

OCTOBER

7

AND **SHIFTS**

IN **PERSPECTIVES**

**ESSAYS ON ISRAEL
AND THE SURGE
IN GLOBAL
ANTISEMITISM**

Ken Jacobson

Deputy National Director, ADL

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Foreword

My colleague and friend Ken Jacobson is often described as somewhat of “an institution” at ADL. It is meant in the most flattering way.

Kenny is an institution, not only in the sense of someone who has been a fixture at ADL for more than 53 years – indeed who has spent nearly his entire professional life with the organization – but also in the sense of someone who has touched and steered just about every professional, not to mention every division, across the organization in some meaningful or significant way.

Over his many decades at ADL, Kenny has distinguished himself as Director of International Affairs, head of Civil Rights and interim head of the Marketing Department, among other capacities. He is rightfully known as the organization’s resident historian, he’s undoubtedly one of the nation’s leading experts on antisemitism and hate, and has been described by members of our board as a “one-man think tank.” And for good reason: Here is someone who has borne witness to many of the seminal moments in the modern history of the Jewish people, who is steeped in Jewish values and Yiddishkeit, and who is more than eager to share his wisdom with anyone who will listen.

And when he wasn’t busy leading, Ken was always busy writing. Over the years his op-eds, articles, letters and other editorial matter have appeared in dozens of publications, from *The Times of Israel* to *The Hill* to *The Algemeiner* to *The New York Times*, from *The Jerusalem Post* to *The Washington Post*, and beyond. In the early years, Ken’s essays were penned first in longhand before being directed to someone in the typing pool, where it was turned into legible typewritten copy. In the early 2000s, Ken became an early adopter of the BlackBerry, typing out his articles on that handheld device with its built-in keyboard. And finally, like many of us, he made the switch to tapping out his thoughts on his iPad.

For Ken, writing isn’t a vanity project: It never was. It is, rather, about speaking truth to power, about calling out antisemitism and hypocrisy whenever he sees it, occasionally explaining Jewish history to the layperson, or speaking the language of logic to recalcitrant world leaders. Occasionally, Kenny writes just to get something off his chest, even if he realizes that the piece he’s writing is being written just for his colleagues to read, and likely will not see the light of day. His voice is urgent and honest, never hyperbolic and always self-effacing.

After the October 7, 2023 massacre in Israel, Ken turned his sights on that tragedy and hasn’t looked away since. The Hamas atrocities of that

nightmarish day, the kidnappings, the world's hypocrisy in blaming Israel for the violence, and the unprecedented wave of antisemitism that followed have become fodder for Ken's analysis and insights, and have found him opining on the issues at stake of this critical moment at a rapid clip of two, and sometimes three pieces a week.

This book brings all of his essays post-October 7 together in one place for the very first time. What you now hold in your hands is the product of Ken's creative output of the past few months. I hope everyone who cares about the future of the Jewish people, and for the safety and security of the State of Israel, and for human decency everywhere, will take the time to carefully read them. There's much to learn from Ken's insights and wisdom.

Jonathan Greenblatt

CEO and National Director, ADL

New York, New York

September 2024

Introduction

October 7, 2023 was the worst day for the Jewish people since the Shoah, the Holocaust. The murder of over twelve hundred individuals, the seizing of around 250 hostages, and the feeling that the social contract between the people and the government of the Jewish state had been broken all made for a deep sense of tragedy.

Ever since that horrific day, the trauma has been deepened by the continuation of the hostage crisis, attacks on Israel from Iran, Hezbollah, the Houthis and elsewhere, and the related surge in global antisemitism to unprecedented levels not seen in decades. Israel and Jews are feeling under siege.

Most significantly, the continuing tragedy is a product of misinformation that has continually been disseminated since almost immediately after the massacre. These false claims have been fueling the hatred of Israel and Jews nonstop for months.

