

## No real quid pro quo

By Cal Thomas The Washington Times September 9, 2009

HBO showed the film "Schindler's List" last week. The 1993 Steven Spielberg movie never ceases to arouse my deepest emotions. The perennial question put forth in the film remains: How could people wantonly kill so many others as a matter of state policy?

This is more than history, however. There are those who would gladly "finish the job" the Nazis started. The Obama administration -- like previous administrations -- is pressuring Israel in ways that, if the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu succumbs, will effectively give Israel's modern enemies the opportunity to destroy its people. Next time it is unlikely there will be an Oskar Schindler to save even a remnant.

There are other questions related to the pressure the Obama administration is applying to Israel to stop building settlements, which supposedly will persuade that nation's sworn enemies to stop killing Jews. They are linked to the false premise that it's only what Israel does, or doesn't do, that affects the so-called peace process. If peace doesn't happen, blame it on the Jews. It's always their fault.

Those questions include: What could the Jews have done seven decades ago to dissuade Adolf Hitler from his Final Solution? What can modern Israelis do today to keep from being murdered by those who continue to hate Jews simply for being Jews? The answer to both questions is: nothing. Jews were murdered then and now, not for anything they did, but simply for being Jewish.

The notion that modern Israel, which was created out of the ashes of the Holocaust precisely because much of the world (the Arab world excepted) did not want another Holocaust, could have done something to prevent the killings has been the fundamental flaw in American foreign policy for decades.

The Latin phrase "quid pro quo" means "something for something." Israel has given lots of quid, but has received little quo. The Obama administration is again pressing Israel to stop building homes on its historic territory.

The political geniuses believe this will magically cause Israel's enemies to either reciprocate with a peaceful act, or at least suspend the terrorism for a

while in order to give the administration political cover for another sellout of the Jews. But as Middle East commentator Yoram Ettinger writes on his Web site, "Israeli policy-makers and public opinion molders tend to accept U.S. administrations as top authorities on the Middle East."

Mr. Ettinger lists numerous instances -- beginning with the founding of Israel in 1948 -- that remind how they have been consistently wrong in their judgments.

George Mitchell, the administration's Middle East envoy, is visiting Israel this week to continue "negotiations." These are not real negotiations because only one side is expected to give anything and the other side is never held accountable for failing to live up to its promises.

Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian National Authority, has conditioned any new peace talks on the cessation of Israeli settlements in the "occupied Palestinian territories." No one asks Mr. Abbas what he would give in return for putting Israeli construction on hold, other than more talks that would bring more empty promises.

As Israel is pressured to stop building, Palestinian construction continues unabated. A new Palestinian housing project has begun in Ramallah. It is expected to provide 2,000 housing units, accommodating 10,000 people. Thousands of Arabs are moving into Jewish areas of Jerusalem, but don't look for Mr. Mitchell to suggest they live elsewhere. Only Israel is not allowed to determine where it's own people live.

Can anyone doubt the goal? It is to overwhelm the Jewish population and eventually eliminate all Jews from the land, not just land that is in dispute and which Israel holds onto because of its legitimate fear that Arab and Muslim nations, having started five wars, might go for number six if they believe they can win the next one. Only a fool would believe otherwise, given their repeatedly stated intentions and behavior.

In the Middle East and in Washington, there is a surplus of fools.

**Cal Thomas is a nationally syndicated columnist.**

## What's Israel Got to Do With It?

By Cliff May TownHall.com September 3, 2009

Bill Gates famously called George Gilder "very stimulating even when I disagree with him, and most of the time I agree with him." The issues on which Gilder has staked out stimulating positions over more than 30 years as a writer and public intellectual are wide-ranging. They include the causes of poverty and the creators of wealth; the consequences of modern feminism; and the possibilities opened by the high-tech revolution. His arguments are often surprising, always provocative and generally controversial. His latest book is titled "The Israel Test." Much of what he says is dramatically different from what just about anyone else is saying. In particular: "Either the world, principally the United States, supports Israel, or Israel, one way or another, will be destroyed. There are no other realistic choices. And if Israel is destroyed, capitalist Europe will likely die as well, and America, as the epitome of productive and creative capitalism spurred by Jews, will be in jeopardy."

At this juncture, it is probably not just useful but necessary to note that George Gilder is not Jewish. In other words, the case he makes for Israel has no basis in religious or ethnic affiliation. At the same time, not being tethered to Israel or to Jews allows him to be blunt in a way few of Israel's Jewish defenders dare.

For example, he says that people "who obsessively denounce Jews have a name; they are Nazis." He does not hesitate to apply the term to Arab and Iranian leaders who exhibit such behavior. He contends, as well, that the "most dangerous form of Holocaust denial is not rejection of the voluminous evidence of long-ago Nazi crimes but incredulity toward the voluminous evidence of the new Holocaust being planned by Israel's current enemies. Two Iranian presidents have resolved to acquire nuclear weapons for the specific purpose of 'wiping Israel off the map.'"

