

Our Selective Moral Outrage

By Bret Stephens The Wall Street Journal

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Why does Israel face more opprobrium than Russia?

Few places on earth have been as systematically brutalized over the past decade as Chechnya. So you might have thought that the Russian government's decision last week to declare an end to its "counterterrorism" operations in the territory would have been an occasion for somber reflection in the Western media. Forget it. It's a 600-word news item at best.

Here's a contrast to ponder. Since the beginning of the second intifada in the autumn of 2000, roughly 6,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire. That figure includes combatants, as well as those killed in January's fighting in Gaza.

As for Chechnya, there are no solid figures for the number of civilians killed since the second war began in late 1999; estimates range anywhere between 25,000 and 200,000. Chechnya's population, at a little over one million, is about one-third or one-fourth that of the Palestinians. That works out to between 25 to 200 Chechen deaths per 1,000, as against 1.5 to 2 Palestinian deaths per 1,000.

Now type the words "Palestine" and "genocide" into Google. When I did so Monday, I got 1,630,000 results. Next, substitute "Chechnya" for "Palestine." The number is 245,000. Taking the Google results as a crude measure of global outrage, that means the outrage over the Palestinian situation was 6.6 times greater than over the Chechen one. Yet Chechen fatalities were anywhere between 13 to 133 times greater.

Final calculation: With an "outrage" ratio of 6.6 to one, but a proportional kill ratio of one to 13 (at the very low end), it turns out that every Palestinian death receives somewhere in the order of 28 times the attention of every Chechen death. Remember that in both cases we're mainly talking about Muslims being killed by non-Muslims.

I'll admit this math exercise is a bit of a gimmick. But it raises a worthwhile question: Why is Palestinian life so dear in the eyes of the world -- and Chechen life so cheap?

Maybe the answer is that the Palestinian cause is morally worthier than Chechnya's. But that can't be right. Yes, Chechen terrorists have committed spectacular atrocities, notably the 2004 Beslan school massacre. Yet modern terrorism is a genre Palestinians practically invented. As it is, Chechnya has been suffering grievously under Russia's thumb since the 1800s. (Just read Tolstoy's "Hadji Murat.")

If colonialism is your beef, the case for Chechen independence is inarguable.

Maybe, then, the answer is that there is no shortage of imagery of Palestinian death, and thus it engages more of the world's attention. By contrast, the Russians imposed a virtual media blockade on Chechnya, and journalists who covered the story, like Anna Politkovskaya, had a way of ending up dead.

But imagery need not simply be televised to be vivid, nor does the world lack for testimonials of Russian brutality. "I remember a Chechen female sniper," a Russian soldier told L.A. Times reporter Maura Reynolds. "We just tore her apart with two armored personnel carriers, having tied her ankles with steel cables. There was a lot of blood, but the boys needed it."

Maybe it's that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is simply more important strategically than Russia's war against Chechnya, in the same way that the attacks of 9/11 mattered more in the scheme of things than, say, Tamil Tiger atrocities in Sri Lanka.

Yet even before 9/11, there was evidence that al Qaeda was feeding money and arms to Chechen fighters, putting Chechnya squarely into the context of what became the global war on terror. Evidence of al Qaeda involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is sparser, and only came to light in 2007.

Of course, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict inflames the Muslim world in a way the Chechen one does not. But why is that, when so many more Muslims are being victimized by Russia?

Then too, why does the wider world participate in the Muslim world's moral priorities? Why, for instance, do high-profile Western writers like Portuguese Nobelist José Saramago make "solidarity" pilgrimages to Ramallah, but not to the Chechen capital of Grozny? Why do British academics organize boycotts of their Israeli counterparts, but not their Russian ones? Why is Palestinian statehood considered a global moral imperative, but statehood for Chechnya is not?

Why does every Israeli prime minister invariably become a global pariah, when not one person in a thousand knows the name of Chechen "President" Ramzan Kadyrov, a man who, by many accounts, keeps a dungeon near his house in order to personally torture his political opponents? And why does the fact that Mr. Kadyrov is Vladimir Putin's handpicked enforcer in Chechnya not cause a

shudder of revulsion as the Obama administration reaches for the "reset" button with Russia?

I have a hypothesis. Maybe the world attends to Palestinian grievances but not Chechen ones for the sole reason that Palestinians are, uniquely, the perceived victims of the Jewish state. That is, when

they are not being victimized by other Palestinians. Or being expelled *en masse* from Kuwait. Or being excluded from the labor force in Lebanon. Things you probably didn't know about, either. As for the Chechens, too bad for their cause that no Jew will ever likely become president of Russia.

The European Union Report on Jerusalem: Distortions and Omissions

By Nadav Shragai The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs April 2, 2009

An imbalanced EU position paper on Jerusalem written in December 2008, and recently leaked to the media, completely ignores Israel's historical and legal rights to its capital. The EU attack refers primarily to the City of David, located just beyond Jerusalem's Old City walls, an area identified by archaeologists and historians as the location of King David's capital some 3,000 years ago. Archaeological excavations took place there during Ottoman rule, as well as under the ensuing British Mandatory rule, and they have continued under Israeli rule as well.

