

The I's have it By Daniel Gordis The Jerusalem Post October 15, 2009

About one thing, at least, the world seems to be in agreement: Israel is the primary culprit in the Middle East conflict, the cause of relentless Palestinian suffering and the primary obstacle blocking the way to regional peace.

The international chorus of opprobrium is growing by the day. The Hollywood crowd lashes out at the Toronto International Film Festival for its (oh, so sinful) focus on Tel Aviv. The Swedish press breathes new life into the old blood libel.

The Norwegians divest from an Israeli firm because it supplies technology to the separation fence. The Turks refuse to participate in joint air exercises with Israel. The Americans peddle the notion that at its core, the Mideast conflict is really about the settlements.

It's relentless, this ganging up, but it's also not terribly new. The momentum has been building for years, and though we may not like it, we cannot honestly claim to be surprised.

What is surprising, however, is a recent - and possibly more ominous - addition to this chorus. A growing segment of the American Jewish community is abandoning Israel.

Here, too, examples abound: Two American Jewish sociologists, Steven Cohen and Ari Kelman, wrote that among American Jews aged 35 and younger, a full 50% said that the destruction of the State of Israel would not be a personal tragedy for them.

In San Francisco, Jewish communal funds were used to support the SF Jewish Film Festival's screening of Rachel, an Israel-bashing "documentary" about Rachel Corrie of International Solidarity Movement fame.

Noting that the SFJFF was now effectively in partnership with Jewish Voices for Peace, a well known anti-Israel, pro-boycott organization, many prominent Jews vehemently protested. But the film was shown, anyway.

There's Fast For Gaza, that group of rabbis encouraging us to fast in protest against the injustices in Gaza. But if you search their Web site (www.fastforgaza.net) for mention of Sderot or Gilad Schalit, your search will be in vain. Those issues, apparently, are irrelevant to justice for Gaza.

Finally, for now, there's Jay Michaelson's column in The Forward, entitled "How I'm Losing My Love for Israel" (September 25).

Michaelson, a spokesman for much of the generation that Cohen and Kelman described, wrote

that "I understand why many Israelis feel fed up with the Palestinian problem.... But as an outsider, I no longer want to feel entangled by their decisions and implicated in their consequences. B'seder: It's your choice to make... but count me out."

"Count me out" is pretty strong stuff. But if Michaelson is different from most American Jews of his generation, it's mostly because he's more articulate. Which leads to the real issue: Why are American Jews abandoning Israel?

That question is the title of a recent column in Ha'arets by Prof. Jonathan Sarna, perhaps the greatest living analyst of American Jewish life. The problem, suggests Sarna, is that American Jews have been raised on an idealized image of Israel, and that "in place of the utopia that we had hoped Israel might become, young Jews today often view Israel through the eyes of contemporary media: They fixate upon its unloveliest warts."

But that, says Sarna, is actually good news, for the "fix" is clear.

"By focusing upon all that they nevertheless share in common, and all that they might yet accomplish together in the future, American Jews and Israelis can move past this crisis in their relationship and settle in, as partners, for the long haul ahead."

I wish I were convinced, but I'm not. The loss of American Jewish love for Israel, I fear, is actually much more deeply rooted. The issue isn't Israel, or utopia. It's America, and the "I" at the core of American sensibilities.

Another profound observer of American Jewish life, Rabbi Morris Allen of Mendota Heights, Minnesota, recently wrote with sadness that for contemporary American Jews, life-cycle rituals have become infinitely more significant than the holiday cycle.

Both Sarna and Allen are actually pointing to a shared challenge. Most American Jews are first and foremost Americans. And today's America is about the celebration of individuality and a future unfettered by ethnic loyalties.

In America, the narratives of immigrant groups are eroded, year by year, generation after generation. In America, we are oriented to the future, not to the past, and if we cling to some larger grouping, it is to a human collective whole rather than to some "narrow" ethnic clan.

That's the cause for what Rabbi Allen has observed. Because Jewish holidays celebrate

peoplehood, a collective embrace of a shared mythical past, they are less compelling for typical American Jews than are life-cycle ceremonies, which focus on the future, my family - and me.

Similarly, the recreation of the State of Israel is truly powerful only against a backdrop of centuries of Jewish experience, and is spine-tingling only if my sense of self is inseparable from my belonging to a nation with a past and a people with a purpose.

In today's individualistic America, the drama of the rebirth of the Jewish people creates no goose bumps and evokes no sense of duty or obligation. Add the issue of Palestinian suffering, and Israel seems worse than irrelevant - it's actually a source of shame.

We're not terribly alarmed, but we should be. These young American Jews, after all, will soon control the coffers of the federations, and will sit on the boards of synagogues. Their generation will either strengthen or abandon AIPAC, the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and the American Jewish Committee (AJC). They will be the ones allocating funding to schools, setting curricula and communal priorities.

"Who is wise?" asks the Talmud. "He who can see what is about to happen." Deep down, we know what's about to happen. A gaping chasm threatens the American-Israeli relationship, and we're basically doing nothing. Try to list the serious Jewish educational enterprises addressing this challenge, asking how American Jewish education can counter America's unfettered individualism, or what Israel could do to help.

Can you name even one? Neither can I.

