

Breaking faith with Israel By The Washington Times editorial May 6, 2009

Will the United States sell out its strongest ally in the Middle East to cozy up to its worst enemy? The Washington Times reports today that the Israeli government is increasingly worried that the Obama administration will break a 40-year understanding between Washington and Tel Aviv to keep Israel's clandestine nuclear program a secret.

Iran has long complained that Israel is given a pass on the nuclear issue. The Jewish state is suspected of possessing a small atomic arsenal, but it has never officially admitted to having a nuclear-weapons program and is not a signatory to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (nuclear states India, Pakistan and North Korea have also declined to sign). The United States has officially remained silent. Iran says it is a double standard.

On the contrary, we say it shows the United States has standards. America treats Israel and Iran differently because they are fundamentally different. Israel is a dependable U.S. ally and a free liberal democracy. Iran is a long-standing enemy of the United States, is directly or indirectly responsible via Iraqi insurgents and others for more deaths of U.S. service members than any country since the Vietnam War. Its people suffer under an oppressive theocracy. We approve of an Israeli nuclear force for the same reason we approve of a British, French or American nuclear force: We know it will serve peaceful purposes. We oppose an Iranian nuclear force for the same reason we oppose a North Korean nuclear force: We know it will not serve a peaceful purpose. Any attempt to establish parity between Israel and Iran on the nuclear issue is dangerous and naive.

The United States has adopted a policy of strategic ambiguity on the issue, which is a useful tool in the hands of skilled diplomats. Our fear is that the current romantic fascination with the notion of a Grand Bargain - a comprehensive diplomatic agreement that will solve all outstanding issues in the Middle East - will push the Obama administration toward opening the question of the Israeli nuclear force. Pressing Israel to make its suspected nuclear arsenal into a bargaining chip only weakens our allies without defanging our foes.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration sounds Iran's talking points. Last month during his

European trip, President Obama pledged to "seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." In 2006, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad demanded that "the Middle East be free of nuclear weapons, not only the Middle East, but the whole world should be free of nuclear weapons." In 2005, the Gulf Cooperation Council called for a Middle East nuclear-free zone and urged Israel to "adhere to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to open all its nuclear installations for international inspection."

Prince Turki al-Faisal, former Saudi ambassador to the United States, recently told The Washington Times that, ideally, the U.N. Security Council would enforce such a nuclear-free zone and authorize military action against states that refused to denuclearize. Noting that Israel would never agree to such a framework, he shrugged: "So what? It's still a good idea."

We respectfully disagree. The notion that a nuclear-free world would be peaceful and secure is fatuous. The world was certainly not a nonviolent paradise before the advent of nuclear weapons. If anything, the Israeli nuclear arsenal has been a force for peace in the region. Arab conventional armies attacked Israel four times between 1948 and 1973. Since the suspected arrival of an Israeli nuclear capability, no country in the region has mounted another such invasion and Egypt and Jordan have made peace with Israel.

Meanwhile, Iran has underwritten continued terrorist attacks and pledged to wipe Israel off the map. For this reason alone, Tel Aviv should never be asked to give up its nuclear deterrent. It is a matter of national survival. As Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly told then-President Clinton in the 1990s when asked to sign a treaty that would restrict Israel's access to fissile material, "We will not sign the treaty because we will not commit suicide."

If the Obama administration is genuinely interested in achieving durable peace in the Middle East, it will renew the policy of strategic ambiguity. Now is not the time to hit the reset button on one of the most successful strategies in U.S. diplomatic history.

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Why Jane Fonda is Banned in Beirut

By William Marling The Wall Street Journal May 1, 2009

Anti-Semitism leads to startling censorship in Lebanon. A professor at the American University here recently ordered copies of "The Diary of Anne Frank" for his classes, only to learn that the book is banned. Inquiring further, he discovered a long list of prohibited books, films and music.

This is perplexing -- and deeply ironic -- because Beirut has been named UNESCO's 2009 "World Book Capital City." Just last week "World Book and Copyright Day" was kicked off with a variety of readings and exhibits that honor "conformity to the principles of freedom of expression [and] freedom to publish," as stated by the UNESCO Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the UNESCO's "Florence Agreement." The catch is that Lebanon has not signed the Florence Agreement, which focuses on the free circulation of print and audio-visual material.

Even a partial list of books banned in Lebanon gives pause: William Styron's "Sophie's Choice"; Thomas Keneally's "Schindler's List"; Thomas Friedman's "From Beirut to Jerusalem"; books by Philip Roth, Saul Bellow and Isaac Bashevis Singer. In fact, all books that portray Jews, Israel or Zionism favorably are banned.

Writers in Arabic are not exempt. Abdo Wazen's "The Garden of the Senses" and Layla Baalbaki's "Hana's Voyage to the Moon" were taken to court. Syria's Sadiq Jalal al-Azm was prosecuted for his "Critique of Religious Thinking."

Censorship is carried out by the Sûreté General, which combines the functions of the FBI, CIA, and Homeland Security. It does not post a list of banned works, much less answer questions. However a major book importer, in an email, provided a list of banned films and the reasons given by the Sûreté. *Here are some:* "A Voice From Heaven" (verses of Koran recited during dance scenes); "Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert" (homosexuality); "Barfly" (blacklisted company Canon); and "Daniel Deronda" (shot in Israel).