The essays in this book, written over the course of the year since the October 7 massacre, seek to address the mistruths that took over in so many places. A lethal combination of complexity – where simplicity was in order, and simplicity where complexity and perspective were in order – are the basis of so many of these articles.

Only one article in this collection preceded October 7. The day before was the 50th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War and I discussed what Israel had learned and not learned and raised questions whether Israel could be surprised again.

While a lot of attention has been paid to Israel's response to October 7, what was often overlooked was a new perception by Israel's antagonists that the Jewish state was vulnerable after all, and that campaigns to isolate, weaken and eventually destroy Israel – many fueled by mistruths – received a jolt of energy as a result of this new perception.

The hate and mistruths started immediately following October 7, when the barbaric massacre generated a surprising, even shocking reaction. Anti-Israel forces quickly rationalized the murders and hostage taking by labeling them as legitimate resistance against Israeli forces, promoting slogans like “from the river to the sea Palestine will be free,” “by any means necessary,” and “globalize the Intifada.”

Those same voices also promoted the idea of Hamas as a legitimate political party that was working for the Palestinian people, while they denied or

ignored Hamas's violent history and charter which transparently calls for the end of the Jewish state, and, in the language of the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion, blames Jews for all the world's problems.

My first post-October 7 essay addresses the first and biggest mistruth, that the murder, rape and hostage taking were merely forms of legitimate resistance. I point out that while divisions over Israel and the Palestinians are legitimate and complicated, what happened on October 7 was totally removed from that and was, at its core, pure evil. This theme runs throughout the essays, and is critical in distinguishing between legitimate protest and hate.

As Israel began defending itself and securing its boarders against future attacks, the enmity across the Middle East spread around the world, most startlingly to the United States. The impression that America had been the most hospitable place for Jews was being challenged by the surge of antisemitism. Places where Jews felt at home for decades, such as on college campuses, as members of activist groups and even in certain neighborhoods with significant Jewish populations, began to feel dangerous for many.

Several of my essays examine how we reached this point, what factors led to rhetorical and physical attacks on Jews, and why campus officials and others ignored or minimized Jewish concerns about their own safety.

I also raise questions as to the role of ideology in this transformation and how, particularly with regard to the left that enjoyed such a long history of relations with the Jewish community, the main source of the anti-Israel, anti-Jewish activity was coming from former allies. Especially daunting for many American Jews was the realization that for longtime allies, their support for Israel invalidated their work in the civil rights spaces, thus leading to their exclusion or expulsion from such groups.

As the war dragged on, I addressed the two main Israeli goals: freeing the hostages and eliminating Hamas. The question was asked whether it was possible to achieve both, without reaching a clear answer. I hope that by the time this book is published, both goals will be accomplished.

Other strategic issues that surfaced relate to what "the day after" the war might look like, how to approach threats from Iran and its nuclear development in light of Iran's missile bombardment of Israel, and the impact of the war on U.S.-Israel relations.

As all these serious and tragic events unfurled, I also tried to highlight the positive, including recognizing how, despite the horrors of October 7 and the resurgence of global antisemitism, the Jewish people and State of Israel

remain strong, and that Israel's peace treaties and alliances with many of its neighbors have largely held up.

So as we near the anniversary of October 7, let us continue to pray and work for the release of all hostages being held in Gaza. Let us remember the atrocities of October 7 and celebrate the lives of those who were brutally slaughtered by Hamas. Let us work towards helping Israelis and the global Jewish community heal from this trauma. Let us work together to protect and secure Israel for its citizens for years to come. And let us seek out and commit to real opportunities for peace.

Above all, Am Yisrael chai!

Ken Jacobson

Deputy National Director, ADL

New York, New York

September 2024

The Yom Kippur War Taught Israel It Can't Afford Complacency

Oct. 6, 2023

The arrival of the movie biography “Golda,” addressing Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir’s handling of the biggest external crisis in Israel’s history, the 1973 Yom Kippur War, gives us an opportunity to look at what has been learned in the 50 years since, and what may have not been learned.

