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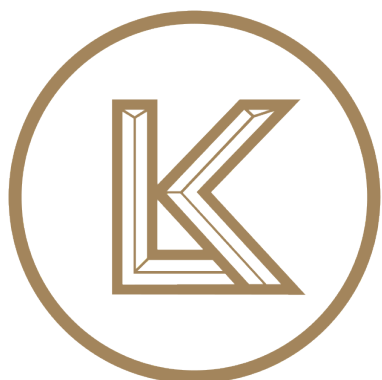
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EDITOR'S NOTE

May's *AIR* looks at our collective Holocaust remembrance responsibilities in 2023. Its key piece comes from Irwin Cotler, former Canadian Attorney-General and now Special Envoy for Preserving Holocaust Remembrance, who offers 12 moving and important reflections to answer the question, "what have we learned in the last 80 years, and more importantly, what must we do?" Also, Ben Cohen offers some thoughts on the contemporary significance of the heroic and doomed Warsaw Ghetto uprising, which took place 80 years ago, while Israeli columnist Haviv Rettig Gur puts the Nazi genocide of Jews in the historical context of decades of violent antisemitism.

Also featured this month is Justin Amler's exposé of the unrelenting ugliness and bias that has made every incumbent of the UN Human Rights Council position of "Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories" so scandalously "special". Plus, Colin Rubenstein warns of Iran's new "multifront strategy" to use proxies to attack Israel, and the greatly elevated danger of a major war it creates.

Finally, don't miss Amotz Asa-El on Israel's diplomatic achievements and challenges at 75, Ehud Yaari on Sudan's civil conflict and Israel's peace hopes and Arab writer Nadim Koteich on what Israeli democracy means for residents of countries like the UAE.

As always, please let us know what you think about any of the above at editorial@aijac.org.au.

Tzvi Fleischer

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Holocaust survivor Tova Gutstein lights a torch during the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day's official state opening ceremony in the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem, 17 April 2023 (Image: Abir Sultan/ AAP)



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EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN
COLIN RUBENSTEIN**

IRAN ESCALATES ITS MULTIFRONT WAR WITH ISRAEL

As the modern State of Israel celebrated the 75th anniversary of its establishment – and its subsequent amazing development as a Jewish state – there has been a concerted escalation in attacks and provocations by Iran and its proxies. If this continues, it risks sparking a multifront, regional war of a magnitude not seen in decades.

The *Wall Street Journal* (April 14) reported that recent attacks on Israel from Gaza, Lebanon and Syria were deliberately orchestrated by Esmail Qaani, the leader of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) elite Quds Force, who held a series of clandestine meetings with the leaders of Iran's proxies across the region, demanding a coordinated, multifront assault on the Jewish state.

The unusual character of the attacks Israel has been facing, with coordination between Palestinian terror groups including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), represents a significant tactical shift by Teheran that could change the face of the Israel-Iran conflict which has been a key aspect of Middle East politics for decades.

For instance, in March, a terrorist infiltrator from southern Lebanon remotely detonated a powerful and sophisticated roadside bomb at Megiddo, 70 km inside Israeli territory, severely wounding a passing motorist in an attack that potentially could have killed many.

In early April, Hamas fired rockets into Israel from Gaza, in itself nothing new, but this was joined by a barrage of 34 rockets launched into northern Israel by its operatives in southern Lebanon.

This was almost certainly done with the prior knowledge and consent of Iran's proxy Hezbollah, which has dominated south Lebanon for years and illegally stocked its towns and villages with what is estimated to be more than 150,000 short and long-range rockets and missiles aimed at Israel.

April also saw both rocket strikes and a drone attack on Israel's Golan Heights, most likely from Hezbollah positions in Syria.

"This is the modus operandi of Iran," Maj. Gen (Ret.) Yaakov Amidror, former head of Israel's National Security Council, recently told Israeli radio.

"This is how they increase the pressure on Israel – by turning the screws on several borders at once. And so, we find ourselves in a very different place from where we were even just half a year ago.

Understanding why this reckless and dangerous shift is happening now requires some insight into the Islamist regime's game plan for bringing about Israel's demise.

According to Teheran's "resistance doctrine", Iran views Israel as an inherently weak society that can be brought to the breaking point through unrelenting military pressure.

Lebanon's Hezbollah has been the primary instrument for exerting that pressure, although Iran also substantially funds, arms and trains Hamas and PIJ.

In addition, as the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank continues to weaken under increasingly ineffectual ageing and corrupt leadership, Iran and its proxies are also constantly looking for ways to expand their growing influence and capabilities there.

Many Israeli analysts believe that Iran's leaders have misread the implications of the massive, impassioned demonstrations that have swept Israel regarding the Government's controversial judicial reform legislation.

Apparently, Iranian decisionmakers misguidedly believe that the crucial tipping point

is at hand. Iran is showing signs of throwing caution to the wind, testing the limits of Israeli restraint and taking aggressive gambles it had avoided in the past.

Amidst its fanciful delusions, the Iranian leadership has apparently failed to understand the significance of the seas of Israeli flags that have become the visible theme and symbol of the protest movement – representing the attachment, love and patriotism the individual Israeli demonstrators feel towards their state.

One can speculate Iran's leaders may be projecting from their own experience – seeing the demonstrations in Israel in the same light as the recent months of anti-Government protests on their own streets, which did pose a real threat to their brutal regime. Such a comparison, of course, is obviously nonsensical.

Iranian protesters yearn for democracy and basic freedoms they have never had and risk mass arrest or even their lives by demonstrating, while Israeli demonstrators are themselves exercising the freedoms they've always had to protest and pressure their representatives – a legitimate part of the democratic process of pluralistic negotiation and consensus-building.

Yet on top of the rising tensions sparked by the IRGC's misguided new aggressiveness, Iran also remains poised on the verge of a breakout to nuclear weapons capability, adding daily to its stockpile of highly enriched uranium and advancing development of the technology to build both nuclear warheads and the ballistic missiles to carry them.

“Iran's aggressive and provocative behaviour today would worsen drastically if it were operating under a nuclear shield. This would massively magnify global proliferation and instability”

In an ominous development likely spurred on by the US's continued policy of steady disengagement from the Middle East, Iran also recently restored ties with Saudi Arabia in a deal brokered by China.

This shifting sand under the feet of all the major players in the Middle East only drives home the importance for the international community to increase pressure on Iran to permanently and reliably dismantle its illegal nuclear weapons program. Obviously, Iran's aggressive and provocative behaviour today would worsen drastically if it were operating under a nuclear shield. This would massively magnify global proliferation and instability and greatly endanger the interests of the community of free nations, including Australia's.

Through its nuclear program and its new campaign of multifront aggression against Israel, Iran is taking the world down a dangerous path. Many Israeli and Western strategic analysts consider a major, highly destructive regional war between Israel and Iran all but inevitable within the next few years unless much more is done to contain Iran's illegal and aggressive actions. Iran's open pursuit of a multifront campaign directed at the Jewish state brings such an outcome much closer. If the international community wants to avoid the destruction, instability and global uncertainty such a major Middle East conflict would entail, it has very little time left to find a better approach to short-circuiting Iran's massive aggression and sprint toward nuclear weapons capabilities.

AIR

WORD FOR WORD

“As a life-long friend and supporter of the State of Israel, I have worked my entire career to deepen and strengthen our partnership. And I have seen first-hand the benefits to both our nations.... Today, as we mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel, we reaffirm our enduring friendship and commitment to Israel's security. Yom Ha'atzmaut Sameach!”

US President Joe Biden on Israel's 75th Independence Day (White House, April 25).

“[I will] not accept a blanket ability of the parliament to over- come judicial Supreme Court decisions, just as we don't accept that the court can abrogate any decision by the parliament. Both sides of these extremes hinder the balance between the three branches of government... The fact that we have demonstrations is a sign of our democracy.”

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu appearing to distance himself from a key element of his Government's controversial judicial

reforms (Times of Israel, April 23).

“I am convinced that there is no greater existential threat to our people than the one that comes from within: Our own polarization and alienation from one another. I believe that it is only through dialogue between us that we can possibly allow our moments of crisis to turn into moments of growth.”

Israeli President Isaac Herzog (Times of Israel, April 23).

“Ben-Gurion, one of the main founders of the Zionist regime, had warned decades ago that the regime would fall apart whenever its power of deterrence ended. Today their power of deterrence has finished or is near its end.”

Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei predicting Israel's demise (Twitter, April 23).

“We have a very good relationship with the State of Israel... We will do everything toward expanding and strengthening our relationship in different fields. It is a very shining example of our friendship.”

Turkmenistan's Foreign Minister Rasit Meredow on the opening of an Israeli embassy in his country (Times of Israel, April 20).



SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

THE SECRET TO HAPPINESS?

According to the World Happiness Index, published by the UN's Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Israel has consistently ranked as one of the happiest nations in the world. What's more, its rank has been improving in recent years.

In the 2018 report, using data from 2017, it ranked 19th in the world. In the 2020 report, 14th. In the 2022 report, ninth. And in the latest report, issued in March but using data from last year, it rocketed up to fourth. Only Denmark, Iceland and perennial top place winner, Finland, ranked higher.

It seems surprising that successful, prosperous, apparently happy countries with minimal violence and disorder, like Australia and New Zealand, trailed the Jewish state in this index – which is based on both objective indexes, such as GDP and life expectancy, and subjective surveys in which residents rate their life satisfaction.

Israel has comparable objective stats to Australia in measures like GDP per capita, life expectancy and health-care services, but Israelis face serious problems that do not apply in Australia. At first glance, you would expect these factors would make them less satisfied with their lives. They include: constant murderous terrorism and other serious security concerns, including repeated rocket attacks from Hamas-controlled Gaza and Iranian threats to wipe out the country; mandatory service in the army; higher overall costs of living; and the open demonisation of Israel and Israelis routinely expressed at the UN and other international forums (see p. 19).

Moreover, you probably would not expect the last few years to be the ones in which Israel would rocket up the World Happiness Index. Terrorism levels have been creeping up. There was a relatively major conflict with Gaza in May 2021 and a smaller one in August 2022, both of which sent many Israelis to bomb shelters for days. Iran is drawing ever closer to nuclear weapons capabilities, even as it continues to threaten to wipe Israel off the map. Coronavirus hit Israel pretty hard. And perhaps most important, between December 2018 and November 2022, Israel experienced its most serious political deadlock ever, with five inconclusive elections in just three years (the current major Israeli controversy over proposed judicial reforms started after the data for the latest World Happiness Index was already collected).

So, Israel's happiness as a society appears odd and anomalous, and there are many attempts to explain it.

One explanation commonly offered is that Israel is a

tiny country with tight-knit ties in terms of local communities, friendship groups, and especially, extended families.

Israeli columnist Herb Keinon has another theory which complements, rather than contradicts, the one about family and community. He says Israel's high life satisfaction:

"Has to do with a sense of purpose and meaning that many people have living here, coupled with being close to loved ones and friends... Regarding a sense of purpose and meaning, which is a component of life satisfaction, many Israelis believe that life in Israel itself has religious meaning and significance. Others find that building and defending the first Jewish state in 2,000 years has historical significance that gives their lives meaning."

Some may look at the ongoing massive protests over the judicial overhaul and despair that this illustrates deep divisions in this country that threaten to tear it apart... The protests could also be a manifestation of what makes Israel score so high on the Happiness Index: that people feel living here has purpose."

I think the idea that living in Israel gives purpose to the lives of many or most of its citizens is a valuable insight. I am a fan of the book, *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl, an Austrian Holocaust survivor and psychiatrist. In it, Frankl explains his personal observation from Auschwitz and other Nazi concentration camps that fellow inmates who felt they had a strong reason to survive, whose survival was in service of a greater goal that gave their life meaning, were much more likely to make it through alive than those who lacked this drive.

I think Frankl's core philosophical insight in the book is irrefutable – a person who can imbue the life they are living with a deep sense of meaning and a larger purpose will find it more fulfilling, and thus happier, than someone without this sense, regardless of material conditions. And as Keinon explains, Israel is a society which is particularly good at providing such meaning to large numbers of its citizens.

GRANDMA POWER!

Another anomalous fact about Israel is its extremely high birth rate by OECD standards – an average of 2.93 births per woman, compared to an OECD average of 1.7. And this cannot be explained by reference to very high birth rates among minorities such as the ultra-Orthodox and Muslim populations – even completely secular Israeli women average considerably more children than the OECD average.

Much of this unique Israeli trend can be explained by Israel's family-oriented culture and general expectations about family size. In surveys, Israelis say, on average, the ideal family has three children. In most other Western countries, the ideal is two children.

But there is something else that arguably facilitates larger family size – and perhaps life satisfaction – among Israelis: Grandma power! Or at least strong support pro-

vided by extended family, which generally lives close by.

As the *Economist* noted last year:

“One more explanation [for Israel’s anomalously high fertility rates] may be that Israeli grandparents tend to help out more than their peers in many other rich countries. Since Israel is small and densely populated, grandma is never far away. In one survey 83% of secular Jewish mothers aged 25-39 said they were supported by their child’s grandparents, whereas only 30% of German mothers said the same. In Israel the traditional family structure is still strong. In France and Britain more than half of babies are born out of wedlock. In Israel it is under 10%.”

AIR



Nadim Koteich

ISRAEL ISN'T PERFECT, BUT IS AN EXAMPLE FOR THE REGION

Abu Dhabi – In Israel, the battle to safeguard democracy takes precedence above all else. Despite Iran recently enriching uranium at 83% purity – shortening the time to create a nuclear weapon to about two weeks – Israelis remain focused, first and foremost, on fighting for their nation’s democratic principles. This presents a valuable lesson for the rest of the Middle East.

Every Saturday evening, tens of thousands of Israelis gather across the nation to protest Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu’s recently paused judicial reform plans. That was despite the perilous spate of violence that visited Israel in April in the form of missiles fired from Hamas in Lebanon and Gaza.

These unceasing protests – the subject of which isn’t the nation’s increasingly belligerent adversaries but its own Government – reveal the maturity of Israel’s democracy. More specifically, they underscore that for many Israelis, the pursuit of the rule of law is superior to national security concerns.

While Israel debates policy and holds regular elections, much of the Middle East remains under authoritarian rule that quashes political discourse and silences dissent under the saying “No voice goes higher than the voice of the battle.” As a Lebanese who has lived under the dictatorships of Hezbollah and Bashar al-Assad, I’ve witnessed how this slogan has been used to free autocrats from accountability for economic disarray, the erosion of human rights, and the destruction of infrastructure.

Any Middle Eastern observer would draw a distinction between the demonstrations in Israel and the protests elsewhere in the region – including, more recently, in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon. In those countries, public dissent is often described by the authorities as treasonous, the work of foreign enemies, or both. These claims are used to justify

harsh repression in the form of lawless imprisonment and execution.

Yet when similar conspiracy theories surfaced in Israel – suggesting, as the Prime Minister’s son did, that demonstrations were prompted and supported by Washington – Israelis firmly rejected them. Israelis’ resistance to these ideas further showcases the strength of their democratic commitment.

Israel’s democracy isn’t flawless. The state grapples with its two goals – preserving its Jewish core while promoting inclusivity for all, including Arab Israelis. This dilemma sometimes marginalises the latter group and perpetuates socioeconomic inequalities. The low political participation of Arabs hinders their influence. Likewise, Israel’s resettlement policies in the West Bank tarnish its democratic image, raising concerns about its commitment to liberty, equality and justice. Addressing these issues is crucial to strengthen Israeli democracy and foster a genuinely inclusive society.

But the Palestinian issue shouldn’t be the sole metric by which we measure Israel’s standing as a democracy. Few countries in the Middle East have a sterling record when dealing with ethnic or racial minorities. Ask the Kurds and Christians in Iraq, Syria, Iran and Turkey, or consider the hostilities between Sunni and Shi’ite Muslims.

Nevertheless, Israel’s democracy stands tall. Its current struggle is a fight to uphold the rule of law, which ought to be the primary focus of the region’s people and leaders, particularly given the prevailing conception that conditions aren’t ripe for a fully developed democracy in the Arab world.

Countries such as the United Arab Emirates have embraced the principles of good governance, advocating transparency, accountability and the rule of law as cornerstones for economic and social development. The UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms led by Abu Dhabi, has achieved stability and progress without adhering to a wholly democratic model. In recent years, it has maintained its ability to attract and retain talent, especially in the fields of fintech, artificial intelligence and the arts – all of which rely heavily on an efficient judicial system that safeguards intellectual-property rights and fosters a business-friendly environment. By adopting the rule of law, the UAE stands at the forefront of efforts to foster a more inclusive and peaceful future for the Middle East – as seen in its signing the historic Abraham Accords with Israel, Morocco, Sudan and Bahrain.

