analyst and *New York Times* reporter Ronen Bergman, *Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel’s Targeted Assassinations*. The book is available in full downloadable format on the website (*AIR* will not provide a link in this case, so as not to encourage theft of intellectual property. Dr Bergman has been informed of this theft by the author of this article).

NAZI GERMANY EQUALS “APARTHEID ISRAEL”

In 2019 Anderson was sacked from his position at Sydney University after superimposing a swastika over an Israeli flag during a lesson. Following a series of court appeals, aided by the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), on Oct. 27 Anderson won his case against dismissal.

Meanwhile, Anderson has been doubling down on his antisemitic comparison of the Jewish state to the Nazi regime, tweeting (Oct 10):

“Australian #Zionists struggle to understand the parallel between Nazi Germany and #ApartheidIsrael. The specific parallel is between large scale racial massacres based on



Former academic turned pro-Iranian regime advocate Tim Anderson (Screenshot)

pseudo-racial theories.”

In November, Anderson was interviewed by the small far-left blog “Sydney Criminal Lawyers” about his court case and his views on Israel.

Referring to the image he used in class of the swastika superimposed on Israel’s flag, Anderson described it as “a pedagogical tool, showing how to read conflicting sources, in relation to the massacre of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, and the relative scale of civilian casualties from Israeli forces and from the Palestinian resistance.”

Anderson went on to blame the “war media” for “misrepresentation of my Gaza graphic as the image of ‘a swastika on an Israeli flag’ [which] is a gross distortion.”

Anderson explained his real intentions about using this graphic later in the interview. “The background image of an Israeli flag partly obscured by a swastika is a visual



Slide used by Anderson during a lesson in 2017, including a swastika superimposed on the Israeli flag. (Source: National Tertiary Education Industry Union v University of Sydney [2021] FCAFC 159)

comment saying that the Israeli army was acting like Nazi Germany in this racialised massacre of more than 1,000 Palestinians, most of them civilians," said Anderson. This apparent distinction without much of a difference may have left readers wondering what the "gross distortion" was.

Much of Anderson's ire was directed at Prof. Stephen Garton, who was University of Sydney Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor in 2017. During the interview, Anderson commented on an exchange of messages with Garton relating to Anderson's depiction of Israel as an apartheid state. Anderson alleged that "This was not just a difference of opinion. We both knew that an Israeli-linked group was one of the largest donors to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and that Stephen Garton wanted to defuse the media trolling of the university through their attacks on me."

The interview concluded with Anderson's infamous accusations that the "racialised colony" which is Israel is performing "slow genocide" of the Palestinians.

Anderson went even further in his interview on Nov. 19 on the Hezbollah TV channel, *Al Manar* — sanctioned by the US as a terrorist entity since 2006. As well as again mumbling Iranian and Russian propaganda on air, he defended his choice to superimpose a swastika on an Israeli flag in his presentation to the students by talking about "racial massacres of Palestinians in Gaza." Without mentioning Zionism explicitly, but hinting at Israel, Anderson made what appeared to be a classically antisemitic claim by alleging that these alleged acts against the Palestinians are based on "pseudo racial theory about some mythical people that owns the land of the Levant."

THARAPPEL: "WOMEN CRYING ON TV"

Anderson's close ally, and fellow Al-Tajamu member, is radical anti-Israel activist Jay (José) Tharappel. For his extreme views and for wearing Yemen's Houthi badge with the slogans "Curse on the Jews" and "Death to Israel", Th-

arappel was recently expelled from the NSW Labor party.

Just like his mentor, he has also enlisted himself to defend Russia in its aggression against Ukraine. For example, repeating typical propaganda from Moscow that Ukraine is being controlled by the CIA, oligarchs and Jews, Tharappel claimed (Sept. 2) that Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy "does not control his country. If he wanted peace, he would be accused of treason, removed from power, and replaced, by the West, with someone willing to keep throwing

Ukrainian soldiers at the Russian army."

Over the last few weeks, Tharappel has decided to take a stand with regards to the recent wave of protest in Iran, sanctimoniously defending Teheran's violent repression of its own people.

"Condemning the Iranian government," explains Tharappel in his blog (Sept. 24), "serves only one purpose: to manufacture consent for aggression against Iran, which is the far greater crime in terms of how many lives have been lost."

Living in the West and voicing support for Iran's people is counterproductive, in Tharappel's view, because it might lead to, God forbid, Western action against Teheran. "The media will interview a bunch of people, especially female exiles," Tharappel posits, and "cite that as evidence that there is 'growing global condemnation' of Iran." He adds, with what could be understood as misogynistic undertones, "women will start crying on TV to 'do something', then the West will start escalating their destabilisation campaign against Iran even further."

The internal Iranian protests against the theocracy, muses Tharappel in another post (Sept. 26), are dangerous because they may result in "liberalism". "If default liberalism were to win power in Iran, what would its national strategy be? Economic and military capitulation to Israel and the West of the kind witnessed in the USSR under Gorbachev and Yeltsin? Capitulation to Kurdish and Balochi separatism? These outcomes are more likely with default liberalism," he claims.

And we don't want a liberal or free Iran that respects human rights, do we? Anderson and Tharappel certainly don't seem to.

AIR

Dr. Ran Porat is an AIJAC Research Associate. He is also a Research Associate at the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Monash University and a Research Fellow at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Reichman University in Herzliya.