About 20 years ago a wave of new, illegal construction by Palestinians began on the site, causing significant and sometimes irreversible damage to the antiquities there. The Jerusalem municipality intends to offer the delinquent residents generous compensation and alternative land in the city.

Jerusalem has had a Jewish majority for the last 150 years - at least since 1864. Israel's position in Jerusalem under international law derives from the Palestine Mandate, where the League of Nations recognized "the historical tie between the Jewish people and Palestine," and called "for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine."

The 1949 Armistice Agreement between Israel and Jordan did not fix the final boundaries between the parties, but only the lines of military separation at the close of the 1948 war. At the demand of the Arab side, the Armistice Agreement stipulated that it did not serve to predetermine the rights of any party in the final resolution of conflict. In other words, upon the outbreak of the Six-Day War, the 1967 lines enjoyed no diplomatic status.

In 1967, Israel agreed to allow the Muslim Waqf to manage the Temple Mount area, with a view toward preventing inter-religious conflict at one of the world's most sensitive sites. This was a huge concession on Israel's part that has never been properly recognized. By doing so, Israel has underscored its intention to assure freedom of access to members of all faiths at all of the holy sites in Jerusalem.

An internal European Union position paper on Jerusalem prepared in December 2008 by the EU ambassadors in Tel Aviv was leaked to the media in March 2009 by the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions.¹ The "EU Heads of Mission Report

on East Jerusalem" accuses the Israeli government of "actively pursuing the illegal annexation" of East Jerusalem, noting that Israeli actions "in East Jerusalem will only make eventual Israeli concessions on Jerusalem much harder."² The report states, "there are currently around 190,000 Israeli settlers living inside East Jerusalem, in addition to around 96,000 in settlements around Jerusalem, the majority living in large settlement blocks such as Givat Ze'ev, the Etzion bloc and Ma'ale Adumim."³

Yet this biased and one-sided document ignores Israel's longstanding legal, national and historical rights to its own capital city. The document also displays an utter disregard of the vast empirical evidence that attests to the 3,000-year-old link between Jerusalem and the Jewish people. With its holy places, the Old City, the region of the Holy Basin and the Temple Mount, the State of Israel - as the state of the Jewish people - has exercised its rights in the city in accordance with the principles of law and natural justice, and has sought to anchor the city's status as Israel's united capital.

The City of David - An Historical Treasure

The EU attack on Israeli activities in Jerusalem refers primarily to the City of David - also known as the Arab village of Silwan - located just south of the Old City walls. The City of David is the area identified by archaeologists and historians as the location of King David's capital some 3,000 years ago. David's son Solomon established the First Temple on the summit of Mount Moriah, where Isaac was bound for sacrifice, a location known today as the Temple Mount.

Archaeological excavations in the City of David took place during Ottoman rule, as well as under the ensuing British Mandatory rule, and have continued under Israeli rule as well, unearthing discoveries of Jewish life and artifacts from various ancient periods. Work at the site has received high praise and vast esteem from throughout the world archaeological community.

Israel has been accused of digging under Palestinian homes and thus endangering them. Yet this argument is a distortion. While part of the supervised excavations do indeed take place under homes, Israel has excavated in the very same way under the houses of Jewish residents in the Jewish Quarter, endangering no one.

Adjacent to the City of David is an area called the King's Garden, described in the books of Nehemiah and Ecclesiastes, as well as in many other historical sources. Scholars, visitors and pilgrims have attributed the area to King David and Solomon. About twenty years ago the Jerusalem municipality repaired a drainage problem at the site after it would turn into a swamp each winter, providing a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other pests.

New Palestinian Construction Spreads Over an Archaeological Site Israel's resolution of the drainage problem brought in its wake a wave of new, illegal construction by Palestinians on the site. While Palestinian Arab residents in Jerusalem can obtain building permits like the city's Jewish residents, the eastern part of Jerusalem has been afflicted with large-scale construction often undertaken without any building license.⁴ This construction often occurs on land zoned for public use (i.e., clinics or parks or, as in this case, an archeological site). In response to the illegal construction in the City of David, the Jerusalem municipality issued demolition orders for 88 structures. Testifying a year ago at the Knesset, the director general of the Israel Antiquities Authority, Joshua Dorfman, estimated that the illegal construction did significant and sometimes irreversible damage to the antiquities at the site. However, only a number of isolated demolitions were carried out.

The Jerusalem municipality is insisting today on carrying out these orders, but given the sensitivity of the issue and international criticism, it intends to offer the delinquent residents generous compensation that includes land at an alternative site in the city. The residents, supported by ideological groups and the Palestinian Authority, have opposed this offer and are engaged in a campaign of incitement against the state's authorities and their attempts to enforce the law. However, after extensive deliberations, the municipal planning committee in early March turned down a plan submitted by the residents to "whitewash" the illegal construction at the site.

As Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat explained, "This is one of the most strategic sites in the city, on an international level, which must be an open public area....I would like to see what [New York Mayor Michael] Bloomberg would say about illegal building in Central Park. Would he give up Central Park because there is illegal building there?"⁵

The Jewish Return to the City of David An additional issue that has served as a pretext for attacks on Israel is renewed Jewish residency in the City of David itself. Scores of Jewish families now live in this area in houses legally purchased at great cost from former Arab residents. No one forced Arab owners to sell properties to Jews and earn substantial profits. The sales were made by

individuals acting of their own free will and in many cases were even documented on video, in order to refute the litany of complaints that were subsequently made by politically motivated groups.