The battle to safeguard Israeli democracy and the rule of law will doubtless continue for some time. As we in the Middle East observe this unfolding drama, we can glean valuable insights that, if employed wisely, could improve the region’s well-being and security for years to come.

AIR



Nadim Koteich hosts “Tonight with Nadim” on Sky News Arabia.

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ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

AFTERSHOCKS

The shock reverberations of Indonesia being stripped of hosting the U-20 FIFA World Cup have shown its domestic political machinations in a harsh light, while blame and denial fill the vacuum. Decades of reflexive anti-Israel posturing from Indonesian political, religious and intellectual leaders have had virtually no consequence beyond Indonesia's borders – until now.

While a priceless opportunity for its millions of avid football fans and heartbroken youth team has gone begging, Indonesia should consider itself fortunate that FIFA decided to only impose a sanction that freezes the funding for the Indonesian Football Association instead of banning its teams for a second time in eight years. A yellow card, so to speak.

Presidential polling also received a shakeup in the days following FIFA's decision, with Defence Minister and two-time candidate Prabowo Subianto opening a 4% margin over long-time frontrunner and Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo, whose standing took a hit for joining calls for Israel to be excluded from the U-20 tournament.

Two weeks later, the same poll revealed Ganjar had regained a slender lead of 1.4% (other polls make the situation less clear) as it became apparent that his out-of-character stance on hosting the Israeli team had been dictated by his Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle (PDI-P) leadership, allegedly to uphold “anti-colonial” precepts embedded in the constitution and save President Widodo from impeachment – an excuse that stretches credulity. In this, party leader Megawati played a key role – invoking her father Sukarno's foreign policy, which placed the Palestinian cause as one of its cornerstones, to justify the PDI-P's intervention – a typically unsubtle powerplay/loyalty test that backfired badly on her, Ganjar and other PDI-P governors obliged to take the same line.

Megawati's intervention and the ultimate humiliating result is said to have deeply angered Widodo, deepening his estrangement from his former political patron. While Megawati has unquestioned power within her party, Jokowi has the power bestowed by years of high public approval. The candidate anointed by Jokowi stands to benefit greatly in the 2024 election, such that both Ganjar and (former Jokowi opponent) Prabowo have sought the glow of being seen alongside the popular President.

Meanwhile, the other governor to wear the public outrage over the U-20 FIFA debacle, Bali Governor I Wayan Koster appeared to reverse his position on the 2023 World Beach Games, which Israel has been invited to participate in, to be held on the island in August. After originally banning Israeli athletes from competing in Bali, Governor Koster met with Indonesian Minister of Youth and Sports Dito Ariotedjo and the Chairman of the Indonesian Olympics Committee Raja Sapta Oktohari on April 14, and stated that the Games would “run smoothly in line with the Constitution... because there is already an agreement that Bali will be the host.”

Yet Koster has since hardened his view, citing Indonesia's constitution and regulations relating to the display of the Israeli flag and anthem. “So I still reject Israel's presence in Bali, including at the upcoming ANOC World Beach Games,” he said.

Anger over the U-20 FIFA debacle produced a predictably strange result in social media. A video of FIFA President Gianni Infantino has been doctored to include the claim that the world football's governing body has banned Israel from playing in the U-20 World Cup in 2023, and that Indonesia would take its place.

The video, originally recorded in 2019, actually shows Infantino delivering a message to the Indonesian Football Federation ahead of a special congress, but the fake version has added Indonesian-language subtitles that suggest that Infantino has announced a “ban” on Israel from the tournament.

“Apologies to Indonesia. I am aware my decision was wrong. Israel deserves to be banned in the World Cup right now. Their heinous action last night makes me sad for the conditions of the Palestinians,” the subtitles read as Infantino speaks to the camera in English.

At the 0:21 mark, a male narrator can be heard saying in Indonesian: “Israel has been banned by FIFA. Indonesia's U-20 team has replaced the position of Israel's U-20 team in the U-20 World Cup in 2023... This followed an incident of the Israeli forces' attack on the Faisal al-Husseini Stadium... during a 2023 Palestinian league cup final match between Jabal al-Mukaber vs Balata FC.”

The video has been viewed several hundred thousand times so far.

Meanwhile, a group of Indonesian hackers called “VulzSecTeam” published data from Israeli petrol stations, bus stations and flights on April 16 via their Telegram channel, according to a report from the Israeli daily *Maariv*. They accessed a number of government systems in Israel, including those of the police, health ministry and central bank.

The group told *Arab News* they will soon target “other systems in Israel,” and that “Operation Israel” was started “for humanitarian reasons” to spread awareness of their belief in “freedom among human beings, including the freedom for Palestinians from Israeli attacks.”

Miriam Bell

FALSE ANALOGIES

Concern about the deployment of Nazi analogies and misuse of the Holocaust in New Zealand public discussion were widespread last year, when an anti-vaccine and anti-lockdown protest movement was in full swing.

But inaccurate, inappropriate and offensive public references to Nazism and the Holocaust in public discourse did not stop when the protestors' occupation of the Parliament's grounds in Wellington came to a violent end in March 2022.

Instead, they have continued, particularly on social media, and may have even increased.

One high-profile example came in April, when it was revealed that National Party candidate Stephen Jack had reposted a poem on Facebook which compared former Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to Adolf Hitler.

The poem, apparently written by a Balclutha farmer, contained the lines "Just as Hitler had the SS, our prime minister's on the job. She's given up on the police and bought the Mongrel Mob."

It was not a first offence for Jack, who had earlier made a sexist joke online. It led to him withdrawing his candidacy.

Another recent example of Holocaust misappropriation came in tweets by Maori academic Dr Rawiri Taonui, a member of the National Anti-Racism task force.

One tweet said: "Hitler exercised an unfettered right to free speech and look where that ended."

Another tweet said: "The anti-Semitic persecution of the Jewish people and the equal & opposite suppression of the Palestinian people are among the saddest cases of genocide over the last 100 years."

Dr Taonui was called out over his tweets by the Holocaust & Antisemitism Foundation, which said they misrepresented history, and that it was a falsehood to suggest Israel had committed genocide against the Palestinians, or that its treatment of them was at all comparable to what happened to Jews under Nazism.

Victoria University Associate Professor of History Giacomo Lichtner pointed out in a 2022 article on *The Conversation* that such abuse of Holocaust analogies is hardly new, and there is a long history of exploitation of the Holocaust for political ends, from causes on the left and right, as a way to try to increase legitimacy and impact.

But "social media and the active dissemination of conspiracy theories had made [the trend] global," he said.

Holocaust Centre of NZ Chair Deb Hart said there

is no firm data on whether there had been an increase in this trend in New Zealand in recent years, but "based on anecdote, we are seeing more of this kind of thing."

It was very much in evidence around the time of the parliamentary occupation – not just during it, but also before and afterwards, she said.

A good example was the posters that were put up around Wellington, which featured a yellow Star of David with "unvaccinated" in the middle.

Such false equivalence belittles the enormity of the Holocaust and led to situations where people equated the murder of six million Jews with situations that bore no reasonable comparison, Hart said.

"A lack of knowledge plays a part in it... People use, or refer to, the 'Holocaust', and 'genocide', as shorthand without understanding what they were.

"They just know they were bad, and so they use the words to say something was really bad. But these words matter, and they should not be used to describe situations which may be awful, but are not the same."

Where misappropriation occurred, people were beholden to call it out, and the Holocaust Centre did that. But addressing it also spills over into the education sphere too, she said.

"We teach the Holocaust to bear witness to the lives that were lost, and also as a protective measure – to show... how hate starts small, and what to do to prevent hate from growing."

NZ Jewish Council spokesperson Juliet Moses agreed there seemed to have been a rise in the use of Nazi analogies over recent months and years.

"The pandemic gave rise to a lot of these analogies, with different leaders as Hitler, the unvaccinated as persecuted Jews, and so on, but there are other New Zealand examples.

"In the wake of the [controversial woman's rights activist Posie Parker's visit to New Zealand and Australia in late March] accusations have been flung around about Nazis (quite apart from the neo-Nazis who were present at a rally in Melbourne), for example. And there were Dr Taonui's tweets recently."

Moses thought the increase had multiple causes. The first was that, as we move further in time away from the Holocaust, there is increasing ignorance about it.

Another reason was that we live in times where people believe advancing a dominant narrative is more important than objective truth, or that such a thing as objective truth does not even exist, she said.

"Thirdly, while I don't always think [such analogies are necessarily] antisemitic as such, there is a rise in antisemitism, and when such tactics are wielded against Jewish people, such as accusing Israelis of being the new Nazis, then it's antisemitism," Moses said.

BEHIND THE NEWS

ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

One rocket was fired from Gaza on March 18. Fifty-four rockets were fired from Gaza on April 5 and 6, with most falling in empty areas or being intercepted by Iron Dome, although at least one home was hit. Hamas also fired 34 rockets from Lebanon, causing some property damage and injuring one person, and another Palestinian group fired six rockets from Syria, both on April 8. These all prompted Israeli retaliatory strikes.

Hamas drones from Gaza were intercepted on March 22 and April 3. A drone that crossed into Israel from Syria was downed on April 2.

Two more shooting attacks occurred in the West Bank town of Huwara on March 19 and 25, targeting and injuring a civilian family and two IDF soldiers respectively.

On April 7, two Israeli-British sisters, 20-year-old Maia Dee and 15-year-old Rina Dee, were shot dead in their car near Hamra in the Jordan Valley. Their mother, Lea, later died from wounds sustained in the attack. The same day, an Israeli Arab plowed his car into pedestrians in Tel Aviv, killing a tourist and wounding seven.

On April 18, two Israeli civilians were shot and wounded in Jerusalem. A Palestinian terrorist wounded five Israelis in a car-ramming attack in Jerusalem on April 24.

Several stabbing, shooting and various other terrorist attacks occurred throughout the West Bank during April, and Israeli counterterrorism raids continued there.

AL-AQSA CLASH DURING RAMADAN

On April 4, during Ramadan and on Passover eve, approximately 400

Palestinians, many masked, barricaded themselves in the al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem after evening prayers. They brought fireworks, clubs, rocks and explosives which they used against Israeli police who entered the site to physically remove the Palestinians. This came following the failure of hours of negotiations to convince those barricaded in the mosque to leave.



Stand-off at al-Aqsa (Image: Twitter)

Approximately 350 people were arrested during the violent unrest. Video footage showed Israeli police entering the mosque using stun grenades and being met with a bombardment of fireworks and rocks. Israeli police chief Kobi Shabtai later conceded that some Israeli officers may have used excessive force during the scuffle as captured in videos shared on social media, promising they would be investigated.

ISRAEL UNDER CYBER ATTACK

Israeli institutions have come under increasing cyber-attacks over recent weeks. Coordinated attacks targeted government sites, and health and educational institutions, including tens of thousands of attempted attacks over two days in early April on the critical services provided by the United Hatzalah emergency medical services organisation — which was able to prevent any damage.

Some Israeli banks and one of Israel's largest cyber-security compa-

nies, Check Point, were also temporarily disrupted by a group of hackers with reported Russian ties calling themselves "Anonymous Sudan". The bank attack occurred on Iran's Quds (Jerusalem) Day (April 14).

Israeli university websites were also temporarily unavailable for browsing due to unsophisticated "directed denial of service" attacks.

Several water monitors, including irrigation systems and wastewater treatment systems in the Jordan Valley, were also damaged by hackers.

PA, HAMAS CRACKDOWN ON SCRUTINY

There appears to be a current trend within the Palestinian Authority of "shrinking the space for civil society organisations and further empowering its security services," according to Mohannad Karaje, head of Palestinian civil rights organisation Lawyers for Justice, which defends dissidents detained by the PA in the West Bank. The PA denied registration to Lawyers for Justice in March which, Karaje said, meant it could lose access to its bank accounts and have its offices closed and staff arrested.

Meanwhile, in late March, Hamas police arrested and then assaulted Hani Abu Rizk, a correspondent for the *Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda* newspaper, who was covering the eviction of a local resident and cancer patient from his home in the Gaza strip. The arrest and assault on Rizk was strongly condemned by the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate.

IRAN HUMANITARIAN AID COVER FOR WEAPONS SMUGGLING

Multiple sources have confirmed that Teheran has shipped weapons and military equipment aboard airplanes

sent to Syria ostensibly to provide humanitarian support to the country after northwestern Syria was badly affected by the earthquake which also struck Turkey on Feb. 6. According to the reports, for at least seven weeks, hundreds of supposed Iranian relief supply flights to Aleppo, Latakia and Damascus carried advanced communications equipment, radar batteries and spare parts for upgrading Iranian air defence systems operating in Syria. Israeli security forces reportedly quickly uncovered this operation and took various actions to thwart it, including by attacking the Aleppo airport and Iranian militias in Syria (see below).

Also in Syria, on March 24, US F-15 jets bombed Iranian proxy militias in response to an attack by an Iranian-built drone against a US base in the northeast part of the country, which had resulted in the death of an American civilian contractor and wounded five soldiers.

ISRAEL ATTACKS IRANIAN TARGETS IN SYRIA

Israel continued its ongoing war-between-wars campaign in Syria against Iran and its proxies, seeking to undermine Teheran's attempts to

smuggle advanced weapons to Syria and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

On April 8, Israel carried out air attacks on the headquarters of the Syrian fourth division in the Syrian Golan Heights, commanded by Maher al-Assad, brother of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. This was in retaliation for an Iranian drone launched towards Israel in early April.

Israel also targeted several Syrian army units and Iranian proxy militias at the Homs area on April 2. Other Iranian and Hezbollah sites in Syria were hit by Israel following a bomb attack on March 13 at Israel's Megiddo Junction by a terrorist from Lebanon. Israeli missiles were also reportedly launched at Iranian proxy sites west of Damascus in early April, allegedly resulting in the deaths of several Iranian Revolutionary Guard operatives.

EGYPT TO SUPPLY WEAPONS TO RUSSIA?

Amidst a plethora of images of top-secret US intelligence documents leaked on the popular gaming chat-app Discord were summaries of alleged conversations between Egyptian President Abdel Fatah El-Sisi and senior military officials about the production of approximately 40,000

rockets to be secretly shipped to Russia. There were also references in the document to Egypt possibly providing Russia with artillery rounds.

A senior Egyptian official denied the information gleaned from the secret document dated Feb. 17, and reiterated his country's non-involvement in the war in Ukraine. White House spokesman John Kirby said that the US had not seen any indication Egypt was providing weapons to Russia.

Meanwhile, Israel will reportedly begin deploying a missile warning system to Kyiv in May and, if that is successful, roll out similar systems in other Ukrainian cities. The systems will provide alerts of impending strikes, but will not have interception capabilities.

ISRAEL OPENS TURKMENISTAN EMBASSY

Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen inaugurated Israel's first embassy in Turkmenistan during an April 20 visit to the Central Asian state. Cohen is the first Israeli foreign minister to visit the majority Muslim country since 1994.

The newly built embassy is located in the capital city of Ashgabat, 16 km from Turkmenistan's long border with Iran.



STRANGER THAN FICTION

CONFUSING TIMES

Daylight saving times can often lead to confusion, with people forgetting to adjust their clocks. In Australia especially, it can lead to head-scratching, with two states and a territory not observing daylight saving, and other states sometimes changing their clocks at different times, leading to a plethora of time zones in different geographical areas.

However, as if to emphasise its political dysfunction, Lebanon took this one step further by having rival time zones in exactly the same place.

The problem began when caretaker

Lebanese PM Najib Mikati announced on short notice that daylight saving would begin only at the end of the holy month of Ramadan on April 20, so observant Muslims could break their fast earlier each day – rather than, as previously, the final Sunday of March.

However, Christian authorities, including the Maronite Church, said they would follow the customary practice of changing the clock on March 26, and many businesses and other organisations, including television stations, followed suit.

The national airline, Middle East Airlines, compromised, saying its clocks would stay on wintertime in accordance with Mikati's announcement, but flight times would be adjusted to daylight sav-

ing time. Many operators of electronic devices that adjust automatically, such as mobile phones, were not notified of the change in time to cater for it, so some changed to daylight savings and others didn't.

However, on March 29, three days after daylight saving had been due to begin, Mikati's cabinet reversed itself, and daylight saving began uniformly a few days late. Mikati himself blamed the country's political gridlock, leading to the lack of a president, for the confusion, saying, "The problem is not winter or summer time... Rather the problem is the vacuum in the top post in the republic." Perhaps he's right – under Lebanon's constitution, the PM must be a Sunni Muslim and the President a Christian.