More than Normalisation

The new mideast strategic landscape

Dan Schueftan

Despite what most Western readers have long been conditioned to assume, the Middle East and Arab-Israeli relations are a source of good news these days. The region is still violent and unstable; the conflict between the Jewish state and its radical enemies – Palestinians and others – is far from over; and the threat of the Iranian revolutionary regime may be greater than ever. However, a new strategic alignment that has lately been emerging promises a better chance than ever before in modern history for regional states to isolate and stand up to the radicals who continue to threaten the existing order. The old structure of the Arab-Israel conflict that defined the Middle East for generations – during and shortly after the Cold War – is now being replaced by a strengthening Arab-Israeli coalition against Iran and its radical Arab proxies.

Since the 1930s, Arab radicals – the likes of the Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al-Husseini, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Muammar Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, Hafez al-Assad, and Yasser Arafat – managed to intimidate other Arab regimes and mobilise them, often against their own national interests, in a fruitless and destructive struggle for the “liberation” of Palestine from the Jews. Cooperation with Israel was condemned as treachery, and evasion of confrontation with her was considered cowardice. This imposed pan-Arab solidarity stifled

regional development and repeatedly drew the region into wide-scale wars which occasionally pushed the Soviet and American superpowers to the brink of nuclear confrontation.



Israeli soldiers in 1948 scored a crucial success in breaking aggressive Arab solidarity against the Jewish state's existence (Image: Israel National Photo Collection)

For Israel, pan-Arab solidarity could have presented a clear existential threat. A small, vulnerable and isolated state could hardly survive in the long run against a radical and aggressive Arab leadership that could mobilise the enormous resources of the entire Middle East – oil, gas, money, markets, international clout, control of essential waterways and impact on Muslim communities the world over.

The erosion, restriction, and ultimately the abolition of aggressive regional solidarity targeting the Jewish state was the supreme objective of Israel's regional strategy since its

inception. While the goals of regional peace and cooperation sound much more noble and appealing, every clear-sighted realist knew that this romantic dream was unattainable in this historically violent and unstable region. Besides, breaking up attempts at regional solidarity was an indispensable precondition to any progress toward peace or its lesser cousins: Arab states would consider accepting Israel only following a painful recognition of the failure of the attempt to erase it at an acceptable cost.

Israel's grand strategy of breaking up aggressive Arab solidarity scored a crucial success in its 1947-49 War of Independence. A pre-emptive alliance with King Abdullah I of Transjordan broke up the joint Arab invasion on the day the Jewish state was established, thereby partitioning Mandatory Palestine between Israel and the Hashemite kingdom. [Ed. Note: Of course, that tacit alliance did not prevent the Jordanian armed forces from destroying Jewish communities, and ethnically cleansing east Jerusalem and the West Bank of all Jews.] Without this alliance, Israel may not have survived the coordinated Arab assault in the early part of the war, it would not have withstood the pressure to internationalise its capital city in Jerusalem, and it could not have concentrated all its forces in the south to confront the Egyptian expeditionary army. The resounding defeat of Egypt that followed forced that pivotal Arab state to betray all other Arab invaders in February 1949, by signing a separate agreement with Israel, practically enabling her to dictate the terms of the armistice and the strategic outcome of that formative war.

Only five years after having successfully shattered Arab solidarity in the late 1940s, Israel faced her most formidable challenge when a messianic Arab leader unprecedentedly captured the imagination of Arabs “from the [Atlantic] Ocean, to the [Arabian] Gulf.” Gamal Abdel Nasser's movement was not essentially about the

struggle against Israel. It was about uniting the Arabs under Egyptian leadership to restore their historic glory, to retrieve their trodden dignity and to catapult their international bargaining position.

Yet the mobilising commitment to “liberate” Palestine could not have been left out of Nasser’s wish list, even though Nasser himself had consistently insisted since the early 1960s that the Arabs were ill prepared to deal Israel a decisive blow and repeatedly warned that a premature war could end up in disaster, as it had in 1948. Ironically, his own political instruments – the radical rhetoric and the political mechanisms of all-Arab solidarity – were turned against him and enabled his even more radical rivals in the Arab arena to manipulate him into initiating the 1967 war.

Traumatised by the all-Arab mobilisation against it in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Israel placed at the top of its regional security strategy the objective of undermining and finally shattering aggressive Arab solidarity against the Jewish state by forcibly removing its Egyptian keystone. Israel, as well as its Arab neighbours, were well aware that the eviction of Egypt from this pivotal position meant not only the collapse of the all-Arab struggle against Israel. It also inevitably meant

terminating the Arab hopes for a major role in world affairs that fuelled Nasser’s messianic movement. This was a zero-sum game: Israel could not be safe without it; Egypt and Arab radicals could not abide by it.

The ultimate expression of Israel’s strategic victory in this crucial round was Egypt’s 1979 separate peace agreement with Israel. The essence of Israel’s success was Egyptian acquiescence with whatever consequences Israel chose to inflict on other Arabs who continued to challenge it violently. Thus, Israel could get away with, for instance, the occupation of an Arab capital city (Beirut, 1982), the destruction of nuclear projects (Iraq, 1981; Syria, 2007) and wide-scale repression of Palestinian violence (2002-04, in response to the Second Intifada). The 1979 separate peace with Egypt was “the end of the beginning” of the “all-Arab-Israeli conflict.” When the Soviet Union collapsed a decade later, the chances of a major coordinated assault against Israel declined even further.