In fact renewed Jewish settlement in the City of David rests on empirical Jewish historic, religious, and cultural ties to the area. Relations between the Jewish and Palestinian residents of the neighborhood are reasonably warm as long as political elements remain uninvolved and do not incite the Palestinian residents. Police sources testify that ever since the Jews began moving into the area, crime and nationalist incidents there have declined sharply.

The EU's Problematic Policy Shift on Jerusalem The recent EU report was not issued in a diplomatic vacuum. Rather, it is the latest manifestation of a problematic shift in EU policy on Jerusalem that began in 1999. The German ambassador to Israel at the time, whose country served as rotating President of the EU, proposed re-dividing Jerusalem by reviving UN Resolution 181 of 1947, that had been drafted before Israel was invaded by the neighboring Arab states in the 1948 war of independence. In fact, Resolution 181 had not proposed that Jerusalem be divided, but rather that it should be internationalized, becoming a *corpus separatum* - a proposal declared by Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, to be "null and void."⁶

The diplomatic resurrection of the idea of denying Israeli sovereignty over its united capital also energized the longstanding Palestinian denial of *any* Jewish connection to Jerusalem. Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Qurie stated at the time in the official Palestinian Authority newspaper *Al-Ayam*, "The (EU's) letter asserts that Jerusalem in both of its parts - the Western and the Eastern - is a land under occupation."⁷

Israeli Rights in Jerusalem According to the new EU document, "The EU policy on Jerusalem is based on the principles set out in UN Security Council Resolution 242." However, Resolution 242, drafted in the aftermath of Israel's defensive Six-Day War in June 1967 and unanimously approved by the Security Council on November 22, 1967, does not mention Jerusalem at all. Moreover, the operative clauses of the resolution never insisted on total withdrawal to the pre-1967 lines, but only on withdrawal from "territories" to "secure and recognized boundaries." The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations in 1967, Arthur Goldberg, wrote retrospectively: "I never described Jerusalem as an occupied area....Resolution 242 does not refer to Jerusalem in any way whatsoever, and this omission was deliberate."⁸

In this context, it should be recalled that between 1948 and 1967 during the period of Jordanian rule in Jerusalem, in contravention of its international legal obligations, Jordan refused to allow Jews access to the Western Wall, the Mount of

Olives, and additional places sacred to Jews under its control. Over 50 synagogues in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City were either destroyed or desecrated, and hundreds of tombstones in the most important Jewish cemetery in the world on the Mount of Olives were desecrated and smashed. The reunification of Jerusalem by Israel in June 1967 restored freedom of religion and worship to all residents of the city - Jews, Muslims and Christians alike.

The European Union report on Jerusalem also ignores the historical progression of Jewish rights and seniority in the city. Jerusalem has had a Jewish majority for the last 150 years - at least since 1864. Israel's position in Jerusalem under international law derives from the Palestine Mandate, where the League of Nations, the repository of international legitimacy prior to the establishment of the United Nations, recognized "the historical tie between the Jewish people and Palestine," and called "for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine." The League of Nations did not distinguish between Jewish rights in Jerusalem and their rights in other areas of Palestine.

Israel's Knesset established Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel in 1950. The Armistice Agreement between Israel and Jordan, signed a year earlier, did not fix the final boundaries between the parties, but only the lines of military separation at the close of the 1948 war. At the demand of the Arab side, the armistice agreement included a clause that stipulated that nothing in this agreement would predetermine the rights of any party with regard to the final resolution of the outstanding issues through peaceful means. In other words, upon the outbreak of the Six-Day War, the 1967 armistice lines enjoyed no legal or diplomatic status.

On June 5, 1967, Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol sent a message to Jordan's King Hussein saying that Israel would not attack Jordan unless it initiated hostilities. Nevertheless, Jordan launched an attack on Israel along the municipal boundary line in Jerusalem. With the liberation of the Old City of

Jerusalem in the course of the Six-Day War, Israel's Knesset applied Israeli law, jurisdiction, and authority to the eastern part of the city.

At the same time, in a concession unprecedented in modern international diplomatic history that has never been properly recognized, Israel agreed to allow the Muslim Waqf to manage the Temple Mount area, with a view toward preventing inter-religious conflict at one of the world's most sensitive sites. By doing so, Israel underscored its intention to assure freedom of access to members of all faiths at all of the holy sites in Jerusalem.

Notes

1. Rory McCarthy, "Israel Annexing East Jerusalem, Says EU," *Guardian* (UK), 7 March 2009.
2. "EU Heads of Mission Report on East Jerusalem," *EU Observer*, 8 March 2009, <http://euobserver.com/9/27736>
3. *Ibid.*
4. Justus Reid Weiner, *Illegal Construction in Jerusalem: A Variation on an Alarming Global Phenomenon* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2003).
5. Etgar Lefkovits, "Barkat May Relocate Silwan Residents," *Jerusalem Post*, 19 March 2009, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1237461629053&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>
6. Dore Gold, *The Fight for Jerusalem: Radical Islam, the West, and the Future of the Holy City* (Washington: Regnery, 2007), pp. 193-4.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Gold, p. 174.