COVER STORY

SHOAH REMEMBRANCE

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN 2023

Irwin Cotler

This year's Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day, April 16, was a particularly poignant historical moment of remembrance and reminder, of bearing witness, of learning and acting upon the universal lessons of history and the Holocaust.

I write in the aftermath of the 90th anniversary of the establishment in 1933 by the democratically-elected Government of Germany of the infamous Dachau concentration camp – the forerunner of the deportation to Dachau of thousands during Kristallnacht – reminding us that antisemitism is toxic to democracy, an assault on our common humanity, and as we've learned only too painfully and too well that while it begins with Jews, it doesn't end with Jews.

I write also in the aftermath of the oft-ignored 81st anniversary of the Wannsee Conference of Jan. 20, 1942, convened by the Nazi leadership to address "The Final Solution to the Jewish Question." This blueprint for the annihilation of European Jewry was met with indifference and inaction from the international bystander community.

I write also on the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the most heroic Jewish and civilian uprising during the Holocaust, which followed the deportation of 300,000 Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to the death camp Auschwitz-Treblinka in 1942. There is a straight line between Wannsee and Warsaw; between the indifference of one and the courage of the other.

I write also amidst the international drumbeat of evil, reflected in the unprovoked and criminal Russian invasion and aggression in Ukraine, underpinned by war crimes, crimes against humanity, and incitement to genocide, which is a stand-alone crime under the genocide convention; the increasing assaults by China on the rules-based

international order, including mass atrocities targeting the Uighurs, which are constitutive of acts of genocide; the Iranian regime's brutal and massive repression of the Iranian people's "Women, Life, Freedom" human rights revolution; the mass atrocities targeting the Rohingya, Afghans and Ethiopians; and the increasing imprisonment of human rights defenders such as Russian patriot and human rights hero Vladimir Kara-Murza – a critic of the invasion of Ukraine who embodies the struggle for freedom –

"I write amidst an unprecedented global resurgence of antisemitic acts, incitement, and terror – of antisemitism as the oldest, longest, most enduring, and most dangerous of hatreds"

sentenced on April 17 to 25 years in prison for telling the truth. It was a re-enactment of the Stalinist dictum of "give us the person and we will find the crime."

And I write also amidst an unprecedented global resurgence of antisemitic acts, incitement, and terror – of antisemitism as the oldest,

longest, most enduring, and most dangerous of hatreds.

It is a virus that mutates and metastasises over time, but which is grounded in one foundational, historical, generic, antisemitic, conspiratorial trope: namely, that Jews, the Jewish people, and Israel are the enemy of all that is good and the embodiment of all that is evil, regardless of what moment in time we are experiencing or living in.

And so at this important historical inflection moment, we should ask ourselves, what have we learned in the last 80 years, and more importantly what must we do?

1. *Zachor* – the imperative of remembrance

The first lesson is the danger of forgetting – tantamount to the killing of the victims a second time – and the imperative of remembrance (or *Zachor*, in Hebrew). As Prof. Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace Laureate and Holocaust survivor put it: "The Holocaust was a war against the Jews in which not all victims were Jews, but all Jews were tar-

geted victims.”

As we remember the victims of the Shoah – defamed, demonised and dehumanised as prologue and justification for genocide – we must appreciate that the mass murder of six million Jews and millions of non-Jews is not a matter of abstract statistics.

As we say at these moments of remembrance, “Unto each person there is a name, each person is an identity, each person is a universe.” As the Talmud reminds us, “Whoever saves a single life, it is as if he or she has saved an entire universe.” Just as, if you kill a single person, it is as if you have killed an entire universe.

Thus, the abiding universal imperative: we are each, wherever we are, the guarantors of each other’s destiny. And in the words of Czech novelist Milan Kundera, “The struggle of memory against forgetting is the struggle of liberty against tyranny.”

2. The Holocaust as a paradigm for radical evil, and antisemitism as a paradigm for radical hate – learning and acting upon these intersections

The second lesson is the danger of antisemitism – the oldest and most enduring of hatreds – and the most lethal. If the Holocaust is a metaphor for radical evil, antisemitism is a metaphor for radical hate.

One point three million people were deported to the death camp Auschwitz, the most brutal extermination camp of the twentieth century. Of these, 1.1 million were Jews. Let there be no mistake about it: Jews were murdered at Auschwitz because of antisemitism, but antisemitism did not die at Auschwitz. It remains the bloody canary in the mine of global evil today. As Ahmed Shaheed, the former UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, put it in his landmark report to the UN, antisemitism is “toxic to democracies”, a threat not only to Jews but to our common humanity. In combatting antisemitism, we defend our democracy.

3. The danger of state-sanctioned incitement to hate and genocide – the responsibility to prevent and protect

The third enduring lesson is that the genocide of Eu-

ropean Jewry – like the genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda, where 10,000 Tutsis were murdered every day for three months – succeeded not only because of the machinery of death, but because of a state-sanctioned ideology of hate.

From 1933 onwards, the Jew was held out as the personification of the devil – as the enemy of humankind –

and humanity could only be redeemed by the death of the Jew. As the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed – and as echoed by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda – “the Holocaust did not begin in the gas chambers – it began with words.”

These, as the court put it, are the catastrophic effects of racism. These, as the court put it, are the chilling facts of history. Indeed, in another important principle and precedent, the Supreme Court of Canada held that the very incitement to genocide constitutes the crime in and of itself, whether or not acts of genocide follow.

4. Holocaust denial – from assaultive speech to criminal conspiracy, the responsibility to unmask the bearers of false witness

The fourth enduring lesson concerns the Holocaust

denial movement – the cutting edge of antisemitism old and new. It is not just a cruel assault on Jewish memory and human dignity in its accusation that the Holocaust is a hoax. Rather, it constitutes an international criminal conspiracy to cover up the worst crimes in history. It not only holds that the Holocaust was a hoax, but maligns the Jews for fabricating the hoax, a message that is now being repeated in the genocide denial in Rwanda.

Holocaust deniers use social media and game platforms as a force multiplier for their virulent hate and fabrications, to enhance support for their lies and to spread their conspiratorial tropes, i.e. the Jews weaponise the Holocaust to gain false sympathy, to extract false reparations, and to sanitise their own criminality.

Regrettably, as a recent report issued by Anti-Defamation League demonstrates, social media and game platforms are failing to combat the proliferation of Holocaust denial content resulting in the consequential spread of antisemitic falsehoods and incitement.



The Holocaust must remain the paradigm for radical evil (Images: Shutterstock)

It is our responsibility to unmask the bearers of false witness and expose the criminality of the deniers as we protect the dignity of their victims.

5. The proliferation of Holocaust distortion, trivialisation, minimisation, revisionism and inversion – the responsibility to combat

The fifth enduring lesson concerns the horrifying rise of Holocaust distortion, again particularly weaponised on social media. It is a phenomenon that threatens not only our relationship to the truth, but our collective relationship with history and our understanding of contemporary events. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic was weaponised, with Jews blamed for manufacturing the virus, causing its spread, and, in yet another classic trope, profiting from it.

A related phenomenon is that of Holocaust trivialisation and minimisation, where the symbols and imagery of the Holocaust are also weaponised. In Holocaust revisionism, extremist collaborators with the Nazis are glorified as heroes; and in Holocaust inversion, Jews/Israel are compared to Nazis and accused of Nazi-like crimes.

A recent report by UNESCO and the United Nations, in partnership with the World Jewish Congress, found that a significant percentage of Holocaust-related content on major social media platforms constituted Holocaust denial or distortion. The adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolution combatting Holocaust denial and distortion was as timely as it was necessary.

6. The danger of silence in the face of evil – the responsibility to protest injustice

The sixth lesson is the danger of complicity with evil by way of silence or inaction. As Wiesel put it in his famed 1986 Nobel Prize address: “We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim; silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented... wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion or political views that place must – at that moment – become the centre of the universe.”

He added: “There may be times when we are powerless



National Memorial to the victims of Genocide in Kigali, Rwanda (Image: Shutterstock)

to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time where we fail to protest against injustice.”

It is our responsibility, as Wiesel taught us, to speak truth to power and to hold power accountable to truth, as he did so memorably upon receiving the US Congressional Medal of Freedom for his courageous action.

7. Indifference and inaction in the face of mass atrocity and genocide – the responsibility to protect

The seventh painful and poignant lesson is that Holocaust crimes (and genocides such as that of the Tutsis in Rwanda) resulted not only from state-sanctioned incitement to hatred and genocide, but from crimes of indifference and conspiracies of silence, with the international community as a bystander.

What makes the Holocaust and the genocide of the Tutsis so unspeakable are not only the horror of the crimes, but that these crimes were preventable. No one can say that we did not know. We knew, but we did not act.

Today we know, but we have yet to combat the mass atrocities targeting the Uighurs in the Xinjiang region of China; or the assaults on the Rohingya; or ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia. This ignores the lessons of history and mocks the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine.

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Let there be no mistake about it: indifference and inaction always mean coming down on the side of the aggressor, never the victim. In the face of evil, indifference is acquiescence to, if not complicity with, evil itself.

8. Combatting mass atrocity and the culture of impunity – the responsibility to bring war criminals to justice

The eighth lesson calls on us to combat mass atrocity and the culture of impunity that underpins it.

If the last century, symbolised by the Holocaust and such mass atrocities as the genocide in Rwanda, was the age of atrocity, it was also the age of impunity. Few of the perpetrators were brought to justice. Just as there must be no sanctuary for hate, no refuge for bigotry, there must be no base or sanctuary for these enemies of humankind.

Let there be no mistake about it: indulging impunity, as we did for so many years with Putin's criminality in Chechnya, Georgia and the Crimea, only incentivises and invites mass atrocity such as that accompanying the criminal aggression in Ukraine.

9. La Trahison des clercs, the betrayal of the elites

The ninth lesson is that the Holocaust was made possible not only because of the “bureaucratisation of genocide”, as Robert Lifton put it – and as the Wannsee Conference and the Nazi desk murderer Adolf Eichmann personified – but because of the betrayal of the elites, including scientists and doctors, judges and lawyers, church leaders and educators, engineers and architects.

The Nuremberg crimes were also the crimes of Nuremberg's elites. It is our responsibility, then, to speak truth to power, to hold power accountable to truth.

The “double entendre” of Nuremberg – of Nuremberg racism and Nuremberg principles – must be part of our learning as it is part of our legacy.

10. The assault on the vulnerable and powerless – the responsibility to give voice to the voiceless

The tenth lesson concerns the vulnerability of the powerless and the powerlessness of the vulnerable, as I witnessed at Auschwitz in the remnants of shoes and suitcases, crutches and hair of the murdered. Indeed, it is revealing, as Prof. Henry Friedlander points out in his work *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*, among the first groups targeted for killing were the Jewish disabled.

It is our responsibility to give voice to the voiceless and to empower the powerless, be they the disabled, poor, elderly, women victimised by violence, or vulnerable children – the most vulnerable of the vulnerable. The test of a just society is how it treats its most vulnerable among them.

11. The importance – and justice – of Holocaust restitution

The eleventh lesson is the justice imperative of Holocaust restitution. Several weeks ago, there was an interna-

tional gathering of Special Envoys on Holocaust Remembrance, whose organising theme was that of Holocaust reparations and restitution.

The gathering built upon the 2009 Terezin Declaration – a statement of support by 46 states for measures to ensure the return of, and compensation for, the seizure and plunder of property on the occasion of and anticipation of mass murder – in a word, “thefticide”, mass theft accompanying mass murder of Jewish victims during the Holocaust. This thefticide consisted of the plundering of personal belongings, as well as communal and religious objects and institutions of cultural and sacred value. Almost 80 years after the Holocaust, there has been compensation for only a small fraction of the spoils of thefticide.

The absence of restitution is a standing injustice. It is imperative to secure justice through recognition and dignity for survivors and their descendants.

12. The courage and moral strength of the ‘Righteous Among the Nations’ – Raoul as role model

Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat credited with saving 100,000 Hungarian Jews in the Holocaust – an honorary citizen of the US, Canada, Israel, and Australia – demonstrated how one person with compassion and the courage to act can confront evil, prevail, and transform history.

At this historical inflection point, as we witness a resurgence of global authoritarianism and the corresponding assault on human rights, the lessons of Raoul Wallenberg and the righteous among the nations are especially poignant.

And one more word, this time to you, the survivors who have taught me so much. You endured the worst of inhumanity, but somehow found in the resources of your own humanity the will to go on, the resilience to build families and relationships, and to make enduring contributions to every community and country you inhabit. We are all your beneficiaries, and we will continue to be inspired by your teachings and your example.

And so, together with you, we must remember – and pledge – that never again will we be indifferent to incitement and hate, but we will speak up. Never again will we be silent in the face of evil. Never again will we indulge racism and antisemitism, the most dangerous of hatreds. Never again will we ignore the plight of the vulnerable. And never again will we be indifferent in the face of mass atrocity and impunity.

AIR

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ULTIMATE DEFIANCE: THE WARSAW GHETTO

Ben Cohen

“Now something unprecedented took place. Three officers with lowered machine pistols appeared. They wore white rosettes in their button-holes – emissaries. They desired to negotiate with the Area Command. They proposed a 15-minute truce to remove the dead and the wounded. They were also ready to promise all inhabitants an orderly evacuation to working camps in Poniatow and Trawniki, and to let them take along all their belongings. Firing was our answer. Every house remained a hostile fortress. From every floor, from every window, bullets sought hated German helmets, hated German hearts.”

There are many inspiring stories from the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 1943, the 80th anniversary of which was marked last month, but the passage quoted above is probably the one that left the deepest impression upon me.

I first read it many years ago, when I picked up a copy of *The Ghetto Fights*, a memoir by Marek Edelman, who was a leader of the Bund, the pre-war Jewish Socialist party, and who participated in the uprising against the Nazi occupiers. Edelman was describing the aftermath of the epic battle that commenced on April 19, 1943, when the Germans attempted to liquidate the ghetto with columns of troops, armoured vehicles and tanks, and with heavy artillery pieces placed outside its walls. But the Jewish resistance fighters inside had anticipated their arrival; in the ensuing combat, the Germans became trapped at the intersection of Mila and Zamenhofa Streets, with their intended path to a safe retreat fatally exposed to the guns wielded by fighters of the ZOB and the ZZW, the two Jewish military organisations in the ghetto. “Not a single German left this area alive,” wrote Edelman.

At the same time, further German units were pinned down in Nalewki and Gesia streets. “German blood flooded the street,” Edelman recalled. “German ambu-

lances continuously transported their wounded to the small square near the Community buildings. Here the wounded lay in rows on the sidewalk awaiting their turn to be admitted to the hospital.” By 2 pm that same day, the Jewish fighters realised that they had won a key battle over their oppressors.

The Germans returned to the ghetto walls 24 hours later and were again met with hails of bullets and deadly attacks using what we now call Improvised Explosive De-

vices (IEDs). It was at this point that the three German officers described by Edelman came begging for a ceasefire, in order to collect their dead and wounded. In that precise moment, the role of the Jew and the German, of the “Untermensch” and the “Aryan” – cemented over the previous decade by the growing power of the Third Reich – was utterly inverted.

Every bullet fired at the Germans was a riposte to the grotesque slogan carved into the gates of Auschwitz, “*Arbeit Macht Frei*” (“Work Makes You Free”). And every German who fell while attempting to rescue his wounded comrades was a sign that the humanity of the Jews had not been extinguished – that they were real agents making real decisions, including the decision to deny the enemy any form of mercy or regard amid the heat of the fighting.

The energy and the intensity shown by the 700 poorly armed young Jewish fighters reflected the understanding, deep in their hearts, that the battle for the ghetto was not ultimately one in which they would prevail.

“We knew we couldn’t win,” wrote Mira Fuchrer, just 21 years old, one of the women fighters who came from the ranks of the Labour Zionist *Hashomer Hatzair* organisation. “We fought so we could die with dignity.”

For Fuchrer’s boyfriend, the 22-year-old commander of the ZOB, Mordechai Anielewicz, the sheer fact of the uprising was a fillip to Europe’s Jews in their darkest hour, and therefore in itself a victory. “The dream of my life has risen to become fact,” he reflected at the height of the fighting. “Self-defence in the ghetto will have been a reality. Jewish armed resistance and revenge are facts! I have been a witness to the magnificent, heroic fighting of Jewish men of battle.”