What can be done to prevent a second Holocaust and to beat back the jihadis at America's gates? Gilder believes, first, we need to recognize the nature and gravity of the threat; second, we need more resolve; and third we need more technology of the sort America and Israel have been most adept at producing.

It will require comprehensive missile defense and other high-tech means to prevent our sworn enemies from "infiltrating nuclear weapons into American cities, exploding them offshore near American ports, or detonating bombs above America's critical electronic infrastructure" - destroying that infrastructure with an EMP (Electro-Magnetic Pulse) attack, an offensive capability that Iran, for one, is known to be developing.

"No nation in history has succeeded in preserving its integrity and sovereignty without meeting the challenge of ever-advancing armaments," Gilder points out. "But many American intellectuals still imagine that the United States is different, that it is possible or desirable for us to negotiate an 'end to the arms race.' Our enemies will always want to end the arms race because they know only free nations can win it. ... An end to the arms race would deprive the capitalist countries of their greatest asset in combating barbarism."

Gilder is convinced that the forces targeting Israel and America also are "targeting capitalism and freedom everywhere." Capitalism, he says, requires freedom - for entrepreneurs, workers and consumers alike. All benefit, because, "under capitalism the achievements of one group provide markets and opportunities for others."

He goes on to make this unfashionable observation: Any democracy not resting on a solid capitalist foundation is doomed. "Without an expanding capitalist economy," he writes, "democracy becomes dominated by its zero-sum elements - by mobs and demagogues."

Over the centuries, such mobs and demagogues have, many times, turned against Jews. Today, Gilder adds, "they have turned against Israel." Sometimes, the root cause is simply greed and envy. But often it is the belief that "social justice" necessitates the dispossession of the "haves" and redistribution to the "have-nots" in the interest of "equality of outcome."

Over time, this can only lead to expanding poverty because it is based on a misunderstanding of what wealth is. Fundamentally, wealth inheres not in material resources but in "human minds and creations that thrive only in peace and freedom. In particular, the immiseration of the Middle East stems chiefly from the covetous and crippling idea among Arabs that Israel's wealth is not only the source of their humiliation but also the cause of their poverty."

Gilder has much more to say - more challenging arguments and perplexing questions than I can summarize in a brief column. But his underlying thesis is straightforward: The future of freedom, democracy, capitalism, America, the West and the tiny state of Israel are all tied together in a single knot. Israel is "not only a major source of Western technological supremacy and economic leadership - it is also the most vulnerable source of Western power and intelligence."

Israel is, Gilder contends, "not only the canary in the coal mine - it is also a crucial part of the mine." If Americans will not defend Israel, they will

"prove unable to defend anything else. The Israel test is finally our own test of survival as a free nation."

**Clifford D. May is the President of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.**

## Boycotting Israeli films is just the beginning

**By James Morton and Karen Mock The National Post September 9, 2009**

This is the first year for the Toronto International Film Festival's City to City Spotlight. Because it is Tel Aviv's 100th anniversary, the Israeli city was chosen as the focus for the spotlight -- a 10-movie program that TIFF's website promises will "explore the evolving urban experience while presenting the best documentary and fiction films from and about a selected city."

As might have been expected, the usual suspects are deploring TIFF's spotlight on Tel Aviv, complaining the "uncritical celebration" of the city is like "celebrating Montgomery (Alabama) buses in 1963" or "South African fruit in 1991." These comparisons are fallacious and inflammatory; seeing artists and writers turn on their colleagues in this way brings back memories of the McCarthy era, when filmmakers denounced and betrayed others from the industry to silence them for political reasons.

Tel Aviv can indeed be highlighted as a beautiful city by the ocean, founded near Jaffa a century ago by idealists who dreamed of Jews being accepted as just another nation among nations. Secular and diverse, Tel Aviv is a success story. Comparisons of Tel Aviv to Jim Crow Alabama and apartheid South Africa are odious slanders.

Ironically, Israel is the only state in the Middle East where films are made freely and without censorship of any sort. Its film industry benefits Israelis of all racial and religious backgrounds. It is the only country in the region where a film festival like the Toronto Film Festival could be held.

Israel is embattled but free; the rule of law applies and people can speak their minds regardless of what they have to say. It is disturbing to see people from an industry that values and requires freedom of expression trying to silence their colleagues and to politicize Toronto's internationally

acclaimed film festival. Those complaining are small-minded people, living far away, jumping on the bandwagon with those who demonize Israel for a quick fix of media attention.

But why does this otherwise small story matter? After all, the TIFF is going ahead and apart from a brief media flurry, little seems to have been accomplished by the attempted boycott.

It matters because this incident reflects a larger reality, a reality of revived anti-Semitism. Boycotting Israeli films is now respectable enough that an Oscar-winning actress and over 50 others have publicly signed a protest letter. From college campuses that were once, but are no longer, friendly to Jews, to newspapers that spout vile nonsense about Israeli theft of bodily organs, old-fashioned Jew hatred is on the march in this country and worldwide.

We urge all Torontonians to resist this latest call for a boycott, the way they responded to the misguided attempts to boycott Israeli wines and the outstanding exhibit of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Indeed we must speak out forcefully to resist all forms of anti-Semitic propaganda and to recognize it for what it is. The demonization of Israel is part of the rebirth of anti-Semitism that inevitably leads to violence and hate crimes, and Canada is not immune.