The next major step that changed the core of Arab-Israeli relations and the regional balance of power was not the failed “peace process” with the Palestinians, nor the 1994 peace

agreement between Israel and Jordan. It came more than three decades after the regional turning point in 1979, following the “Arab Spring” and Arab awareness of the far-reaching significance of its failure.

The exhilarating hopes for a speedy restoration of Arab greatness that Nasser inspired in the 1950s and

1960s were shattered with the 1967 defeat and obliterated by the turn of the century.

The much more modest hope that prevailed in the region and among Middle Eastern scholars was that Arab societ-

ies might extricate themselves from their lingering predicament by rising against their autocratic and corrupt leaders and replacing their failing realities with more pluralistic modern political and social structures. The Arab upheaval which started in 2011 clearly proved that the failure to meet the challenges of the 21st century was deeply rooted in these Arab societies, far beyond the tyranny and deficiencies of their leadership. Never before in their modern history were Arab regimes and their politically aware elites more cognisant of their weakness and less hopeful about an effective response to their predicament in the foreseeable future.

The profound change in the strategic landscape of the Middle East in the recent decade started with this recognition, but it materialised only when it was accompanied by three more realisations among important regional players. A somewhat exaggerated and oversimplified definition may be helpful in order to characterise its four pillars: the magnitude of the Iranian regional threat, the inability of Arab states to stand up to that threat by themselves, the questionable steadfastness of American support, and the proven capacity and dependability of Israel.

Unlike most European and

“The historic all-Arab coalition against Israel has been replaced by a de facto Arab-Israeli coalition against the radical forces that threaten them both”

GBM

G R O U P

With Compliments

Minnie Smorgon and Family

On behalf of

GBM Group
10 Queens Road
Melbourne VIC 3004
Tel: +61 3 9869 1333

American political leaders, officials, and observers, Arabs fully realise the magnitude of the Iranian determination to hegemonise the Middle East at their expense and the effectiveness of Iranian brutality and sophistication in the pursuit of that objective. Watching the impact of the Iranian takeovers in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen and its subversion in their own countries, they know they are in desperate need of external assistance to survive.

In this time of supreme Arab anxiety and distress, the Obama Administration demonstrated a frightening combination of surrealistic misreading of basic regional realities and sweeping strategic incompetence. Some of the most important regional allies of the United States perceived Obama's policies as an attempt to replace their own historic alliance with the US by an American strategic deal with the Iranian Revolution. These suspicions, which culminated with the JCPOA nuclear deal in 2015, were only partially alleviated during the one-term Trump Administration – and resurfaced with renewed vigour when Biden was elected. This deep mutual mistrust was manifested when even a conciliatory presidential visit in July 2022 failed to convince Saudi Arabia to help Biden bring down the price of oil.

With the need for external support against the Iranian threat at a desperate peak, and trust in the American guarantor at its lowest ebb, the most vulnerable Arab states turned to the only power that fully appreciates the magnitude of that threat and is capable and determined to provide a forceful response. Israel is not only cognisant of the catastrophic consequences of Iranian regional hegemony but has also been engaged for more than half a decade in a wide-scale preventive war in Syria and western Iraq to thwart the Iranian takeover where it threatens Israel most acutely.

Israel is, of course, infinitely less powerful than the US. But to the beleaguered Arabs it is, at this stage, also immeasurably more trustworthy as an ally against their worst and most immediate enemy, which poses an ongoing existential threat.

Using an outdated vocabulary of Middle Eastern affairs, recent relations between Israel and most Arab states are often discussed in terms of peace and normalisation. What is happening recently is far more significant than the willingness to live together and overlook old grievances and animosities. It is about strategic interdependence with a senior Israeli partner. The historic all-Arab coalition against Israel has been replaced by a de facto Arab-Israeli coalition against the radical forces that threaten them both. Iran is the immediate and outstanding among those radicals, but Erdogan's Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean and Syria – and, in a different way, its allies in the Muslim Brotherhood – are not very far behind.

For Israel, the result of these new alignments is a transformational change in its regional standing, as well as a major upgrade of its position on the global stage. In the Middle East, Israel can, for the first time, act as a fully-fledged regional player. In recent decades, Israel established its position as a formidable military, economic, and technological power, but it could not openly and freely manoeuvre politically or partake in regional strategic alliances. Its position is dramatically enhanced when Arab parties compete over its attention and cooperation.

On the international scene, global powers and other states no longer have to weigh the advantages of cooperation with Israel against its prohibitive costs in "the Arab World". While a large part of Arab public opinion remains hostile to Israel, European and other states can pay lip service by criticising Israel in interna-

tional forums and through symbolic diplomatic protests while deepening bilateral cooperation, with no real cost *vis-à-vis* Arab regimes.

By far the most significant effect of this transformation is on the American strategic calculus of its relations with Israel. Washington no longer needs to choose between support of Israel on the one hand, and Arab oil, gas, money, markets, and alliance with the United States, on the other. Most of America's allies in the region need a strong Israel for their strategic welfare



The unprecedented Negev summit of moderate Arab regimes that Israel hosted last year (Screenshot)

or even survival, and they share with Israel a disappointment in the degree of trustworthy support that Washington offers to its regional allies. The US is already engaged in coordinating an American-sponsored regional air defence system against Iran that reflects this new and revolutionary reality. Crucially important Arab states want more of that, not less.