The doomed fighters of the ghetto knew they had no chance – but still managed to hold out for a month, and not only win their battle to die with dignity, but a storied place in history (Images: Warsaw Uprising Museum/ Public domain)



Truce negotiations and the eventual deportations from the Ghetto to the concentration camps (Images: Picryl)

Like other aspects of the Holocaust and World War II more generally, the details of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising have become richer and more complicated with further research over time. Critically, thanks largely to the painstaking work of the late Moshe Arens, a former Israeli cabinet minister, we now know that there was not just one – as was assumed for several decades – but

“The energy and the intensity shown by the 700 poorly armed young Jewish fighters reflected the understanding, deep in their hearts, that the battle for the ghetto was not ultimately one in which they would prevail”

two military groups in the ghetto. As well as the Jewish Fighting Organisation (ZOB), which drew supporters of the non-Zionist Bund and left-wing Zionists such as Dror and Hashomer Hat-zair, there was the Jewish Military Union (ZZW), commanded by Pawel Frenkel and rooted in the Revisionist Zionist Betar movement of Vladimir

Jabotinsky.

The political divide between these two organisations was unmistakable, as was the internal split within the ZOB between those leftists who supported the creation of a Jewish state and those who saw Zionism as a needless

deviation from the proletarian class struggle (but not, I should emphasise, as a “racist”, “colonialist” project in the manner of those who define themselves as anti-Zionists today).

Yet the imperative of defeating the Germans was overwhelming, and so the ZOB and the ZZW, Betarniks and Bundists alike, forged a strategic alliance. The ZOB distributed its fighters at different points around the ghetto while the ZZW concentrated its forces in Muranowska Square, flying a blue-and-white Zionist flag alongside a Polish one from its headquarters, as it pushed back against the German advance.

The vicious urban fighting lasted for nearly a month before the Germans were able to declare victory. “The former Jewish Quarter in Warsaw is no more,” announced the SS Commander Jurgen Stroop in a May 16, 1943 cable to his superiors in Berlin.

In the event, the ghetto was razed, and most of the surviving fighters committed suicide rather than face capture and humiliation at the hands of the Germans. The 42,000 Jews who still remained in the ghetto two years after the Germans began mass deportation of the community were transported either to the Majdanek concentration camp or the labour camps at Poniatow and Trawnicky. Most of them were murdered at those locations during a two-day mass shooting operation in November 1943.

“Never say that you are walking the final road/Though leaden skies obscure blue days,” the ghetto fighters would sing. “The hour we have been longing for will still come/ Our steps will drum – we are here!”

Eighty years later, as their descendants wrestle with a resurgence of antisemitism (albeit in far more favourable circumstances – the existence of a Jewish state, full civil and political rights in most countries where Jews live) we should not only wish that their memory remains a blessing. Let it strengthen us, too.

AIR

Ben Cohen is a New York City-based journalist and author who writes a weekly column on Jewish and international affairs for the Jewish News Syndicate (JNS). © JNS (JNS.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

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“Special”

The ugly history of the UNHRC’s Special Rapporteurs

Justin Amler

In 1993, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) created the “Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories” post, to investigate and report on the “human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.”

The UNCHR was a body created in 1946 in the wake of WWII as the UN’s principal body devoted to the “promotion and protection of human rights.”

However, as is common at the UN, it became politicised and ineffective, dominated by human rights violators, thus becoming increasingly discredited among both activists and major governments. Finally, in 2006, it was officially disbanded, and replaced by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) – which has also become politicised and ineffective, and equally dominated by serious human rights violators and their sympathisers.

The human rights violators that dominated these bodies turned both the UNCHR and the UNHRC into non-stop Israel-bashing forums, to the neglect of almost all other human rights issues. As the *AIR* has previously reported, in every year of the Council’s existence, no matter what is happening across the globe, Israel has been subjected to more critical resolutions and other forms of negative scrutiny at the UNHRC than any other country. Over the years, Israel has been condemned more than all other countries in the world combined.

Staff and “experts” employed by the UNHRC have, unsurprisingly, largely been people who share the Council’s extreme anti-Israel obsessions.

A recent example is Craig Mokhiber, who heads the New York section of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which oversees the UNHRC. In March 2023, his personal and extreme antagonism toward the Jewish state was very publicly exposed when his tweets were published, showing he supported the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel, and accused Israel of “apartheid”, “ethnic cleansing”, “race-based slaughter” and committing an “ongoing genocide”.

He even accused the global media of hiding “endless atrocities committed against Palestinian civilians.” And he openly campaigns against the widely accepted International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, calling it a “politicised and cynically instrumentalised ‘definition’” – even though the definition has

been endorsed by his boss, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, as well as the then-UN Special Rapporteur for freedom of religion or belief, Ahmed Shaheed.

So, given the obsessions of both the UNHRC as a body and its staff, it is not at all surprising that the position of “Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories” has been linked to one scandal after another, with virtually every occupant of the post becoming associated with anti-Israel extremism and, often, antisemitism.

CURRENT SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR FRANCESCA ALBANESE



Current “Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories” Francesca Albanese (Image: Shutterstock)

The current Special Rapporteur is Italian academic Francesca Albanese. Like Mokhiber, she was embroiled in an international scandal in December 2022 when her social media history was exposed as including a multitude of disturbing, and even antisemitic posts. In 2014, she posted that America is “subjugated by the Jewish lobby,” while Europe is subjugated “by the sense of guilt about the Holocaust.” Another post stated, “[t]he Israeli lobby is clearly inside [the BBC’s] veins...”

For these claims, she was condemned by the US government, US antisemitism monitor Deborah Lipstadt, by members of the European Parliament and US Congress, and many others.

After these posts were revealed, she initially acknowledged the comments were a “mistake”. However, she then released another statement backtracking, saying her comments were “wrongly mischaracterized as antisemitic” and criticism of them amounted to a “yet another malicious attack” against her mandate.

Earlier, it was shown she had repeatedly compared Israel to Nazi Germany – including endorsing a post by her husband, Massimiliano Calì, equating Palestinian terrorists with Jews resisting the Nazis in the Warsaw Ghetto (she also neglected to disclose when applying to be “Special Rapporteur” that her husband was previously employed by the Palestinian Authority), called Israel an Apartheid state repeatedly, said Israel was conducting a “slow genocide”

of Palestinians and expressed her “dream” to have Hamas removed from the list of terrorist organisations.

Her extremism has also come through very clearly in her behaviour since taking up the role of Special Rapporteur. Most recently, following two terror attacks on April 7, in which Palestinian gunmen murdered Israeli-British teenagers Rina and Maia Dee, along with their mother, Lea, and an Arab Israeli rammed his car into a Tel Aviv crowd, killing Italian tourist Alessandro Parini, Albanese tweeted the following: “Israel has the right to defend itself, but can’t claim it when it comes to the people it oppresses/ whose lands it colonizes.”

That’s right – she argued that Israel has no right to defend itself against Palestinian terrorism, because the Palestinians are people Israel “oppresses”. In essence, she effectively endorsed and encouraged violent “resistance”, aka terrorism, by Palestinians by saying Israel had no right to defend itself against this.

Earlier, she had used her role to:

- Address a Hamas conference in Gaza in Nov. 2022, and effectively support anti-Israel violence, telling it that “You have a right to resist this occupation... Israel says ‘resistance equals terrorism,’ but an occupation requires violence and generates violence.”
- Defend Miloon Kothari, a member of the UN Human Rights Council’s anti-Israel ‘Commission of Inquiry’, who said social media is “controlled largely by the Jewish Lobby,” and insisting he was the target of a “smear campaign”.
- Blame Israel for a Palestinian terror attack that killed seven civilians. When asked if she condemned a terror attack in February that killed seven civilians, including a 14-year-old, outside a Jerusalem synagogue, she replied, “the brutal colonial occupation Israel maintains over the Palestinians (an apartheid regime by default) continues to traumatize millions of people, pushing them into hopelessness & despair, including kids.”
- Like Mokhiber, repeatedly denounce the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

A “SPECIAL RAPPOREUR” LIKE NO OTHER

Far from being an exception, these constant demonstrations of anti-Israel bias, mixed in with anti-Jewish tropes, have very much been part and parcel of the Special Rapporteur position from its inception, as we will see below when we discuss Albanese’s predecessors.

It is clear that this particular role was designed to be used as a springboard for UNHRC attacks against the Jewish state. Even its very name of ‘Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian Territories’ implicitly adopts the false Palestinian narrative of Israel illegally occupying “Palestinian land”. Palestinians may wish to lay claim to areas they want for a future state, but that is very different to being a

once sovereign state under occupation by another sovereign state. Palestine, as an independent Arab state, has of course never existed.

But the problem goes way beyond the position’s title – it centres on the entire construction of the position’s mandate.

Unlike the UNHRC’s 58 other Special Rapporteurs, who are assigned to specific countries with the task of overseeing activities and improving the human rights in those designated countries for a specific period of time, the Special Rapporteur for the Palestinian Territories is the only one assigned to a non-state to criticise a member state – with no set time limit.

Its mandate is to: “Investigate Israel’s alleged violations of the principles of international law and international humanitarian law.”

In other words, it is to investigate alleged Israeli transgressions alone, and there is no mandate to look at crimes by Palestinians, either against Israelis, such as terrorism or rocket attacks, or against Palestinian civilians. This is one reason why neither the PA nor Hamas have ever been condemned by UNHRC – while Israel is condemned constantly.

Another unique feature of this farcical mandate is that the Special Rapporteur for the Palestinian Territories is scheduled to continue “until the end of the Israeli occupation.” Apparently, its mandate will only end when Israel withdraws from all disputed territories.

The practical effect is that, unlike all other Special Rapporteur positions, there is no end-date for this role.

Overall, the mandate of this role is a violation of the UN Charter, which calls for neutrality and the equal treatment of all nations.

While all UN Special Rapporteurs are theoretically supposed to display “impartiality and objectivity”, it is clear that the holders of this particular role are not allowed to do so, even if they want to (as the first Special Rapporteur René Felber discovered, see below).

Just like the infamous and similarly unprecedented UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory created by the UNHRC in 2021, this Special Rapporteur role is designed to be a perpetual witch-hunt against Israel.

ALBANESE’S PREDECESSORS

René Felber, from Switzerland, was appointed in 1993 as the first “Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian Territories” – but he resigned in 1995 after renouncing

“While all UN Special Rapporteurs are theoretically supposed to display ‘impartiality and objectivity’, it is clear that the holders of this particular role are not allowed to do so, even if they want to”

his mandate. Felber said he believed that it was better to support the peace process rather than condemn the parties because this would promote respect for basic freedoms.

He wanted to document human rights issues on both sides, but this attempt at some kind of even-handed approach led to him coming under fire from human rights groups, including the International Commission of Jurists and Amnesty International.

Unfortunately, his call for reconsideration of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur to look at both sides was not supported by any future holders of the role – who all fully embraced and lived up to its mandate calling for completely one-sided reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

South African John Dugard, who served as Special Rapporteur from 2001 to 2008, said Israel was worse than apartheid South Africa, stating that Israel's policies were "beyond the scope of apartheid law."

In one UN report, he stated that "Israel's defiance of international law poses a threat not only to the international legal order but to the international order itself," and this was "no time for appeasement on the part of the international community."

Dugard was replaced by a notorious anti-Israel agitator, American academic Richard Falk, who served from 2008 until 2014.

Before, during and after his tenure, Falk was known for his incendiary denunciations of Israel, including repeated statements comparing Israel and Israeli defence measures to Nazi atrocities.

He even wrote an article in December 2013 that said Israel was "slouching toward nothing less than a Palestinian holocaust." This led to US State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki calling on him to resign, saying: "We do not support his mandate or his work, which has been one-sided and biased, nor do we believe he should continue to serve

as independent UN rapporteur."

Falk also posted a blatantly antisemitic cartoon on his personal blog, which led to denunciation by not only the US and UK governments, but also the UN Secretary-General.

Falk's successor, Indonesia's Makarim Wibisono, also easily failed the UN's objectivity test, as evidenced by his statements, including denouncing Israel's supposed "unconscionable use of force against the Palestinians," "untenable acts of aggression," and supposed "policy of retribution against the entire Palestinian nation."

He also accused Israel of being "the aggressor and the perpetrator of wanton violence." He described Israel's continuing defensive battle against rocket and other terrorist attacks from Gaza as a "flimsy pretext" for attacks on Palestinians.

Wibisono also openly embraced what he called the "sacred Palestinian cause".

After Wibisono departed, Michael Lynk from Canada was appointed to the role and continued in the same spirit.

Lynk had a long history of involvement with anti-Israel events, including speaking to at least 11 events with BDS activists and other NGOs that are part of the campaign to delegitimise Israel.

He consistently dismissed Israel's security concerns, claiming that Hamas and Hezbollah pose "no real threat to Israel."

Lynk even praised Manal Tamimi, a virulently antisemitic activist who said, "Vampire Zionists... drink Palestinian blood" and called on people to rise up and kill "all these Zionist settlers everywhere." Lynk called Tamimi "a human rights defender".

Lynk referred to Israel as a "covetous alien power" that must "abandon the fever-dream of settler-colonialism and recognise the freedom of the indigenous people."



Special Rapporteur Richard Falk's republication of blatantly antisemitic material saw him widely condemned (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

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Finally, that brings us to incumbent Albanese, who, since taking office in May 2022, has, as already noted, created scandal after scandal with her extremism.

It is clear that from the very beginning, the “Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian Territories” role has been special indeed – but only because it is a politically motivated position created by an organisation dominated by some of the world’s worst human rights violators to continue their anti-Israel crusade.

In any reasonable body, the individuals involved, with their naked and unhinged hostility towards the Jewish state, and often open antisemitism, would never even be considered for such role. But such is the obsessive bias against Israel in the UNHRC that it is their very extremism that made them the perfect choice.

AIR

ISRAEL’S DIPLOMATIC ACHIEVEMENTS AT 75

Amotz Asa-El

David Ben-Gurion had hardly finished reading out Israel’s Declaration of Independence on May 14, 1948, when armoured columns invaded the newborn state from three sides, while warplanes bombarded Tel Aviv and artillery shelled Jerusalem.

The Middle East conflict, which for the previous three years had been largely diplomatic, had thus transformed into a military contest that would unsettle not only the Jewish state and its neighbours, but, for decades, the international system itself.

Even so, the intense diplomatic and strategic contest that accompanied the UN Partition Resolution of Nov. 29, 1947, and Israel’s establishment half a year later, amounted to a war in its own right. Now, as the war against Israel’s international legitimacy turns 75, Jerusalem’s gains in this struggle have been massive, yet complete victory remains

elusive. And there are some unpredicted challenges to existing ties.

The newborn state’s precarious diplomatic future was laid bare already at its birth, during the UN vote to divide British Mandate Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. The plan’s adoption, after a yes vote by 33 states, sparked euphoria throughout the Jewish world and beyond. However, 23 of the UN’s 56 member nations at the time failed to back the plan, with ten abstaining and 13 voting against it – almost all the latter because they rejected any Jewish sovereignty anywhere in their ancestral homeland.

A look at the diplomatic map faced by the young state illustrates the fact that the rejectionists could be divided into four different groups. The first was the Arab bloc, which at the time consisted of six UN members, and the second was the rest of the wider Muslim-majority world, represented in the partition vote by Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey and Iran.

Beyond these sprawled newly independent India, whose negative vote can be seen as a harbinger of the role it would seek during the Cold War, as co-founder of the future Nonaligned Bloc. Finally, a fourth type of opponent was represented by Greece, which opposed Israel’s establishment out of fear of jeopardising its specific national interests, including important diaspora communities, in the Arab world.

While this opening situation was difficult enough, it was later aggravated dramatically when the Soviet Union turned anti-Israel, after having voted for Israel’s establishment along with all the UN’s other Communist members, except Yugoslavia.

The Eastern bloc’s change of attitude began soon after the War of Independence, when Moscow realised Israel would not join the Soviet orbit. Things got worse by the mid-1950s when Moscow became the main weapons supplier of all of Israel’s enemies except Jordan. This trend reached its height in 1967, when the entire Communist Bloc (except Romania) severed all diplomatic ties with Israel in the wake of the Six Day War.

Meanwhile, beyond Moscow’s immediate sphere of influence, China became even more hostile towards Israel. India also maintained its anti-Israeli attitude, refusing to exchange ambassadors with Jerusalem, though it did let Israel open a consulate in what is now Mumbai.

Finally, Arab efforts to isolate Israel registered their biggest successes in 1974, when all African countries save four severed diplomatic ties with Israel in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War.

The siege against Israel thus reached its climax that year.

Cracks began to appear in the diplomatic blockade in 1979, when Egypt and Israel signed a peace agreement and exchanged ambassadors. The Egyptian move failed to affect the rest of the Arab bloc, or the Muslim world. However,

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it did help inspire the restoration of sub-Saharan Africa's relations with Israel, as governments across that continent asserted that if Egypt could have an ambassador in Israel, then so could they.

That trend began in 1983 with Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), and eventually spread in all directions, from Kenya to Uganda to Nigeria and Senegal.

