

The War We Haven't Fought Yet

By Daniel Gordis The Jerusalem Post

It's not even over, but we can already begin to imagine how we'll remember the summer of 2009. Haredi residents of Mea She'arim unleashed violent demonstrations when Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat dared to open a parking lot on Shabbat to relieve unbearable congestion. A few weeks later, Jerusalem neighborhoods were once again filled with smoke from burning trash bins, and this time, municipal workers were attacked, because an apparently deliberately starved baby was removed from his haredi mother's care.

The mayor responded by withholding city services from Mea She'arim, saying (correctly) that he had an obligation to protect the city's workers. A director of Hadassah University Medical Center, where the baby was treated, was then threatened and had to be assigned bodyguards. The battle lines were drawn.

In Ramat Bet Shemesh, a small band of anti-Zionist, ultra-religious fanatics continued to terrorize other residents for outrageous behaviors like owning a television set. But though the campaign of terror was months old, the authorities still seemed disinclined to intervene. Elsewhere, when a massive gay-lesbian rally was planned in Tel Aviv to protest the murder of two youths in a support center, a 20-year-old soldier from a Nahal Haredi unit was arrested for sending a threatening e-mail, promising the gay community that the next attack would be even deadlier.

His remand was extended, but our memories were not.

This is Israel, and a few days later, we'd all forgotten about him. Indeed, mostly forgotten about all these instances. "They're a bit extreme," we tell ourselves. We can muddle through this, too. After all, when you consider that we have Barack Obama, Iran, Gilad Schalit, the economy, swine flu and a few other matters on our plate, how much do burning trash bins really matter? They want to turn their own neighborhoods into a war zone - can we really be bothered?

I suggest that we allow ourselves to be bothered, deeply bothered.

A brief reminder of some American history. Israel, as we all know, is 61 years post-independence. The US was the same age in 1837. That year, Martin van Buren was inaugurated as the eighth president of the United States. Michigan became a state of the union. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales*

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became a best-seller. Horace Mann introduced his educational reforms in Massachusetts, American Presbyterians split into the "new" and "old" schools and Samuel Morse exhibited his electric telegraph at the College of the City of New York.

The parallels to Israel are striking. A functioning political system was in place. The country did not yet have permanent borders. Educational reform was desperately needed. America was a deeply religious, and religiously fractious, country. There was cultural excellence and technological innovation.

Not bad for a country only 61 years old.

But in 1837, 61 years after American independence, Congress was also operating under the recently passed "Gag Law," designed to stifle congressional debate on slavery. Those who favored the Gag Law hoped to conduct the business of state as usual, without undue attention to that nagging problem of enslavement. Yes, most people understood that there was a deep and dangerous fault line running through American society with radically different conceptions of the kind of society American ought to become, and no, no one knew how to resolve it. What the authors of the Gag Law believed, however, was that what mattered most was conducting business as usual and putting off the slavery debate. They did not want Congress discussing slavery (because many of them supported it), and they wanted to spend their time working on seemingly more pressing and immediate matters.

We Israelis, of course, have no need for a Gag Law. No legislation is required to get us to ignore the massive fault lines running just underneath the surface of our society. We have radically different conceptions of what the permanent borders of this country should be, but no national conversation on the subject. Nor is there meaningful public discourse about how to manage the cooling relations between Israel and its historically most trusted ally. And though everyone knows that we have at least two major populations who do not share a commitment to Israel being both Jewish and democratic, with the exception of a foolish and ill-fated demand for loyalty oaths, no one is terribly inclined to take the issue on.

Let us return to America in 1837. On the surface, despite the rumblings of slavery discussions, America was thriving. But in 1837, the US was only 24 years away from its Civil War. The fault lines would erupt, threatening the very survival of the

country that had once hoped to ignore them. Somewhere between 600,000 and 700,000 soldiers would die in the war; brothers would fight on opposite sides, sometimes killing each other. The war would rip the country asunder, and were it not for a leader of the likes of Abraham Lincoln, the US as we know it might not have survived.

With Lincoln, America elected a leader with a vision for the country and with the courage to fight for that vision. He knew that the price might be horrific. It is clear from his writings that he did not relish the bloodletting that preserving the union would require. But he stood fast. There are times, he

understood, that one must be willing to say to large blocks of one's citizens that their vision of the country is not ours, and that we will fight them - economically at first, then using force if we have to - to ensure that the democracy we envision survives, no matter what.

But those were different days. Some people in America knew what kind of a country they wanted and debated the issue fiercely. America wasn't exhausted by seven decades of war. And perhaps most distressing, there's no Abraham Lincoln anywhere on our horizons.

Three More No's to Peace

By Mitchell Bard Aish.com August 16, 2009

No negotiations with Israel, no recognition of Israel as a Jewish state and no end to the armed struggle against Israel.

Echoing the Arab rejection of peace with Israel expressed at Khartoum almost exactly 42 years ago ("no peace with Israel, no negotiations with Israel, no recognition of Israel"), the Palestinians declared at the Fatah conference in Bethlehem in August 2009 three no's: no negotiations with Israel, no recognition of Israel as a Jewish state and no end to the armed struggle against Israel.