We call on community leaders of all backgrounds to speak up. Sadly, we know what silence can bring.

**Karen Mock served for 12 years as national director of the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada. She is running as a Liberal for Parliament in Thornhill, Ont. James Morton is a Toronto lawyer.**

## What Carter Missed in the Middle East

**By Elliott Abrams The Washington Post September 8, 2009**

In an op-ed on Sunday ["The Elders' View of the Middle East"], former president Jimmy Carter, speaking on behalf of a self-appointed group of "Elders," described a rapacious Israel facing long-suffering, blameless Palestinians, who are contemplating a "nonviolent civil rights struggle" in which "their examples would be Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela."

As with most of Carter's recent statements about Israel and the Palestinians, instead of facts we get vignettes from recent Carter travels. And while

he finds "a growing sense of concern and despair" among "increasingly desperate" Palestinians, polls do not sustain this view. The most recent survey by the leading Palestinian pollster, Khalil Shikaki (done in August, the same month Carter visited), shows "considerable improvement in public perception of personal and family security and safety in the West Bank and a noticeable decrease in public perception of the existence of corruption in [Palestinian Authority] institutions." This does not sound like despair. In fact, positive views of personal and family

safety and security in the West Bank stood at 25 percent four years ago, 35 percent two years ago and 43 percent a year ago, and they have risen to 58 percent in the past year, Shikaki reports. There are other ways to measure quality of life in the West Bank: The International Monetary Fund recently stated that "macroeconomic conditions in the West Bank have improved" largely because "Israeli restrictions on internal trade and the passage of people have been relaxed significantly."

The IMF predicts that "continuation of the relaxation of restrictions could result in real GDP growth of 7% for 2009 as a whole," a rate of growth that would be far in excess of ours -- or Israel's.

Carter's efforts to portray life among the Palestinians as unbearable and getting worse are belied by data. His efforts to blame Israel for all the problems that do exist are equally unpersuasive, and the best example is Gaza.

Carter states that Gaza is a "walled-in ghetto" and that "Israel prevents any cement, lumber, seeds, fertilizer and hundreds of other needed materials from entering through Gaza's gates." But Gaza is not an enclave surrounded by Israel; it has a border with Egypt. Every commodity that Carter says is needed can be supplied by Egypt, a point he overlooks in his efforts to blame Palestinian problems exclusively on the Jewish state.

Similarly, he says that "[s]ome additional goods from Egypt reach Gaza through underground tunnels," phrasing that suggests the "additional goods" may help reduce shortages. In fact, they include missiles and rockets, thousands of which have been fired into Israel since its troops left Gaza in 2005. While Carter warns that a Palestinian "civil rights struggle" is in the offing, he says nothing about Palestinian violence in the real world -- in which Palestinian terrorist groups continue to attack Israel and where all of Gaza is, of course, in the hands of one such group, Hamas.

Carter claims that the expansion of Israeli settlements is "rapidly" taking Palestinian land. Yet

four years ago Israel gave up the Gaza Strip and all the settlements there (plus four small West Bank settlements); moreover, Carter presents no data suggesting that Israel's West Bank settlements are actually expanding physically. Their population is growing, but new construction is almost all "up and in," meaning that the impact on Palestinians is limited -- and that the picture Carter paints of a rapidly disappearing Palestine is inaccurate.

Most inaccurate of all, and most bizarre, is Carter's claim that "a total freeze of settlement expansion is the key" to a peace agreement. Not a halt to terrorism, not the building of Palestinian institutions, not the rule of law in the West Bank, not the end of Hamas rule in Gaza -- no, the sole "key" is Israeli settlements. Such a conclusion fits with Carter's general approach, in which there are no real Palestinians, just victims of Israel. The century of struggle between moderate and radical Palestinians, and the victories of terrorists from Haj Amin al-Husseini to Yasser Arafat, are forgotten; the Hamas coup in Gaza is unmentioned; indeed the words "Hamas" and "terrorism" do not appear in Carter's column. Instead of appealing for support for the serious and practical work of institution-building that the Palestinian Authority has begun, Carter fantasizes about a "nonviolent civil rights struggle" that bears no relationship to the terrorist violence that has plagued Palestinian society, and killed Israelis, for decades. Carter's portrait demonizes Israelis and, not coincidentally, it infantilizes Palestinians, who are accorded no real responsibility for their fate or future. If this is "the Elders' view of the Middle East," we and our friends in that region are fortunate that this group of former officials is no longer in power.

**The writer, a senior fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, served as a deputy national security adviser in the George W. Bush administration.**

## **Build now, freeze later: Netanyahu's preemptive 'entrance strategy'**

**By Herb Keinon The Jerusalem Post September 6, 2009**

While in recent weeks diplomatic officials were saying that much of the discussions with the US regarding a settlement freeze revolved around an exit strategy - under what terms Israel would be allowed to renew construction in certain settlements - what they failed to mention was that what was also being discussed was an "entrance strategy."