A few years later, the Eastern bloc collapsed and the Soviet Union broke up. By 1992 all of Central and Eastern Europe, from Lithuania to Albania, had established full diplomatic ties with Israel.

The transformation of the international system, and the radical change of Israel's place within it, immediately impacted the outer circle of anti-Israeli diplomacy. China and India both established full diplomatic ties with Israel in 1992, a year after Mongolia and a year before Vietnam.



Israeli diplomacy is a 75-year story of massive achievements – yet final victory in the quest for legitimacy remains elusive (Image: Shutterstock)

The Soviet Union's downfall also triggered a transition in Israel's relations with the Muslim world, as six post-Soviet, Muslim-majority countries established diplomatic ties with Israel. Adding to Jerusalem's existing relations with Nigeria and Turkey, Israeli diplomacy could view these gains as tempering the effects of the loss of ties with Iran in the wake of the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Overall, within a decade of its return to Africa in the early 1980s, Israel sent ambassadors to more than 50 new destinations. The siege which reached its peak in 1974 had come undone. Even Israeli diplomacy's most crucial frontier, the Arab world, began to join the trend, as the 1993 Oslo Accords inspired some of the Arab rapprochement that the peace with Egypt had failed to spark.

The 1994 peace agreement with Jordan was followed by formal visits of Israeli ministers to Morocco, Tunisia, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, and the establishment of diplomatic missions, if not full embassies, in some of these lands.

Publicly, these relations appeared shaky, as highlighted by the closure of Israel's missions in Tunisia and Morocco

following the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000. However, unofficially, the Arab world, particularly its richer countries, continued to develop trade with Israel. That trend was redoubled following the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020, after which Israel sent full ambassadors to the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco, and began a dialogue intended to lead to the same result with Sudan.

Today, with about half the Arab world's population living in countries that recognise Israel, and only 22 of the UN's 193 members still refusing to establish diplomatic relations, Israel's diplomatic goals are radically different from what they were in 1948.

However, formidable challenges do remain.

The first of "three" frontiers that still challenge Israeli diplomacy is the broader Muslim world.

While relations with countries like Azerbaijan and Nigeria are smooth and even intimate, the most populous Muslim-majority country, Indonesia, still refuses to establish ties with Israel, even after the Abraham Accords – despite hopes expressed in both Jerusalem and Washington that Jakarta could soon change course.

Diplomats believe that if and when Indonesia begins to openly engage in dialogue with Israel, other Muslim-majority countries, like Pakistan and Bangladesh (though probably not Malaysia, where anti-Zionism often shading into antisemitism plays an ongoing role in national politics) could follow Jakarta's example.

The second diplomatic frontier sprawls across the Middle East and can be divided into three parts: Iran, whose hostility under the ayatollahs is ideological, strategic, endemic and active, along with proxy states like Syria; moderate Arab governments that unofficially engage with Israel, like Saudi Arabia and Oman, or are candidates for such engagement, like Kuwait; and other states which are radical either by their own choice, like Algeria, or by someone else's choice, like Lebanon.

The third frontier lies between the West Bank and Gaza, where Palestinian hostility to Israel's right to exist remains as common and vocal as it was back in the 1947 when the Arab world rejected the UN's proposal to create a Palestinian state in the Holy Land alongside a Jewish state.

Cracking each of these three remaining fronts will be Israeli diplomacy's overarching challenge for the foreseeable future.

Yet, in addition to these challenges, in recent months, Israeli diplomacy has also faced some new ones suddenly emanating from some of the Jewish state's closest friends.

As opposition to the Netanyahu Government's judicial reform proposals repeatedly sent hundreds of thousands to the streets to protest what they see as an attempt to disempower the judiciary, Western leaders responded by deploying language Israeli leaders had rarely heard previously.

US President Joe Biden said publicly he does not intend to invite PM Binyamin Netanyahu to visit Washington “in the near term,” and stated that Netanyahu and his Government “cannot continue down this road.”

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak did host Netanyahu, but refrained from appearing with him in front of the cameras after hosting him at 10 Downing Street. Sunak “stressed the importance of upholding the democratic values that underpin our relationship,” his office said.

French President Emmanuel Macron was undiplomatically blunt, warning Netanyahu that if his Government’s plan passes, Paris should conclude that Israel has broken away “from a common conception of democracy.”

Collectively, the statements by these three key Western leaders suggest that while Israeli diplomacy continues to pursue new frontiers, Jerusalem’s natural allies are warning it not to neglect its position among the democracies that have recognised, hailed, supplied and collaborated with the Jewish state throughout the last 75 years – even when almost everyone else ostracised it.

AIR

SUDAN’S CIVIL WAR ENDANGERS PEACE HOPES

Ehud Yaari

When fighting broke out between rival generals in Sudan in April, one of its many ripple effects was the potential upending of understandings reached with Israel. Previously, the two countries had been on a path to signing a comprehensive peace agreement sometime later this year in Washington, to be followed by the exchange of ambassadors and the conclusion of protocols for cooperation in various fields – from developing Sudan’s vast agricultural potential to upgrading its health services and initiating trade relations.

This process represented the culmination of declarations and agreements reached in 2020-21- regarding normalisation between the two countries and Sudan’s participation in the Abraham Accords. The United States played a major role in those efforts by rescinding Sudan’s designation as a state sponsor of terrorism, lifting the associated

sanctions, and extending financial aid.

According to Israeli officials, the final text of the peace agreement was drafted months ago, with input from Washington and informally approved during Foreign Minister Eli Cohen’s February visit to Khartoum. A formal signing was predicated on several preliminary steps: completing US and international mediation between the military and the loose coalition of factions called the “Forces of Freedom and Change” (FFC), forming an interim civilian government in Khartoum, and holding general elections, after which the new parliament would ratify the agreement with Israel.

The US has long seen democratisation in Sudan as a key objective, in part to help ease Khartoum’s tensions with neighbouring countries and protect the vital Red Sea corridor.

On December 5, a “Framework Agreement” was reached to resolve the protracted tensions between the regular army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a powerful paramilitary that emerged from years of bloody conflict in Darfur and which had previously partnered with the army in ousting dictator Omar al-Bashir in 2019. This framework envisions a two-year transition to civilian rule and the RSF’s merger into the army. Yet the commander of the RSF, Gen. Mohamed Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo, has insisted that this merger be extended to ten years, incensing Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the army chief who heads the transitional Sovereignty Council.

These tensions led to the outbreak of hostilities in the capital and various towns and bases in the provinces. The army is backed by reconstituted Islamist factions that

formed the core of Bashir’s regime, while Hemedti is rumoured to enjoy tacit support from National Umma Party leader Mariam al-Mahdi, who is suspected of trying to break the army-RSF partnership in the hope of accelerating the transfer of power to a civilian coalition led by herself. Many of Hemedti’s troops are also followers of the Mahdiyya

movement, which harkens back to the Islamic state that Mahdi’s ancestor established in Sudan in the late nineteenth century.

Notably, the Islamists have taken a clear stand against peace with Israel, as have many FFC member parties (e.g., the communists and Baathists).

ISRAEL’S CAUTIOUS ROLE IN SUDAN

Israel’s past and present approaches to Sudan have been complicated by a host of factors. During the current



Civil war rages in Khartoum (Screenshot)

normalisation era, Israeli authorities have failed to cultivate relations with Sudanese civilian parties, focusing entirely on Burhan, his subordinate officers, and, to a lesser extent, the RSF. Over three successive governments in Jerusalem, no serious effort was undertaken to show the Sudanese people the potential benefits of normalisation.

A handful of Sudanese civilian delegations have visited Israel, but these quiet, infrequent trips are dwarfed in number by the high-ranking military delegations that have arrived on semi-secret missions to seek assistance.

This imbalance has exacerbated the wide opposition to normalisation among Sudanese political elites, many of whom believe that Israel has been providing intelligence and cyber tools to the military in order to quell recent protests. In fact, Israel has carefully screened such military requests and refused or deferred the bulk of them in consultation with Washington.

For instance, when Hemedti sent his brother Gen. Abd al-Rahim Dagalo and his political advisor Yusuf Izzat to present his long wish lists on multiple occasions, Israeli officials were apparently unwilling to play any role in Sudan's domestic strife – especially given that Hemedti has been repeatedly accused of ordering massacres in Darfur when he headed the Janjaweed militia. Qatari-financed media have spread rumours that the General is getting help from Israel's Mossad, but such accusations may be a product of Doha's long-running rivalry with the United Arab Emirates, which has ties to Hemedti.

Israel's cautious approach is based on experience acquired over seven decades of intermittent involvement in Sudan. In the 1950s, the late Sadeq al-Mahdi (Mariam's father) sought Israeli help in his struggle against Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasser.

This engagement flourished with President Jaafar Nimeiri in the 1970s and '80s, albeit in a strictly clandestine manner. Nimeiri cooperated in the effort to bring Ethiopian Jews to Israel and allowed the Mossad to maintain a presence in Khartoum. The relationship later deteriorated after Bashir took power, inched closer to Iran, and began facilitating arms shipments to Hamas in the Gaza Strip. By 2016, however, Bashir had distanced himself from Teheran, and secret contacts with Israel resumed. Burhan served as chief of military intelligence during this time.

Israel's interest in Sudan has also been driven in part by PM Binyamin Netanyahu's longstanding desire to open a direct flight route to Latin America in order to boost

economic relations. A permit to overfly Sudan, complemented by similar arrangements with Chad, is still one of his primary foreign policy targets.

CONCLUSION

The two-and-a-half-year delay in converting the

normalisation declaration into a signed peace agreement appears to have put the entire process at risk. Even if Sudan forms a civilian government in the near term, it may prove reluctant to test the public mood by concluding a treaty with the "Zionist enemy", as Israel is often referred to by the local press. If Burhan wins his contest with Hemedti, his Islamist allies may convince him to suspend or at least slow down normalisation; similarly, if Hemedti prevails, he will have to factor in how the National Umma Party and other potential partners feel about Israel.

Keeping Sudan in the Abraham Accords may therefore require the

United States to insist that Khartoum fulfill its commitments and complete the peace agreement – perhaps even by warning the country that it stands to lose the US benefits granted in conjunction with the initial normalisation declaration. Most of Sudan's civilian factions do not want to forfeit American support.

Other countries could help preserve the process as well. The UAE wields significant influence in Khartoum, as does Egypt, which maintains a limited military presence. Saudi Arabia and neighbouring Chad could likewise steer the next civilian government away from leaving the peace track paved by Sudan's generals. AIR

Ehud Yaari is the Lafer International Fellow with The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP). ©WINEP (washingtoninstitute.org), all rights reserved, reprinted by permission.



Former allies turned rivals Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan (top) and RSF leader Gen. Mohamed Hamdan "Hemedti" Dagalo (Screenshots)

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THE LESSONS OF INDONESIA'S WORLD CUP DEBACLE

Tzvi Fleischer & Tammy Reznik

Indonesia scored a spectacular own-goal in March when FIFA, the world soccer federation, cancelled Jakarta's hosting rights for the 2023 Under-20 World Cup – scheduled to begin in late May.

FIFA was compelled to respond to declarations by senior Indonesian political leaders refusing to host an Israeli team as part of the international competition.

Despite Indonesian President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo urging his compatriots, "Don't mix sports with politics," this was a clear case of political grandstanding interfering with sporting competition – with results that were completely pointless and destructive.

And the fallout is far from over.

The real losers of this story were everyday Indonesians; a soccer-mad bunch. They will not only miss out on watching the tournament at home – their first ever international soccer competition – but also lose international standing and credibility as well as much needed tourist dollars.

Sadder still, they will even forfeit the right of the Indonesia Under-20 team to participate in the World Cup for the first time ever (hosting nation teams always have the opportunity of participating in the World Cup whether they qualified or not – and Indonesia's team did not.) Such participation would have provided a golden opportunity to help develop Indonesian soccer into the future.

Furthermore, adding insult to injury, FIFA slapped sanctions on Indonesia, freezing funding for the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI).

Most Indonesians understand what they have lost. A recent poll shows that 71% of Indonesians surveyed had no problem with hosting the Israeli team – and almost as many regretted the loss of the Under-20 World Cup because of the anti-Israel political posturing.

Back in 2019, when Indonesia was awarded the rights to the tournament, it was an announcement that brought joy and pride to many in this football-mad country.

At that time, it was not known which teams would be qualifying and competing, and it was a surprise to many when Israel qualified for the first time in June of last year.

Despite Indonesia having no diplomatic relations with Israel, as well as a long tradition of taking unashamedly pro-Palestinian stances, it was clear that the national Government was prepared to host the Israelis, in line with the commitments it had made to FIFA. However, with general elections looming next February, political point scoring entered the picture and changed it.

After some earlier rumblings and some relatively small street protests by conservative Muslim groups, Bali Governor Wayan Koster stated that he would refuse

to host the Israeli team on the Hindu-majority island, where the Israeli team was supposed to be based. He cited security concerns and Indonesia's foreign policy for his decision.

He was joined by Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo, a frontrunner to be the candidate for the ruling PDI-P party in next year's presidential elections, who also called for Israel to be excluded.

President Widodo sent Indonesian Soccer chief Erick Thohir to meet with FIFA boss Gianni Infantino in Doha to try to find arrangements to salvage the tournament, but it was already too late.

The irony in this tale is that, whilst Indonesia and Israel have no diplomatic relations, considerable covert economic, security and political relations between the two countries have existed for more than 20 years.

Israeli political leaders frequently meet quietly with their Indonesian counterparts, trade relations are estimated to be valued at more than US\$500 million (A\$755m) per year, and there is considerable tourism both ways between the two countries. So an Israeli team visiting Indonesia to play in an international tournament would hardly have required a major shift in policy for Indonesia.

Furthermore, the political grandstanding supposedly on behalf of the Palestinian cause achieved absolutely nothing for Palestinians, and Israel will still take part in the tournament.

The only winner from this whole affair is the appar-



Gone but not forgotten: The FIFA U-20 World Cup was squandered by Indonesia, leaving a bitter aftertaste (Image: FIFA)

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ent new tournament host Argentina – which will not only get all the tourism and reputational benefits, but also get to have its Under-20 team take Indonesia’s place in the tournament.

For Indonesian players and fans, the loss of the tournament has been devastating. As Indonesian striker, Rab-bani Tasnim Siddiq, said on Instagram about the outcome caused by the politicians, “We sacrificed our time, thoughts, sweat and even blood. But it suddenly failed due to your political reasons.”

And the affair appears to be having some political fallout. Recent polls show the ruling PDI-P losing ground to Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto, the presidential candidate of the rival Gerindra party.

Yet despite all this, Bali Governor Wayan Koster still went on to announce he would also refuse to host Israeli teams at the 2023 ANOC World Beach Games scheduled to take place on the island in August.

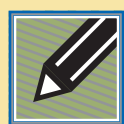
After meeting with Indonesian Minister of Youth and

Sports Dito Ariotedjo and Chairman of the Indonesian Olympics Committee (KOI) Raja Sapta Oktohari on April 14, Koster said unspecified arrangements were now agreed for the World Beach Games to go ahead. But he then issued a statement on April 22 re-iterating, “I remain consistent in refusing the Israeli team’s participation in the 2023 World Beach Games,” even as the Association of National Olympic Committees, which organises the World Beach Games, said it was “in close dialogue with the Indonesian authorities and Indonesian Olympic Committee to ensure all qualified NOCs [National Olympic Committees] are welcome in Bali.”

Israeli athletes have already earned the right to participate in the World Beach Games in at least the open ocean swimming and 3×3 beach basketball competitions, so it is unclear what will happen next.

PDI-P leaders like Koster and Pranowo really need to learn the lesson that, as President Widodo urged, sport and politics really shouldn’t be mixed.

AIR



YOURWRITE

STATE OF PLAY

In the *AIR* of April 2023 I am misrepresented as “pushing” and proposing a “plan” for a one-state approach. That is not my position.

Contrary to the allegations in *AIR*, I am not an advocate for a “two and a half state” plan, nor do I have a “plan” for “breaking Israel into two parts”. But an outcome (which is not in any sense a solution, for either side) which sees a deeply divided Israel, and a Palestinian entity lacking genuine sovereignty, is entirely possible.

As recounted in my recently published memoirs (*Tomorrow There will be Apricots: an Australian Diplomat in the Arab World*) I risked my career to advocate for the two state approach. I believed that only two strong, confident governments could deliver the compromises required of both sides to reach a just and durable solution to their conflict.

But with the demise of the Oslo Process, we are now beyond the two state era.

My position is that the way forward for both sides must now be found – by them – in the context of a single state providing equality, and hopefully a measure of justice, for all.