All of Jane Fonda's films are banned, since she visited Israel in 1982 to court votes for Tom Hayden's Senate run. "Torn Curtain" is banned: Paul Newman starred in "Exodus." And the television

series "The Nanny" is banned because of Fran Drescher.

According to Beirut newspaper L'Orient, any one of the recognized religions (a system known as "confessionalism") can ask the Sûreté to ban any book unilaterally. The Muslim Dar al-Fatwa and the Catholic Information Center are the most active and effective. (The latter got Dan Brown's "The Da Vinci Code" banned.) Even works by self-proclaimed Islamists such as Assadeq al-Nayhoum's "Islam Held Hostage," have been banned, and issued only when re-edited in sympathetic editions (in Syria).

Censorship is a problem throughout the Arabic-speaking world. Though a signatory of the Florence Agreement, the Academy of Islamic Research in Egypt, through its censorship board al-Azhar, decides what may not be printed: Nobel Prize winner Naghib Mahfouz's "Awlad Haratina" (The Sons of the Medina) was found sacrilegious and only printed in bowdlerized form in Egypt in 2006. Saudi Arabia sponsors international book fairs in Riyadh, but Katia Ghosn reported in L'Orient that it sends undercover agents into book stores regularly.

Works that could stimulate dialogue in Lebanon are perfunctorily banned. "Waltz with Bashir," an Israeli film of 2008, is banned -- even though it alleges that Ariel Sharon was complicit in the Sabra and Shatilla massacres. According to the Web site Monstersandcritics, however, "Waltz with Bashir" became an instant classic in the very Palestinian camps it depicts, because it is the only history the younger generation has. But how did those copies get there?

The answer is also embarrassing. Just as it ignores freedom of circulation, Lebanon also ignores international copyright laws. Books of all types are routinely photocopied for use in high schools and universities. As for DVDs, you have only to mention a title and a pirated copy appears. "Slumdog Millionaire" was available in video shops before it opened in the U.S.

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A cautionary tale By Caroline Glick

Just in time for the annual AIPAC conference, the US Justice Department announced last week it is dismissing its charges against former AIPAC staffers Keith Weissman and Steve Rosen. Their prosecution, and what it exposed about the nature of AIPAC, and the position of Israel, and of pro-Israel Jews and non-Jews in America must serve as a

The Jerusalem Post May 4, 2009

cautionary tale for Israel and its American supporters.

A brief summary of the now five-year-old affair is in order. In August 2004, just as the question of how the Bush administration should contend with Iran's nuclear weapons program was becoming the issue of the day, CBS news reported on an "Israeli spy scandal." According to that report, AIPAC

lobbyists were working with a pro-Israel, neo-conservative hawk in the Pentagon and the Israeli embassy in Washington to try to force the Bush administration to adopt a more confrontational policy towards Iran due both to its nuclear weapons development program and to its central role in fomenting the insurgency in Iraq.

At the time, as a New York Times report noted, the Bush administration had yet to adopt a clear policy on Iran. As one government source told the newspaper, "We have an ad hoc policy [on Iran] that we're making up as we go along." The idea behind the AIPAC spy scandal story then was that these nefarious pro-Israel forces were being used by Israel to compel the Bush administration to adopt Jerusalem's preferred policy on Iran.

The truth however, was far less impressive. In the event, Rosen and Weissman were approached by Pentagon analyst Larry Franklin (who happens to be Catholic, not Jewish). Franklin asked them to use their connections with the National Security Council to make then-president George W. Bush aware of Iran's central role in the insurgency in Iraq and of its swift progress in its nuclear program. He felt that this information was being obfuscated by the CIA and the State Department in their briefings to the president.

After that meeting, Franklin was approached by the FBI, which had been wiretapping his conversations, and was compelled to entrap Rosen and Weissman in a sting operation. He was given false information relating to a supposed imminent threat to the lives of Israeli agents operating in Iraqi Kurdistan which he passed to Weissman and Rosen, who in turn, passed it on to Naor Gillon then serving at the Israeli embassy. It was this incident that spurred the CBS report and the accusations that Weissman and Rosen were Israeli spies.

Rosen and Weissman were indicted under the 1918 Espionage Act - a law that had not been enforced since World War I - and accused of "conspiracy to communicate national defense information to people not entitled to receive it." The maximum penalty for this offense is ten years in prison.

Franklin, for his part was sentenced to 12 years in prison for mishandling classified information. For similar offenses, prominent Democrats like former national security advisor Sandy Berger and former CIA director John Deutch were dispatched with misdemeanor convictions and slaps on their wrists from friendly prosecutors. Franklin's lawyer is now seeking to overturn his conviction.

The decision to prosecute Weissman, Rosen and Franklin was clearly political - and deeply discriminatory. In speaking to Franklin and acting on the information he provided them, Weissman and Rosen did nothing that lobbyists and journalists in Washington don't do every day of the year. By

selectively choosing to enforce an arguably defunct law against them - and against no one else - the FBI and the Justice Department and whatever forces in the State Department the CIA and elsewhere that supported them made clear that the US government will treat pro-Israel forces in Washington differently than everyone else.