The delegates to the conference, the first Fatah has convened in two decades, were competing among themselves to see whose position toward Israel would be more radical. Though deeply divided over who will control the movement, the Palestinians were united in their obduracy toward Israel.

In fact, in addition to the three no's to peace, the Palestinians had more than a dozen other demands, including Israeli acceptance of the "right of return" of Palestinian refugees, the release of all Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails, the freezing of all settlement construction and the lifting of the Gaza blockade. They also vowed to continue the struggle against Israel "until Jerusalem returns to the Palestinians void of settlers and settlements." These recalcitrant positions come after Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas's previous statements that he will not negotiate with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and expects President Obama to bring about Netanyahu's downfall.

Fatah officials also discussed the possibility of forming a strategic alliance with Iran, the world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism, which opposes the peace process and has threatened to destroy Israel. Fatah's Jerusalem Affairs Liaison, Hatim Abdul Qader, said that in light of the stalled peace process, Fatah had no choice but to seek help from Iran and, last month, Palestinian Chief Negotiator,

Saeb Erekat, met with Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki in Egypt. Paradoxically, Iran has funded Fatah's opponents, Hamas, which prevented Palestinians in Gaza from participating in the conference.

The Fatah conference demonstrated once again that the range of Palestinian opinion is not from radicals opposing peace with Israel to moderates who favor a negotiated settlement, but from radical to even more radical opponents of an end to the conflict. Sadly, the desire of the Palestinian people to coexist with their Israeli neighbors has once again been sublimated to the irredentist ideology of their fanatical leaders leaving Israel with no partner for negotiations. Roughly half of the population is under the thumb of Hamas, which is at war with Fatah. Meanwhile, Fatah is at war with itself and divided into at least three factions. And none of the men (and they are all men) who claim to represent the people are interested in peace with Israel.

The Palestinian position, combined with that of the king of Saudi Arabia and other Arab leaders who rejected President Obama's pleas to take steps toward normalizing relations with Israel, has driven a stake through the heart of the administration's entire Middle East strategy. The administration approach was built on the premise that publicly pressuring Israel would win support from the Arab states, who would then take steps to normalize ties with Israel, which would lead to a peace agreement, which, in turn would result in Arab cooperation on the Iranian nuclear issue and make all of the other problems in the region melt away.

The question now is whether the administration can recalibrate its policy to the reality that negotiating with Abbas is a dead end and that pressuring Israel alienated the Israelis while emboldening the Arabs to believe he would force Israel to capitulate to their demands without them having to do anything in return.

Et Tu, Netanyahu

By Caroline B. Glick WorldJewishReview.com August 21, 2009

This week we discovered that we have been deceived. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's principled rejection of US President Barack Obama's bigoted demand that Israel bar Jews from building new homes and expanding existing ones in Judea and Samaria does not reflect his actual policy.

Housing and Construction Minister Ariel Attias let the cat out of the bag. Attias said that the government has been barring Jews from building in the areas since it took office four months ago in the hopes that by preemptively capitulating to US demands, the US will treat Israel better.

And that's not all. Today Netanyahu is reportedly working in earnest to reach a deal with the Obama administration that would formalize the government's effective construction ban through 2010. Netanyahu is set to finalize such a deal at his meeting with Obama's Middle East envoy George Mitchell in London next Wednesday.

Unfortunately, far from treating Israel better as a result of Netanyahu's willingness to capitulate on the fundamental right of Jews to live and build homes in the land of Israel, the Obama administration is planning to pocket Israel's concession and then up the ante. Administration officials have stated that their next move will be to set a date for a new international Middle East peace conference that Obama will chair. There, Israel will be isolated and relentlessly attacked as the US, the Arabs, the Europeans, the UN and the Russians all gang up on our representatives and demand that Israel accept the so-called "Arab peace plan."

That deceptively named plan, which Obama has all but adopted as his own, involves Israel committing national suicide in exchange for nothing. The Arab plan -- formerly the "Saudi Plan," and before that, the Tom Friedman "stick it to Israel 'peace' plan" -- calls for Israel to retreat to the indefensible 1949 armistice lines and expel hundreds of thousands of Jews from their homes in Judea, Samaria, Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. It also involves Israel agreeing to cease being a Jewish state by accepting millions of foreign, hostile Arabs as citizens within its truncated borders. The day an Israeli government accepts the plan - which again will form the basis of the Obama "peace" conference" -- is the day that the State of Israel signs its own death warrant.

Then there is the other Obama plan in the works. Obama also intends to host an international summit on nuclear security for March 2010. Arab states are already pushing for Israel's nuclear program to be placed on the agenda. Together with Obama administration officials' calls for Israel to join the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty -- which

would compel Israel to relinquish its purported nuclear arsenal -- and their stated interest in having Israel sign the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty -- which would arguably force Israel to allow international inspections of its nuclear facility in Dimona -- Obama's planned nuclear conclave will place Israel in an untenable position.

Recognizing the Obama administration's inherent and unprecedented hostility to Israel, Netanyahu sought to deflect its pressure by giving his speech at Bar Ilan University in June. There he gave his conditional acceptance of Obama's most cherished foreign policy goal -- the establishment of a Palestinian state in Israel's heartland.