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How aboriginal rights shaped the 20th century

By Allen Z. Hertz *The Jerusalem Post* April 12, 2009

For more than 60 years, there has been a bitter dispute over the unwillingness of most Muslims and Arabs to accept the legitimacy and permanence of Israel as an independent Jewish state in the Middle East. In this connection, Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have denied that the Jews are a people within the context of the modern political and legal doctrine of the self-determination of peoples.

However, there is an enormous body of archeological and historical evidence demonstrating that the Jewish people - like the Greek people or the Han Chinese people - is among the oldest of the

world's peoples. And, it is well known that the Jewish people has more than 3,500 years of continuous history, with a subjective-objective national identity that, in each century, has kept a link to the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. For example, the Jewish Bible, the Christian Gospels and the Koran all specifically testify to the connection between the Jewish people and its historic homeland.

Like other peoples, the Jewish people has a right to self-determination. Though the self-determination of the Arab people is expressed via 21 Arab countries, Israel is the sole expression of the self-

determination of the Jewish people, which of all extant peoples, has the strongest claim to be considered aboriginal to the territory west of the Jordan River. Thus, the Jewish people is aboriginal to Israel in the same way that, in Canada, certain First Nations are deemed aboriginal to their ancestral lands. And, it is noteworthy that the Supreme Court of Canada has decided that, where aboriginals maintain their historical connection with the land, aboriginal title can survive both sovereignty changes and influx of new populations resulting from foreign conquest.

In this regard, it is essential to recognize that the Middle East has always had a significant Jewish population, including some Jews who, in each century, continued to live west of the Jordan River. Today, many of the sons and daughters of these Middle Eastern Jews are citizens of Israel, where they have been joined by Jews from many other countries. Though some Western thinkers are now uncomfortable with the idea of a nation-state as the homeland of a particular people, that is no reason to target Israel, because the overwhelming majority of modern states are the homeland of a particular people, e.g., Japan, Italy or the 21 countries of the Arab League.

Israel and 30-odd other modern countries are all successor states of the Muslim Ottoman Empire, which for 400 years (1516-1920) was the principal power in the Near and Middle East. Apart from the ruling Turks, the Ottoman population was composed of several large ethnic groups, including Greeks, Armenians, Kurds, Arabs and Jews. For centuries, these Jews lived in large numbers in a variety of Ottoman venues - including Constantinople, Salonika, Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, Baghdad, Basra, Tiberias, Hebron, Safed, Jaffa and Jerusalem.

In late October 1914, the Ottoman Empire opted to enter World War I to fight against the United Kingdom and its allies. As the fortunes of war began to favor the British army, the United Kingdom addressed the question of what to do with the multinational Ottoman lands both in the light of current British interests and the 19th-century liberal doctrine of the self-determination of peoples. In this regard, the father of modern political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, in his 1896 manifesto *The Jewish State*, had already proclaimed that Jews, though living in many different places around the globe, constituted one people for the purpose of self-determination.

IN October 1917, the British cabinet adopted, as a declared war aim, the creation of an entirely new country called Palestine to serve as "a national home for the Jewish people." This was done to help realize the Jewish people's self-determination on its ancestral lands; to shore up Jewish support for the Allied war effort in revolutionary Russia and the US; and to help the British better cover the eastern flank

of the Suez Canal, which was then the crucial gateway to British India. The intention to create this Jewish national home in Palestine was announced to the world in the November 1917 Balfour Declaration.

As Great Britain worked to defeat the Ottoman Turks, the world also began to learn about the national claims of the Arab people. Here, recall the wartime exploits of Lawrence of Arabia and the Hashemite Prince Feisal ibn Hussein, both of whom were present at the 1919-1920 Paris Peace Conference. There, a powerful international searchlight was trained on the self-determination of peoples, including the claims of the Arab people.

However, no one there had ever heard anything about a distinct Palestinian Arab people. Had there then been such a distinct Palestinian Arab people, Prince Feisal, US president Woodrow Wilson, France's prime minister Georges Clemenceau, British prime minister David Lloyd George and others would have known about it. This assessment is confirmed by extensive local testimony and petitions collected in 1919 by the US King-Crane Commission, which told President Wilson that Arabs around the Jordan River specifically rejected any plan to create a new country called Palestine. To the contrary, local Arabs then enthusiastically sought creation of a new, unitary Arab state matching the then Ottoman province of Syria, which for centuries had included modern Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel.

The 1919-1920 Paris Peace Conference was concerned with the task of accommodating the political interests of the victorious Allied and associated powers with the claims to self-determination of well-known peoples which had long histories of national self-affirmation and bitter suffering under foreign oppression. Thus, considered were difficult and entangled issues touching the self-determination of such famous peoples as the Chinese, the Poles, the Germans, the Finns, the Letts, the Latvians, the Estonians, the Czechs, the Slovaks, the Serbs, the Slovenes, the Croats, the Italians, the Hungarians, the Romanians, the Bulgarians, the Greeks, the Turks, the Kurds, the Armenians, the Arabs and the Jews. In this larger context, just one decision among many was creation of an entirely new country called "Palestine" as "a national home for the Jewish people."