And, indeed, it was the entrance ramp into a settlement freeze that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's office announced late Thursday evening.

Yes, Israel will agree to a temporary moratorium - the first such moratorium since then-prime

minister Menachem Begin was holding talks at Camp David in the late 1970s.

But before the moratorium, Israel will announce the approval of hundreds of new apartments that - together with the 2,500 units already being build in West Bank settlements - will provide for what Netanyahu calls normal life (and which the world has taken to calling "natural growth").

What the prime minister will do by first approving more units, before calling for a freeze whose length will be dependent on the normalization gestures to be promised by the Arab

world, is to try to disarm his opponents on the Right who will accuse him of capitulation.

Netanyahu took an important step toward taking the sting out of the opposition by bringing this plan to the inner cabinet late last month - a forum which includes right-wing ministers Moshe Ya'alon, Bennie Begin and Avigdor Lieberman. The inner cabinet, which in addition to Netanyahu also includes Ehud Barak and Dan Meridor, approved the move.

Essentially, therefore, he neutralized opposition from his own ministers, something critical to entering into any agreement with the US that includes a settlement moratorium.

Don't let the critical White House or State Department statements Friday fool you. It is obvious that Washington knew about these plans, and that Netanyahu didn't wake up Thursday night, a day after his top envoys met with US Mideast envoy George Mitchell in New York, and surprise everyone with this announcement. He reportedly briefed Mitchell on the idea during his visit two weeks ago to Europe.

While precious little has been revealed over the months of intensive talks that have been held between the US and Israel on this matter, one thing is clear - they haven't only been talking about what the press has been reporting: the length of the moratorium, or the number of housing units that could continue to be built.

This doesn't mean that the US likes the decision to approve new tenders, but Washington undoubtedly knew about it and most likely appreciated that it was politically critical for the prime minister if he was ever to agree to a moratorium.

Netanyahu, who is sensitive to his relations with US President Barack Obama, was not going to surprise him with this type of announcement, especially since he himself felt blindsided by the US president in May when - without any forewarning - Obama called for an absolute settlement freeze during their first meeting in Washington.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton then spelled out what the president had in mind on May 28, declaring, "With respect to settlements, the president was very clear when Prime Minister Netanyahu was here. He wants to see a stop to settlements - not some settlements, not outposts, not natural growth exceptions.

"We think it is in the best interests of the effort that we are engaged in that settlement expansion cease. That is our position. That is what we have communicated very clearly, not only to the Israelis but to the Palestinians and others. And we intend to press that point."

To listen to Clinton was to think that the US would ensure that nary an Israeli shovel would crack Judean and Samaritan earth.

That was then. A little more than three months later, not only will settlement construction not cease, but before a temporary freeze is declared, some new units will be approved. That is not an insignificant change, and it is a change brought about by a number of factors.

First of all, the initial US demand was completely impractical. It was impractical not only from a political point of view, since Netanyahu, in his government constellation, could not agree to such a demand, but also practically impossible - there is no way that real needs would not be provided for the nearly 300,000 Israelis living beyond the Green Line.

Furthermore, the administration misread the Israeli public, thinking that the settlements were enormously unpopular, and that the public would back the US president. The administration confused headlines and certain columns in Haaretz with Israeli public opinion, a public that saw the US demand as unreasonable and rallied around Netanyahu.

Secondly, it became clear with time that there had indeed been agreements with the Bush administration on where and how Israel could continue to build in the settlements, and that the Obama administration was simply tossing those out the window.

This in turn led to criticism and some push-back, not only in Israel, but also in the US, with some asking how the Obama administration could call on Israel to fulfill its commitments, when it itself was not doing the same.

Thirdly, it became clear as time went on that the US was a prisoner to its own demand. Netanyahu said he would not agree to a complete freeze, and that talk about stopping construction in east Jerusalem was completely out of the question, even as the Palestinians - taking their cue from the US's initial statement - threw in a condition that they never had when they were negotiating with Ehud Olmert: they would not start talks until there was a total settlement freeze everywhere.

But with Israel standing firm that it would not freeze everything, the US had to decide whether it wanted to launch a process or not, and if it did, then it would have to agree to some construction.

The fourth element that has led to a change in the US position was Saudi intransigence. Even as Washington was trying to get Israel to agree to a freeze, the Obama administration also tried to get the Arab world - especially Saudi Arabia - to ante up some significant confidence-building measures.

Both Obama and Clinton were told in no uncertain terms by the Saudis that they would give nothing until there was an agreement. It then

became impossible for the administration to come to Israel and say that in exchange for a settlement freeze, it would be getting some serious steps from the Saudis.

The US was looking for the Saudis to help extricate the stalled "diplomatic bus" from the mud. But the Saudis, as usual, refused.

Ironically, it is this inflexibility that has led - to a large extent - to the Obama administration becoming more flexible on Netanyahu's position that he can't stop all settlement construction.