Only genuine political engagement between Palestinians and Israelis can define that path and bring such an outcome about. I wish they would. But it is unlikely that either side will demonstrate the political will, or establish the ideological underpinning, or work through the organisational requirements and the immense practical problems involved. It would require a tectonic political and societal shift, on both sides, that may never be realised.

Both sides are staring into a void, and that prospect should

fill them, and all of us, with dread.

Robert Bowker

[Ed Note: While the AIR accepts Ambassador Bowker’s assertion that his current public advocacy of eventually creating a single state to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a “plan”, we stand by our other criticisms of his stance made in the last AIR. He says a two-state solution is dead because it’s now too hard to achieve, but also says the only way forward is something vastly harder to achieve – that Israelis and Palestinians will somehow agree to give up their national aspirations and much of their identities and live in peace and comity in a single shared state. Bowker concedes this would require a “tectonic political and society shift” that appears virtually impossible, and may never happen – yet this is nonetheless what he advocates as the only hope for the future. However, it appears obvious to us that the political and social changes, the so-called “tectonic shifts”, required to return to the possibility of two states for two peoples – or variations on this, such as confederations involving Arab state partners, especially in the wake of the possibilities created by the Abraham Accords – are vastly less than for the one state outcome he says he hopes for.]

We also note that Amb. Bowker’s current stance – “a single state providing equality, and hopefully a measure of justice, for all” – is remarkably similar to that now being advocated by major portions of the global anti-Zionist movement, which now argues they are fighting for Palestinian “equality” between the river and the sea, and against “Jewish Supremacy” and “Apartheid”. They say such equality can only be a reality when Israel is dismantled and a single democratic state with a Palestinian majority created, achieved through a right of return. This stance is an updated version of the PLO’s line since the mid-1960s – demanding Israel’s destruction by calling for “a secular, democratic state in all of Palestine.” Given the unreasonable nature of Bowker’s ostensible stance – a two-state solution is all but impossible, so I advocate something even more impossible – it obviously raises the question of to what degree his current position has been influenced by this current, updated version of past calls for Israel’s destruction.]





THE BIBLIO FILE

Battling the Boycotters

Challenging the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement: 20 Years of Responding to Anti-Israel Campaigns

Edited By Ronnie Fraser, Lola Fraser

Routledge, Feb. 2023, 262 pp., A\$ 59.19



Ahron Shapiro

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel is not the grassroots “movement” it purports to be, but a self-aggrandising propaganda and intimidation syndicate strategically funded by politicised NGOs to an astounding level estimated to exceed US\$100 million (A\$151m) annually.

This fact, revealed by Professor Gerald M. Steinberg, President of the Jerusalem-based watchdog NGO Monitor in his standout submission to the newly published academic anthology, *Challenging the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions [BDS] Movement: 20 years of responding to anti-Israel campaigns*, is one of the many valuable insights that can be gleaned from the book.

As its title suggests, editors Ronnie and Lola Fraser pin the conceptual birth date of BDS to the initial call for an academic boycott of Israel, in April 2002, in the aftermath of the infamous September 2001 World Conference against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa. That is certainly more accurate than the revisionist narrative promoted by the BDS movement today, which fallaciously claims that BDS grew organically out of a 2005 Palestinian initiative, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cul-

tural Boycott of Israel.

Yet the roots of BDS certainly go back further than Durban, and are in fact a modern adaptation of organised Arab boycotts of the Jewish businesses in the land of Israel that predate the establishment of the state by many years and took various forms. Following the establishment of Israel, a formalised boycott was eventually organised on a state level, and this sputtered along until the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and 1993 Oslo Accords. These early efforts did not have major effects on the Israeli economy, but did manage to deter quite a few prominent global corporations from entering the then tiny Israeli market for many years.

Durban itself was little more than a reboot of the demonisation and delegitimisation campaign against Israel that was served up at the UN by the Soviet bloc in the mid-1970s after successive failures by their Egyptian and Syrian clients to defeat Israel militarily. As Steinberg astutely reminds us:

The agendas, list of speakers, and draft texts [at Durban] were manipulated in order to revive the 1975 UN General Assembly resolution that declared Zionism

to be a form of racism. The 1975 UN resolution had been formally rescinded in 1991, but the UN and NGO mechanisms remained active. With the collapse of the Oslo process and the escalation of violent attacks and responses, the political conditions were ripe for a worldwide soft-power campaign based on this and related themes.

In other words, the Palestinian rejection of Israeli peace offers in 2000 and 2001, together with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat’s decision to launch the Second Intifada beginning in September 2000, created an opportunity for radical anti-Israel peace rejectionists on the UN and NGO scene to plan their political comeback with Durban as the springboard. BDS would be a key part of their renewed offensive.

It bears clarifying that when I say peace rejectionists, I’m not talking only about supporters of the Islamist terror group Hamas or Iranian proxy Hezbollah, for example, whose rejectionism is an integral part of their identity. Regrettably, this rejectionism remains pervasive even among ostensibly mainstream Palestinian intellectuals like Nadia Hijab, co-founder of the Palestinian think tank Al-Shabaka, who in 2010 authored the detailed policy brief “What if Peace Talks ‘Succeed?’” Hijab’s brief, which remains as relevant today as ever, lays down concrete strategies to continue the struggle to dismantle Israel in the event Palestinian leaders agreed to make the concessions required to close a peace deal.

In the short term, the goal of the radicals who hijacked the agenda at Durban was to bury hopes of reviving the faltering Oslo Israel-Palestinian peace process. In the long term – which includes the present day – the goals are to demonise and isolate Israel as a pariah state and annul Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state in the eyes of the international community.

As is touched upon in several

passages in the book, BDS organisers proved to be adept opportunists, taking full advantage of the power of the internet to spread their hate, especially though social media, as well as finding ways to exploit social and cultural trends.

Whereas once boycotts of Israel failed to find broad sympathy outside the Arab world, BDS focused its resources on both proselytising the Palestinian narrative and rebranding anti-Israel activism and even aggressive intimidation and bullying as a noble struggle for social justice blessed with a halo of smug self-righteousness. In recent years, BDS has hitched its wagon to the fashionable left-wing ideology of “intersectionality”, seeking to recast the complicated and supremely political and nationalist Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a simplistic morality play featuring all-powerful, cruel and racist Israeli oppressors and their helpless Palestinian victims.

In the United States, BDS formed alliances with the Black Lives Matter movement, framing Palestinians as people of colour and Israelis as privileged “whites”. This is in spite of the fact that the Jews of Israel are ethnically diverse, with the majority descending from families who were once refugees from Arab and even African lands, while those with European ancestry have a history replete with institutionalised discrimination, relentless persecution, pogroms and genocide.

According to the revisionist BDS narrative, Palestinians are indigenous, Jews are “white” foreigners, and Zionism is a racist and colonialist ideology. In reality, Jews maintained a constant presence in their homeland throughout two millennia of national exile, while Zionism simply asserts the Jewish people’s right to self-determi-

nation in the land where they became a people.

The anthology covers all this ground and more, over the course of its 11 submissions from a varied selection of scholarly contributors. The Frasers say their vision for the book was to detail how Israel and its supporters have responded to BDS over the past two decades. It is by no means comprehensive, but each essay approaches the matter differently, which helps maintain reader interest throughout, while the endnotes give the reader many opportunities to take a deeper dive into the material.



BDS campaigners have shown themselves to be adept opportunists, including exploiting social media’s preferences for brief, emotive slogans (Image: Shutterstock)

The book is, however, not without its faults. Most of the essays in the anthology assume an in-depth understanding of the Israel-Palestinian conflict and appear to take for granted that the reader is already favourably disposed towards Israel. This can lead to some unintended consequences.

A case in point appears right in the book’s introduction, where the Frasers casually mention the UN’s 2009 inquiry into the Gaza war of the previous year, known as the Goldstone Report, and explain how it “found that Israel had carried (sic) ‘deliberate attacks on civilians’ with ‘the intention of spreading terror’ [and this] resulted in the Israeli government taking seriously the threat of BDS and delegitimation.” Left unsaid was the fact that Goldstone himself eventually

discredited and repudiated his own report over its many failings. Most university students today – too young to remember either the Gaza war or the sham of the UN inquiry that followed it – might read the passage as written and justifiably wonder why Israel *shouldn’t* be boycotted and delegitimised given these “findings”.

I found that Ben Gurion University of the Negev’s Chair of Geopolitics David Newman’s essay “The Mutual Weaponisation of BDS: A perspective from Israel” to be particularly weak and disappointing, despite his making a fair number of reasonable points. I’d

disagree with his claim that BDS “started as a strategy to put pressure on the Israeli government to change its policies relating to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip” and only later “transformed into a broader policy of delegitimation of the State of Israel in its entirety” (a claim he does not back up by citing any source). In an unseemly twist that you don’t often see on the pages of the same scholarly book, left-leaning Newman accuses fellow

essayist Steinberg’s NGO Monitor of being essentially a shill for the Israeli right, though he grudgingly admits its research into NGO funding is on “solid ground”.

Compared to the ten other essayists, as well as the editors themselves, Newman undoubtedly serves as the dissenting opinion, declining to even pass judgement between BDS activists and those who oppose them.

“One man’s coloniser is another man’s patriot and pioneer,” writes Newman, “while one man’s traitor and antisemite is another man’s freedom fighter.”

Fortunately for the reader, the rest of the essayists offer both far stronger moral compasses and more profound and useful insights into both the BDS movement and how it can be effectively countered.



ESSAY

Before the Holocaust

Nazi antisemitism was the culmination of a widespread trend

Haviv Rettig Gur

Western Holocaust commemorations have a peculiar uniformity to them. They speak of Nazism as a warning against intolerance and chauvinism; they frame the genocide as a single event with a clear beginning and end that for all its cataclysmic scope and impact was nevertheless short-lived.

This way of remembering is a tragedy in its own right. It downplays a long history of persecution, ignores the Holocaust's deeper roots in favour of the emotional salve of simplistic moral lessons, and detaches the specific gas chambers and killing fields from a broader history of which they are an apotheosis, not an aberration.

There is a more Jewish telling of the Holocaust, one that notices that the 20th century was already among the bloodiest periods in Jewish history *before* the start of the genocide. It includes the flight of millions of Jews out of Europe and the way those who remained were delivered into the Nazi embrace by Western immigration quotas. It is a version of the story that begins not in 1939 or 1941, but in 1880.

Jews began their mass flight from Europe following the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881, an event that sparked mass popular pogroms in the Russian Empire and saw new laws

enacted against its already oppressed Jewish subjects. These pressures from above and below slowly increased, culminating in the massacres of the Russian Civil War of 1918-21, which claimed the lives of well over 100,000 Jews.

Most of the Jews who fled westward in the six decades that preceded the Holocaust went to the United States. Their story is often swallowed up in the larger tale of American immigration, of millions of other Europeans who sought a new life and new

“Many nations protest that they did not actively join in the murders; few can claim they did not restrict Jews’ lives, persecute them, hand them over to their executioners and prevent survivors from returning to their homes”

opportunities in America. But the Jews were not like the Poles, Italians or Germans who arrived with them in New York harbour.

Polish or German families sent their young men ahead of the family to establish themselves and make the family's arrival more comfortable. Italians who found the immigrant life too difficult returned to their home country in large numbers.

But Jews behaved differently. Once they decided to leave, they sold everything, boarded ships and arrived

on America's shores as whole families. They knew they would not be returning.

During the Panic of 1907, 300,000 Italian immigrants returned home to Italy. What would have happened, British Jewish author Israel Zangwill asked in 1908, if 300,000 Jews were to do the same?



Immigrant children at Ellis Island, 1908 (Public domain)

“What home does the Jew have to return to? He has burned all his bridges. Often he was made to flee without a passport. He cannot return,” Zangwill said in a speech in London cited in German historian Gotz Aly's book *Europe Against the Jews*.

This was no idle comment. European immigrants returned to their home countries in huge numbers between 1908 and 1925: 57% of Italians, 40% of Poles, 64% of Hungarians, 67% of Romanians and 55% of Russians.

Among Jews, the figure was just 5%.

Other immigrants were seeking a better life; the Jews were running away.

In a 1908 pamphlet, the German author Eugene Doctor wrote about the antisemitic hatred driving the Jews westward and fretted that their mass arrival in America would spark an antisemitic wave in their new home.

If a solution to this Jewish quandary wasn't found, he warned, the situation in the east would “come to a boil... One fine day, even this [situation] will be swept away, and all we'll have will be the revival of the old refrain: ‘The Jew must be burned alive.’”

As the decades passed, Europe

would slowly but steadily become uninhabitable to Jews. Between the antisemitic May Laws passed by the Czar in 1882 and the Nuremberg Laws passed by the Nazis in 1935, many more European states implemented an ever-tightening regime of restrictions on Jewish work, citizenship and education that would keep Jews out of professions, universities, and ultimately entire countries.

In the summer of 1938, before any German occupier forced its hand, Poland passed a law stripping citizenship from any Jew who hadn't lived in the country for the previous five years. The Nazis, fearful the move would leave them saddled with now-stateless Polish Jews, rounded up 17,000 of them living on German soil and drove them to the Polish border, where they lived in a kind of stateless limbo, refused entry to either Germany or Poland, until the start of the war.

It was the same story once the war was underway. Romanian dictator Ion Antonescu didn't need Nazi propagandists to convince him that the Jews were a problem that needed solving. After the Nazi declaration of war on the Soviet Union, he was thrilled by the opportunity offered by the chaos engulfing Europe. "Romania needs to be liberated from this entire colony of bloodsuckers who have drained the life essence from the people," he declared of the country's Jews. "The international situation is favourable and we can't afford to miss the moment."

As the pressure on the Jews grew, so did Western fear of them flooding in as refugees.

In 1910, when the US had already absorbed some two million Eastern European Jews, New York Immigration Commissioner William Williams ended his annual report with a warning: "The time has come when it is necessary to put aside false sentimentality in dealing with a question of immigration, and to give more consideration to its racial and economic aspects and in deciding

what additional immigrants we shall receive, to remember that our first duty is to our country."

American immigration officials working under Williams began turning back more and more Jews arriving in New York, even as the killings and persecution grew worse back in Eastern Europe. Despite their efforts, the Jews kept coming.

In 1921, the US Congress decided to act. It passed the Emergency Quota Act and then the 1924 Quota Act, severely reducing Jewish immigration from over 120,000 per year to less than 3,000 a decade later.

America, and after it Britain, Canada, Argentina and countless other nations, systematically closed their doors to the Jews and kept them closed right through the Holocaust.

The Holocaust, in other words, was understood by the Nazi leadership as a German solution to a problem felt by all. No one wanted the Jews, all sought ways to be rid of them. It was only when the West closed its doors – when the Jews became, in Hannah Arendt's word, "undeportable" – that Europeans began to contemplate and even embrace the radical Nazi solution to what many saw as everyone's shared problem. Millions of people could be snuffed out of existence by the German genocidaires because they were unwanted everywhere and protected by no one.

And much of Europe participated.

This is a contentious point in today's Europe, but a true one nonetheless. Many nations protest that they did not actively join in the murders; few can claim they did not restrict Jews' lives, persecute them, hand them over to their executioners and prevent survivors from returning to their homes after the war. All took part in the larger cleansing, even if only some took upon themselves the responsibility of direct killing.

There were, of course, countless individual Europeans who risked life and limb to save Jews, and even some political and religious leaders who did

so. But these are almost everywhere the exceptions. As eminent historian Saul Friedlander has shown, no major social or political group anywhere in Europe rallied collectively to the Jews' defence.

The Germans planned and initiated the Holocaust. But German efforts could not have succeeded without massive collaboration – and in fact in the few places where such help was denied them, they failed.



Hungarian Jews arriving at Auschwitz, 1944 (Public Domain); Nazi *Einsatzgruppen* murdering Jews in Latvia, 1941 (Yad Vashem)

In Belgium, the Nazis were able to round up nearly two-thirds of the Jews of Flemish Antwerp (65%), where local police collaborated with the occupiers. In French-speaking Brussels, where officials and citizens refused to help, the Nazis' success rate was halved (37%).

In Hungary, the government enthusiastically deported 437,000 Jews to Auschwitz in the summer of 1944 in an operation wholly run by Hungarians. But these deportees were rural Yiddish-speaking Jews from the provinces. When the Nazis demanded Budapest's assimilated, middle-class Jews, the Hungarian government balked. Its refusal left the Nazis helpless to implement any large-scale killing in the capital. Most of Budapest's Jews would survive the war.

The same pattern emerges in Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and elsewhere. Greek collaboration allowed the Nazis to exterminate the Jews of Salonica, while Greek refusal to help meant the same could not be done to the Jews of Athens.