In some important ways, then, the "New Middle East" has arrived. Not, of course, in the surreal Shimon Peres vision of regional democracy, peace, and prosperity, but in terms of a balance of power and hard strategic realities that can guardrail a somewhat less unstable and dangerous region, where the radicals are isolated and the others cooperate to keep them at bay. AIR

Dan Schueftan is the Director of the National Security Studies Centre at the University of Haifa. This article is reprinted from Tablet Magazine, at tabletmag.com, the online magazine of Jewish news, ideas, and culture. © Tablet Magazine, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

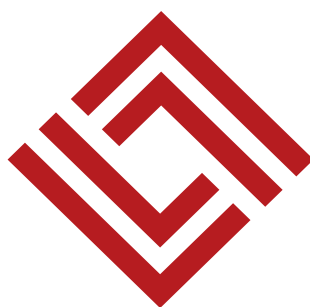


It takes a **Village**

St Ives Shopping Village offers a community environment with over 100 fashion, food and lifestyle retailers with independent and national brands available.

We are delighted to support the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council.

stivesvillage.com.au @stivesvillage @ f
166 Mona Vale Road, St Ives



Lascorp

Investment Group (Aust) Pty Ltd

Specialising in retail and shopping centre investments,
syndication and management.

29 Claremont Street, South Yarra, VIC 3141

P 03 249 0000 **E** mail@lascorp.com

lascorp.com

NOTED AND QUOTED

THE MONTH IN MEDIA

BACK TO THE FUTURE?

Twin bus bombings in Jerusalem on Nov. 24 that killed a 16-year-old Israeli boy and wounded many others, including one man who later died, received widespread TV, radio and print coverage.

Channel Seven Sydney's "6pm News" report (Nov. 24) included an Israeli paramedic explaining that the bombs were packed with "nails and ball bearings" to maximise "shrapnel injuries". Reporter Ashlee Mullany observed that "attacks like this on Israel's busy bus system were common during the Palestinian uprising in the early 2000s, which left thousands of people dead."

On *SBS TV* "World News" (Nov. 24), reporter Rena Sarumpaet said, "Israeli-Palestinian tensions have been high with months of Israeli arrest raids in the West Bank that have killed more than 130 Palestinians... prompted by Palestinian attacks that have killed around 20 Israelis."

EXPLOSIVE CLAIMS

ABC Middle East correspondent Allyson Horn's live cross to *ABC TV* "The World" (Nov. 24) to discuss the twin bus bombings contained two significant problematic claims.

Horn accurately noted that Israeli military raids on the West Bank were in response to terror attacks.

But her assertion that "reports are this has been the deadliest year for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank" omitted the key fact that this figure comes from the UN, which stated explicitly it only started compiling such data in 2005 (the ABC's website reported this accurately in October). There were many more deaths on both sides during the Second Intifada years, 2000-2004.

Horn also omitted Israel's claim that most of these fatalities involved Palestinians carrying out acts of violence.

Discussing negotiations over the formation of Israel's next government, Horn said, "one of the big concerns that is being negotiated at the moment is where Benjamin Netanyahu will place some very ultra-right-wing nationalists, people who have called for the eradication of Arabs from this part of the world, people who have been accused of inciting violence and inciting attacks and racism towards Palestinians."

No Israeli MK has called for the "eradication of Arabs from this part of the world," which implies advocating for the mass murder of Israeli Arabs and Palestinians or mass expulsions. Even the head of the far-right Jewish Power Party Itamar Ben Gvir, who has talked about expulsions, has been clear this would only apply to terrorists, not all Arabs.

SALLYING FORTH

On *ABC Radio National* "Between the Lines" (Dec. 2), academic Sally Totman said, "the fact that [Binyamin] Netanyahu is willing to partner up with these extreme right-wing groups is a sign that he's not moderate in any way."

Netanyahu has partnered up with far-right politicians because all other potential coalition partners have refused to join any government he leads whilst he is on trial on corruption charges. Netanyahu denies the allegations and under Israeli law is entitled to remain in office pending a verdict.

According to Totman's analysis, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and Hamas "are very concerned about [the] appointment [of far-right MK

Itamar Ben Gvir] and what that will mean. And I'm sure that they'll respond if things start to become increasingly repressive in the occupied territories."

Hamas and PIJ espouse an extreme Islamist agenda, including making it very clear they seek Israel's destruction. They thus do not need any incentive to carry out terror attacks.

Equally ill-informed were Totman's statements about the reasons why the Oslo peace process failed to end the conflict.

She said, "there was that idea [in 1993] that there would be a two-state solution... peace was coming very soon. And over the years, that's just been whittled away... even the Camp David Accords in 2000 was a lesser... vision of a two-state solution than even we'd sort of seen in '93."

This is just wrong. There was never a specific promise of a two-state peace as part of Oslo. Indeed, in 1995, shortly before his assassination, then Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin specified Israel was seeking to create a Palestinian entity "which is less than a state" at the end of the Oslo process.

Nonetheless, in July 2000, Israeli PM Ehud Barak offered Palestinian President Yasser Arafat a full Palestinian state that included all of Gaza, more than 90% of the West Bank, land swaps, dismantling settlements to provide territorial contiguity, a capital in east Jerusalem and shared sovereignty over the Old City's holy sites.

Not only did Arafat refuse the offer, he authorised the start of the Second Intifada terror campaign that began three months later and which lasted for five years, resulting in the murder of more than 1,000 Israelis.