The international decision to establish "a national home for the Jewish people" was the sole rationale for the 1922 creation of Jewish national home in Palestine which, under the aegis of the League of Nations, was administered by the British until May 1948, when Israel declared independence. Decision-makers at the 1919-1920 Paris Peace Conference knew that Palestine would initially lack a Jewish majority population. However, the international decision to create Palestine "as a national home for the Jewish people" was made not

so much on the basis of local demographics, but in recognition of the Jewish people's aboriginal title and continuing links to the land around the Jordan River, as well as with regard to broader considerations of demography, history, politics and social justice that were both global and Middle Eastern. Thus, there was a conscious choice to refer - not just to the 85,000 Jews then living locally - but also to the past, present and future of 14 million Jews worldwide, including the 1 million Jews then living in the Near and Middle East.

Failure to create a Jewish national home in Palestine would have meant denying the Jewish people a share in the partition of the multiethnic Ottoman Empire, where Jews had lived for centuries, including some west of the Jordan River. Failure to create a Jewish national home in Palestine would also have meant that the Arab people would have received almost the whole of the Ottoman inheritance. That result would have been unacceptable to David Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson and their peers, because they clearly understood that the claim to self-determination of the Jewish people was no less compelling than that of the Arab people.

The Paris decision-makers strongly believed that they had also done justice to the claims of the Arab people, whom they had freed from 400 years of Turkish rule and helped on the road to independence via the creation or recognition of several new Arab states on territory that had formerly been subject to the Ottoman sultan. Moreover, the decision to create Jewish national home in Palestine did not result in the displacement of any Arabs. To the contrary, from 1922 until 1948, the Arab population of Palestine almost tripled, while the Jewish population multiplied eight times. The later problem of Arab refugees (about 736,000) from Palestine and Jewish refugees (about 850,000) from Arab countries only emerged from May 1948, when local Arabs allied with several neighboring Arab states to launch a war to exterminate the Jews living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

Like the Greek people or the Han Chinese people, the Jewish people has kept the same name and subjective-objective national identity, in each and every century, since ancient times. By contrast, the first steps toward a distinct, subjective-objective Palestinian Arab identity were taken only after the international community had already created a new country called "Palestine" to serve as "a national home for the Jewish people." Thus, the continuing subjective-objective national identity of the Jewish people and the creation of Jewish national home in Palestine were both preconditions for the subsequent evolution of a distinct, subjective-objective Palestinian Arab identity. This logical sequence reminds us that the history of Palestine

(1922-1948) and the factual existence of modern Israel are only explicable because the subjective-objective national identity of the Jewish people, and its continuous link to the lands west of the Jordan River, precede by around 3,500 years the formation of a distinct, subjective-objective Palestinian Arab identity and any articulated Palestinian Arab claim to a hypothetical Palestinian Arab state that has, in fact, never existed.

Thus, deep into the 20th century, Arab leaders themselves failed to recognize the right to self-determination of a distinct Palestinian Arab people. For example, as principal Arab leader at the 1919-1920 Paris Peace Conference, Prince Feisal specifically accepted the plan to create Palestine as "a national home for the Jewish people" and his father, the Hashemite king of the Hejaz (later part of Saudi Arabia) was party to the 1920 Sevres Treaty that explicitly stipulated that the newly-created Palestine would be "a national home for the Jewish people."

And, decades later, the governments of Jordan and Egypt showed how little regard they had for the self-determination of a distinct Palestinian Arab people; first, by rejecting the 1947 UN plan to partition Palestine into two new independent states, the one Jewish and the other Arab; and second, by themselves failing to create a new Palestinian Arab state, between 1949 and 1967, when Egypt held the Gaza Strip and Jordan administered east Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Such analysis does not deny the current existence of a distinct Palestinian Arab people; nor does it claim that such a Palestinian Arab people is without rights. Rather, the conclusion is that there are rights on all sides, and that there should be a peaceful process that respectfully reconciles the rights of the Palestinian Arab people with the prior rights of the Jewish people.

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A Loud and Promised Land

By David Brooks *The New York Times* April 17, 2009

On my 12th visit to Israel, I finally had my baptism by traffic accident. I was sitting at a red light, when a bus turning the corner honked at me to back up. When I did, I scraped the fender of the car behind me.

The driver — a young, hip-looking, alt-rocker dude — came running out of the car in a fury. He ran up to the bus driver and got into a ferocious screaming match. Then he came up to me graciously and kindly. We were brothers in the war against bus drivers. Then, as we were filling out our paperwork, another bus happened by and honked. The rocker ran out into the street and got into another ferocious screaming match with this driver. Then he came back to me all smiles and warmth.

Israel is a country held together by argument. Public culture is one long cacophony of criticism. The politicians go at each other with a fury we can't even fathom in the U.S. At news conferences, Israeli journalists ridicule and abuse their national leaders. Subordinates in companies feel free to correct their superiors. People who move here from Britain or the States talk about going through a period of adjustment as they learn to toughen up and talk back.

Ethan Bronner, *The Times's* Jerusalem bureau chief, notes that Israelis don't observe the distinction between the public and private realms. They treat strangers as if they were their brothers-in-law and feel perfectly comfortable giving them advice on how to live.