This politically motivated prosecution was wildly successful. No, it didn't lead to Rosen and Weissman being convicted of anything. But that was never the point. The prosecutors - and those faceless bureaucrats pulling the strings - managed to drag not only Weissman's and Rosen's names through the mud for five years, they managed to cast a pall of criminality and treason on the whole pro-Israel community and the hawks in the Pentagon that tended to agree with them on matters of national security policy.

And having accomplished this goal, the forces behind the Rosen-Weissman-Franklin persecutions went on to intimidate AIPAC into firing Rosen and Weissman. In an act of disgraceful cowardice, AIPAC not only fired the men, they refused to pay their legal fees and so cast them adrift as millions of dollars in legal bills began piling up.

AIPAC was not alone in abandoning these men to their fates. Aside from some lone voices - almost never heard above a whisper - the organized American Jewish community lost its voice when it came to the AIPAC scandal. While behind closed doors everyone was quick to shake their heads and acknowledge the obvious fact that these men were being railroaded in a scandalous abuse of legal power, in public everyone was mute. There were no angry letters to the White House and the Attorney General's office demanding an explanation of how these prosecutions came about. There were no demonstrations outside the Justice Department demanding that the charges be dismissed. There was no media campaign to discredit the decision to abuse legal tools to weaken the pro-Israel community and specifically, to weaken the anti-Iranian hawks in the US. There was silence.

In a perfectly fair world, where people care about both process and outcome, the human rights and specifically the first amendment crowd at places like the American Civil Liberties Union and likeminded institutions, could have been counted on to stand up and denounce the abuse of executive power that stood at the heart of the AIPAC scandal. After all, in transferring a classified memo on Iran to Weissman and Rosen, Franklin was doing something that the ACLU generally supports.

At one of its major 2008 conferences, for instance, the ACLU invited Daniel Ellsberg, the former Rand Corporation official who leaked the top secret Pentagon Papers regarding US involvement in Vietnam to The New York Times in 1971 to serve as its keynote speaker. Both in

photocopying the documents and in transferring them to The New York Times, Ellsberg was committing serious criminal offenses. And yet, because he was doing so to advance the cause of the anti-war movement, groups like the ACLU worked to discredit his prosecution. Charges against Ellsberg were dropped in 1973. Ever since, he has enjoyed hero's status in left-wing, first amendment circles in the US.

But then, apparently, process is not important. For like the organized American Jewish community, the ACLU, The New York Times, The Washington Post and all the other outspoken champions of free speech were silent on - if not supportive of - the Justice Department's case against Franklin and against Rosen and Weissman.

This entire story, in all of its disparate parts, holds some very sad lessons for supporters of Israel in the US and beyond as well as for the government of Israel. First, AIPAC's cowardly decision to abandon Weissman and Rosen and the willingness of the overwhelming majority of the organized Jewish community to mutely endorse the move exposes an unpleasant truth about the nature of the American Jewish community. Simply stated, the majority of American Jews are either indifferent to the treatment of Israel and its supporters, or are too frightened to express their concerns.

Second, the fact that the AIPAC scandal unfolded during the Bush administration's tenure shows that even when administrations friendly to Israel are in office, a persistent, powerful group of bureaucrats in the federal government remains ready and able to persecute pro-Israel activists and policymakers. Moreover, members of this group are willing to abuse executive power to achieve their aim of weakening the standing of both Israel and its supporters in the US capital.

One of the disturbing aspects of the AIPAC scandal was the readiness of pro-Palestinian Jewish organizations like the Israel Policy Forum and J Street to defend the persecution. As James Kirchick from The New Republic noted over the weekend, M.J. Rosenberg, the Director of Policy Analysis for the IPF, wrote recently that "as a guy on trial for espionage," Rosen had no right to point out that Charles Freeman, US President Barack Obama's initial choice to serve as Director of the National Intelligence Council, had a record of egregiously anti-Israel behavior and action. What the behavior of the likes of Rosenberg shows is that anti-Israel forces in the federal bureaucracy can depend on having an anti-Israel American Jewish amen corner backing any decision they take to persecute Israel's supporters.

The silence of the human rights and free speech crowd also provides food for thought. The fourth lesson of the AIPAC affair is that Israel and its supporters can expect to receive absolutely no

backing from this policy community. As is the case with the US feminist movement's silence on the plight of women in the Muslim world, and the US human rights community's silence on the plight of human rights activists in places like Iran and Syria, Israel can expect that the American Left - both Jewish and non-Jewish - will be silent about any actions taken against the human rights of Israelis and the civil rights of Israel's supporters in the US.

It is important that these lessons be properly understood by pro-Israel activists in the US. And it is imperative that they be internalized by the Netanyahu government as it crafts its strategy for contending with an openly hostile Obama administration in the months and years to come.

Many in Jerusalem expressed their disappointment that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu decided not to travel to Washington this week to participate in the AIPAC conference but rather delayed his visit to the US for two weeks to better prepare for his meeting with Obama. But what the AIPAC scandal shows is that it may be advantageous that Netanyahu's first visit to Washington as premier not be conducted as part of the AIPAC conference.

The weaknesses of the pro-Israel community - and first and foremost of AIPAC - which the Rosen-Weissman-Franklin affair exposed show that it is unwise for Israel to rely on pro-Israel organizations to sell its policies to the American people and their elected officials. These groups cannot be trusted to help out in a crisis because they may simply not care that much about Israel's security or because they are too frightened of being persecuted to stick their necks out.