Netanyahu's conditions -- that the Arabs generally and the Palestinians specifically recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state; that they relinquish their demand that Israel accept millions of hostile Arabs as citizens under the so-called "right of return;" that the Palestinian state be a "demilitarized" state, and that Arab states normalize their relations with Israel were supposed to put a monkey wrench in Obama's policy of pressuring Israel.

Since it is obvious that the Arabs do not accept these eminently reasonable conditions, Netanyahu presumed that Obama would be forced to stand down. What Netanyahu failed to take into consideration was the notion that Obama and the Arabs would not act in good faith -- that they would pretend to accept at least some of his demands in order to force him to accept all of their demands, and so keep US pressure relentlessly focused on Israel. Unfortunately, this is precisely what has happened.

Ahead of Obama's meeting Tuesday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Al Quds al Arabi, reported that Obama has accepted Netanyahu's call for a demilitarized Palestinian state. Although Netanyahu is touting Obama's new position as evidence of his own diplomatic prowess, the fact is that Obama's new position is both disingenuous and meaningless.

Obama's supposed support for a demilitarized Palestinian state is mendacious on two counts. First, Palestinian society is already one of the most militarized societies in the world. According to the World Bank, 43 percent of wages paid by the Palestinian Authority go to Palestinian militias. Since Obama has never called for any fundamental reordering of Palestinian society or for a reform of the PA's budgetary priorities, it is obvious that he doesn't have a problem with a militarized Palestinian state.

The second reason his statements in support for a demilitarized Palestinian state are not credible is

because one of the central pillars of the Obama administration's Palestinian policy is its involvement in training of the Fatah-led Palestinian army. US Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton is overseeing the training of this army in Jordan and pressuring Israel to expand its deployment in Judea and Samaria.

The US claims that the forces it is training will be responsible for counter-terror operations and regular police work, and therefore, it is wrong to say that Dayton is raising a Palestinian army. But even if this is true today, there is no reason not to assume that these forces will form the backbone of a future Palestinian army. After all, the Palestinian militias trained by the CIA in the 1990s were trained in counter-terror tactics. This then enabled them to serve as the commanders of the Palestinian terror apparatus from 2000 until 2004 when Israel finally defeated them. It is the uncertainty about these forces that renders Obama's statement meaningless.

And that gets to the heart of the problem with Netanyahu's conditional support for Palestinian statehood. Far from deflecting pressure on Israel to make further concessions, it trapped Israel into a position that serves none of its vital interests.

For Israel to secure its long-term vital national interests vis-à-vis the Palestinians, it doesn't need for the US and the Palestinians to declare they agree to a demilitarized state or for a Palestinian leader to announce that he recognizes Israel's right to exist or even agrees that Israel doesn't have to commit national suicide by accepting millions of Arab immigrants. For Israel to secure its national interests, Palestinian society needs to be fundamentally reorganized.

As we saw at the Fatah conclave in Bethlehem last week, even if Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas were to accept Netanyahu's conditions, he wouldn't be speaking for anyone but himself. Fatah's conclave-like Hamas's terror state in Gaza - gave Israel every reason to believe that the Palestinians will continue their war against Israel after pocketing their state in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem. There is no Palestinian leader with any following that accepts Israel. Consequently, negotiating the establishment of a Palestinian state before Palestinian society is fundamentally changed is a recipe for disaster.

Furthermore, even if Netanyahu is right to seek an agreement with Mitchell next week, he showed poor negotiating skill by preemptively freezing Jewish construction. Domestically, Netanyahu has lost credibility now that the public knows that he misled it. And by preemptively capitulating, Netanyahu showed Obama that he is not a serious opponent. Why should Obama take Netanyahu's positions seriously if Netanyahu abandons before them before Obama even begins to seriously challenge him?

Beyond the damage Netanyahu's actions have inflicted on his domestic and international credibility is the damage they have caused to Netanyahu's ability to refocus US attention and resolve where it belongs.

As Netanyahu has repeatedly stated, the Palestinian issue is a side issue. The greatest impediment to Middle East peace and the greatest threat to international security today is Iran's nuclear weapons program. A nuclear armed Iran will all but guarantee that the region will at best be plagued by continuous war, and at worst be destroyed in a nuclear conflagration.

Netanyahu had hoped that his conditional support for Palestinian statehood, and his current willingness to bar Jews from building homes in Judea and Samaria would neutralize US pressure on Israel and facilitate his efforts to convince Obama to recognize and deal rationally with the issue of Iran's nuclear weapons program. But as Ambassador Michael Oren made clear on Sunday, the opposite has occurred.

In an interview with CNN, Oren said that Israel is "far from even contemplating" a military strike against Iran's nuclear installations." He also said, "The government of Israel has supported President Obama in his approach to Iran, initially the engagement, the outreach to Iran."

From this it appears that Israel has not only made no headway in convincing the administration to take Iran seriously. It appears that Jerusalem has joined the administration in accepting a nuclear armed Iran.

It is possible that Oren purposely misrepresented Israel's position. But this too would be a disturbing turn of events. Israel gains nothing from lying. Oren's statement neutralizes domestic pressure on the administration to get serious about Iran. And if Israel attacks Iran's nuclear installations in the coming months, Oren's statement will undoubtedly be used by Israel's detractors to attack the government.