One Israeli acquaintance recounts the time he was depositing money into his savings account and everybody else behind him in line got into an argument about whether he should really be putting his money somewhere else. Another friend tells of the time he called directory assistance to get a phone number for a restaurant. The operator responded, "You don't want to eat there," and proceeded to give him the numbers of some other restaurants she thought were better.

We can all think of reasons that Israeli culture should have evolved into a reticence-free zone, and that the average behavior should be different here. This is a tough, scrappy country, perpetually fighting for survival. The most emotionally intense experiences are national ones, so the public-private distinction was bound to erode. Moreover, the status system doesn't really revolve around money. It consists of trying to prove you are savvier than

everybody else, that above all you are nobody's patsy.

As an American Jew, I was taught to go all goopy-eyed at the thought of Israel, but I have to confess, I find the place by turns exhausting, admirable, annoying, impressive and foreign. Israel's enemies claim the country is an outpost of Western colonialism. That's not true. Israel is, in large measure, a Middle Eastern country, and the Israeli-Arab dispute is in part an intra-Mideast conflict.

This culture of disputatiousness does yield some essential fruits. First, it gives the country a special vividness. There is no bar on earth quite so vibrant as a bar filled with Israelis.

Second, it explains the genuine national unity. Israel is the most diverse small country imaginable. Nonetheless, I may be interviewing a left-wing artist in Tel Aviv or a right-wing settler in Hebron, and I can be highly confident that they will have a few things in common: an intense sense of national mission, a hunger for emotionally significant moments, an inability to read social signals when I try to suggest that I really don't want them to harangue me about moving here and adopting their lifestyle.

Most important, this argumentative culture nurtures a sense of responsibility. The other countries in this region are more gracious, but often there is a communal unwillingness to accept responsibility for national problems. The Israelis, on the other hand, blame themselves for everything and work hard to get the most out of each person. From that wail of criticism things really do change. I come here nearly annually, and while the peace process is always the same, there is always something unrecognizable about the national scene — whether it is the structure of the political parties, the absorption of immigrants or the new engines of economic growth.

Today, Israel is stuck in a period of frustrating stasis. Iran poses an existential threat that is too big for Israel to deal with alone. Hamas and Hezbollah will frustrate peace plans, even if the Israelis magically do everything right.

This conflict will go on for a generation or more. Israelis will keep up their insufferable and necessary barrage of self-assertion. And yet we still dream of peace and the day when I am standing in line at an Israeli cash register and an Israeli shopper sees a chance to butt in front of me, and — miracle of miracles — she will not try to take it.

If only Israel would get over that darned Holocaust.

Yeah, that's the ticket By David Rothkopf *Foreign Policy* April 20, 2009

Roger Cohen's piece called "Israel, Iran and Fear" in the Sunday New York Times contained just enough

truth to very likely distract some readers from the

two deep and dangerous misunderstandings on which it is based.

The piece essentially argued at the outset that Israel should get over the Holocaust in the way that Germany has. The misconception here, of course, is failing to recognize that getting over the Holocaust was as essential to Germany's survival as never forgetting it has been to Israel's. Germany could not move forward into being the vibrant democracy Cohen praised it for being unless it did what was necessary to accept responsibility for its bestial heritage and then able to compartmentalize that, effectively putting it in a museum to be viewed periodically, to be acknowledged, but also to be quarantined off from daily life. An Israel that dropped its guard and accepted the promises of its neighbors at face value (or, as paradoxically implicitly suggested by Cohen, dismissed the threats of its neighbors as bombast) could very well have long ago ceased to exist.

Cohen believes Israel needs to stop "overstating" the threats around it, which he asserts are linked to never having gotten over the Holocaust, and for my money, undermines his credibility further by quoting Jimmy Carter to support his argument. Cohen suggests, as does Carter, that Israel's policies are too driven by unjustified fear of enemies that it easily outclasses in might. His implication is that if they did get over this fear, they would not act so harshly against their enemies and adopt policies that only inflame the situation. Further, if they got "over" the Holocaust (and the millennia of constant and brutal persecution that preceded it) perhaps they would not be so easily able or inclined to justify getting overly tough with their enemies.

The notable element of truth in Cohen's analysis is that the perpetuating the policy of building settlements on Palestinian land actually only inflames the situation. The policy needs to stop and Israel does need to move assertively forward toward a two-state solution for the reasons he states and that have been widely accepted worldwide.

However, his second major misconception (and Carter's) is of course, that somehow Israel is safer than it depicts, that the threat of its destruction is overstated by Israelis to serve political purposes. This is just patent nonsense. Sure, Israel has a powerful military. But that army has already proven

to be an ineffective defense against asymmetric warfare: It may win battles but for over twenty years it has regularly lost ground for Israel politically while failing to reduce the threat from its enemies. Secondly, those enemies are the ones continuously calling for the destruction of Israel -- the Iranians and the extremist mullahs throughout the region are not doing it just to prop up the Israeli PR machine.

Third, as we move toward an era in the region in which there will be more nuclear weapons and materials scattered about we need realize that only one or two well placed devices (they can be delivered in VWs if missiles are unavailable) would have a devastating, perhaps permanently shattering impact on Israeli society.