Saving Israel: How the Jewish People Can Win a War That May Never End addresses in much greater detail the issue of creating an ongoing Zionist conversation in the Jewish State. It has now been published.

Please join Suburban Orthodox, Ner Tamid and the Baltimore Zionist District in welcoming Dr. Gordis to Baltimore on November 13 - 14, details will follow shortly.

U.N. Human Rights Council's Gaza study was destined to unfairly criticize Israel By Robert O. Freedman **Baltimore Sun** **October 20, 2009**

The recently released report of the United Nations Human Rights Council on last winter's war between Israel and Hamas, which was chaired by the South African jurist Richard Goldstone and just approved by the Human Rights Council, condemns both Israel and Hamas for "war crimes" and possibly "crimes against humanity." However, the report - which was approved by a vote of 25-6, with 11 abstentions - reserves the bulk of the blame in its 575 pages for Israel.

To understand how this report, which is clearly biased against Israel, came about, it is necessary to consider three factors: the nature of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), which has displayed a long-term bias against Israel dating back to its previous incarnation as the United Nations Commission on Human Rights; the context of the Israeli invasion of Gaza; and the dynamics of military combat in urban areas against guerrilla forces.

1. The nature of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Originally formed to protect human rights throughout the world, the UNHRC has instead chosen to single out Israel for blame. Despite an estimated 400,000 civilians having been killed in the Darfur region of Sudan, and tens of thousands of civilians killed in conflicts in Chechnya, Sri Lanka, Iraq and Afghanistan, the UNHRC regularly castigates Israel for human rights violations, while other countries killing civilians during armed conflicts escape such condemnation. One must ask

why Israel, which has been defending itself against terrorist attacks since it was created in 1948, merits such criticism from the UNHCR.

The answer to this question lies in the fact that the UNHCR has become politicized - that is, it has become yet another battlefield in the Arab-Israeli conflict, as Palestinians and other Arabs constantly bring charges against Israel to the UNHCR. Given the fact that such violators of human rights as China, Cuba, Russia, Malaysia and Egypt are members of the UNHCR, it should not be seen as surprising that politics, not human rights, dominates discussions at the council, despite the fact that the United Nations' charter calls for the organization to prevent or stop conflicts, not to exacerbate them as the UNHCR has done. Indeed, by 2006 the anti-Israeli bias in the UNHCR had become so bad that then-U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan criticized it for "disproportionate focus on violations by Israel," while neglecting other parts of the world such as Darfur, which he termed a "graver" crisis.

Neither Mr. Annan's statement, nor a similar one a year later by Mr. Annan's successor, Ban Ki-Moon, seemed to have much effect. The anti-Israeli bias of the UNHCR has continued unabated, and it is not surprising that an investigatory commission organized by the UNHCR would have an anti-Israeli bias from the start. The fact that one of the top investigators of the commission, Marc Garlasco, was revealed as a collector of Nazi memorabilia, and that another, Christine Chinkin, had accused Israel of war

crimes while the fighting was still going on in January, only reinforced the anti-Israeli bias of the commission. (Israel refused to cooperate with the commission on the grounds that such cooperation would legitimize the panel, whose report the United States also criticized for its one-sided nature. Indeed, the biased nature of the UNHCR's resolution on the Goldstone report was so bad that even Judge Goldstone himself criticized it.)

2. The context of the Israeli invasion. The Goldstone Report concentrates on a number of cases where it accuses Israel of "disproportionate" force and "deliberately targeting civilians" - both violations of international law. What was missing from the report was a detailed analysis of the reasons why Israel decided to invade Gaza, where it allegedly committed the crimes of which the Goldstone Report accuses it.

After suffering no fewer than 8,000 rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza since 2001, and a sharp escalation of the attacks after Hamas unilaterally terminated a six-month cease-fire in December, Israel chose to invade Gaza. Israel had no choice but to enter Gaza to suppress the rocket and mortar attacks that were making life unbearable in southern Israel from the Gaza border to Be'ersheva, as "red alerts" forced inhabitants of the region under threat from the attacks to flee to shelters on a regular basis, thereby disrupting normal life. Under these circumstances, an impartial commission, looking at the causes of the Israeli invasion, might well have found it to be a justified act of self-defense. However, as noted above, the Goldstone Commission was far from impartial.

3. War in urban areas. Urban areas are among the most difficult in which to wage war, especially against guerrilla forces who often hide among civilians. In the case of Gaza, there are numerous pictures and reports of Hamas fighters firing rockets from civilian areas such as houses and schools.

Any commander leading his troops into combat has two central tasks: successfully completing his

mission and protecting his soldiers. In the fighting in Gaza, where Hamas fighters hid out in houses and had fortified positions near schools, each Israeli commander faced a very difficult choice - destroying the Hamas fighters with tank or artillery fire, or risking increased casualties among his own troops by getting involved in close-in combat. In the so-called "fog of war," therefore, it is not surprising that Palestinian civilians got killed as Israeli soldiers fought their way into Gaza, despite clear reports that Israel did, in fact, try to minimize civilian casualties.