## Palestinian recognition of the Jewish state

By Robert O. Freedman Middle East Strategy at Harvard August 27, 2009

In his June 2009 Bar-Ilan University speech, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu asserted that Palestinian recognition of Israel as a "Jewish state" was one of Israel's requirements for agreeing to the establishment of a Palestinian state. Both Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat, immediately rejected the requirement. However, if there is to be a long-lasting peace between Israel and a Palestinian state, Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state is a necessity.

Palestinians have three official objections to Israel being recognized as a Jewish state, as well as a fourth objection about which they do not speak openly, but which lies at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The three official objections are as follows:

It is not the task of the Palestinians to determine the nature of the Israeli state, but that of the Israelis.

Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state would jeopardize the position of the Israeli Arabs, who form 20 percent of the Israeli population.

Israel did not demand recognition as a "Jewish state" in its peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan.

The fourth Palestinian objection—which they do not assert openly lest it destroy the chances for a peace treaty with Israel—is that many Palestinians simply do not accept the legitimacy of Jewish nationalism (Zionism). For the Palestinians, and for many other Arabs as well, a Jew is defined by religion, not nationality or ethnicity, and given the position of Jews as *dhimmi*s, or second-class religious subjects in Muslim history, the Palestinians feel that Jews have no right to be rulers, let alone rule over what they consider Muslim territory.

These attitudes, partially latent during the heyday of the Oslo peace process (1993-2000), were reinforced by the Al-Aqsa Intifada, which transformed what had been a conflict between two peoples over the same piece of territory into a religious war between Muslims and Jews, and which greatly strengthened Hamas in the process. Indeed both Hamas and non-Hamas religious leaders stressed that the Palestinians were fighting the Jews, just as Muhammad had fought the Jews who they allied with his enemies as he sought to unite the Arabian Peninsula under the banner of Islam.

What the Palestinians—and other Arabs—fail to understand is that Zionism arose as a national movement among Jews in Europe in the 19th century. Very much influenced by the national unification movements of Germany and Italy (as were the Arab nationalists of the time), as well as by the increasingly precarious position of the Jews in Eastern Europe who were beset by pogroms in Czarist Russia, Zionist thinkers such as Hess, Lilienblum and Herzl asserted that just as the French had France, the Germans had Germany and the Italians had Italy, the Jews deserved a state of their own where they could lead a "normal, national life," and the ancient Jewish homeland of Israel, then occupied by the Ottoman Empire, was chosen as the site of the future Jewish state. To be sure, the land which the Zionists wanted was already populated by Arabs; however, the Arabs who lived there at the end of the 19th century had not yet developed a national identity (that was come during the British mandate of 1922-48), and at the time primary saw themselves as Muslims or Christians, or as "Southern Syrians" or as Ottoman subjects.

This being the case, one can respond to the Palestinian reasons for not recognizing Israel as a "Jewish state" in the following manner:

1. While the Israelis alone can and should define the nature of their state, as the existential nature of the state is a central factor in the conflict (unlike, for example, the conflicts between France and Germany in the 19th and 20th centuries), then Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish State becomes central to ending the conflict.

2. There are many minorities in the Middle East, and the often negative treatment of these minorities, whether religious (such as the Copts in Egypt and the Shi'a in Saudi Arabia) or national (such as the Kurds in Turkey and the Azeris) is, in fact, linked to the nature of the country in which they live. However these minorities could be protected by treaty arrangements (currently they are not, although Turkey has begun the process of trying to address its Kurds' aspirations)—so long as they swear allegiance to the state. Indeed, should a Palestinian state which recognizes Israel as a "Jewish state" emerge, that could make it easier for Israeli Arabs to solve their own identity problems, which have become increasingly serious in recent years, as some Israeli

Arab leaders have openly backed Hamas, Hezbollah and Syria in their conflicts with Israel. Thus, as part of a peace treaty between a Palestinian state and Israel, the protection of the rights, albeit not the national rights, of the Israeli Arabs could be stipulated.

3. While acknowledgment of Israel as a Jewish state was not a component of Israel's peace treaties with either Egypt or Jordan, in neither case was Israel involved in the type of existential conflict with these countries as it currently is with the Palestinians—a conflict in which it often appears that the assertion of one people's national aspirations negates those of the other people. Thus it

is necessary for both sides to recognize the legitimacy of the other's national aspirations. For the Palestinian side, this involves recognizing Israel as a Jewish State.

4. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, it is necessary for the Palestinians to recognize Israel as a Jewish state to replace the image of the Jew as *dhimmi*, or second class citizen, with the image of the Jew as a member of a national group exercising legitimate national rights, just as the Palestinians themselves do. Once this is done, the chances for a long-lasting peace between Israel and a Palestinian state will be greatly enhanced.

## Israel, Iran and Obama

By The Wall Street Journal editorial August 30, 2009

**Conflict is inevitable unless the West moves quickly to stop a nuclear Tehran.** The International Atomic Energy Agency has produced another alarming report on Iran's nuclear programs, though it hasn't released it publicly, only to governments that would also rather not disclose more details of Iran's progress toward becoming a nuclear theocracy. Meanwhile, Iran intends to introduce a resolution, backed by more than 100 members of the so-called Non-Aligned Movement, that would ban military attacks on nuclear facilities. No actual mention of Israel, of course.