The genocide policy was successful only where locals cooperated. Alas, locals cooperated in the vast majority of places.

As Aly notes, “When we examine the daily practices of persecution in various countries, we cannot fail to note the ease with which German occupiers were able to enlist local nationalist, national-socialist, and antisemitic movements to serve their ends... There is no way we can comprehend the pace and extent of the Holocaust if we restrict our focus to the German centers of command.”

UNWANTED

This long, slow, purposeful destruction of European Jewry – the transformation of Europe into a continent literally uninhabitable to Jews – didn’t begin with the war, and didn’t end with its conclusion.

After V-E Day came the now all-but-forgotten story of the Jewish DPs, the “displaced persons” who would languish for years on German soil, imprisoned behind barbed wire by the American and British occupation forces for the simple reason that no one on Earth would take them in.

It was a postscript to the Holocaust that for many survivors encapsulated its deepest truth: That Auschwitz was not the exception to the European Jewish experience but merely its logical conclusion.

On May 8, 1945, the day the war ended, Germany was “in free fall; chaos reigned; national, regional, and local military, police, and political authorities had abandoned their posts,” writes historian David Nasaw. “There was, literally, no one directing traffic, no one policing the streets, no one delivering the mail or picking up the garbage or bringing food to the shops,

no one stopping the looting, the rape, the revenge-taking ... millions of homeless, ill-clothed, malnourished, disoriented foreigners: Jewish survivors, Polish forced laborers, former Nazi collaborators... jammed the roadways, the town squares and marketplaces, begging, threatening, desperate.”

And among these wretched souls, the Jews could be identified with ease, “distinguishable,” writes Nasaw, “by their pallor, emaciated physiques, shaved heads, lice-infested bodies, and the vacant look in their eyes.” They had been the worst treated. All Germany’s slave laborers had suffered. The Jews alone, by order of Hitler’s deputy Heinrich Himmler himself, were deliberately worked to death.



Jewish refugees in a ‘displaced persons’ camp in Germany after World War II (Public domain)

The fall of the Reich left millions of people from across the European continent displaced on German soil. With the war over, the Allies’ first priority was to repatriate anyone who could manage the journey home. At checkpoints throughout Germany, Allied soldiers would collect the wandering millions and deliver them to processing sites established in nearby towns. Millions hitchhiked, stole bicycles or vehicles or simply walked to their former homes in France, Holland, Italy, Belgium, Poland and elsewhere.

By Oct. 1, “more than 2 million Soviets, 1.5 million Frenchmen, 586,000 Italians, 274,000 Dutch citizens, almost 300,000 Belgians and Luxembourgiens, more than 200,000 Yugoslavs, 135,000 Czechs, 94,000

Poles, and tens of thousands of other European displaced persons... had been sent home,” writes Nasaw.

Yet as 1945 drew to a close, the Allies came to realise that some of the war’s survivors, who would come to be called “the last million”, could not go home.

Hundreds of thousands of Polish Catholics were afraid of what awaited them in their violence-wracked, Soviet-dominated country. Hundreds of thousands more Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Estonians and Latvians could not return to countries now under Soviet rule because of their active collaboration in the Nazi war effort and occupation regimes.

And then there were the Jews, the survivors of the slave labour camps within Germany and over 200,000 survivors flowing in from the East who had tried returning home and been pushed out by violent neighbours and even pogroms carried out by those who’d felt nothing but relief at their disappearance.

In 1946, the US and Britain established the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) and tasked it with resettling the last million in new homelands. The IRO quickly got to work marketing the remaining DPs to Western and Latin American nations as a solution to the dire shortages of post-war labourers they needed to help rebuild their economies.

It worked. Over the course of 1946, more than 700,000 DPs would be offered new homes by IRO member nations – a generosity of spirit that came with one immense caveat.

The first to be plucked from the dismal DP camps were the healthiest and blondest and Protestant: Latvians and Estonians who had mostly spent the war as willing participants in the Nazi war machine. They were prioritised not despite their collaboration with the Nazis but because of it. To Western recruiters, it proved their anti-Communist bona fides.

The recruiting nations then turned to the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox

DPs, primarily Ukrainians, Poles and Lithuanians who were often unwilling labourers in Nazi war factories but were nevertheless cared for well enough to emerge healthy from the experience.

Then the recruiters swiftly closed up shop and left the camps, leaving behind the last 250,000 DPs to spend the next two years still imprisoned by their erstwhile liberators.

These were, of course, the Jews.

“On May 8, the war in Europe ended,” survivor Hadassah Rosensaft would write in her memoir. “I have often been asked how we felt on that day... Of course, we were glad to hear the news of the Allied victory, but we in [concentration camp-turned-DP camp Bergen] Belsen did not celebrate on that day... I have seen a film on television showing the world’s reaction to the end of the war. In Times Square in New York, in the streets of London and Paris, people were dancing, singing, crying, embracing each other. They were filled with joy that their dear ones would soon come home. Whenever I see that film, I cry. We in Belsen did not dance on that day. We had nothing to be hopeful for. Nobody was waiting for us anywhere. We were alone and abandoned.”

It was no mere oversight that left the Jews trapped in the land of their murderers, and sometimes in the very concentration camps from which they had been “liberated”. It was not ignorance of the problem or the chaos of a frenzied reconstruction that left them ignored by the world as the years passed.

Even as they languished, a frenetic debate was underway in America. Many voices, including Jewish groups and many Christian denominations, called to lift the old quotas and let these last survivors into America. But a coalition of midwestern Republicans and southern Democrats in Congress adamantly refused. The Jews, it was said, were closet communists. Quotas for Eastern Europe, the nations from

which the DPs hailed, remained in the immediate post-war period astonishingly low: 6,524 per year from Poland, 386 from Lithuania, 236 from Latvia, and 116 from Estonia.

Congress would finally pass a new displaced-persons bill in June 1948, a month after Israel had declared independence and begun to take in the DPs en masse.



Jewish immigrants on the deck of the *Pan York* on the day they arrived in Israel, August 14, 1948 (Yad Vashem Archives)

THE LONG HOLOCAUST

The Holocaust is too large and complex to allow for only a single narrative of what it means. To the West, including many Western Jews, it is usually understood as a cautionary tale about the terrible results of human intolerance. To drive home this point, teenagers are taken to see museums, death camps and cattle cars.

But a study of the broader context in which the Holocaust took place – the context without which it could not have taken place – upends this easy moral narrative. Auschwitz isn’t an answer to any useful question. Auschwitz is the question.

The answer – one answer – begins to take form only when one steps back from these totems of Holocaust commemoration, from the camp incinerators and Ukrainian killing fields, from the Nazi rallies and the partisan fighters’ resistance poems. It emerges from a close reading of what came before the genocide, the suffering and marginalisation that are all but forgotten now, vanished like the millions of murdered souls into the vast shadow cast by what was to come.

The Nazis were less original than anyone wants to admit. The propaganda machines, the anti-Jewish legislation, the fever dream of a Jew-free Europe – in all these the Nazis were copying ideas and policies laid down by others. Where they did innovate, especially in the technology of the genocide, their success depended on the eager collaboration of a great many Europeans in almost every nation and province of the continent.

For all its incomprehensible horror, the focus on the murder itself paradoxically serves as a kind of psychological salve, a way to forget how dozens of nations, including the free Anglophone peoples of the West now host to most of the world’s diaspora Jews, were unabashed participants in the vast, generations-long corralling of millions of helpless Jews to their ultimate destruction.

The Nazis were ultimately defeated, but not before they’d won their war against the Jews of Europe. It’s a point that might seem monstrous at first glance but becomes unavoidable when one looks at the longer history in which the Holocaust is embedded: To the nations whose Jews were destroyed, that destruction came as a relief.

In Eastern Europe after the war, many surviving Jews were not allowed back to their homes nor treated better than they’d been before. In the West, any meaningful exploration of the broader context and culpability of the nations of Europe and the Anglophone West was quickly set aside in favour of a thin, unthreatening moralism.

Only the Jews are left to remember that when their brethren stood before the open furnace, no other nation or religion, class or institution reached out a hand in rescue.

AIR

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NOTED AND QUOTED

THE MONTH IN MEDIA

PLAYING WITH FIRE

ABC and SBS ran TV and online reports that contained baseless claims accusing Israeli police of arbitrarily restricting the number of worshippers allowed to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem for the annual Holy Fire ceremony on April 15, and using excessive force against visitors angry at being denied entry.

A joint ABC/AP article on the ABC website (April 13) implied that Israeli authorities had imposed the limit on their own initiative, and also aired an outrageous comparison – asserting that Jews did not experience similar restrictions on visits to the Western Wall during Passover. This omits the obvious reality that the Western Wall is a large sprawling outdoor prayer space with multiple exits, and nothing in common with the confined, narrow spaces of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which has only one exit.

An AP report on the ABC website (April 16) did provide more context, including that overcrowding at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre had led to catastrophe in the past.

A report by the BBC's Yolande Knell on ABC TV "News at Noon Weekend" and SBS TV "World News" (April 16) repeated the accusations of unfair restrictions and claimed that a few recent incidents of attacks on Christians, which were widely condemned in Israel, were evidence of a Jewish plot to pressure Christians to leave the city.

What all the reports about the Holy Fire controversy omitted to mention was that the Church's own staff architect Teo Metropoulos had formally written to Israeli police on April 3 asking for a limit on the numbers of worshippers allowed in for the ceremony to protect their safety.

The letter warned that, given the

narrow exit to the Church, a limit of 1,800 visitors inside the building and 200 in an outdoor courtyard must be enforced. After consultations, Israeli police actually allowed more worshippers in than this.

As for allegations that Israeli police used excessive force, video footage showed that a few people tried to bypass the safety gates, sometimes forcefully, and were simply prevented from doing so.

ATTRIBUTION AND RETRIBUTION

Allegations that Palestinian terrorism against Israel can be attributed to the inclusion of far-right ministers in the Israeli Government were raised in media coverage.

On ABC Radio National "Breakfast" (April 10), Israeli research associate Ayala Panievsky said rocket fire from Lebanon, Syria and Gaza was a result of "the establishment of the most far right government in the history of Israel," pointing to Itamar Ben-Gvir's role as police minister which "caused many policies that were seen by Palestinians in Israel, in the West Bank, in Gaza... as... kind of encouraging hostile forces to act."

On SBS TV "World News" (April 7), Australian Israeli reporter Irris Makler explained that the overlap between the holy Muslim month of Ramadan and the Jewish festival of Passover was "the source of the friction."

Makler added that "it was exactly this set of circumstances, clashes at al-Aqsa during Ramadan, which coincided with Passover two years ago... that preceded the war with Hamas in Gaza."

True – and notably, the 2021 violence occurred under a Netanyahu-

led caretaker government that didn't include Ben-Gvir.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Against the backdrop of Israeli protests over judicial reform, veteran commentator Gerald Steinberg delved into the history of Israel's legal system on ABC Radio "Nightlife" (March 30).

Professor Steinberg explained, "there was never a national debate about what should be the role" of the judiciary in Israel. The selection process for High Court judges was established in 1953 "without any serious public discussion," he said.

Despite widespread popular protests, a consensus exists among Israeli parliamentarians – not just in the current Government – that the judiciary has accrued too much power, Steinberg added.

The massive protests, he suggested, stemmed from the Government introducing a package of reform "in a very blind way" that "was interpreted as an attempt to gain autocratic or, as the demonstrators said, dictatorial powers" and "risked entirely sweep[ing] away the checks and balances."

VIEWPOINTS

In the *Spectator Australia* (April 1), columnist Charles Moore opined that "the current crisis in Israel is poorly explained. Binyamin Netanyahu's opponents are described as 'pro-democracy protestors', but in fact they oppose judges being chosen by MPs rather than by other judges. (They may be right here, but democratic they are not.) The real source of the trouble is the electoral system which empowers tiny extreme parties in

coalition-building.”

Meanwhile, in the *Australian Financial Review* (March 28), the *Washington Post*’s Steve Hendrix attributed part of the backlash to Netanyahu “not campaign[ing] on overhauling the courts before the November election [and]... not mention[ing] judicial changes in his inaugural address.”

GOING TO EXTREMES

More extreme opinions on the reform controversy appeared on *ABC Radio National* “Late Night Live” (March 29), where US anti-Zionist activist Richard Silverstein accused

the Israeli Government of wanting to “overthrow democracy”. Silverstein claimed “the reason... this is happening is that Israel has had a right-wing government basically for the past 50 years with a couple of intermissions for other governments that were not right wing. But this Government is in a total category unto itself.”

In fact, most Israeli governments of the past 25 years have comprised coalitions of centrist and centre right parties.

Meanwhile, in the *Guardian Australia* (March 31), Joshua Leifer criticised the protests on the basis that “the occupation” of the West Bank “is

precisely what many of the protesters — who draped themselves in Israeli flags, who took to the streets in their military caps and berets... don’t want to talk about.”

He said protesters may chant “democracy” but are blind to the fact Israel is a “liberal ethnocracy that has maintained a military dictatorship in the West Bank for more than half a century.” Leifer ignored the efforts of successive Israeli leaders, including Netanyahu, to end the occupation through negotiations on a two-state resolution that were foiled by the rejectionist stance of Palestinian leaders, as well as the fact that most Palestin-



IN PARLIAMENT

Prime Minister **Anthony Albanese** (ALP, Grayndler) Yom Ha’atzmaut greeting — April 24 — “At Yom Ha’atzmaut, Australia affirms its unwavering support for Israel and the Israeli people.”

PM **Albanese** Pesach greeting — April 4 — “Passover is always a powerful inspiration and a reminder of the courage, strength and resilience of the Jewish people... I wish Jewish Australians, a happy Passover.”

Opposition Leader **Peter Dutton** (Lib., Dickson) Pesach greeting — April 4 — “To our wonderful Jewish community who have contributed so much across our nation in many fields of endeavour, we thank you. I wish you all a happy Passover.”

Foreign Minister Senator **Penny Wong** (ALP, SA) Statement — April 9 — “Australia condemns unreservedly the indiscriminate rocket attacks... and recognises Israel’s right to defend itself. We are shocked by the horrifying news of deadly terror attacks... Terrorism and violence against civilians can never be justified... Violence at Al Aqsa, including against worshippers, is reprehensible. Security operations must be proportionate and in accordance with international law.”

Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations Senator **Michaelia Cash** (Lib., WA) — March 23 — “The Coalition is proud to introduce this Bill which amends the Criminal Code Act of 1995 to prohibit the display of Nazi symbols... Since the rise of the Nazi Party... Nazi symbols have been synonymous with antisemitic thoughts and actions, including the devastation of the Holocaust.”

Shadow Foreign Minister Senator **Simon Birmingham** (Lib., SA) moving to allow the bill to be debated immediately — March 24 — “We must continue to stand as one against an ideology that is most associated with acts of genocide, mass murder and other forms of persecution... The horrors of the Holocaust must never be forgotten.”

Minister for the Public Service, Finance and Women Senator **Katy Gallagher** (ALP, ACT) — March 24 — “The Government does not support... to bring forward a bill that was introduced this week... the Government has been working on matters relating to the prohibition of Nazi symbols for some time.”

Assistant Minister for Education and Regional Development Senator **Anthony Chisolm** (ALP, Qld) — March 24 — “... there is no place in this country for public displays of Nazi symbols or the Nazi salute.”

Shadow Minister for Health and Aged Care and Sport Senator **Anne Ruston** (Lib., SA) — March 24 — “There is absolutely no place in Australia, in our community—there should be no place in the world—for Nazi symbols... they are directly linked to the worst crimes committed against humanity in any of our living history.”

Shadow Home Affairs Minister **Karen Andrews** (Lib., McPherson) — March 20 — “I move: That this House... calls on the Government to urgently take the necessary steps to formally categorise the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps [IRGC] as an organisation involved in supporting and facilitating terrorism.”

Julian Hill (ALP, Bruce) — March 20 — “... the [IRGC] is a malignant actor. They’re a threat to the Iranian people and to peace in the region and... the world.”

Andrew Wallace (Lib., Fisher) — March 20 — “‘The Revolutionary Guards is an institution under the Leader’s supreme command’... This is the same Supreme Leader who has pledged to annihilate the State of Israel, who denies the Holocaust... Here we have a primary branch of the nation’s armed forces perpetrating terror.”

Luke Gosling (ALP, Solomon) — March 20 — “The IRGC is a malignant actor that has long been a threat to international security and to its own people.”

Aaron Violi (Lib., Casey) — March 20 — “The [Iranian] regime is effectively a rogue state responsible for acts of terrorism, cybercrime, acts of violence against its critics, hostage diplomacy and other abhorrent behaviour.”

ians live under the rule of their own elected leaders.