Rather than focus his efforts on rallying the likes of AIPAC, Netanyahu would be better served to bring his message directly to the American people. Only by garnering wide-scale, popular, grassroots support for a strong US-Israel alliance will Netanyahu have a chance of maintaining strong ties with Washington under the Obama administration and beyond.

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Obama prepares to throw Israel under the bus

By Melanie Phillips JewishWorldReview.com May 7, 2009

Barak Obama is attempting to throw Israel under the Islamist bus, and he's getting American Jews to do his dirty work for him. White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel reportedly told the Israel lobbying group AIPAC on Sunday that efforts to stop Iran hinged on peace talks with the Palestinians. General James Jones, National Security Adviser to Obama, reportedly told a European foreign minister a week ago that unlike the Bush administration, Obama will be 'forceful' with Israel. Ha'aretz reports: Jones is quoted in the telegram as saying that the United States, European Union and moderate Arab states must redefine 'a satisfactory endgame solution.' The U.S. national security adviser did not mention Israel as party to these consultations.

Of course not. If you are going to throw a country under the bus, you don't invite it to discuss the manner of its destruction with the assassins who are co-coordinating the crime. As I said here months ago, the appointment of Jones and the elevation of his post of National Security Adviser at the expense of the Secretary of State was all part of the strategy to centralize power in the hands of those who want to do Israel harm.

On Tuesday, Vice-President Joe Biden and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry turned the thumbscrews tighter, telling Israel to stop building more settlements, dismantle existing outposts and allow Palestinians freedom of movement.

This is all not only evil but exceptionally stupid. The idea that a Palestine state will help build a coalition against Iran is demonstrably absurd. The Arab states are beside themselves with anxiety about Iran. They want it to be attacked and its nuclear program stopped. They are desperately fearful that the Obama administration might have decided that it can live with a nuclear Iran.

The idea that if a Palestine state comes into being it will be easier to handle Iran is the opposite of the case: a Palestine state will be Iran, in the sense that it will be run by Hamas as a proxy for the Islamic Republic. The idea that a Palestine state will not compromise Israel's security is ludicrous.

It is of course, by any sane standard, quite fantastic that America is behaving as if it is Israel which is holding up a peace settlement when Israel has made concession after concession – giving up Sinai, giving up Gaza, offering all the territories to the Arabs in return for peace in 1967, offering more than 90 per cent of them ditto in 2000, ditto again to Mahmoud Abbas in the past year -- only to be attacked in return by a Palestinian terrorist entity, backed in its continued aggression, let us not forget, by the countries of the Organisation of the Islamic

Conference, which has made no concessions at all and is not being pressured to do so.

It is not the aggressor here but the *victim* of aggression that America is now choosing to beat up. In any sane world, one might think the Americans would be piling the pressure on the Palestinians to renounce their genocidal ambitions against Israel, to stop teaching and training their children to hate and kill Jews, to adhere to the primary requirement in the Road Map that they must dismantle their infrastructure of violence as the first step in the peace process; one might think, indeed, that they would view Mahmoud Abbas's repeated statements that the Palestinians will never accept Israel as a Jewish state to be the main impediment to peace.

But no. The repeated professions that America will never jeopardize Israel's security are stomach churning when Obama is actually blaming Israel for measures it has taken to safeguard its security – the settlements were always first and foremost a security measure, and the travel restrictions are there solely to prevent more Israelis being murdered – and trying to force it to abandon them. Now comes further news that Obama will also try to force Israel to give up its nuclear weapons – which it only has as a last ditch insurance against the attempt to annihilate it to which several billion Arabs remain pledged.

Of course Obama doesn't care that Hamas would run any Palestinian state. Of course he doesn't care that Israel would be unable to defend itself against such a terrorist state. Because he regards Israel as at best totally expendable, and at worst as a running sore on the world's body politic that has to be purged altogether. His administration is proceeding on the entirely false analysis that a state of Palestine is the solution to the Middle East impasse and the route to peace in the region. What that state will look like or do is something to which at best the administration's collective mind is shut and at worst makes it a potential cynical accomplice to the unconscionable. So Israel is to be forced out of the West Bank. Far from building a coalition against Iran, Obama is thus doing Iran's work for it.

None of this, however, should come as the slightest surprise to anyone who paid any attention to Obama's background, associations and friendships before he became President and to the cabal of Israel-bashers, appeasers and Jew-haters he appointed to his administration, with a few useful idiots thrown in for plausible deniability.

American Jews, meanwhile, are reacting as predicted – with a total absence of spine. As IsraelMatzav reports, AIPAC was sending delegates to visit Congress to 'convince' Representatives and Senators to sign a petition calling for a two-state solution. Inspired! Almost eighty per cent of

American Jews voted for Obama despite the clear and present danger he posed to Israel. They did so because their liberal self-image was and is more important to them than the Jewish state whose existence and security cannot be allowed to jeopardize their standing with America's elite.

But the ordinary American people are a different matter. They do value and support Israel. They do understand that if Israel is thrown under that bus, the west is next. And it is they to whom Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu must now appeal, over the heads of the politicians and the media and certainly America's Jews and everyone else. He must

tell the American people the terrible truth, that America is now run by a man who is intent on sacrificing Israel for a reckless and amoral political strategy which will put America and the rest of the free world at risk.