Some critics of Netanyahu from the Right like Ariel Mayor Ron Nachman claim that it may well be time to begin bringing down Netanyahu's government. They are wrong. We have been down this road before. In 1992 the Right brought down Yitzhak Shamir's government and brought the Rabin-Peres government to power and Yassir Arafat to the gates of Jerusalem. In 1999 the Right brought down the first Netanyahu government and gave Israel Camp David and the Palestinian terror war.

There is another way. It is being forged by the likes of Vice Premier Moshe Ya'alon on the one hand and former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee on the other.

Ya'alon argues that not capitulating to American pressure is a viable policy option for Israel. There is

no reason to reach an agreement with Mitchell on the administration's bigoted demand that Jews not build in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem. If the US wants to have a fight with Israel, a fight against American anti-Jewish discrimination is not a bad one for Israel to have.

Ya'alon's argument was borne out by Huckabee's visit this week to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. Huckabee's trip showed that the administration is not operating in a policy vacuum.

There is plenty of strong American support for an Israeli government that would stand up to the administration on the Palestinian issue and Iran alike.

Netanyahu's policies have taken a wrong turn. But Netanyahu is not Tzipi Livni or Ehud Olmert. He is neither an ideologue nor an opportunist. He understands why what he is doing is wrong. He just needs to be convinced that he has another option.

A Mideast Test For President Do-Everything By Jackson Diehl The Washington Post August 23, 2009

Starting in September, President Obama will face a politically fateful battle in Congress over health-care reform. There is also the escalating war in Afghanistan and the tricky task of "responsibly" extracting some of the 130,000 remaining U.S. troops from Iraq. A showdown is approaching with Iran, which shows no sign of responding to a September deadline for opening negotiations on its nuclear program. All of that is on top of nursing the still-convalescing economy.

So, in his spare time, why wouldn't Obama set out to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a famously intractable problem that has defeated the past 11 U.S. administrations? It seems as though the president-who-would-do-everything will attempt just that.

As the U.N. General Assembly meets in late September, Obama aims to announce the opening of a new negotiating process between Israelis and Palestinians, along with "confidence-building" steps by Israel, the Palestinian Authority and a number of Arab governments. Though Obama will not offer a specific American "blueprint" for a peace settlement -- as a number of Arab governments have urged him to do -- he will probably lay out at least a partial vision of the two-state settlement that all sides now say they support, and the course that negotiations should take. More significantly, he intends to set an ambitious timetable for completing the peace deal -- something that will please Arabs but may irritate Israel.

Why do this now? There is, Obama said after meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak last week, "a growing realization on the part of the Palestinians that Israel is not going anywhere and is a fact, a reality that has to be dealt with; and a recognition on the part of the Israelis that their long-term security interests require finding an accommodation with the Palestinians and ultimately with their Arab neighbors."

In general, those observations are correct. But the administration's efforts to broker the initial steps that Obama hopes to announce have demonstrated just how difficult it will be to translate those promising trends into a peace agreement.

At the moment, in fact, there is still no deal. Instead, Obama's Mideast envoy, former senator George J. Mitchell, has become embroiled in protracted and publicly fractious negotiations with the Israeli government of Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu over whether and for how long it will freeze Jewish settlement construction in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Arab states led by Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, have repeatedly and publicly dismissed the idea of taking steps toward normalization of relations with Israel.

As so often happens in Middle East negotiations, what were intended as simple first steps have become an end in themselves, subject to months of posturing, hair-splitting and horse-trading. Both sides seem fairly confident that Mitchell and Netanyahu will reach a deal on the settlement issue; they are due to meet again this week. But it will be a messy compromise that will be time-limited and probably fall short of the complete halt in building that the administration has repeatedly sought. Similarly, Obama probably will get only two of the three actions he requested from Saudi King Abdullah when he traveled to Riyadh in June. The Saudis will privately support small concessions to Israel by four or five other Gulf states, and they have provided long-overdue financial support to the Palestinian Authority. But they are unlikely to make a public gesture of their own.

The administration believes that the sum of the measures Obama is to announce will be impressive enough to sway Israeli and Arab public opinion and energize the subsequent talks. But several Israeli and Arab officials I spoke to last week depicted the effort as a waste of the new administration's time and political capital. Israel's ambassador in Washington, Michael Oren, said: "There's been a long learning process over the last six months of what can and cannot be achieved."

Maybe so -- and yet Obama and his team appear undeterred. Mitchell has been working on an outline for how the peace negotiations would proceed. Talks on this will also be tough. It's not clear whether Netanyahu's government will be willing to focus on

"final status" issues; some in his government want negotiations to be aimed at creating a provisional Palestinian state with temporary borders. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who turned down a far-reaching peace proposal by Israel's previous government less than a year ago, is still insisting he won't begin talks without a complete settlement freeze. And Hamas, which governs 1.5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, remains implacable in its refusal to recognize Israel.