Despite the terror outbreak start-

ing in September 2000, Barak continued to negotiate, culminating in his January 2001 offer, which former US President Bill Clinton said “was so good I couldn’t believe anyone would be foolish enough to let it go.”

Ignoring these basic but critical facts, Totman criticised the existence of settlements on the West Bank, as well as the “security barrier” and “checkpoints” there – none of which would be an issue if Arafat had accepted the state offered to him.

HOSPITAL PASS

The *Australian* print edition (Nov. 25) and the *West Australian* website

(Nov. 24) were amongst only a few local media outlets that covered the shocking abduction by Palestinian terrorists of Israeli Druze teenager Tiran Fero from life support in a Jenin hospital – which is under the control of the Palestinian Authority.

Fero was taken there after being involved in a car accident.

The *West Australian* said, “The incident threatened to ratchet up already boiling tensions between Israel and the Palestinians.”

But what neither report noted was that the potential for conflict came primarily from the Israeli Druze community, whose leaders threatened to march *en masse* to Jenin

unless Fero’s body was returned.

The *Australian* noted that “the bodies of Israelis have previously been abducted to be used as bargaining chips to secure the release of Palestinian[s].”

The *West Australian* pointed out that “more than 130 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli-Palestinian fighting in the West Bank and east Jerusalem this year, making 2022 the deadliest year since 2006,” accurately noting that “fighting has surged since a series of Palestinian attacks in the spring killed 19 people in Israel,” and adding that “the Israeli army says most of the Palestinians killed have been militants.”



IN PARLIAMENT

The following seven statements were given in Federal Parliament to mark “International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people”:

Maria Vamvakinou (ALP, Calwell) – Nov. 30 – “There is strong support in solidarity with the Palestinian people, regionally and internationally and in significant communities right across Australia... the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to a state, must be recognised and realised.”

Senator **Mehreen Faruqi** (Greens, NSW) – Nov. 29 – “Today is the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. The year 2022 has been a year of tragedy after tragedy. Yet, day after day, the courageous Palestinian people resist occupation and oppression... On 5 August, the Israeli regime began a three-day bombing assault in the Gaza Strip, which killed at least 49 Palestinians, including 17 children... Israel is committing the crime of apartheid... the Israel lobby is in overdrive... the trips, and other activities, have only one objective, and that’s to see that no matter what Israel does it will never be criticised by Canberra.”

Tony Zappia (ALP, Makin) – Nov. 29 – “Eight million Palestinian people continue to live in Israel-occupied territory and refugee camps in neighbouring Arab states. Simultaneously, the Palestinian people face everyday struggles for survival, the loss of land, human rights violations and oppression.”

Graham Perrett (ALP, Moreton) – Nov. 29 – “...these settlements are illegal, and they are... strategically placed in positions to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state.”

Alicia Payne (ALP, Canberra) – Nov. 29 – “To this day Palestinians make up 21% of the global refugee population.”

Senator **Fatima Payman** (ALP, WA) – Nov. 28 – “It is easy to

despair at the lack of progress towards [peace, justice and an enduring two-state solution] and at the steep cost to human life, which are felt not only in Palestine but here in Australia as well... Israel is the only country... that systemically prosecutes children in military courts that lack fundamental fair-trial rights and protections.”

Max Chandler-Mather (Greens, Griffith) – Nov. 22 – “The term ‘apartheid’ applies, according to international law, when serious human rights violations are committed in the context of an institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over another, with the intention of maintaining that regime. It is clear apartheid applies here when violations include discriminatory laws and policies, denial of equal nationality and status, harsh movement restrictions, massive seizures of Palestinian land and property, restrictions on the right to political participation and popular resistance, discriminatory underinvestment in Palestinian communities in Israel and restrictions on the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes in Israel and the occupied territories.”

Senator **David Shoebridge** (Greens, NSW) – Nov. 23 – addressed Israel’s election: “How long will Palestinians be forced to wait for the most basic of rights—for freedom and for peace with justice?... Israel has just elected its most far-right government in history, and that’s saying something... 2022 is also on course to be the deadliest year for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank on record...”

Senator **Anne Urquhart** (ALP, Tas.) – Nov. 29 – “I stood beside the nine-metre-high concrete wall that Israel has built – twice as high and four times as long as the Berlin Wall – which rips apart Palestinian neighbourhoods and annexes Palestinian lands... Military occupations must be opposed, whether in Ukraine or in Palestine... We must recognise the rights of Palestinians as equal to those of Israelis: to have self-determination, to have security and to live equally amongst the world’s nations. We must also support Israeli accountability in international courts.”

ADAMS' CATASTROPHE

ABC Radio National "Late Night Live" (Nov. 16) listeners were treated to a classic exhibition of host Phillip Adams' indifference to balance and factual accuracy when he interviewed Lebanese-born Palestinian writer Fida Jiryis about her recent memoir, *Stranger in My Own Land*.

Jiryis talked about the *Nakba*, Arabic for "catastrophe", the term used to refer to the "the founding of the State of Israel on 78% of historic Palestine."

She claimed, falsely, that "at the time, the Zionist militias coordinated a campaign of ethnic cleansing throughout historic Palestine, forcing out Palestinians from hundreds of their villages and from the major towns in order to make room for Jewish settlers."

Jiryis agreed with Adams' statement that "in a matter of weeks, around three quarters of a million Palestinians were expelled, more than half the Arab population of the country."