The mullahs understand that the only real challenge to their nuclear ambitions is likely to come from Israel. They've long concluded that the U.N. is no threat, as IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei has in practice become an apologist for Iran's program. They can also see that the West lacks the will to do anything, as the Obama Administration continues to plead for Tehran to negotiate even as Iran holds show trials of opposition leaders and journalists for saying the recent re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was fraudulent. The irony is that the weaker the West and U.N. appear, the more probable an Israeli attack becomes.

The reality that Western leaders don't want to admit is that preventing Iran from getting the bomb is an Israeli national imperative, not a mere policy choice. That's a view shared across Israel's political spectrum, from traditional hawks like Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to current Defense Minister and former Labor Prime Minister Ehud Barak. Israelis can see the relentless progress Iran is making toward enriching uranium, building a plutonium-breeding facility and improving on its ballistic missiles—all the while violating U.N. sanctions without consequence. Iran's march to the bomb also alarms its Arab neighbors, but it represents an existential threat to an Israeli nation that Iran has promised to destroy and has waged decades of proxy war against.

This threat has only increased in the wake of Iran's stolen election and crackdown. The nature of the regime seems to be changing from a revolutionary theocracy to a military-theocratic state that is becoming fascist in operation. The Revolutionary Guard Corps is gaining power at the expense of the traditional military and a divided clerical establishment.

On the weekend, Ahmadinejad called for the arrest and punishment of opposition leaders, and last week he nominated Ahmad Vahidi, a commander in Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps, to become defense minister. Vahidi is wanted on an Interpol arrest warrant for his role in masterminding the 1994 attack on a Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires. That attack killed 85 people and wounded 200 others. Vahidi's nomination shows that when Ahmadinejad talks of wiping Israel off the map, no Israel leader can afford to dismiss it as a religious allegory.

Israel also looks warily on the Obama Administration's policy of diplomatic pleading with Iran, which comes after six years of failed diplomatic overtures by the European Union and Bush Administration. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's suggestion in July that the U.S. would extend a "defense umbrella" over its allies in the Middle East "once [Iranians] have a nuclear weapon" may have been a slip of the lip. But Israelis can be forgiven for wondering if the U.S. would sooner accept a nuclear Iran as a *fait accompli* than do whatever is necessary to stop it.

It's no wonder, then, that the Israeli military has been intensively—and very publicly—war-gaming attack scenarios on Iran's nuclear installations. This has included sending warships through the Suez Canal (with Egypt's blessing), testing its Arrow antiballistic missile systems and conducting nationwide emergency drills. U.S. and Israeli military officials we've spoken to are confident an Israeli strike could deal a significant blow to Iran's

programs, even if some elements would survive. The longer Israel waits, however, the more steps Iran can take to protect its installations.

The consequences of an Israeli attack are impossible to predict, but there is no doubt they would implicate U.S. interests throughout the Middle East. Iran would accuse the U.S. of complicity, whether or not the U.S. gave its assent to an attack. Iran could also attack U.S. targets, drawing America into a larger Mideast war.

Short of an Islamist revolution in Pakistan, an Israeli strike on Iran would be the most dangerous foreign policy issue President Obama could face,

throwing all his diplomatic ambitions into a cocked hat. Yet in its first seven months, the Administration has spent more diplomatic effort warning Israel not to strike than it has rallying the world to stop Iran.

In recent days, the Administration has begun taking a harder line against Tehran, with talk of "crippling" sanctions on Iran's imports of gasoline if the mullahs don't negotiate by the end of September. Rhetorically, that's a step in the right direction. But unless Mr. Obama gets serious, and soon, about stopping Iran from getting a bomb, he'll be forced to deal with the consequences of Israel acting in its own defense.

## Israel obsession leads HRW (Human Rights Watch) astray

By Gerald Steinberg and Dan Kosky The Baltimore Sun August 30, 2009

Human Rights Watch has long been a self-proclaimed torch-bearer for human rights around the world. Although the organization can rightly be proud of its initial contribution on behalf of political prisoners incarcerated by oppressive regimes, HRW's activities in more recent years have been characterized by an obsessive focus on Israel and only muted criticism of dictatorships such as Syria, Saudi Arabia and Libya. HRW's Middle East activities recently reached a nadir. In May, Arab News reported that HRW officials had visited Saudi Arabia to raise funds, using their pseudo-research on Israel over the Gaza war as bait.

Why did this giant of the NGO world choose to single out Israel? Part of the answer lies in an ideological shift. Like many one-time liberals, HRW has become infused with a spirit of simplistic anti-nationalism. This worldview dictates that military power is inherently evil and illegitimate, while victimhood and powerlessness is unquestionably both innocent and moral. Translated into a Middle East context, Israel is portrayed as permanently guilty while the Palestinians are excused from all responsibility regardless of their behavior.