However, there is a larger moral issue here that was not covered at all in the Goldstone report. Which of the two sides bears the greater moral onus: Hamas, which deliberately fired mortars and rockets from Gaza at civilians in Israel, or Israel, which sought to suppress such fire at its civilians by invading Gaza and, in the process, killed Palestinian civilians - not deliberately, as the Goldstone report alleges, but as part of the military operations aimed at stopping the rockets?

In sum, given the evident bias of the UNHCR, it is difficult to give its report on the recent Israeli-Hamas war much credence.

The George W. Bush administration boycotted the UNHCR, but the Obama administration has decided to rejoin it. The fact that the U.S. failed to sway many nations in the UNHCR vote against Israel casts doubt on whether that decision will change the dynamics of future UNHCR investigatory commissions, or even the debates on the council itself.

Robert O. Freedman is Peggy Meyerhoff Pearlstone Professor Emeritus at Baltimore Hebrew University and is currently visiting professor of political science at Johns Hopkins University. His publications include "Israel's First Fifty Years" and "Contemporary Israel: Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy And Security Challenges."

Upstart Israel lobby draws controversy

By Amanda Carpenter The Washington Times October 21, 2009

An upstart group trying to displace the powerful American Israel lobby has attracted President Obama's national security adviser to its first big meeting next week, but the event is also being shunned by Israel's U.S. ambassador and several members of Congress because of its views and ties to controversial figures.

J Street was formed a year and half ago as a more liberal alternative to the nation's main pro-Israel lobbying organization, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, better known as AIPAC. J Street's executive director has said that he wants his

group to be the "blocking back" for Mr. Obama's efforts to bring peace to the Middle East.

But by taking on the long-established AIPAC and the hawkish Israeli government, and by embracing individuals who have expressed hostility to Israel, J Street also has alienated some veteran Israel supporters in Washington. For example, one of next week's speakers is a Muslim activist who has said that Israel should be considered a suspect in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Twelve members of Congress who were initially listed on the conference's host committee of more

than 160, including both senators from New York, have withdrawn their names.

Sen. John Kerry, Massachusetts Democrat and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Tuesday that he would not be able to make a scheduled Tuesday speaking slot because of a conflict, though his staff and J Street say they are hoping to reschedule his appearance at some other time during next week's three-day conference.

Rep. Howard Coble, a North Carolina Republican who removed his name from the host committee, said he was confused about the group's positions, although he elaborated that he did not feel misled.

"I have a consistently favorable pro-Israel voting record and if someone touts themselves as pro-Israel, I am very likely to join forces with them and that was my thinking with this group," he said. "Then I hear from my rabbi back home and others, and they assure me that this group is by no means on the same page with the mainstream Jewish community back in my district. And I didn't feel comfortable lending my name to that outfit."

But Rep. Jan Schakowsky, Illinois Democrat, said that J Street is a bona fide pro-Israel organization.

"I am pro-Israel and I was invited to participate there and I feel I share the goals of this organization, which is a safe and secure Israel in peace with Palestinian neighbors in a two-state solution," she said, before saying supporters of the Jewish state should welcome pro-Israel groups of all kinds.

"I feel like this has been posed as either or by some, you are with AIPAC or J-Street. I work closely with both organizations and all pro-Israel organizations," she said.

Hadar Susskind, J Street director of policy and strategy, downplayed the changes in the host committee and said conference schedules frequently get altered.

"As happens in putting together events like this, the list of hosts changed constantly over several months. Names were added and deleted, and decisions on participation changed regularly," he said. "We made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the list, apologize for any mistakes and will certainly adjust the list in the days ahead to reflect both those who wish to add their name and those who wish to remove it."

One key difference between J Street and AIPAC is that the latter calibrates its public positions to reflect the current government in Israel, but J Street is liberal-leaning and has been critical of the center-right governing coalition of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Israeli Embassy said in a statement Tuesday about Ambassador Michael Oren's invitation to address J Street's meeting next week that it would

send an observer and "will follow [J Street's] proceedings with interest."

"In response to the question about J Street's invitation to participate in its conference, the Embassy of Israel has been privately communicating its concerns over certain policies of the organization that may impair the interests of Israel," the embassy said.

Those concerns range from J Street's position that the U.S. should not impose new sanctions on Iran to the group's tepid criticism of a U.N. report that concluded that Israel deliberately targeted civilians in the Gaza war.

Despite others' distancing themselves from J Street, the White House will be sending retired Gen. James L. Jones, the national security adviser, to address the J Street conference.

"The White House always welcomes the opportunity to discuss the president's views and engage in a dialogue with interested parties," White House spokesman Thomas Victor said.

Another senior White House official told The Washington Times on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the situation that Mr. Jones' decision to speak to J Street was part of a broad outreach effort to U.S. Arab and Jewish groups.

On Monday, Mr. Jones spoke to AIPAC's board of directors and last week he addressed the American Task Force on Palestine. Mr. Jones will also speak to the Arab American Institute's conference later this month.

J Street's critics say the group tolerates those who would make Israel a pariah.

Earlier this year, it supported a Washington Jewish theater company's decision to show Caryl Churchill's "Seven Jewish Children," a play that depicts in its final scene a monologue of a parent explaining that Jews must rationalize the killings of Palestinian children in Gaza.