In fact, the catastrophe was the rejection by Arab leaders of the 1947 UN Partition Plan that would've created a Palestinian Arab state. Instead, they pursued war in an effort to destroy any chance the proposed Jewish state would survive. Most Palestinian Arabs who were displaced never even saw Jewish soldiers but still fled, either because they were told to do so by Arab commanders to make it easier to attack Jewish targets, or out of fear that Israelis would inflict upon them what they planned to do to Israelis.

FRANKLY DISGUSTING

There was scattered coverage about *Farha*, a controversial movie by Jordanian filmmaker Darin Sallam which focuses on a 14-year-old Palestinian Arab girl who hides in a cellar from where she can witness fighting in the 1948 war.

The movie has attracted criticism because it depicts Israeli soldiers executing an Arab family in cold blood.

Australian writer Christos Tsiolkas' review in the *Saturday Paper* (Nov. 5) stressed that "I want to be clear that this isn't a question of doubting the reality of the brutalities that *Farha* depicts," but said "the villainous nature of the Israeli soldiers is so crudely expressed that it dilutes our emotional response to their atrocities."

He referred to the "Naqba, the catastrophic events that saw the newly formed state of Israel invade and expel the Palestinians from their land."

There was neither invasion nor expulsion. There was a war initiated by Arabs where Jews were forced to defend themselves, which required fighting in areas where Arab forces were based.

A report in the *Guardian Australia* (Dec. 1) said that the movie "is the story of a friend of [director Darin] Sallam's mother, who met each other as young women in Syria," and that "Sallam has also said that while she did not seek to draw a deliberate parallel with Anne Frank, she can see the similarities in the traumatic experiences of the two teenage girls."

The comparison is odious and typical of those who seek to compare Israel's creation to the Nazi Holocaust. *Farha* is a fictional movie, depicting made up events.

In contrast, Anne Frank was actually sent to the concentration camp of Bergen Belsen, where she died, because an informant betrayed her family's secret hiding place to the Nazis.

COURAGEOUS CLIVE

In the *Canberra Times* (Nov. 30), analyst Clive Williams said ASIO's decision to downgrade to "possible" the threat level of a terror attack occurring in Australia after eight years of "probable" is "courageous".

Williams said in the past "internationally, many Islamist extremist incidents have taken place over the Christmas period," adding that "so far there has not been any violent spillover in Australia from ethnic/religious-based conflicts in Turkey, Ukraine, Israel/Palestine, Afghanistan, and Xinjiang, but remains a possibility."

Williams' inclusion of "Israel/Palestine" was a little hasty.

On Dec. 6 and 7, there was widespread local media coverage of a \$1 million reward announced by NSW Police and the NSW State Government to coincide with a new coronial inquest into the twin bombings of the Israeli consulate in Sydney and the Hakoah Club Jewish social venue in Bondi on Dec. 23, 1982. The reports said investigators believe a pro-Palestinian terrorist group called "May 15" based in Lebanon had orchestrated the attacks, which only failed to kill anyone because the bombs used proved defective.

WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

Nine Newspapers' Konrad Marshall's profile in the *Good Weekend Magazine* (Dec. 3) of Amy Taylor, lead singer of the Australian music group Amyl and the Sniffers, misrepresented the Palestinian boycott campaign directed against the 2022 Sydney Festival.

Marshall called Taylor "naïve" because the group performed at the "Festival in January... unaware the event had financial support from the Israeli government, or that a huge boycott was in effect."

Israel's embassy in Canberra was approached by Festival organisers and gave a \$20,000 grant that was used for the sole purpose of staging a performance by Australian dancers of the show "Decadance" developed by Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin – who is actually a vocal critic of Israel's occupation of the West Bank.

Moreover, contrary to the sugges-

tion that the group were outliers for taking part, in fact a large majority of acts continued to perform at the Sydney Festival.

The feature said, “some in the punk community branded the band Zionists, accusing them of taking blood money,” and quoted Taylor saying, “we made a mistake. Sometimes you just have to admit you don’t know something.”

Stung by the criticism, Taylor “dove down a Middle-East-conflict rabbit-hole” consuming pro-Palestinian propaganda “and donating the band’s festival fee to the Olive Kids foundation, which supports Palestinian children.”

Taylor’s naivety was in automatically assuming that acts who did comply with the boycott were justified in doing so. There is clear evidence that some acts withdrew because of intimidation and threats they experienced on social media.

MORE CAPITAL ERRORS

On Dec. 5, the *Canberra Times*’ “The Public Sector Informant” section said it received FOI documents relating to DFAT’s decision on Oct. 17 to remove language from its website stating that Australia recognises west Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

The FOI documents added nothing to the general understanding of why DFAT decided that Australia no longer recognised west Jerusalem as Israel’s capital before Cabinet had taken any decision on the issue.

The Public Sector Informant also erroneously stated that “the former government recognise[d] West Jerusalem as the capital instead of Tel Aviv.” Australia, like most other governments, has never regarded Tel Aviv as Israel’s capital.

BLACK AND WHITE REPORTING

On Dec. 5, the headline and lede in a *Canberra Times* report favoured the Palestinian narrative regarding

Ammar Mefleh, a 22-year-old Palestinian terrorist who was shot dead by an Israeli Border Police officer on the West Bank, implying he was the victim of excessive force.