The recalcitrance that Obama has already encountered is a reminder of the famous maxim of former secretary of state James A. Baker III, considered a master of Middle East diplomacy. The United States, he said in 1991, "can't want peace more than the parties." In taking on the issue now, Obama is, in essence, trying to prove that wisdom wrong. If he succeeds he will probably deserve to be called a president who can do everything.

Press Conference given by Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu and PM of the UK- Gordon Brown Israeli Prime Minister's office August 25, 2009

PRIME MINISTER GORDON BROWN: Let me, first of all, welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu to London. It's a great pleasure to have you here, to congratulate you on becoming Prime Minister and to work with you on all the issues that affect both our countries and the future of the world.

Prime Minister Netanyahu is a leader of immense courage and we have had good talks today; discussions that leave me as realistic as ever, but more optimistic than before. I reiterated that we in the United Kingdom will always remain a strong friend of Israel and that Israelis and Palestinians will always be able to count on our support for peace. We share a vision of a secure and confident Israel, accepted and welcomed by its neighbor alongside, after decades of waiting, a secure and viable Palestine in a region at peace with itself.

I strongly agree with Prime Minister Netanyahu – and we've talked about this on many occasions – that the Palestinian economy must be allowed to flourish, so I strongly welcome his recent moves to remove checkpoints on the West Bank. An economic road map should underpin and sustain political dialogue and I know that the Prime Minister is committed to exactly that.

We also discussed the issue of settlements and of East Jerusalem. I made clear that a settlement activity was a barrier to a two state solution. I'm increasingly confident, however, that there is a genuine will to make progress; that a freeze in such activity would result in meaningful steps towards normalization from Arab states. President Obama has my strong support in his efforts to pursue this agenda and I know Prime Minister Netanyahu will be meeting Mr. Mitchell tomorrow. The UK will look to work with the US and the European Union and the international community to support politically, economically and in the security field the implementation of any future peace agreement.

We also discussed and will continue to discuss Iran. I made it again absolutely clear to Prime Minister Netanyahu that we deplore recent comments from the Iranian regime about Israel. Such diatribe has no place in a civilized world. We also share Israel's concerns over Iranian ambitions to

develop a nuclear weapon. The region and world have nothing to fear from a civilian nuclear program in Iran, but Iran's actions do not make their arguments convincing. Iran needs to cooperate with the international community. It should take up President Obama's unprecedented offer of engagement. Until then, the international community will continue to view Iranian ambitions with suspicion.

Prime Minister, welcome again to Downing Street. I look forward to working as closely as ever with you in the future. We share our anxieties about Iran and we share a common desire that there is peace in the Middle East. I'll be happy to answer any questions after this statement by you. I ask you to speak to the press here.

PRIME MINISTER BENJAMIN NETANYAHU: Thank you. Thank you very much, Prime Minister. I'm very pleased to be here in Great Britain today with my good friend and a good friend of Israel, Gordon Brown. Britain and Israel are linked by a shared history and a common relationship that's based on shared values and common interests. I just came from the Palestine Exploration Fund; it was established by Queen Victoria in 1865 and some of the most remarkable and moving studies of Jewish history and the Holy Land were undertaken by Brits in the 19th century and the findings there have just underpinned what I just said: there is a shared heritage and a shared history and I think in many ways you know that, Gordon, from your own personal history.

We have common hopes and we have also common challenges and I discussed with the Prime Minister the need to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. It's clear such weapons would pose a great threat to Israel, to our region, to the world and I'd like to take the opportunity to commend the continued efforts of the British government to address this threat. There has been a clear voice that comes out of London and from other capitals as well recently and I think that we should expect all responsible members of the international community to show similar resolve.

We also discussed the peace process. I reiterated Israel's commitment to peace and outlined what I believe is the winning formula for peace: a demilitarized Palestinian state that recognizes the Jewish state. We're working hard to advance a peace process that will lead to an actual peace result and we hope to move forward in the weeks and months ahead.

We're not waiting. We have already moved: my government has removed, to be precise, 147 checkpoints and roadblocks. The 14 remaining checkpoints, 12 of them are manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to facilitate movement. I have extended the time of passage on the Allenby Bridge on the Jordan River in order to facilitate movement in and out of the Palestinian territories. I chair a ministerial committee that seeks to remove and has removed roadblocks to economic activity in the West Bank. We've moved on the ground.

I've also moved not merely in deed but in word: I have spoken about the need to achieve this balance of a demilitarized Palestinian state next to a Jewish state and I think that this has resonated far and wide.

It wasn't easy to do, but this is what we have done in the short period of time, the four months that we're in office, so we have moved. We expect similar movement from the Palestinian Authority and certainly based on what we've seen in the recent Fatah conference there has not been that movement; that's an understatement. But there has to be that movement. There has to be not merely a partner on the other side, there has to be a courageous partner, because I think we've shown a certain amount of fortitude and leadership and that's what's required from the Palestinian side. They have to say unequivocally 'it's over. We are going to make a real peace. It'll be a final peace. It will be a peace that will end all claims to further conflict. It'll be a peace that will resolve the Palestinian refugee issue once and for all and just as Jews can come to Israel, Palestinians can come to the Palestinian state.' But not in Israel, because there has to be a Jewish state and if we're asked to recognise a Palestinian state as the nation state of the Palestinian people, it is absolutely essential that the Palestinian leadership says to the Palestinian people 'you will have to accept Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people.' Recognition is the pivot of peace. The absence of such clear and forthright expressions by the Palestinian leadership of such recognition has been what has been holding peace up and this is what the people of Israel and I think all fair minded people in the world expect.