On Monday, J Street's organizers canceled a panel at the conference after some bloggers posted a video on the Internet of one of its poets, Josh Healey, reciting a poem in which Jews were compared to Nazis writing "numbers on the wrists of babies born in the ghetto called Gaza."

One speaker still on the list is Salam al-Marayati, founder of the Muslim Public Affairs Council.

Among other things, Mr. al-Marayati said during a radio interview on Sept. 11, 2001, after the terrorists had struck U.S. soil, that Israel should be considered a suspect.

"If we're going to look at suspects, we should look to the groups that benefit the most from these kinds of incidents, and I think we should put the state of Israel on the suspect list," he said. He has since said he regretted that statement.

A license to kill

By Moshe Arens Haaretz October 6, 2009

While the Goldstone report is being eagerly read in Israel and in capitals around the world, it is also being intensively studied by terrorists bent on destroying the State of Israel - and they must be breathing a sigh of relief.

This is not only because the Hamas terrorists in Gaza are in effect getting off scot-free in the report - they, in any case, did not have to be concerned about being brought before the International Court of Justice.

They can also interpret the report as international approbation for carrying out military operations from civilian population centers - schools, hospitals, refugee camps, etc. - as they did in the years when they were launching rockets into Israeli towns and villages in the south of Israel, and as they continued to do during the Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip.

From the report it is clear to them that establishing military units and rocket launchers in civilian population centers will from now on be an effective military tactic that they can hope to apply with impunity, enjoying at least partial immunity from an Israeli response. That response is likely to be withheld out of concern that it will lead to Israel being charged with committing a war crime.

The report is in effect a license to kill - for Hamas, for Hezbollah, and for terrorists all over the world. No less.

"The bastards have changed the rules," Spiro Agnew, Richard Nixon's vice president, supposedly said when his wrong-doings caught up with him. He resigned on October 10, 1973. That was 36 years ago, during the Yom Kippur War, a conventional battlefield war, tanks against tanks and soldiers against soldiers, with no civilians in the vicinity. And also no war crime inquiries.

But since that Israeli victory, things have changed. Faced by the overpowering force of the Israel Defense Forces, terror attacks against civilians have become the weapon of choice for Israel's enemies. And here the Goldstone report is changing the rules of warfare so as to favor the terrorists. As long as they operate in civilian surroundings, they should have nothing to worry about.

Hezbollah pioneered this tactic in Southern Lebanon, and put it into practice very effectively during the Second Lebanon War. Hamas in Gaza, tutored by Hezbollah, followed suit. And the Goldstone report has now enshrined it with international legalese, which may very well serve as a precedent in future encounters with terrorists.

This will have far-reaching effects on the war against terror, wherever it is being waged, and it will empower the terrorists, whether Justice Richard Goldstone realizes it or not. It will be especially damaging for Israel, whose civilians are under almost constant threat from terrorists.

During Operation Defensive Shield the IDF showed that the commonly held wisdom that terrorism could not be defeated by military means was dead wrong.

Whereas Palestinian terrorism could not be deterred, it could be physically eliminated by military means. The terrorists could be pursued into their lairs and destroyed, or brought to justice. Since then, terrorism from Judea and Samaria against Israeli civilians has essentially ceased. Now, after the Goldstone report, that kind of operation is going to be difficult to repeat.

The report is a blow to the war on terror everywhere and for all nations engaged in fighting terrorism. Hopefully, the nations of the world will have the strength and political will to reject the report, and make it clear to all that terror operations carried out from civilian areas are the war crime, and not the attempt to eliminate these attacks. That using civilians as a shield is a war crime.

If that does not happen, we can expect that areas densely populated by civilians will become the base for terrorist activities in many parts of the world - with the expectation that "international law" will provide them with immunity from counterattacks.

Israel, knowing that its existence is at stake, will find a way to defend itself even under these changed circumstances. But the peace process is bound to be set back. This will not be the time to take big risks.

Thank you Justice Goldstone. The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Palestinian Support Wanes for American-Trained Forces

By Charles Levinson The Wall Street Journal October 15, 2009

Commanders of the U.S.-trained Palestinian security forces who have been locking up criminals and battling Hamas militants here for nearly two years have maintained morale in the ranks with a single promise: They will one day be the anchor of security for an independent Palestinian state.

The lack of progress toward that goal is starting to sap Palestinian public support for the forces and erode morale among troops, even as they win praise and fresh funding from Washington for their accomplishments.

Meanwhile, the more the Palestinian Authority Security Forces cooperate with the U.S. and Israel to

suppress Hamas, the more they threaten to undermine popular support for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas -- who is key to Washington's Mideast peace effort.

Popular anger at Mr. Abbas has already boiled over because of a series of concessions he made to Israel, under U.S. pressure, including his decision to withdraw support for a United Nations report that alleged Israeli war crimes in Gaza. Mr. Abbas later reversed the decision, and supported the report. Israel has denied its forces acted improperly.

Many Palestinians applaud the PASF's success in boosting security in the once-lawless West Bank, which is dominated by Mr. Abbas's Fatah party.

Dov Schwartz, an aide to U.S. Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, who is overseeing the PASF training program, says "the Palestinians have undertaken a serious and sustained effort to return the rule of law to the West Bank. People now feel safe."