A GALLANT BACKFLIP

Opinions varied on the value of Binyamin Netanyahu's March 28 concession to pause the judicial reform agenda after massive street protests erupted following his decision to sack Defence Minister Yoav Gallant after the latter publicly warned Israel's security was being endangered by "the growing rift" in society that is "penetrating the IDF".

On *ABC Radio* "Breakfast" (March 28), Professor Gerald Steinberg said, "[Netanyahu's] talking about negotiations. Part of the problem, though, is that we've heard this before [when] he's been in trouble... then when he gets back into power, it seems as if those pledges have disappeared completely... there's going to be a lot of distrust."

On *ABC Radio* "AM" (March 29), Israeli academic Menachem Klein, predicted the pause was Netanyahu "just buying time, trying to divide the protesters."

The *Australian* (March 29) said large scale protests disprove "claims Israel's estimable democracy is under threat... recent weeks have shown it is alive and well" but now "there is an urgent need for all sides... to seek the sensible middle ground."

The *Guardian Australia* (March 30), said Netanyahu's decision to pause the reform process was not because of an unwillingness "to tear the nation in half," but all about "saving... himself".

After Netanyahu reinstated Gallant, AIJAC Research Associate Dr Ran Porat said on *ABC Radio* "World Today" (April 11), "It was not a surprise because Netanyahu was flirting with reversing his decision for weeks now and... looking for a ladder to just climb down after he climbed too high ... He doesn't want to pay the political price of moving forward with that reform as it is."

A DETERRENT EFFECT

In the *Australian* (April 1), former Australian Ambassador to Israel Dave Sharma canvassed the effect months of protests have had on regional perceptions of Israel's deterrence capacity.

Sharma wrote, "While Netanyahu was preoccupied with judicial reform, Saudi Arabia restored diplomatic relations with Iran in a deal facilitated by China. The coalition within the Middle East opposed to Iran's expansionism, carefully cultivated and nurtured by Israel, is threatening to come apart."

The "expansionist and anti-Palestinian agenda of Israel's new government is causing disquiet" among the Abraham Accords signatories, including the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco, leading to Netanyahu's invitation to visit Abu Dhabi repeatedly getting postponed, he wrote.

TOM'S TRASHTALK

An online article from ABC Middle East correspondent Tom Joyner (April 2) on the protests included a long section at the end that trashed Israel's democratic credentials when compared to Australia.

According to Joyner, "although they share some similarities, Israel's democracy differs widely from Australia's... Israel oversees a brutal, decades-long military occupation over millions of Palestinians in the West Bank and effectively blockades the Gaza strip. Those Palestinians living under Israeli rule in the West Bank share none of the democratic rights enjoyed by citizens of Israel."

Calling Israel's occupation "brutal" is unsubstantiated opinion, ignoring the basic reality that Israel is effectively at war with numerous armed Palestinian groups.

Stating that Israel oversees a military occupation over millions of Palestinians and segueing into "those Palestinians living under Israeli rule in the West Bank share none of the

democratic rights enjoyed by citizens of Israel" without any context or qualification for either statement is misleading.

The overwhelming majority of the millions of Palestinians on the West Bank live under the Palestinian Authority and are ruled by their own leaders. Palestinians living under direct Israeli rule in the West Bank number in the tens of thousands but can vote in Palestinian Authority elections (when it deigns to hold them).

Joyner's decision to cite Israel's partial blockade of Gaza as a point of difference between Israeli and Australia democracy, is not only opinion, but a *non-sequitur*. Blockades of enemy territory are not illegal under international law and say nothing about a country's democratic credentials.

Joyner also didn't feel it necessary to include an Israeli counter perspective, relying solely on Palestinian expert Dr Ghassan Khatib, a lecturer in "the occupied West Bank, and a former Palestinian politician" to back up the report's blanket claim that "Palestinians view the Israeli courts as a key instrument for their oppression."

Khatib was quoted saying, "The Israeli judicial system has been a tool employed by Israel to appropriate land illegally, to deprive Palestinians of their rights, to discriminate against Palestinians inside Israel."

In fact, Palestinian groups frequently petition the Israeli Supreme Court, which does issue significant findings in their favour – for example, in 2020 striking down legislation that retrospectively legalised settler homes built on private Palestinian land.

Indeed, the next day on *ABC TV* "The World", Joyner's report on proposed judicial reforms effectively undermined the article's aspersions about the Israeli Supreme Court as a tool of Palestinian oppression. Joyner said, "In the Israeli occupied West Bank, Palestinians are worried if the Government's plans become a reality, their rights and protections will be under even greater threat" – thus

effectively conceding the Court does play a role in protecting Palestinian rights.

OWN GOALS

The Australian media showed little sympathy for Indonesian politicians after FIFA stripped the world's largest Muslim-majority nation of the right to host the Under-20 World Cup soccer tournament, following an announcement by Bali's Governor that he would not let Israel's qualifying team play because the two countries do not have diplomatic relations.

The *Australian Financial Review's* Liam Gammon explained the machinations that resulted in Indonesia losing the tournament (April 11). Gammon said, "Mainstream Islamic organisations close to the administration, and even the Palestinian ambassador to Indonesia, were supportive of the long-planned tournament going ahead with Israel competing. What electrified the issue politically was objection to Israeli participation – on ostensibly anti-colonial grounds – from the nationalist PDI-P party to which President Widodo is affiliated. Party chairwoman and former President Megawati Sukarnoputri had quietly ordered local leaders from her party to oppose the Israeli team's involvement."

Earlier, ABC Southeast Asia correspondent Anne Barker said on *ABC TV* "Mornings" (March 28) the decision "only adds to the stain on Indonesia's sporting reputation after last year's soccer stadium tragedy at Malang, in which 135 people were killed in a stampede."

On April 4, the *Australian* slammed Indonesia's "self-destructive political posturing", noting that in "2019, when it was awarded hosting rights, Jakarta gave a firm assurance about Israeli participation."

The *Australian* reported (April 8) an Indonesian pollster saying that, before FIFA's decision, support for Israeli participation was as high as

59% and likely higher after the loss of the hosting rights because people were "angry".

PROXY PERIL

On *Sky News* (April 10) AIJAC's Dr Colin Rubenstein warned of Iran's increasing regional profile in recent months.

Dr Rubenstein noted Iran's material support for Russia's war in Ukraine, the "de-escalation" agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia brokered by China, and Teheran's "encouragement of... its... proxies, particularly Hamas... Palestinian Islamic Jihad... Syria" to attack Israel.

The seriousness of Iran's increased regional posturing had prompted the United States to "send... a submarine into the region," he noted.

In the *Guardian Australia* (April 10), veteran Middle East correspondent Martin Chulov quoted an unnamed Israeli official saying of the Saudi-Iran rapprochement that, "There's something in it for the Saudis that we have yet to figure out," and of unexpected efforts by Sunni Arab countries to re-engage with Syria's Bashar al-Assad that, "We're not entirely sure what's going on."

Earlier, the *Australian* (March 31) said it was "imperative the US re-engages far more actively in the Middle East. Failing to do so will open the way for China to gain even further influence."

DEADLY TALLY

On April 11, the *Canberra Times* and *SBS TV* "World News" reported on the growing number of Israeli and Palestinian fatalities in 2023.

The list compiled by *Associated Press* said "more than 90 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire... at least half... affiliated with militant groups," while "19 Israelis" have been killed during Palestinian attacks.

The *Canberra Times* included the important point, not made by SBS,

that "all but one [of the Israelis] were civilians."

The *Guardian Australia's* list of fatalities (April 11) said that "at least 93 Palestinians of whom about half are militants and half civilians" were killed since January.

The critical point missing in all three news reports was the fact that the overwhelming majority of the so-called Palestinian "civilians" killed were actually involved in violent protests at the time, most either throwing rocks or Molotov cocktails. Only a few cases involved completely uninvolved civilians inadvertently killed.

DRIVERLESS VEHICLE

The ABC repeatedly covered a terrorist attack in a way that suggested no one was behind the wheel of a car that was deliberately driven into a group of people on Tel Aviv's promenade, killing a 35-year-old Italian tourist and injuring several others.

Examples included *ABC TV* "News at Noon Weekend" (April 8), where newsreader Miriam Corowa introduced a BBC story from Lucy Williamson by saying "one person has been killed and several others wounded in a car ramming attack in central Tel Aviv."

Williamson similarly said, "at least one man is reported to have died when a car rammed into people in the city centre."

On April 10, *ABC TV* "Mornings" host Joe O'Brien introduced a third Williamson report about the funerals of Israeli sisters Maia and Rina Dee who were brutally murdered in a terrorist shooting attack along with their mother, by saying that "it happened on the same day as a car rammed a group of tourists in Tel Aviv."

Later that day, *Sky News's* Chris Kenny, on his eponymous program, criticised *ABC TV* "Mornings" saying, "A car rammed a group of tourists. Really? This stuff is as absurd as it is obscene. The car, of course was driven by... a murderous person. A terrorist."

MEDIA MICROSCOPE

Allon Lee

OUT OF WAQF

Most media outlets diligently included both Palestinian and Israeli police claims when reporting on the latter's efforts to evict worshippers who had barricaded themselves inside Jerusalem's al-Aqsa Mosque and stockpiled rocks and fireworks, as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan coincided with the start of the Jewish Passover festival.

Unfortunately, they all neglected to point out a specific key trigger that led to the Israeli response.

On *ABC TV* "The World" (April 5), host Bev O'Connor prefaced an interview with ABC Middle East correspondent Allyson Horn by saying, "Israeli police have clashed with worshippers at Jerusalem's al-Aqsa Mosque... Israeli authorities say armed worshippers were holed up at the compound."

Horn said, "what we understand is that a number of worshippers had been holed up, had barricaded themselves inside a mosque... From their side, they say they were staying there, including holding fireworks with them because they feared that Jews would come to this site and perform a ritual sacrifice."

Over on *Channel Seven*'s "The Latest" (April 5), Israeli-born academic Eyal Mayroz said, "I don't think there was a Jewish provocation that we know of... I think with Passover celebrated by the Jews, many Palestinians are worried that religious nationalist activists will attempt to ascend... the Temple Mount, to make what we call Passover sacrifices. Jewish activists have been trying to do that for many years... but this year, given the dominance of extreme right-wing radicals in the Israeli Government, I think the Palestinian fear is likely much more intense."

Whilst it is true that radical but tiny Jewish groups do proclaim their intentions every year to try to smuggle in a goat for sacrifice during Passover, their efforts are always confounded by a combination of very strict visiting hours for non-Muslims and the fact that Israeli police vigilantly monitor visitors to prevent this.

On *ABC TV* "Mornings" (April 7), Horn said, "for two consecutive nights, Israeli police... using stun grenades and rubber bullets... cleared Muslim worshippers from the site after they barricaded themselves in." On *ABC TV* "News 24" 7pm bulletin that night, she noted that "the raids came after Palestinians barricaded themselves inside."

Horn's two reports were marked by an apparent strange reluctance to inform viewers that the Temple Mount is Judaism's holiest site. On *ABC TV* "News at noon" (April 6), Horn referred to "the al-Aqsa compound, one of the most holy sites in Islam, also a significant site for Jews."

"What no media outlet noted was the critical point that a key precursor of the Israeli incursion into the mosque was the failure of the Islamic Trust (Waqf), which administers the Muslim shrines on the Temple Mount, to implement a signed agreement"

Other media professionals seemed to be less inhibited.

On April 5, *SBS TV* "World News" reporter Claudia Farhart used footage of the raid released by Israeli police and noted that "this site is sacred to both Muslims and Jews, who know the hill it's built on as the Temple Mount."

On *SBS Radio* (April 7), Hannah Kwon's report noted the "site is of religious significance to Judaism and Islam."

On *SBS TV* "World News" (April 7), Australian-Israeli journalist Irris Makler said, "there were young Palestinians throwing rocks at the gate through which Jewish Israelis pass to visit. They are not allowed to pray. Let's not forget that the al-Aqsa Mosque is known to Jews as the Temple Mount, is holy to them too."

The previous night on *SBS TV* "World News", reporter Ben Terry had said, "Israeli police in full riot gear shield themselves from projectiles at the green gates of the al-Aqsa Mosque... The mosque is revered by Muslims, but the location is also the most sacred site in Judaism known as the Temple Mount."

On April 10, *SBS TV* "World News" included Israeli Police Chief Kobi Shabtai saying, "the ones who desecrated the place were not the policemen who entered there."

What no media outlet noted was the critical point that a key precursor of the Israeli incursion into the mosque was the failure of the Islamic Trust (*Waqf*), which administers the Muslim shrines on the Temple Mount, to implement a signed agreement that had been reached between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority in mid-March. This said the Jordanian-dominated *Waqf* would prevent people staying in the mosque overnight until the final days of Ramadan as a way to reduce tensions.

Yet not only did the *Waqf* allow Hamas-affiliated activists to take over the mosque and barricade themselves in overnight, but issued an incendiary statement that said the "protection of al-Aqsa Mosque is the duty of every Muslim."

THE LAST WORD

Gil Troy

DEFYING THE PESSIMISTS

It's become fashionable again to question whether Israeli democracy will survive or even whether Israel itself will survive. Actually, Israel's 75th-anniversary celebration marks 75 years of pessimists, inside and out, predicting Israel's demise.

Consider Israel's rise from the ashes of Auschwitz. Zionism, the Jewish national movement to establish a Jewish state and now perfect it, preceded Hitler by decades. Remarkably, in 1945, as Jews realised the Nazis had murdered six million of our people, Zionists refused to despair. Three years later, they established a democratic Jewish state, ending centuries of homelessness and persecution.

Before Israel's declaration of its independence on May 14, 1948 (which fell on April 26 this year according to the Hebrew calendar), then-US Secretary of State George C. Marshall was sure Israel would not last. Marshall threatened to resign if President Harry Truman infuriated the Arab world by backing the Zionists. When David Ben-Gurion, himself flouting the experts, confidently proclaimed independence and Truman followed, recognising the state 11 minutes later, Marshall didn't resign.

The new state had no money, weapons, bullets or oil, only, as Ben-Gurion supposedly retorted, *Hativkah* ("hope"), the Jewish national anthem. Six Arab armies immediately attacked, triggering Israel's War of Independence. Ultimately, 6,000 of 600,000 Israelis were killed.

Israel survived and started absorbing the world's unwanted Jews, including Holocaust survivors and refugees from Arab and Muslim lands. The population doubled within two years, then again by 1963.

During Israel's first 25 years, the young nation kept defeating Arab armies and defying the doubters. Especially before Israel's Six Day War victory in 1967, with Egyptians and Syrians vowing to push the Jews into the sea, Israelis specialised in gallows humour: the last Israeli leaving should shut the lights at the airport.

When the Egyptians and Syrians surprised Israelis on

Yom Kippur, Judaism's holiest day, in October 1973, Israel's legendary eye-patched defence minister, Moshe Dayan, feared

Israel's destruction.

Israel counter-attacked so effectively that, since 1973, no major Arab army has dared attack. In its second quarter-century, Israel evolved from a perennial underdog to a regional superpower. Israel again shocked the experts by making peace with its largest adversary, Egypt, in 1979, then Jordan, in 1994. In the 1990s, Israel also tried making peace with the Palestinians through the Oslo framework.

The Oslo Accords triggered such massive anti-Oslo demonstrations and hysteria that an Israeli fanatic assassinated PM Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. Again, doom-and-gloomers insisted that Israel would never survive this rupture, especially when the Palestinians unleashed a vicious wave of suicide bombings in 2000.

Over the last 25 years, Israel's economy has soared. The eternally-given-up-on-nation became the "Start-up Nation", ranking disproportionately high in global levels of income, hi-tech investment, human development and that lovely expression of sunniness: birth rates.

This year, little, embattled, supposedly stressed-out Israel scored fourth on the World Happiness Index because tradition, community and a sense of purpose matter in people's lives more than money, materialism and shopping malls.

Healthy nationalism frees individuals to thrive while understanding that together we are stronger, better and more adept at managing whatever burdens come our way. Israelis have repeatedly demonstrated the greater meaning and personal satisfaction generated by overcoming challenges communally while being rooted in a rich identity and history.

Moreover, liberal democracy teaches us not to be defined by our tears – be they festering problems, our own failures or external attacks.

By bearing burdens communally, by progressing out of sins and wounds, strangers become patriotic citizens without always agreeing. That's why Israel's protesters keep waving their blue-and-white flags while remaining angry yet peaceful.

AIR



Israel: 75 years of confounding expectations (Image: Shutterstock)



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Gil Troy is an American historian and most recently, the editor of the three-volume set, Theodor Herzl: Zionist Writings. © Jerusalem Post (www.jpost.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.