Another reason for HRW's Israel obsession is simply that the world has changed; HRW's original *raison d'être* disappeared with the collapse of Soviet Communism. For a short time, NGOs battled against the remnants of apartheid South Africa, but in the absence of a globally popular human rights campaign, HRW reinvented itself as a "research organization." Yet HRW now specializes in glossy publications that lack professional substance. Usually based on unverifiable "eyewitness" testimony, embellished with commentary from a self-proclaimed arms expert, HRW's reports make for eye-catching if unreliable battlefield accounts.

HRW's recent report on Israel's alleged misuse of drones during the Gaza war is a prime example. Analyzing a very limited number of cases, the report's claims of wrongdoing rely on dubious eyewitness accounts.

At the same time, the hostility displayed toward Israel by HRW and other NGOs became fodder for Arab demagogues eager to use the rhetoric of human rights to delegitimize Israel.

HRW is able to grease the wheels of the U.N. machine in its favor by demanding international investigations into alleged Israeli "war crimes," most recently in the aftermath of the 2006 Lebanon war and the Gaza conflict. The synergy between HRW and relevant U.N. bodies was recently crystallized when the U.N. Human Rights Council appointed HRW board member Richard Goldstone to head its Gaza inquisition. HRW's benign image would be a perfect cover for those intent on creating a kangaroo court to hang Israel. When NGO Monitor highlighted the conflict of interest, Judge Goldstone promptly resigned from the HRW board.

The likes of HRW benefit from a halo effect that persuades journalists to accept their every claim as gospel, without first checking the "evidence" provided.

Yet this façade is slipping under the weight of HRW's activities within Saudi Arabia, one of the world's most notorious human rights abusers. According to Arab News, HRW's senior Middle East professional Sarah Leah Whitson, along with board and Advisory Committee member Hassan Elmasry, attended a dinner where they asked "prominent members of Saudi society" to make up for the "shortage of funds" due to the global financial crisis "and the work on Israel and Gaza which depleted HRW's budget for the region." This tacit admission that HRW targeted Israel to the detriment of analyzing genuine human rights violations was accompanied by Ms. Whitson's odious invocation of "pro-Israel pressure groups."

HRW has failed to provide an alternative account of events, and its only defense has been an absurd attempt to cast a distinction between soliciting Saudi officials and prominent members of society who owe their very position to the regime.

Serious questions are rightly being asked of a human rights organization that sees fit to have its pockets lined with the gold of one of the world's most oppressive countries.

## All settlers are not created equal

### By Michael Freund The Jerusalem Post

It is a disputed tract of land the size of Britain, it has been under occupation for nearly four decades, and hundreds of thousands of its Arab residents have been turned into refugees as a result of an aggressive and expansionist settlement policy.

Periodic peace talks between the protagonists have failed, UN resolutions on the subject remain unimplemented and the basic human rights of those living under occupation are continually and summarily ignored.

Yet despite the ongoing conflict surrounding this considerable piece of territory, even the most knowledgeable public policy observers would have difficulty identifying it as Western Sahara or recognizing that the occupier in question is Morocco.

Indeed, it says a lot about the media and the international community these days that most people reading the opening few sentences of this column would mistakenly think that it was a reference to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, even though the above-mentioned allegations are in fact not applicable to us.

But if you are wondering why you have never heard of Western Sahara, or perhaps thought it was a reference to an old John Wayne flick, that is probably because it is one of many such conflicts worldwide that receive little or no attention despite the wrongs being perpetrated.

The Obama administration, the European Union and much of the mainstream Western press are apparently too busy scolding Israel for building a few apartments in its capital city to pay much attention to Morocco's misdeeds, particularly since the latter is an Arab state that is doing the "occupying."

The sad story of Western Sahara stretches back to 1975, when Spain withdrew its colonial administration. In the wake of the Spanish retreat, Morocco invaded and claimed the territory as its own, denying the area's residents, referred to as Sahrawis, the fundamental right to freedom and self-determination.

In response, the Sahrawi independence movement, known as the Polisario, launched a guerrilla war against the Moroccan occupation.

Later that year, the International Court of Justice ruled that Morocco's claim to Western Sahara was illegitimate, and the Organization of African Unity, along with dozens of other countries

**Gerald Steinberg is executive director of NGO Monitor and chairman of political science at Bar Ilan University in Israel. Dan Kosky is communications director at NGO Monitor**

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worldwide, recognized the Polisario's self-declared Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

The fighting continued until 1991, when the UN brokered a cease-fire that included the promise of a referendum to determine the territory's future.

But for nearly two decades, Morocco's unelected monarchy has refused to allow the vote to take place. Instead, it has been steadily trying to "Moroccanize" the area by pouring in thousands of Moroccan settlers in a transparent attempt to alter the demography and tilt the balance in its favor.

In the meantime, hundreds of thousands of Sahrawi refugees are huddled in camps in neighboring Algeria, enduring squalid conditions and facing an uncertain future.

But rather than standing up to Morocco for its abuses, the world has largely chosen to ignore them. For example, on April 8, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton welcomed Moroccan Foreign Minister Dr. Taieb Fassi Fihri to Washington. In her remarks to the press before the meeting, Clinton heaped praise on Rabat, but made no mention of the Western Sahara issue.