The report noted a short video showed an Israeli Border Police officer tussling with three Palestinians. Two of the Palestinians break away, leaving the officer wrestling with Mefleh, who pushes the officer, causing his rifle to hit the ground. The officer then pulls out his pistol and shoots Mefleh, who then falls.

Buried in the report was Israel’s response that Mefleh had tried to attack two Israelis in a car, then tried to break into a locked vehicle with a rock, and that he stabbed an Israeli Border Police officer in the face before another officer tried to arrest him.

The article noted Tor Wennesland, special UN Envoy to the Middle East peace process, had condemned the killing on Twitter and called for an investigation (see p. 6). But missing was the fact that Wennesland relied on a selectively edited version of the video circulated by Palestinian activists on social media which made it look like Mefleh was totally innocent.

GUY’S MARXIST GLASSES

Left-wing *Crikey* writer Guy Rundle (Nov. 18) indulged in deluded Marxist fantasies to explain the recent Israeli election result.

Rundle asserted that “Jewish supremacism... towards the Palestinians is a new thing... aris[ing]... from the collapse of meaning in the Zionist movement itself, something that has been occurring since the country abandoned social democracy and neoliberalism in its economy, thus creating unprecedented economic inequality between Jews, and undermining the notion of a unified project.”

Ongoing terrorism and Palestinian rejectionism, not economic inequalities in Israel, have been the primary

factors affecting how Palestinians are regarded by Israelis.

Rundle acknowledged some of the issues that caused the previous Bennett-Lapid coalition to collapse, including euphemistically referring to “a rise in incidental crime which saw voters rushing to the right, and traveling well beyond Likud.”

This would be the internecine Israeli Arab violence directed against Jews who live in mixed Jewish-Arab cities and the increase in Palestinian violence from the West Bank and crime from the Bedouin sector in the south.

But even so, Rundle overstated the support for the far right, with the electorate actually split almost 50:50 between the pro- and anti-Netanyahu blocs.

Israeli far-right parties succeeded with small voter bases because they coordinated to ensure they crossed the minimum electoral threshold required to enter the Knesset, while at least two left-leaning parties did not.

Rundle also claimed, “Israel would use tactical nuclear weapons before it would yield to a one-state solution.”

ELECTION SWINGS AND ROUNDABOUTS

Speaking to *ABC Radio National* “Religion & Ethics Report” (Nov. 23), Australian reporter Iris Makler, who lives in Israel, called “[Binyamin] Netanyahu... a political wizard because in fact there isn’t much difference between the results this time and last time.... 30,000 votes in all. But nevertheless, it did translate into an eight-seat majority.”

A *Guardian Australia* report on the election results (Nov. 27) claimed “US-sponsored negotiations stalled in 2014 but the expansion of Israeli settlements has continued.” Negotiations didn’t stall. As he did in 2008, current Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas refused to engage further and ended peace talks, despite a sympathetic administration in Washington.

Allon Lee

UNLEVEL PLAYING FIELD

Palestinian activists took to social media to argue displays of pro-Palestinian support and hostility directed at Israelis in Qatar during the FIFA 2022 World Cup amounted to a victory for their cause. However, media reporting of these issues was more circumspect.

On the *Latch* website, Jack Revell (Nov. 29) explained the anti-Israel environment in which the event was happening, saying, “Qatar, like most Middle Eastern states... does not recognise Israel and has no diplomatic links to the country. For the World Cup, however, they have allowed direct flights from Israel for media and diplomats to attend the games.”

The *Sydney Morning Herald* (Nov. 30) accurately noted that Qatar “hosts Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, but has also previously had some trade relations with Israel” and “has given a platform to Islamist dissidents deemed a threat by Saudi Arabia and its allies, while befriend[ing] Riyadh’s foe, Iran.” The report also pointed out organisers were enforcing bans on displays linked to political protests except “Tunisian supporters at their November 26 match... unfurled a massive ‘Free Palestine’ banner, a move that did not appear to elicit action from organisers.”

The pro-Palestinian narrative was best exemplified on Dec. 9 by *Crikey*’s Charlie Lewis in his article “How Palestine is winning the World Cup”.

Only briefly alluding to the tight restrictions in place on all other political expression, Lewis asserted that “the most persistent and visible subject of protest has been Palestine.”

Lewis cited Moroccan players draping themselves in a Palestinian flag, Tunisian supporters displaying a “huge ‘Free Palestine’ flag” and “an England supporter’s interview with an Israeli journalist... after his team beat Senegal 3-0 [in which] he exclaimed: ‘It’s coming home! But more importantly, free Palestine.’”

The article quoted academic Fethi Mansouri saying, “these acts of solidarity... show that the Arab masses, even if their oppressive regimes have ‘normalised’ their relationship with Israel... are saying ‘we very much reject this normalisation and want to show our solidarity with Palestine.’”

On SBS’s website (Dec. 10), reporter Rayane Tamer – who signed the #dobetteronpalestine open letter from May 2021 calling for the media to prioritise the Palestinian narrative – quoted ANU academic Anas Iqtaït asserting

“Palestinian activists took to social media to argue displays of pro-Palestinian support and hostility directed at Israelis in Qatar during the FIFA 2022 World Cup amounted to a victory for their cause”

that the “the Palestinian flag carries a form of nationalism that binds all Arab countries together... To a large extent, the Palestinian cause has been the most important cross-border, Arab cause that Arab populations – from Morocco to Iraq – have taken on.”