Gen. Dayton has graduated about 2,100 paramilitaries in the nearly two years his training program has been under way. Recruits are trained in Jordan by Jordanian police, under the supervision of American, Canadian and British officers. The trainees stand out from the West Bank's often poorly equipped and disheveled security services. They sport crisp olive uniforms and carry well-maintained AK-47s supplied by other countries, including Jordan and Egypt.

Gen. Dayton said he hopes to eventually train over 5,000 men, out of a total West Bank security force of roughly 25,000.

The forces won exceptional praise from Israeli officers for their effectiveness keeping a check on protests in the West Bank during the December-January Gaza War. Since then, day-to-day cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli security officials has improved dramatically, Israeli military officials say.

"They won the battle for public order, but I am concerned they may not have won the battle of public opinion, and were seen as protecting the Israeli army," says Paul Kernaghan, who leads the European Union team training Palestinian police officers.

In an incident last fall, Palestinian forces swept into a West Bank town on the heels of the Israeli army -- only to be chased out by angry residents. An internal memo distributed among the Gen. Dayton's training team after the incident warned: "There are growing signs that the local population are increasingly losing respect for the PASF."

In Qalqilyah, on May 31, the PASF engaged in an all-night shootout with Hamas, leaving two Hamas militants, three PASF members and a bystander dead. After the shootout, hundreds of angry Palestinians took to the streets. "Dayton's

Army serves the Jews," Subea Abu Yussuf, a 24-year-old law student, shouted at a PASF officer.

The confrontation put the PASF on the defensive. As dusk settled, a Palestinian major tried to buck up his troops. "We didn't join the Palestinian security forces to fight Hamas or train with the Americans," he said. "We came here to serve our homeland and build our state." His subordinates quietly nodded.

Today's Palestinian security forces were born out of the Palestine Liberation Organization's guerrilla army, founded 45 years ago to fight Israel. After the Oslo Peace Accords in 1994, thousands of exiled fighters returned to the Palestinian territories and formed the nucleus of a nascent, often-unwieldy security apparatus.

Under Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, founder of the Fatah party, the forces included at least 13 independent branches. In the years after Oslo, the Arafat-commanded forces launched crackdowns on Hamas and other militant groups that opposed the peace process.

"At first, everyone was highly motivated," says Col. Said Najjar, a PASF commander who in the 1990s was a lieutenant. "I slept in my shoes and worked constantly to make Palestine safe, because we had been promised an independent state within five years in return."

Throughout the latter half of the 1990s, as an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal looked increasingly remote, Col. Najjar says his soldiers grew disillusioned. Operations against Hamas and other anti-Israel groups appeared at odds with a Palestinian public that increasingly viewed him and his men as doing Israel's bidding and getting little in return. After the failure of the Camp David peace talks in 2000, the second Intifada, or Palestinian uprising, erupted. Many members of the security services turned their guns on Israel.

One of Col. Najjar's soldiers, Sgt. Jihad Qabaha, went to Israeli prison in 1999 for throwing a Molotov cocktail at an Israeli jeep. He says he gave up fighting Israel after he was released from prison in 2002, and joined the PASF.

In January, Sgt. Qabaha, who is now 31 years old, graduated from Gen. Dayton's training camp beaming with pride. His trainers told trainees they were at the vanguard of efforts to build a Palestinian state. Since then, family members and friends have asked dispiriting questions about his loyalties. While he was on leave recently, his 21-year-old sister criticized the PASF for arresting Palestinians. "People say the security forces are working for the Israelis," she said disapprovingly.

"I know that Palestinian statehood will only come by serving this way, not with force, but it's hard when the people you love question what you're doing," says Sgt. Qabaha.

Challenging liberals' moral consistency

By Lanny Davis *The Washington Times* October 19, 2009

"Have you no shame? Have you no decency?" That was the question that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asked during his important speech to the U.N. General Assembly on Sept. 24.

He was referring to the decision of those members of the General Assembly who remained in their seats when Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad spoke the day before.

"Yesterday, the man who calls the Holocaust a lie spoke from this podium," Mr. Netanyahu said. "To those who refused to come here and to those who left the room in protest, I commend you. You stood up for moral clarity, and you brought honor to your countries.

"But to those who gave this Holocaust-denier a hearing, I say on behalf of my people, the Jewish people: Have you no shame? Have you no decency?"

The question was reminiscent of the famous question asked by lawyer Joseph Welch of Sen. Joseph McCarthy on June 4, 1954, during the nationally televised Army-McCarthy hearings.

It came at a moment after Mr. McCarthy had accused a young lawyer working for Mr. Welch of being associated with a communist-front organization. Mr. Welch, incredulous and outraged, confronted Mr. McCarthy in the drama of live television in its early days, with a national audience glued to their sets:

"Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?"

By those two questions, most historians agree, Mr. McCarthy's reckless demagogic career was effectively over. (He was subsequently censured by the U.S. Senate and died a year or so later.)

Mr. Netanyahu's two questions, one would hope, should also have the same effect on the credibility of those nations that chose to stay during Mr. Ahmadinejad's speech, giving, the Israeli leader said, "legitimacy to a man who denies that the murder of 6 million Jews took place and pledges to wipe out the Jewish state. What a disgrace! What a mockery of the charter of the United Nations!"