This is shaping up to be the biggest crisis in relations between Israel and America since the foundation of Israel six decades ago. Those who hate Israel and the Jews will be gloating. This after all is precisely what they hoped Obama would do. To any decent person looking on aghast, this is where the moral sickness of the west reaches the critical care ward.

The House on Rechov Graetz

By Daniel Gordis The Jerusalem Post

April 24, 2009

This may be the week to pick up a correspondence I inadvertently dropped. It all started with a note from a friend who lives on Jerusalem's Graetz street. "This is probably up your alley," he wrote. "If you want to answer him, you can."

Attached was a note from Munir K., who had written to my friend asking for information about his erstwhile home on Graetz. Dr. K., now a physician in the States, had lived on Graetz Street in the 1930's and 40's, and was wondering what had happened to his house.

Who couldn't easily understand his curiosity, even his longing? I took a camera with me to work one day, snapped some shots of the neighborhood and a photograph of the house in question, and emailed them to him. I introduced myself, explaining how his email had ended up with me, answered his questions about the neighborhood today, and wished him well.

He answered me almost immediately, thanking me for the note and the pictures. But then his tone changed. "I was shocked and appalled," he wrote, "to see that the Israeli government granted rights of ownership to another individual of my home of birth to which I own title (my father willed it to me) without any consideration of who the original and legal owners are." Like many of us, he has powerful memories of his childhood home, and I'd just unwittingly undone them. "I have always maintained an image of a one-story red-tiled quality home with a beautiful garden as the one my father built and in which I was raised for the first ten years of my life. That image is now shattered in view of the ... email and the photos you sent."

It was one of those "road to hell is paved with good intentions" moments. Had I been in his shoes, I'd thought as I took the photos, I'd want someone to do for me what I was doing for him. But memory is treacherous territory. It can nourish us, giving us a sense of where we've come from, or, it can ossify us, rooting us somehow in worlds which (however tragically) no longer exist and are gone forever. And

the choice between those two stances makes all the difference.

Sixty years had passed, but Dr. K.'s memory remained sharp. "I was born on 8/28/1937 at the Government Hospital where Dr. Gmelin was the obstetrician... The house across that road from us was owned by family friends, the Maloufs, who rented to it to German Jewish refugees, the Jafet family. ... The house immediately next door to us (to the west) was owned by the brother of Dr. Itayyim, who was a government chemist. They stayed in their house till the late fifties. The Itayyims and Maloufs all ended up in Lebanon."

His was clearly no ordinary family. "My mother always prepared a formal four o'clock tea - we learned that from the British. We had a live-in maid, and my father was the highest ranking Arab in the British Mandate government. He was the Assistant Director of Education for all Arab government schools." One can understand his longing for that world of honor and privilege. Who hasn't read compelling and heartbreaking narratives by Jews about the lives that they lost in the 1930's and the 1940's? And if we can weep at the latter, surely we should feel enormous pain for his lost world, too.

But here's the rub. Even this week, awash in Yom Ha-Shoah on TV and in the papers, we all read and listened to the accounts of people who lost everything - not just homes, but families - to the Nazis and to Europe's murderous venom and hatred. There were tears. Recollections of indescribable suffering. But these were mostly memories in which people celebrated what they've created since: families rebuilt, traditions perpetuated, a state that emerged from the ashes. And they are memories that have accepted, even with all the anguish, what is gone.

Not here. Dr. K. ended his note: "I have very strong feelings about Palestine and my Jerusalem home. ... My son-in-law is Jewish, and I have willed my Jerusalem home to him and my daughter (his wife). Isn't there a Jewish prayer that includes this

statement: 'If I ever forget thee O Jerusalem....' That describes my feelings. ... Do stay in touch. Munir K."

I didn't stay in touch, I confess, though I meant to. I didn't write because I don't know how to relate to his kind of memory. It's the sort of memory that makes demands that cannot be accommodated and ultimately condemns us to conflict. It's a form of memory that makes inevitable more losses of the sort we'll mourn on Yom HaZikaron. What I would have wanted to say was that we live in a country that, for all its many faults, uses its abundance of memory primarily to propel us forward, to give us a sense of what we have to (re)build, of what cannot be recreated or returned but that still ought to animate us.

Dr. K.'s is a gentle form of a very different sort of memory. It yearns to restore the status quo ante. It's the American version of the Lebanese refugee with the keys to his erstwhile home in his pocket, or much worse, the enemies just across our border who

will not rest until all their former land has been restored to them. That memory, we've learned, does not accommodate new realities. It almost invariably leads to war.

In the next couple of days, though, I'm going to force myself to answer him. It will be a useful exercise. Especially this week, we could all use reminders of how powerful, necessary but also dangerous memory can be. I'll write him and explain as gently as I can, that one of the things I love about this country is not only about that we remember, but how, and why.

Saving Israel: How the Jewish People Can Win a War That May Never End, has now been published. Some of the ideas explored above, such as the ways in which Israel should and should not make use of memory, are explored in much greater detail there.

Tyrants Get Another U.N. Platform

By Saad Eddin Ibrahim The Wall Street Journal April 24, 2009

America should rescue the human-rights agenda from its hijackers. In 1948, the United Nations recognized the "inherent dignity" and "the equal and inalienable rights" of all human beings when it ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Though this week's U.N. conference in Geneva claimed to stand for these noble values, the world's dictators were the real winners.