There is one more thing that weakens Cohen's argument. He asserts Israel is strong in part because of the "cast-iron security guarantee" of the U.S. First, I find this kind of disingenuous given the regular efforts that Cohen makes to undercut that "guarantee by lobbying for a different U.S. stance on that front. But secondly, I think this point is overstated precisely because I think U.S. support for Israel is about to go through a measurable weakening. Part of this is due to the growing popularity of views like those of Cohen's regarding the U.S. having been too slavishly supportive of Israel in the past. Part of this is due to the odiousness of some of the approaches taken by the Israelis--either in Gaza or with regard to settlements. And part of this is due to the missteps of some supporters of Israel in Washington.

Notably on this front, see the CQ article, "Sources: Wiretap Recorded Rep. Harman Promising to Intervene for AIPAC" by Jeff Stein. If the piece is true, the degree to which some of Israel's most extreme supporters in Washington went to win favor for their views may well be their own undoing, not just legally or professionally but in terms of the debate about the future of the U.S.-Israel relationship.

So, let's see what we've got: Weaker backing from the U.S. Likely nukes in Iran and other countries in the region. Eroding political support worldwide. Continuing calls from neighbors for its destruction. A demographic timebomb at its heart. Sure, now I see why Israel should relax and "get over" its fears for its own survival.

Please join in welcoming Herb Keinon of the Jerusalem Post who will be speaking at Suburban Orthodox, 7504 Seven Mile Lane in Baltimore (Pikesville) on Sunday April 26 at 7:30 pm. His topic is American - Israel relations in the Age of Obama and Netanyahu. The event is without charge and sponsored by the Religious Zionists of America – Baltimore District and the Berman family. Questions and answer session will follow the talk. For more details, please call Sheldon at (410) 371-8196.

The U.N.'s Anti-racism Conference

By Gerald M. Steinberg The Wall Street Journal Europe April 22, 2009

Geneva shows that the best hope for restoring human rights is to deny these corrupt events the veneer of legitimacy.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's tirade Monday to the United Nations' "antiracism" conference should not have surprised anyone. The Iranian president denounced Israel, or the "Zionist entity" as he calls it, which, according to his version of history, was created by Europe and the U.S. on the "pretext of Jewish suffering" in World War II. He spoke of a world-wide Zionist conspiracy, referring to Israelis as "those racist perpetrators of genocide."

European delegates walk out on Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Monday in Geneva.

Many people walked out, including those European diplomats whose governments had ignored the warning signs and chosen to participate in this conference. They were cheered by Jewish NGO members and students who had come to ensure that this conference would not take the anti-Semitic path of the 2001 Durban catastrophe.

In a packed unofficial session on anti-Semitism the next day, Holocaust survivor and memorializer Elie Wiesel demanded an apology from the U.N. for even inviting Mr. Ahmadinejad, who has long been infamous for his Holocaust denial and calls for the destruction of the Jewish state.

Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz spoke of the Iran-Hamas link and attacks against Israel in the Arab world and by the left in the West. And ex-gulag resident Natan Sharansky condemned the Orwellian spectacle of an antiracism conference run by some of the world's worst human-rights violators, an absurdity that reminded him of Soviet show trials.

Consider that Libya and Iran were the leading organizers of this conference and thus responsible for drafting declarations that single out Israel among the nations for condemnation -- the modern form of anti-Semitism. After Mr. Ahmadinejad's address, the conference got down to business: The Syrian, Qatari and Palestinian representatives spoke of Israel's "racism," though the status of minorities and women in their own jurisdictions was off-limits, of course. Other Arab speakers focused on what they consider to be the worst form of racism: insults to Islam and the prophet Muhammad. Muslim countries have long been pushing for international laws to criminalize such "insults." Draft declarations of the Geneva conference called for limits to freedom of speech with respect to religion, i.e. Islam. Little wonder then that 10 democratic countries -- first Canada, followed by Israel, the United States, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic -- chose to stay away from this farce.

The Geneva conference has so far not seen the type of anti-Semitic excesses as witnessed in Durban, where Jews were physically attacked and Hitler's "Mein Kampf" was handed out.

But the radical agendas of many powerful NGOs is at display at numerous "side events." A London-based group called "Islamic Human Rights Commission" brought three Hasidic Jews to hold signs proclaiming "Zionism is racism." The organization "North-South 21," which is closely linked to the Libyan regime, organized a session on "Occupation and Discrimination," featuring Ramsey Clark, a former U.S. attorney general and now left-wing activist who accuses Israel of "genocide." Radical pro-Palestinian groups such as Badil and Ittajah held an "Israel Review Conference," which discussed how to press war-crime charges against Israelis in Western courts and cut off Western arms sales to the Jewish state. Unlike in 2001, the more prominent NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International did not take part at these sessions, even though they are playing a central role in international campaigns to delegitimize Israel.

Once again, the obsessive focus on the Jewish state meant that the real problems of racism and genocide were largely ignored at this U.N. conference. Only outside the official U.N. antiracism conference, at well-attended "counterconferences" organized by NGOs such as U.N. Watch, did the real victims of racism and mass murder get the attention they deserved.

Only at those counterconferences could one witness moving presentations by victims of Iranian oppression, survivors of the Rwandan genocide and the continuing slaughter in Darfur. And on Monday night, when Jews marked Holocaust Memorial Day, a large gathering stood quietly honoring the victims while the language of human rights was being abused in the U.N. building.