"Perhaps some of you think that this man and his odious regime threaten only the Jews. You're wrong. History has shown us time and again that what starts with attacks on Jews eventually ends up engulfing many others."

On Friday, the U.N. "Human Rights Council" - as Mr. Netanyahu described it, "a misnamed institution if there ever was one" - voted on a resolution supporting dozens of recommendations of a one-sided report accusing Israel of war crimes during its Gaza intervention last January.

But the resolution utterly ignored the fact that the intervention was an act of self-defense and,

moreover, failed to mention Hamas rockets that had been fired and intentionally targeted Israeli civilians - by definition, a war crime and a terrorist act.

Also ignored by the so-called Human Rights Council that accused Israel of war crimes was what Mr. Netanyahu described as the "double war crime of [Hamas] firing on civilians while hiding behind civilians" - referring to the established fact that Hamas hid its rocket launchers in mosques, schools, hospitals and apartment houses.

The resolution also failed to acknowledge that, as the prime minister pointed out, Israel "tried to minimize casualties by urging Palestinian civilians to vacate the targeted areas."

"We dropped countless fliers over their homes, sent thousands of text messages and called thousands of cell phones asking people to leave. Never has a country gone to such extraordinary lengths to remove the enemy's civilian population from harm's way."

It's one thing for a U.N. entity calling itself a "Human Rights Council" to include governments that are notorious serial human rights violators. That hypocrisy has been long noted and ridiculed by fair-thinking people around the world. But it is quite another when people who call themselves "liberals" or "progressives" on the left side of the ideological spectrum are complicit in similar hypocrisy.

Recent polling data in the U.S. since Israel's Gaza intervention has shown increased negative attitudes toward Israel by liberal Democrats (and, conversely, increased support by Republican conservatives), although the data show substantially greater support from all Americans, including liberals and Democrats, for the Israeli positions versus the Palestinian positions.

Why are people who call themselves liberals less supportive of Israel than self-described conservatives? I don't get it. I consider myself a proud liberal on all major issues and have supported an independent Palestinian state since I was a kid - consistent, of course, with Israel's security. Israel is a parliamentary democracy, with transparent courts and a vigorous free press, granting its women, minorities and gays equal rights and the same civil rights for all its Arab citizens as are enjoyed by Israeli citizens. Not one Arab country surrounding Israel can make that claim.

So why wouldn't liberals support Israel as much as conservatives, if not more so? So why the apparent double standard on the left, not just on Israel, but when it comes to Iran, too?

For example, there were plenty of demonstrations by the left in America and in Western Europe when Israel intervened in Gaza -

but none when, during the previous eight years, Hamas aimed its terrorist rockets, intentionally killing Israeli civilians. Why?

Then Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005, dismantling 21 settlements and uprooting more than 8,000 Israelis. And the response from Hamas: to send another 6,000 rockets intentionally aimed at killing Israeli civilians. Where was the U.N. and its so-called Human Rights Council? Where was the left demonstrating for human rights in Europe and the U.S.?

There was ... well ... silence from most of the left. Why? Liberals have always taken the lead against nuclear proliferation. Yet as Iran develops a nuclear weapon, threatening a dangerous cycle of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East among Sunni Arab states, why isn't the liberal leadership in the U.S. and abroad - the legatees of the "ban the bomb" and "nuclear freeze" movements - leading the call for draconian economic sanctions against Iran until it halts its nuclear-weapons program, including a world ban on exporting to Iran the refined oil products on which it heavily depends?

Historically, liberalism stands, above all, for the core values of civil liberties, due process, and

peaceful negotiations and diplomacy - and uncompromising opposition to the immoral acts of terrorists, whether al Qaeda, Hezbollah or Hamas, who justify the intentional killing of innocent civilians for some political or theological purpose.

No exceptions. Thus, liberals should overwhelmingly demand that the Palestinians accept Israel's minimal request to bring peace. In Mr. Netanyahu's words: "We ask the Palestinians to finally do what they have refused to do for 62 years: Say 'yes' to a Jewish state."

And we liberals must invest just as much energy and grass-roots commitment to supporting our government's efforts to deter the Iranians from getting the bomb as enacting a national health insurance system.

Lanny J. Davis, a Washington lawyer and former special counsel to President Clinton, served as a member of President George W. Bush's Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board. He is the author of "Scandal: How 'Gotcha' Politics is Destroying America."

Israel's Secret War on Hezbollah

By Ronen Bergman **The Wall Street Journal** October 15, 2009

Iran's proxy army in Lebanon will think twice before launching another round of missile attacks. On Monday, a secret Hezbollah munitions bunker in South Lebanon blew up under mysterious circumstances, injuring a senior official in the organization. This is the second such incident in recent months. The first occurred on July 14, when an explosion destroyed a major Hezbollah munitions dump in the South Lebanese village of Hirbet Salim. Hezbollah immediately pointed fingers at the Mossad. Whether or not Israel was to blame, the explosion caused Hezbollah considerable discomfort by proving that it was in flagrant violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, which forbids stockpiling weapons south of the Litani River.