So, we have moved forward. We intend to move forward, but we expect the Palestinian partners to be courageous partners for peace that move forward. And with the help of our friends in the United States, in Britain and elsewhere, I think we can

achieve progress that may confound the cynics and surprise the world, but there is no substitute for courageous leadership on all sides.

And I want to take this opportunity to thank you, Gordon, a true friend of Israel and a true friend of peace and I think a champion of decency. And I want to express my hope that we can continue working together in the time ahead for the benefit of the people of Israel, the people of Britain and for the benefit of peace.

PRIME MINISTER GORDON BROWN:

Thank you very much.

PRIME MINISTER BENJAMIN NETANYAHU: Thank you.

QUESTION Prime Minister, I have to ask you about the release of the Lockerbie bomber. Why have you remained silent on this issue until now? What, if any, was the involvement of the UK government in his release? And we've seen an angry response from Washington, what is the position of the British government? Does the British government – do you – think it was the right thing or the wrong thing to release this man?

PRIME MINISTER GORDON BROWN:

My first thoughts have been with the families of the victims of the Lockerbie bombing and I have to tell you that I was both angry and I was repulsed by the reception that a convicted bomber, guilty of a huge terrorist crime, received on his return to Libya.

When I met Colonel Gaddafi over the summer, I made it absolutely clear to him that we had no role in making the decision about Megrahi's future. Because it was a quasi judicial matter, because it was a matter legislated for by the Scottish Parliament and not by us, it was a matter over which we could not interfere and had no control over the final outcome.

I want to make it absolutely clear, however, that whatever the decision that was made on compassionate grounds by the Scottish Parliament our resolve to fight terrorism is absolute. Our determination to work with other countries to fight and to root out terrorism is total and we want to work with countries, even countries like Libya, who have renounced nuclear weapons now and want to join the international community. We want to work with them in the fight against terrorism around the world.

QUESTION [Hebrew] Prime Minister Brown, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, called on Britain to stop funding Israeli leftist opposition organizations such as Breaking the Silence. What is your reaction to that?

PRIME MINISTER BENJAMIN NETANYAHU:

I think we are trying to achieve two goals. One is to reactivate the peace process and the second is to enable normal life for the Israeli residents in Judea-Samaria. We have about a quarter of a million such people. They lead lives, they have

children who have to go to school, they need classrooms, they need kindergartens, and they need to have a place to house their families. This is very different from grabbing land, and I have made it clear that we are not going to build new settlements or expropriate additional land for existing ones.

What we are seeking to achieve with the United States in the talks we have conducted, the talks we will conduct tomorrow and we will conduct after tomorrow, is to find a bridging formula that will enable us to at once launch the process, but enable those residents to continue living normal lives. When we have something to report on this, which is not necessarily what has been reported, then you will hear it loud and clear from me.

PRIME MINISTER GORDON BROWN:

Let's be absolutely clear that we want to do everything we can as the United Kingdom to support the peace process. We want an Israel where people feel secure against the threat of terrorism, and that should be diminished by any actions that are taken. And we want a viable Palestinian economic state so that people can see the benefits of prosperity from peaceful co existence and working together. And we want to work with Prime Minister Netanyahu and with the Palestinians to make sure that that happens, and we want to involve the rest of the Arab states in making sure that they can support a peace process that works.

QUESTION: A question to each of you, if I may. First of all, Mr. Netanyahu, will you continue while you talk to build homes for Jews in those parts of Jerusalem that Israel captured in 1967?

And Mr. Brown, do you think that the Scottish decision on the Lockerbie release has undermined Britain's position with allies like Israel and the US?

PRIME MINISTER BENJAMIN NETANYAHU:

I have made it clear in my conversation with President Obama in Washington and since that Jerusalem is the sovereign capital of Israel. We accept no limitations on our sovereignty. This is very clear. To put a fine point on it, I say Jerusalem is not a settlement. The settlement issue is outstanding and has to be one of the issues resolved in the negotiations, alongside Palestinian recognition of the Jewish state and effective demilitarization arrangements for any future peace agreement. But our position is that Jerusalem is the united capital of the Jewish people. It has only been around for 3,500 years. We recognise that there are obviously Arab residents in Jerusalem, and they enjoy all the equal rights and all the equal benefits of the Jewish residents. We do not draw a difference.

PRIME MINISTER GORDON BROWN: I don't think what has happened will undermine our relationships with Israel or the United States or other countries who are engaged with us in the fight against terrorism. I made it absolutely clear that

whatever the decision made on a quasi-judicial basis by the Scottish Parliament, our determination to fight terrorism is clear. It is shown in all the action we have taken since September 11th. It is shown in the support we have given in Iraq and Afghanistan to deal with problems where terrorism rears its ugly head, and it is shown in every action we are taking to protect the British people and protect people beyond Britain against the threat of terrorism.