And when I checked the US State Department Web site and searched for Western Sahara in the daily press briefings held since the start of the year, the results returned a big and unmistakable zero.

Likewise, when was the last time you heard calls for Morocco to freeze construction of settler homes in Western Sahara, or threats to boycott Moroccan products because of its settlement policy in the area? And when was the last time that the editorial pages of major Western newspapers denounced Rabat's brazen attempts to forge a "Greater Morocco"?

Not surprisingly, the lack of international pressure has enabled Morocco to dither with impunity. Despite two rounds of UN-sponsored peace talks in 2007, and some meetings between negotiators earlier this year, no progress has been made in finding a solution for the beleaguered Sahrawi people.

The Western Sahara issue, and others like it, demonstrates just how unjust the international community can be. They howl and holler about Israel and Jewish "settlers," all the while ignoring Morocco and its own brand of Arab settlers. Apparently, not all settlers are created equal, at least not in the minds of many of the world's leaders and peace activists.

Of course I don't mean to suggest that Israel's policies are comparable to those of Morocco, for the simple reason that I view our presence in the territories as historically just and eminently moral, while Rabat is simply engaging in a lusty land grab.

But those who do view Israel's liberation of Judea and Samaria as an immoral "occupation" need to realize that their obsession with the Jewish state comes at a price.

Jews may very well be news, as the old saying goes, but that does not mean that all the news must be only about Jews. By focusing so compulsively on

Israel, the international community is betraying its mandate and objectivity.

And by holding Israel to an unjust and incongruous double standard, it is allowing other countries, such as Morocco, to literally get away with theft and murder.

So next time someone asks what you think of "the settlement issue," have some fun with the question and tell them that you oppose what Morocco is doing. It's not hard to predict what their response will be, but it is high time we started shifting the debate to where it truly belongs.

## Hamas and the Holocaust

By The Washington Times editorial September 8, 2009

How much should Palestinian children know about Nazi war crimes? According to Hamas, only enough to know the Holocaust is a lie.

A row erupted last week when Palestinian refugee camp committees complained to John Ging, the Gaza director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), that a proposed change to the Gaza school curriculum "confirms the Holocaust and raises sympathy for Jews." The camp committees said they "categorically refuse to let our children be taught this lie created by the Jews and intensified by their media." They offered two rationales: the Holocaust is not a fact, and the U.N. is trying to "mess with our children's emotions."

Mustafa al-Sawwaf, editor of the Hamas-run newspaper Filastin, said the U.N. "should also be prevented from implementing this destructive policy that harms our history and civilization as well as our people's culture." Yes, the official Palestinian history would be harmed by recognizing historical events that their leaders have torn from the record. Palestinian civilization might be threatened too, if you call life in Gaza civilization.

The controversy may have arisen because the human rights section of the curriculum is based on the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The declaration was issued in 1948 in large measure as a response to Nazi war crimes. It is difficult to discuss the document without reference to the Holocaust, and its history is incomprehensible without such discussion -- and the U.N. may have made inquiries about how much of this forbidden history it can go into. For its part, UNRWA has publicly condemned Holocaust denial and does not share the view of

Gaza education committee head Abdul Rahman el-Jamal, who said the Holocaust is a "big lie."

But no need to fret; the U.N. issued a swift disclaimer. Karen AbuZayd, commissioner-general of UNRWA, said on Sept. 1 that the curriculum at the Gaza schools contains no references to the Holocaust. "I can refute allegations that U.N. school curriculum includes anything about the Holocaust," she said. "Anyone can have a look at the schoolbooks." The lesson plans are drafted in the regional U.N. office in the Gaza Strip and reviewed by Palestinian editors. There is no chance the odd Auschwitz reference or quote from Anne Frank's diary can slip in.

It's not that the Palestinians aren't interested in a good atrocity story. A high-level panel is forming to investigate charges leveled in the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet that Israeli troops systematically harvested organs from dead Palestinian teens. Aftonbladet has since admitted there is no evidence to support the ghoulish allegations, but the Palestinians have pledged to get to the bottom of them.

We wonder which emotions the Palestinians are afraid will be "messed with" if their children learn about the Holocaust. Children in Gaza are raised on a diet of unreasoning, bitter hatred against Jews, the better to inspire them to grow up to be radicals, terrorists and suicide bombers. Learning about the Holocaust might introduce more beneficial emotions, like empathy, understanding and compassion. Start down that road, and who knows where it could lead. Peace, perhaps.

If anyone would like to receive this newsletter by a weekly e-mail, please drop us a note at [sheldonb@rsfchart.com](mailto:sheldonb@rsfchart.com) and we will be glad to add you to our growing list of subscribers.

All of the newsletter archives can be found on the Suburban Orthodox webpage (Israel Action section) at <http://www.suburbanorthodox.org/israel-action.php>.

The management of the Focus on Israel newsletter wishes everyone a Happy, Healthy and Meaningful High Holiday season. Next week's newsletter will be a special expanded version. Rosh HaShana starts on Friday night September 18 through Sunday September 20.