The U.N. issued a strongly worded rebuke and sent representatives to investigate. But their efforts were thwarted by Hezbollah fighters, who, with the assistance of Lebanese troops, prevented the foreigners from examining the site. This caused further embarrassment to Lebanon, as it exposed the army's lack of neutrality and the active aid that it extends to Hezbollah.

The episode also led to heightened tensions on the Israel-Lebanon border. The specter of renewed fighting between Israel and Hezbollah looms as large today as it has at any time since the end of the Lebanon war in August 2006. Yet senior military officers in Israel's Northern Command are confident

that the embarrassing outcome of the last round will not be repeated.

"By all means, let the Hezbollah try," one officer told me two weeks ago when I asked if he was concerned about the possibility of warfare. "The welcome party that we are preparing for them is one that they will remember for a very long time." That sentiment is shared by many of his colleagues.

The recent explosions have highlighted the weakened geopolitical status of Hezbollah, a diminishment which no one could have foreseen at the end of the last war. In 2006, on both sides of the border—and elsewhere in the Middle East—Hezbollah was seen as having triumphed. Not only was it able to withstand the vastly superior invading Israeli force, but it also inflicted heavy military casualties and brought civilian life in northern Israel to a standstill with its rockets. At the end of the war, a commission of inquiry was set up in Israel to investigate the military and political failure. A number of senior army officers resigned, and Israel's deterrence power was seen as having sustained a severe blow.

If the 2006 war underlined the military might of Hezbollah—a repeat, in a sense, of Hezbollah's success in driving out the Israeli occupying forces from South Lebanon in May 2000—it also forced Israel to include Hezbollah in any assessment of possible responses to an Israeli attack against Iranian nuclear installations.

As part of its combat doctrine, which eschews reliance on reinforcements and resupply, Hezbollah has stockpiled its weapons throughout Lebanon, but particularly near the Israeli border. According to current Israeli intelligence estimates, Hezbollah has an arsenal of 40,000 rockets, including Iranian-made Zelzal, Fajr-3, Fajr-5, and 122 mm rockets (some of which have cluster warheads) and Syrian-made 302 mm rockets. Some of its rockets can reach greater Tel Aviv. Hezbollah also has a number of highly advanced weapons systems, including anti-aircraft missiles, that constitute a threat to Israeli combat aircraft.

But all is not rosy for Hezbollah. After the war, considerable dissatisfaction with the organization was voiced inside Lebanon. Many blamed its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, for Israel's retaliatory bombardments that caused widespread damage. Nasrallah stated that had he known Israel would respond as forcefully as it did, he would have thought twice before ordering the abduction of the two Israeli soldiers—the act that sparked the conflict.

Harsh criticism of Hezbollah also came from an unexpected source: Tehran. The Iranian strategy calls for Hezbollah to play two roles. One is to instigate minor border provocations. The other is to launch, on Tehran's command, a full-scale retaliatory attack should Israel target Iran's nuclear facilities. The 2006 war met neither criterion, and, as the Iranians complained, merely served to reveal the extent of Hezbollah's military capabilities.

Then, in February 2008, Imad Mughniyeh, the organization's military commander and Nasrallah's close associate, was killed in a car bomb in Damascus. The assassination of the man who topped the FBI's most-wanted list prior to Osama bin Laden was a severe blow to morale, as well as to Hezbollah's strategic capabilities. Nasrallah was convinced that the Mossad was responsible, and vowed to take revenge "outside of the Israel-Lebanon arena."

The Shin Bet, Israel's internal security agency, which is also responsible for protecting the country's legations abroad, has been on high alert ever since. But as of today, Hezbollah has not exacted its revenge. This fact was a topic of discussions at a high-level secret forum of Israel's intelligence services that took place from late July to early September.

Israeli officials raised four possible reasons for Hezbollah's failure to act, all of which reflect its current weakness.

First, no replacement has been found for Mughniyeh, whose strategic brilliance, originality and powers of execution are sorely missed by Hezbollah.

Second, Israel's intelligence coverage of Iran and Hezbollah is far superior today to what it was in the

past. Planned attacks, including one targeting the Israeli Embassy in Baku, Azerbaijan, have all been foiled. The Israeli security services have warned Israeli businessmen abroad of possible abduction attempts by Hezbollah. They also shared information with Egyptian authorities that led to the arrest of members of a Hezbollah network who intended to kill Israeli tourists in Sinai. The arrest of these operatives resulted in sharp public exchanges between Egypt, Hezbollah and its Iranian masters, when Nasrallah admitted that these, in fact, were his men.

Third, Nasrallah cannot afford to be viewed domestically as the cause of yet another retaliation against Lebanon. Any act of revenge that he contemplates needs to be carefully calibrated. On the one hand, it needs to hurt the enemy and be spectacular enough to stoke Hezbollah pride. On the other hand, it cannot be so murderous as to cause Israel to respond with force. To complicate matters further, Israel has made it clear that because Hezbollah is part of the Lebanese government, despite the fact that the party that it backed lost in the recent election, any Hezbollah action against Israel would be viewed as an action taken by the Lebanese government. Thus Israel would regard Lebanese infrastructure as a legitimate target for a military response.