QUESTION: A question to both Prime Ministers, something to clarify as soon as possible because time in the month is ticking away. With the Iranian problem, according to your intelligence how much time do you evaluate is left before Iran reaches the point of no return? And should all measures, if peaceful measures fail or lead to a dead end, do you think that inevitably eventually a military action will have to be taken against Iran if everything else fails?

PRIME MINISTER GORDON BROWN:

As you know, I am not in the habit – and I am not going to break it today – of giving out the detailed intelligence advice that is given to us about matters as sensitive as nuclear weapons. But I do say to you that we recognize the threat that is posed by Iran. We recognise that if they make the decision to go for and to acquire nuclear, it is of profound significance for the rest of the world. We believe that Iran has a choice: they can work with the international community, gain access to civil nuclear power and take their rightful place as a peaceful and important partner in the world; or they can find themselves ostracised and excluded because of their decision to break the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to hide from the world what they are doing to build up nuclear-weapon power.

I hope Iran will make the right decision. I believe President Obama has offered Iran a way forward for this, but I also believe that we have to leave open every option in our dealings with Iran and at the same time, if there is no further progress immediately, I believe the world will have to look at stepping up sanctions against Iran as a matter of priority.

PRIME MINISTER BENJAMIN NETANYAHU:

First, I need to amend my response, Jeremy. We have not been around in Jerusalem for 3,500 years; we have been around there only 3,000 years, so pretty long, I would say.

On the second point that you asked, time is running out. It is late in the day, but it is not too late. If there is a firm resolve by the international community to apply crippling sanctions – to borrow a phrase from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton – then I think this regime will have to make a very difficult decision about its future course. I think it is susceptible to these pressures.

I think what has been revealed in the recent dramatic events of the Iranian election is that this

regime does not enjoy the support of the Iranian people. It is far weaker than meets the eye, and if the resolve of the responsible members of the international community is strong and firm, then however late the hour the future can be secured.

This is our preference. I think that the stronger those actions and those sanctions are today, the less need there will be for stronger actions tomorrow.

PRIME MINISTER GORDON BROWN:

Thank you very much.

"War Crimes or Political Welfare?"

By Gerald M. Steinberg The Jerusalem Report August 17, 2009

The attacks against Israel following the IDF operation against the Hamas terror infrastructure in Gaza early this year employ the most deadly weapons in the NGO arsenal. Charges of "war crimes" are supported by reams of Palestinian "eyewitness testimonies" and "international law" rhetoric. The offensive is led by the NGO superpowers - Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Oxfam - with help from a network of smaller Israeli and Palestinian organizations. This NGO war machine, funded largely by European governments, honed its Israel-bashing strategy at the 2001 U.N. Durban Conference, through the myth of the Jenin "massacre," in 2002, and in the 2006 Second Lebanon War. In contrast, until very recently, the Israeli government defenses were fragmented and lacked any coherent strategy to defeat this sustained attack.

Israeli "victims" were invited, to create an illusion of balance.

Taking advantage of the wave of publicity, the NGOs produced yet more pseudo-research. An Amnesty report included eight pages of criticism of Hamas out of a total of 127, along with a brief mention of Gilad Shalit in a footnote. Israeli NGOs issued similar statements. One report from "Breaking the Silence" consisted of 26 anonymous "testimonies" and rumors from Israeli soldiers, helping to augment the patently absurd image of the IDF as one of the least moral armies in the world.

The Gaza offensive has taken the confrontation further, with the U.N.'s Goldstone Commission and Israeli NGOs using soldiers' allegations of war crimes joining the fray. Setting up an inquiry, under the auspices of the U.N. Human Rights Council, led by human rights stalwarts such as Libya and Iran, was a central aim of the NGO network during the Gaza battles. Amnesty and HRW issued a stream of condemnations alleging "disproportionate force," "collective punishment," "deliberate attacks against civilians" and demands for "independent investigations."

Until recently, the Israeli defense against these calumnies has been largely non-existent. But a few months ago, the NGO assault stumbled, and the first signs of a coherent Israeli counter-strategy emerged. In May, HRW held a fundraising dinner in Saudi Arabia, one of the worst violators of human rights on the planet. During the gala event, Sarah Leah Whitson, who heads HRW's Middle East Division and leads its attacks on Israel, complained to the Saudis about a "shortage of funds because of the global financial crisis and the work on Israel and Gaza, which depleted HRW's budget for the region."

In parallel, the NGOs largely ignored Palestinian aggression and war crimes. Like Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas turned much of Gaza into a large human shield, launching rockets from schools, mosques and houses, and ensuring that legitimate Israeli counter-attacks would kill numerous Palestinians. But Amnesty's reports ignore this issue. Incredibly, its "Middle East expert," Donatella Rovera, explained that this was because she received no complaints from Palestinians living under Hamas rule. This says volumes about the NGOs' "research methodology." Judge Richard Goldstone, who heads the U.N. Inquiry was a member of HRW's board until NGO Monitor, the organization I head, pointed out the conflict of interest. His commission has given the NGOs yet another highly visible platform, and at least 15 Israeli and Palestinian organizations (all funded by European governments) submitted statements and arranged testimony for Palestinians. In addition, a few carefully chosen

When her conduct was described in the Wall Street Journal and elsewhere as duplicitous and clear evidence of an anti-Israel agenda, HRW officials turned on the critics, while trying to cover up the evidence. Whitson and HRW Executive Director Ken Roth ludicrously denied that the wealthy Saudis at the dinner were connected to the regime and refused to release the participant list. Pressed for details, they revealed that the "human rights supporters" included an official of the Shura Council, which runs the religious police. This led board members to reexamine HRW's other activities, including its biased agenda and manufactured "evidence" in its war on Israel.