Too many official country delegates didn't come to Geneva to stand up for the oppressed. They came to condemn the "colonial powers" of the West and Israel. In so doing, they sought to guard against exposing their own regimes' human-rights records. While the delegates met in the official conference hall, the true defenders of human rights -- civil society organizations and dissidents -- gathered at their own conference where they examined today's most pressing human-rights issues.

The deep divide between those who seek to expose human-rights abuses and those who only use the language of human rights as a shield is not new. It started during Rio's Earth Summit in 1992, where, for the first time, the U.N. agreed to host two forums: one for government representatives and one for NGOs. The divide between government and NGOs, and between the Third World and the West, reached an apex in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. The central wedge issue was the treatment of the state of Israel.

Eight years ago, the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action (DDPA) singled out Israel for the harshest rebuke of any country. It was not that Israel was totally innocent of charges about its continued occupation of the Palestinians. But the vehemence with which the delegates issued this condemnation,

and their manner of voting on it -- the delegates cheered "Down With Israel" -- led many to conclude that the DPPA bordered on anti-Semitism.

What compounded this sentiment is that most of the governments that pile on to condemn Israel and the so-called "neocolonial" West have terrible human-rights records. These include tyrannical regimes such as Zimbabwe, Myanmar, Libya, Iran, Syria and Egypt (my home country). Their atrocious violations have been widely reported by organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

But members of like-minded voting blocs -- such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Organization of African Unity and the League of Arab States -- comprise more than two-thirds of the U.N. membership votes. Together, they can railroad through any resolution, no matter how absurd. It was this Afro-Islamic-Arab bloc that made sure Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad would be the keynote speaker in the opening session of this year's U.N. World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance.

Rightly anticipating that the Geneva conference would be a forum for anti-Western and anti-Israel propaganda, the U.S. and a score of Western democracies boycotted the conference entirely. More countries -- such as Britain, Germany and Holland -- walked out of the conference when Mr. Ahmadinejad delivered his usual anti-Israel tirade, calling the Jewish state a "most cruel and racist regime."

Unfortunately, lost in this circus were the real victims who suffer at the hands of autocratic and

theocratic regimes. The most vulnerable groups -- the poor, women, children, migrant and stateless people -- were ignored this week in Geneva.

Though the decision to boycott the conference was understandable, I believe it was a mistake. The U.S. and other democracies should have attended and fought back. An overwhelming majority of mankind would have applauded their moral courage.

I spent three years alone in an Egyptian prison for the crime of "tarnishing Egypt's reputation." Today, prisoners like Roxana Saberi in Iran languish in jails for crimes they did not commit. It is the job of true human-rights advocates to strengthen such victims by standing up to dictators.

Rather than letting Mr. Ahmadinejad steal the headlines, I would have liked to have seen the universally popular President Barack Obama take on the hypocrites who speak in the name of Islam and want to sacrifice such basic rights as freedom of speech by outlawing "Islamophobia." Mr. Obama could have rescued the human-rights agenda from those who have hijacked it.

Though it didn't happen in Geneva, I look forward to a campaign, led by Mr. Obama, to return the cause of human rights to its rightful owners.

Mr. Ibrahim was incarcerated by the Mubarak regime from 2000 to 2003. He is now a visiting professor at Harvard.

The Story You Aren't Hearing About Israel

By Mort Zuckerman The Huffington Post April 13, 2009

Did you hear about the two policemen who stopped to help a driver stuck with a flat--and were shot to death in the head at point-blank range?

Did you know about the 120-kilogram bomb planted in a parking lot adjacent to a shopping mall where thousands of people were milling about the stores, restaurants, and movie theaters?

No, of course, you didn't. These are just two everyday incidents of the ordeal confronted by people in Israel while the world and the political leaders look away. Outrages like these do not make it into the Western media, which exhibit the familiar phenomenon of monitoring only the conflicts that are the flavor of the month. And when they do turn to Israel, sporadically, it is with the excitement of thinking they can expose Israeli wrongdoing: the *New York Times* just drummed up a front-page story alleging the deliberate murder of innocent civilians by Israeli soldiers during the Gaza war, a poorly investigated report that turned out to be yet another urban myth and then was shamefully corrected by the *Times* only on the inside pages and only by blaming Israel for the false report. (Remember another urban myth alleging thousands of citizens massacred in the battle against terrorism in Jenin in 2002 when it turned out no more than 54 died, most of them combatants?)

Ordinary Israelis despair of the cruel bias. The policemen died because Israel eased restrictions on movement in the Nablus area of the West Bank. Hundreds survived in the attack on the mall near Haifa only because a woman reported hearing an explosion. Security found it was a detonator that expired without setting off a car bomb that would have lacerated the crowds with sharp metal and ball bearings.

The willingness to give a free pass to terrorism was, of course, manifest most luridly in the Gaza war. Hamas fired thousands of rockets with the short-term aim of murdering as many innocent civilians as possible in the service of the longer-term ambition to terrorize Israel.

Then, when Israel finally responded (with military restraint and humanitarian aid), it was faced with world demands for an unconditional cease-fire. Ironically, the fiercest criticism in the Arab world about Israel's conduct in Gaza stems from Israel's failure to achieve a decisive victory, for the Arab world rightly perceives not Israel but Hamas as a threat: It knows full well that Hamas is a fifth column for Iranian influence.