Finally, there are the Iranians. Their primary focus is on proceeding with their nuclear program without unnecessary distractions. Tehran's main concern is that a terror attack that can be linked to Iran would result in the arrest of its agents overseas, who are currently procuring equipment for its uranium-enrichment centrifuges.

Tehran has avoided direct involvement in foreign terrorism ever since 1996, when a group of Iranians were convicted in Germany of murdering political opponents of the Iranian regime. And unlike in the past (as, for instance, in the case of the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in retaliation for the assassination of Nasrallah's predecessor), it is now reluctant to place intelligence resources at Hezbollah's disposal. This is a serious blow to Hezbollah, which is not yet able to function as a full-fledged independent operational organization internationally.

Hezbollah is also clearly aware of the severe blow in terms of power and prestige that the Iranian mullahs suffered as a result of the massive protests following June's presidential election. Automatic support from Tehran is no longer a certainty. For now, at least, the Iranian hardliners have troubles of their own.

In short, despite the fact that Hezbollah today is substantially stronger in purely military terms than it was three years ago, its political stature and its autonomy have been significantly reduced. It is clear

that Nasrallah is cautious and he will weigh his options very carefully before embarking on any course of action that might lead to all-out war with Israel. There are some experts in Israel who believe that even Hezbollah's retaliatory role in the Iranian game plan is currently in question.

Whether or not this is the case, all of this is being considered in Jerusalem as part of Israel's calculations about whether to strike Iran's nuclear facilities.

Mr. Bergman is a correspondent for the Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth.

Israel, the U.S. and the Goldstone Report

By John Bolton The Wall Street Journal October 19, 2009

Joining the U.N. Human Rights Council was a mistake Obama should correct. The U.N.'s Human Rights Council (HRC) voted overwhelmingly on Friday to endorse the recommendations of the lopsidedly anti-Israel Goldstone Report. The report, named for former South African judge Richard Goldstone, who chaired the underlying investigation, concluded that Israel's 2008-2009 military campaign against the terrorist group Hamas was actually aimed against Gaza's residents as a whole. Thus it was an illegitimate exercise of "collective punishment," an extraordinarily amorphous legal concept.

more effective than shunning the HRC and attempting to delegitimize it.

The Goldstone Report thus provides a stark test of Mr. Obama's analysis. Predictably, the administration blamed the report's underlying mandate and its stridently anti-Israel tilt on America's earlier absence from the HRC when the investigation was authorized and launched. Yet the new administration's diplomacy had no discernible impact on the HRC's disgraceful resolution.

The report alleges numerous specific human rights violations by both Israel and Hamas. But by attempting to criminalize Israel's strategy of crippling Hamas, the report in effect declared the entire antiterrorism campaign to be a war crime. Mr. Goldstone recommended that Israel and the Palestinians should each conduct their own investigations, failing which the Security Council should refer the entire matter to the International Criminal Court for possible prosecution.

Twenty-five of the HRC's 47 members voted for the resolution (including Russia and China), six voted against (Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Slovakia, Ukraine and the U.S.), and 11 abstained (Japan, South Korea and several European governments among them). Five didn't vote at all, including Great Britain and France. Press reports indicated that London saw its inaction as a "favor" to Israel, a position simultaneously inexplicable and gutless. It is hard to know just how much real politicking the Obama administration did before this vote, but the loss of key allies is telling.

In the month since the report's release, it has roiled the Middle East peace process. An Israeli spokesman said "it will make it impossible for us to take any risks for the sake of peace," perhaps foreshadowing Israeli withdrawal from negotiations while the report remains under active U.N. consideration.

The Goldstone Report has important implications for America. In the U.N., Israel frequently serves as a surrogate target in lieu of the U.S., particularly concerning the use of military force pre-emptively or in self-defense. Accordingly, U.N. decisions on ostensibly Israel-specific issues can lay a predicate for subsequent action against, or efforts to constrain, the U.S. Mr. Goldstone's recommendation to convoke the International Criminal Court is like putting a loaded pistol to Israel's head—or, in the future, to America's.

The HRC resolution endorsing the report's recommendations repeatedly lacerated Israel, leading Mr. Goldstone himself to cringe, saying he was "saddened" the resolution contained "not a single phrase condemning Hamas as we have done in the report." A U.S. State Department spokesman conceded that the adopted text "went beyond even the scope of the Goldstone Report itself."

Mr. Obama has now met the new HRC, same as the old HRC, thus producing a "teachable moment," a phrase he often uses. Quasi-religious faith in "engagement" and the U.N. has run into empirical reality. When the administration picks itself up off the ground, it should become more cognizant of that organization's moral and political limitations.

The U.N. General Assembly created the HRC on March 15, 2006, to replace the discredited Human Rights Commission, which had spent much of its final years concentrating on Israel and the U.S. rather than the world's real human rights violators. The Bush administration voted against establishing this body and declined to join it, believing, correctly, that it would not be an improvement over its predecessor. President Barack Obama changed course, and the U.S. won election to the HRC in May. Mr. Obama argued that engagement would be

Although it will be hard for Mr. Obama to swallow, the logical response to Friday's debacle is to withdraw from and defund the HRC. Otherwise the Goldstone Report will merely be the beginning, next time perhaps with Washington as its unmistakable target.

Mr. Bolton, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.