Encouraged by this fortuitous opening, which spread like a virus in widely read Internet blogs, the Israeli government started at last to think strategically about this NGO war, including the role of European government funding. The Prime Minister's Office issued statements condemning the NGOs' double standards and false claims and proclaimed its intention to fight back. While it is still far too early to assess where all this is leading, the chances are that the NGO war against Israel will be slowed or even stopped. And that might even lead to

the restoration of genuine universal human rights' concerns to their proper place on the NGO agendas.
Prof. Gerald M. Steinberg heads the Jerusalem-based NGO Monitor and chairs

Obama and the Jews

By Yisrael Ne'eman MidEast on Target

US President Barack Obama is viewed by many in Israel and the Diaspora Jewish communities with great suspicion. For many he is seen as anti-Israel while the Jewish Right has the uneasy feeling that he may actually be a closet anti-Semite despite having two very close Jewish advisors in Rahm Emanuel and David Axelrod whom they label as "self-hating Jews". Obama is not anti-Israel, he is simply not pro-Israel and he is certainly not an anti-Semite nor do his advisors hate themselves. Rather the Obama administration has entered into the great Jewish divide/family feud concerning the continued existence of the world Jewish community - the Israeli nation state situated in the ancient homeland or Diaspora Jewry living in pluralistic America?

For Obama America and the western democracies are the answer to the "Jewish Problem" as it was called in 19th century Europe when the Christian world was seeking a solution of what to do with the Jews. Here Jewish communities can be welcomed, developed and enjoy full human rights while participating fully in the land of opportunity. Of course obligations to the liberal democratic state are a given. The President has made his commitment clear. He held a Passover Seder (second night) at the White House, invited Jewish leaders for talks (but not ZOA or the particularly Zionist ones) and continues to emphasize Jewish suffering and particularly the Holocaust.

The latter is compared with suffering of all peoples but most specifically that of the Palestinians – the inference being that Jewish nationalism is responsible and not the fact that the Arab/Moslem world, Palestinians included, rejected the Partition Plan two-state solution in November 1947 leading to the 1948 War meant to destroy any attempt at Jewish independence. The result was a refugee problem the Arabs/Palestinians brought upon themselves. Obama infers a parity or equality between Palestinian refugee issues and the Holocaust even if none exists. One can further understand that had there not been Jewish nationalism (but only a messianic religious hope) no harm would have come to the Palestinians and the West alone would need to make restitution to the Jews. The best solution was for world Jewry to find its home in the liberal democratic West. Hence Jewish nationalism or Zionism is not particularly in the American or world interest. Israel's independence is secondary as are its security concerns. It is not that Obama seeks Israel's destruction but rather as a rock bottom foundation

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of understanding he does not see Jewish survival as tied in exclusively with the Jewish State. Looking back at close to 2000 years of Diaspora Jewish history one can certainly understand this perspective. Jewish interests concern individual, religious and communal rights, but not necessarily national independence. Israel may be an independent state but that does not mean such a situation should continue in its present form. If need be Israel can be weakened (or viewed as unsafe) to accommodate Arab/Moslem needs if such a policy be in the American interest.

One can rest assured that when observing American Jewry (or maybe more correctly Jewish Americans) and the proof they provide through their residency in the USA he becomes convinced that they too prefer America to Israel. Query the vast majority of Jews living in the USA and even those who declare unswerving support for Israel and one will find they have no intention of Zionist "realization" and coming on aliyah. Add to this the fact that well over half a million Israelis have chosen immigration to America (Emanuel's family) and feeling himself on much more solid ground, the president will build an alliance with Diaspora Jewry as opposed to the State of Israel.

From Obama's perspective Israel is a constant irritant in US-Arab/Moslem world relations, issues of settlements are only a symbolic sideline. Just Israel's existence is an affront to the Arab/Moslem world and complicates American foreign policy. Certainly had the Jews found the answer to their "Problem" in the framework of liberal, democratic America none of these complications would exist.

The President is focusing on dual loyalty issues but in a positive light without asking whether one is first Jewish or American but rather shifting the emphasis. He is driving a wedge between Jews in Israel and those in the Diaspora by laying bare their clash of interests. He is exposing the weakness of Zionist commitment of those who claim to be American Jews and in essence accuses them of being hypocritical. He demands of them to forthrightly claim they are Jewish Americans and to stand by Washington first. In return Obama promises not a melting pot, but a full and complete pluralism where one's Jewish heritage - whether religious, cultural, historical or whatever - will be fully respected. Jews as individuals and as a community are to be fully obligated to the US while enjoying all the benefits of being 100% American.