Once the cease-fire was achieved, the world lost interest in Israel. Except that now, in a fit of selectively lethal amnesia, it is on the verge of providing the selfsame murderous Hamas with a huge influx of funding that will rebuild the authority of a terrorist organization dedicated to killing Jews.

The tragedy for the Palestinians as much as the Israelis is that they do not have leadership strong enough to make peace. Hamas wants perpetual war: No one can doubt that it aims not to have a two-state solution but to have a "no state" solution--that is, to have the State of Israel stop existing. For its part, "moderate" Fatah is hopelessly corrupt and weak and seemingly incapable of reform or of enforcing law and order on its people. That is why an Israeli-Palestinian peace remains a dream today and why what Israel can offer the Palestinians is less than what any Palestinian politician is willing or able to attempt.

Even the language of peace is eroding. The Palestinians say they support two states for two peoples but refrain from saying that one of those is the Jewish people. Most recently, a major Palestine Liberation Organization figure, Mohammed Dahlan, asserted that the Fatah movement hasn't even recognized Israel thus far and that the Palestinian Authority's apparent "recognition" of Israel is to make the PA "acceptable" to the international community, in order to bring in international aid. Who can trust that?

There is justification for the widespread Israeli concern that if a Palestinian state were established, power in Gaza, and then in the West Bank, would soon fall into the hands of Hamas. After all, Hamas

won 44 percent of the vote and the mayoralty in several major cities in the last West Bank election. Another unreported fact that reflects on what would happen if Hamas won: The most credible of the Palestinian-run news operations, the Ma'an News Agency, has posted three listings involving a total of 181 persons--all Fatah people--shot by Hamas in Gaza since December 2008.

The Fatah party is facing an election within a year, which may well be won by Hamas. If the Iranian-supported Hamas ultimately succeeds in its 20-year effort to be the principal voice of Palestinian nationalism, Israel will have a neighbor that truly speaks for Iran's goal of seeing Israel "wiped off the face of the Earth."

In a "unity" government, Hamas would undoubtedly be integrated in the security services, which would end Palestinian-Israeli security cooperation covering the majority of the West Bank cities. Hamas wants Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to stop negotiations with Israel and to embrace the political program that allows for "resistance" -- in other words, violence.

No wonder the Palestinian Reconciliation Conference in Cairo ended in failure. Even the lure of billions of dollars in aid has not brought Fatah Sunnis in Judea and Samaria, i.e., the West Bank, any closer to Shiite supporters of Hamas in Gaza. These are two parallel lines that cannot meet, and this division will persist.

And what of Israeli leadership? Now Israel has Binyamin Netanyahu trying to form a cabinet. The world may be skeptical about the will and political ability of a more conservative Likud government to make historic and dramatic decisions that involve painful concessions to the Palestinians in the interest of a two-state solution, but history suggests otherwise. It was Menachem Begin's Likud government that brought about the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. It was Yitzhak Shamir's Likud government that began the peace process at the Madrid Conference in October of 1991. Netanyahu's Likud party and its reservations should not be dismissed lightly, for it was Netanyahu who predicted way back in 1994 that handing over territories to Palestinians would lead to the creation of a fundamental Islamic terrorist base adjacent to Israel.

Israel has taken many risks for peace. The response has been rocket fire, terrorism, more incitement, more vilification, more shedding of Israeli blood, and less security, not to mention an ongoing historic campaign to defame, denounce, denigrate, and delegitimize Israel in every international forum.

Contrary to many reports, Netanyahu has asserted that he is not opposed to a two-state solution, provided it does not put at risk the national security of the Jewish state. The key component would be a record of Palestinian determination and

ability to fight terrorism and to live in peace with Israel. Like so many experts, Netanyahu feels that the chances of an enforceable, comprehensive arrangement are low to negligible. In the meantime, as a matter of law and order, he intends to oppose illegal settlements, be they in the West Bank or among Bedouins in Sinai. His major priority would be to promote prosperity on the West Bank, creating an incentive for the Palestinians to make a commitment to peace. He notes that Palestinians in the West Bank remained calm during the fighting in Gaza and didn't engage in mass protests.

Therefore, Netanyahu will focus on improving Palestinian life by lifting roadblocks (100 so far) and reducing checkpoints (they have gone down from 50 to 15) and making other improvements on the ground for the Palestinian community. In this he is supported by dovish Israeli President Shimon Peres, who now has doubts about Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza without first having established a peaceful and democratic Palestinian party to which it could hand the territory. That Palestinian party does not yet exist.

A Palestinian state cannot be created by terrorism. It can be created through the reformation of political and economic institutions so that they reflect democracy, market economics, and real actions to confront terrorism. When there is an effective, Palestinian-based security force with counterterrorism capability in the West Bank, the Israelis will then be prepared to withdraw their defense forces and the Shin Bet from operating there. Hence the importance of the U.S. effort, led by Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, to develop a decent Palestinian security force. The new units have been enforcing order in the cities of Jenin and Hebron, which had been basically lawless. But it is not enough to target car thieves and robbers. The critical counterterrorism ability of the Palestinian security forces is still limited; above all, they must have the will to target terrorist cells and their networks.