Human Rights Watch, which played an active role in the 2001 fiasco, had tried hard to pressure the Obama administration to abandon core moral principles and participate in the review conference. President Obama rejected this advice, and in a tacit rebuke to the NGO lobby explained that the foundations of the Durban process are fundamentally incompatible with universal human-rights norms. A new structure is necessary if these values are to be given serious attention.

At the same time, though, President Obama has sought to placate the NGO lobby by agreeing to rejoin the failed U.N. Human Rights Council. The main lesson from this week's events is that the best hope for restoring human rights is to deny such corrupt organizations the veneer of legitimacy.

Focus should be on avoiding the next Holocaust

By Walter Reich The Baltimore Sun April 21, 2009

President Barack Obama will deliver the keynote address at Tuesday's Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony in the Capitol Rotunda. The theme for this year's ceremony is "Never Again: What You Do Matters." The theme emphasizes individual responsibility. In what he says about this theme at the ceremony, and in what he does about it afterward, Mr. Obama should avoid platitudes. As an individual and as president - and in urgent response to the outrageously belligerent statement about the Holocaust made at a U.N. conference on Monday by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran - he should speak not only about the past but also about the future. And in doing so, he should lead the world by example.

Until now, Holocaust remembrance has been about the past: the systematic murder by Nazi Germany of 6 million European Jews between 1939 and 1945. Suddenly, Holocaust remembrance is also about the future. It's about the threatened murder by Iran of nearly 6 million Israeli Jews. And, even worse, it's about the potential murder of many millions more. The meaning of "never again" has never been as clear or as urgent.

In 1939, Adolf Hitler issued his "prophecy" that the Jews would be exterminated. And now, Mr. Ahmadinejad, even as he races to build nuclear weapons, denies that the Holocaust ever happened and threatens the elimination of Israel. In his speech Monday at the U.N.'s "anti-racism" conference in Geneva, he called the Holocaust an "ambiguous and dubious question" and a "pretext of Jewish sufferings." Hitler justified his animus against the Jews by accusing them of manipulating international finance and world governments. And Mr. Ahmadinejad, in his speech Monday, justified his animus against Israel, as he'd done before, by hurling the same accusations against "the Zionists."

Mr. Ahmadinejad also argued that it's "Zionists" - by which term he means Jews - who manipulate governments and nations. "It is time," he said, that "the ideal of Zionism, which is the paragon of racism, be broken." The seriousness of this threat by the bellicose leader of a country clearly rushing to amass nuclear weapons, and utterly committed to the elimination of Israel, can hardly be exaggerated.

The fact that the U.S. and eight other nations had already decided to boycott the conference, and the fact that, in the midst of Mr. Ahmadinejad's vitriolic, Holocaust-denying and Israel-threatening speech, several dozen European diplomats walked out, won't slow Mr. Ahmadinejad's march toward nuclear weapons. Nor will it diminish the chance that he will actually use them. He's been chastised before, and it hasn't stopped him. Nor has Mr. Obama's hope to "reach out" to him induced him to

calm his bellicose rhetoric or stop spinning his centrifuges. The bellicose rhetoric, like the bellicose rhetoric of murderous leaders six and seven decades ago, sustains and justifies the rush to violence. He's a man obsessed and determined, and is fast on his way to building the instruments of mass death. Clearly the deadly past has become a frightening portent of a deadly future. And the Obama administration's readiness to drop the demand that Iran suspend its nuclear program while negotiating about it could guarantee that, as the talks proceed, the centrifuges will continue to spin, the warheads will be made, the rockets will be poised, and Iran will be ready to strike. So, on this Holocaust Remembrance Day, the past is threatening to become prologue. In Israel, sorrow is being joined by fear. And "never again," so often an elevated but empty slogan, has become, at least for Israelis, a grim and concrete vow.

Too much is at stake - not only for Israel and its Jews but also for America and world. A nuclear exchange between Iran and Israel could kill many times 6 million, both Israelis and Iranians. And before any exchange - even if Iran only uses its nuclear weapons for blackmail - other nuclear powers, frightened by Iran, will emerge in the region. Saudi Arabia, Egypt and several others will have their own arsenals. At least the Cold War, horrible as it was in potential, could be controlled. The world created by a nuclear Iran could never be controlled. And the nuclear-tipped rockets shot off by those countries could reach well beyond the Middle East into Europe and elsewhere.

In addressing the theme of "never again," President Obama should acknowledge not only the concrete danger of the "again" but also his responsibility, as an individual and as president, to avert it. Mr. Obama should explain why talking to Iran is necessary. But he should also explain, as the nuclear clock ticks on, what he'd say - and what he'd do if, after a reasonable effort, it becomes apparent that Iran is only using the talks as a tactical maneuver to buy the little time still needed to build nuclear weapons.

Options are available, in the form of sharply targeted sanctions against elements in the Iranian regime, that at least have a chance of slowing, and even preventing, Iranian weaponization. Mr. Obama should make it clear that he's ready to pursue those options, and any others he thinks might work and would be compatible with world peace - and, given the urgency, he should make clear his timetable for doing so. He owes that to the victims of the last Holocaust. And he owes it to the potential victims, far greater in number, of the next.

Walter Reich is a former director of the United States Holocaust Memorial.