On the ABC website (Dec. 10), Samantha Lewis pointed out the selective approach of event organisers, writing, “there is a double standard at play when it comes to the hyper-visibility of pro-Palestinian symbols at the World Cup. While Qatar, which

also hosts Hamas, has allowed flags and posters that support the Palestinian cause, authorities there have reportedly been far less accommodating of Iranian protesters, confiscating banners reading ‘Women, Life, Freedom’ and forcing fans to remove shirts with the name or face of Mahsa Amini, whose death in custody sparked the unrest across Iran.” She also noted that officials have confiscated rainbow-coloured items displayed in support of LGBTIQ people. More dubious was her claim that “for much of the Western world, there is an element of out of sight, out of mind to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict fading into the background of the 24/7 news cycle, usurped by more immediate daily things.”

At the start of the tournament, the *Australian* (Nov. 22), foreshadowing Doha’s tight control over visible public expression, noted, “the 11th-hour ban on beer sales at World Cup venues and warnings that homosexuality is a criminal offence that can result in severe punishment, even death, shows the extent to which FIFA has failed to use the event to persuade Qatar’s rulers to bring change to the Arab state’s ways.”

On Dec. 10 in the *Australian*, commentator Alan Howe questioned the appropriateness of Qatar being awarded the competition, describing the Gulf State as “a wealthy state with an expensive veneer of civility disguising 6th-century barbarism of sharia law and hate for homosexuals along with support for those who would wipe Israel from the map.”

In the same edition, sports writer Matt Dickinson provided a broader view of those attending the tournament, writing that on Doha’s public transport system “for every western European face [there were] ten from the Indian subcontinent in Messi and Ronaldo shirts... migrants from Ghana and Senegal who never expected their team to play on their doorstep, Arabs carrying flags of Palestine.”

THE LAST WORD

Jamie Hyams

MOTION SICKNESS

On November 16, in honour of “Palestine Independence Day”, South Australian MP Tony Piccolo (ALP) moved the following motion in the South Australian Legislative Assembly:

That this house—

(a) notes...

(ii) that Israel’s occupation of Palestine has lasted over 50 years;

(iii) that Israel continues to build settlements on occupied territory which undermines a two-state solution; ...

(b) supports the right of both Israelis and Palestinians to live in equality, peace and security within internationally recognised borders;

(c) endorses the principles 1 to 8 stated in the Sydney Statement on anti-Palestinianism; and

(d) calls on the Australian government to—

(i) acknowledge the right of Palestinians to self-determination as provided for by international law;

(ii) acknowledge the Palestinians’ right to statehood; ...

An identical motion, moved by

Piccolo’s ALP colleague Irene Pnevmatikos, was debated in the Legislative Council on Nov. 2 and Nov. 30. Sadly, both motions passed along party lines, with the ALP, Greens and SA Best parties in favour, and the Liberals and One Nation against (and three independents absent), despite their many manifest flaws.

For example, the woefully one-sided narrative ignores the Palestinian terrorism and the intransigence that has prevented them getting a state. While 138 states have recognised Palestine, a point emphasised by speakers, only one is a Western democracy.

Perhaps most troubling is the endorsement of the Sydney Statement on anti-Palestinianism, drafted by a shadowy body calling itself the Arab Australian Federation, run by a veteran PLO activist. Clearly intended as a counterpoint and negation of the authoritative International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism,

it basically declares every denial of the Palestinians’ self-declared “rights” to be anti-Palestinian racism.

Principle Five declares, “Palestinians have the right, in accordance with international law, to engage in resistance against unlawful policies and practices of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.” Given resistance is code for terrorism, and Palestinians claim Israel’s presence anywhere in the West Bank and east Jerusalem is unlawful (and many Palestinian groups insist all of Israel is an illegal entity), this seems an assertion that international law allows terrorism against Israel.

Principle Six calls for the so-called “right of return” to Israel of more than five million descendants of Palestinian refugees, which is incompatible with the continued existence of Israel as a Jewish state. And the SA Parliament endorsed these principles!



South Australian MP Tony Piccolo (screenshot)

Speeches supporting the motion included appalling misinformation. For example, Piccolo implicitly denied Jewish indigeneity to Israel, claiming, “some similarities between what happened... with the colonisation of Australia” and the UN partition plan. He claimed repeatedly that Israel is the party not interested in a two-

state peace, ignoring the many Israeli offers of statehood rebuffed by the PA.

He also claimed, “according to information provided by the UN Special Coordinator, in this century 5,985 Palestinian people have been shot and killed by Israeli forces and 264 Israelis have been killed.” Strange, given more than 1,000 Israelis were killed in the 2000-2005 Second Intifada alone.

Pnevmatikos bafflingly claimed, “Blatant prejudice exists against Palestinians who pursue and engage in peace talks but are deemed to be terrorists.” Greens MLC Tammy Franks bemoaned “the Palestinian war, which culminated in the establishment of the state of Israel.” In fact, what those who accept Israel’s existence refer to as Israel’s War of Independence was mostly fought after the establishment of the state, when Israel’s Arab neighbours invaded from all sides.

In reality, the reason there is no peace is Palestinian intransigence, and commitment to a Palestinian state in place of, rather than alongside, Israel. Motions such as these aren’t just morally wrong, but counter-productive, because they encourage Palestinian leaders to believe their ongoing rejectionism is bearing fruit.

AIR



Australia \$7.95 (inc GST)