Two modest paramilitary forces have been trained to police crime and enforce public order, but not to uproot terror groups. In fact, the PA has increasingly offered safe haven to terror groups. Brig.-Gen. Radhi Assida, the PA National Security Forces (NSF) commander in Jenin, revealed to the Palestinian website Ma'an on January 24, 2009, that PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's NSF had agreed to provide protection to four senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorists wanted by Israel. Assida also confirmed that PIJ operatives continue to receive monthly salaries from the PA Interior Ministry, just like their colleagues in the Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades.

In the interim, Israel must not wait on events. Israel would be wise (despite the risks) to allow even freer movement in the West Bank; it should help to create more jobs and a better standard of living. Yes, the West must press Israel on these issues, but it

must also press the Arab states. They should underwrite the training of PA security forces and invest sensibly in housing and agriculture.

Peace will come only when the Palestinians are liberated from their age-old hatred of Israel and Jews. As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has called for many times, there must be teaching, preaching, and celebrating, from childhood on, that hatred, disrespect, violence, terrorism, anti-Semitism, and war against Israelis and Zionists are unacceptable. Today, it is exactly the opposite.

A great Middle East authority, Prof. Bernard Lewis, recently pointed out in Foreign Affairs how easily the West is misled. In contrast to reports in

English, he writes, "the discourse in Arabic--in broadcasts, sermons, speeches, and school textbooks--is far less conciliatory, portraying Israel as an illegitimate invader that must be destroyed." Israel cannot make peace with those whose first priority is to blow up Israeli women and children and who deny the nation's right to exist. As Lewis puts it, "There is no compromise position between existence and nonexistence."

The sad but realistic fact is that we are much closer to the establishment of two Palestinian states, one in the West Bank and one in Gaza, than to reaching a two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians.

The Man who may be Israel's next ambassador to the United States

By Dan Gordon, Captain (Res.) IDF American Thinker May 3, 2009

Dr. Michael Oren is being touted as Israel's next ambassador to the U.S. He's taking a number of hits in the press. Some people have said he's too conservative, others that he's too liberal. He is undeniably one of the world's foremost historians on the Middle East. That is, admittedly, his day job, not mine. I'm a writer.

I have a play called "Irena's Vow" running on Broadway. So what qualifies me to comment in any way on the man who may be Israel's next ambassador to the United States? Doctor Oren, in addition to his other achievements, is also a major in the same reserve unit in the IDF in which I serve as a captain. I can tell you a bit about the man. I have served in two wars with him.

One night in the 2006 Hezbollah /Israel War Michael and I were serving as public affairs officers. We were up at the Lebanese border late at night when another officer came up and approached us and four or five others.

What most people don't realize is that for the first few weeks of that war Israel actually had fewer troops on the ground than Hezbollah. They quite literally outnumbered Israeli forces on the ground until the last few days of the war. A battle had been raging and Israel had taken casualties. They were looking for volunteers to go into Lebanon as a covering party and hook up with several ambulances that were evacuating wounded. They couldn't land a chopper because it was right in the heart of Hezbollah strongholds and they would have been shot out of the sky by anti air craft missiles.

Without saying a word Michael was the first to pick up his gear and volunteer. We were a half dozen middle aged reserve officers. We didn't have an armored vehicle, so we actually went into Lebanon in my Avis rent a car. After looking for the ambulance for what seemed like hours we realized there was a screw up in co-ordinates and we were sitting ducks in a rent a car in Lebanon.

We headed back into Israel and waited at the border crossing for word on where the ambulances were. After a while the same officer found us and

acknowledged that there had been a screw up in co-ordinates. Now there was another problem.

There was an ambulance with four dead Israeli soldiers that needed a covering party to go in for their evacuation. Again it was too dangerous for helicopters to land. Again they were asking for volunteers. Again Michael was the first to pick up his gear and volunteer.

My son had been killed at the age of twenty two in a horrific car accident. Michael's son had been wounded in action in a fire fight with terrorists. To all of us middle aged men these fallen boys could have been our sons. We went back into Lebanon in the rent a car. We hooked up with the ambulance in a wadi or deep ravine. Flairs were going off above us, which meant that Hezb'allah knew we were there and were hunting for us. We served as the covering force while the fallen were evacuated. Later Michael's daughter, who was serving as a social worker in the Golani Brigade, called Michael on his cell phone. Her unit had taken a lot of wounded; most of them were her friends.

Michael turned to me and said, "My daughter needs a hug. Can I borrow your car?" The two of us drove down from the Lebanese border to Rambam Hospital in Haifa. Michael spent a half hour with his daughter; gave her a much needed hug and then the two of us drove back near dawn to rejoin our unit.

That is the kind of man Israel's ambassador designate to the U.S. is. He wouldn't hesitate to endanger his life not only to recover wounded, but to recover the fallen, and though exhausted himself, drove round trip, four hours to give his daughter a hug when she most needed her father's love.

There are other people who can amply describe Doctor Oren's experience in diplomacy. He has served a number of Prime Ministers and is a fellow at the Shalem Center in Jerusalem, which contains such luminaries as Nathan Shiransky and Lieutenant General (Res.) Moshe Ya'Alon.

I, on the other, hand can tell you about the man. Both Israel and the U.S. would be lucky to have Doctor Michael Oren serving in Washington.