In some ways the big story, as portrayed in the film and indeed in the reality of the country at that time, was the huge price paid for hubris following the unbelievable and unanticipated success of the Six Day War in 1967. The country experienced new and positive things – an enlarged geographic territory, a unified Jerusalem, the Jewish people now largely becoming pro-Zionist and supporters of Israel, a military to be reckoned with – and these led to a cultural shift among the populace toward a belief that Israel had made it and its most challenging days were behind it. So, when some tried to warn the leadership in the early 1970’s that the situation was unsustainable, the warning largely fell on deaf ears.

Consequently, when Israel was caught by surprise on Yom Kippur in 1973, it paid a huge price. That overweening sense of comfort, of a belief that Israel could handle any challenge and therefore needn’t be alert for potential dangers, was gone. And to this day, we no longer see the kinds of attitudes in the country that enabled the war to happen.

Beyond culture, Israelis learned a measure of respect for their enemies, and – while still admiring the heroism of their own soldiers – recognized that the other sides had brave and intelligent military leaders and individuals as well.

And because of the complicated relations with the U.S. government during those difficult days, Israel took away from the war not only how important the U.S.-Israel relationship had become, but also how diversifying Israel’s international support might be imperative when American and Israeli interests diverge.

What has not been inculcated from the war, and should have been, was an understanding of the need to take initiatives for peace even if they don’t actually lead to results. There are benefits to taking initiatives on several levels. For one, they give Israeli leaders more leeway and flexibility in decision-making as to whether to engage in military action. The fact that Prime

Minister Meir's government was somewhat hesitant to take the first military steps when, late in the game, they learned of Arab attacks about to happen, was partially a product of this absence of any open political initiatives which put Israel on the defensive.

Taking initiatives also serves to bring the country together in difficult moments. In this regard, the difference internally between the first Palestinian Intifada and the second is stark. During the first Intifada, an uprising which was not nearly as lethal as the second, the Israeli public was split. Many in the center and left were harshly critical of the government of then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, saying in effect, what do you expect from the Palestinians when Israel offers them nothing?

During the Second Intifada, on the contrary, Israelis were united as a people behind the government because Prime Minister Ehud Barak had offered the Palestinians an opportunity to fundamentally change their situation at Camp David, but they rejected it and turned to violence. No internal blaming of Israel this time around.

In this regard, the absence of peace initiatives from different Israeli governments, even recognizing that the Palestinians have shown little or no evidence that they are truly interested in peace, has left a vacuum which is filled by right-wing fanatics or by a growing apathy toward peace with the Palestinians. One can understandably blame the Palestinians for all this, but the consequences for Israel are not good.

Once again, Israelis are getting too comfortable with the status quo, even those who believe in the necessity of a two-state solution, and Israel again could find itself surprised by whatever eruption may take place.

In sum, the effects of the Yom Kippur War on Israeli society were profound and traumatic for many. The country is still living with the consequences, and that war should continue to influence Israeli thinking on many important matters.

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Is Complicated. What Happened on Oct. 7 Wasn't.

Oct. 12, 2023

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has long been complicated, though, undoubtedly, the principal reason for its lasting so long has been Palestinian rejectionism and extremism.

There is nothing complicated, however, about what is taking place now. It is as clear a case as possible of good and evil. The slaughtering of over 1,300 children, women and men by the Hamas terrorists, the wounding of thousands more, the savage taking of civilian hostages and the glee expressed by the terrorists are all indicators of barbarism of the first order.

If people who are supporters of the Palestinian cause are also applauding what Hamas has done or blaming Israel for this brutality imposed on its people, they are guilty of contributing to the legitimacy of this terrorism while simultaneously harming legitimate efforts to find a fair solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Let's be clear: this horrendous terrorist massacre did not come in a vacuum. Hamas has been an extremist group, disseminating hatred toward Israel and Jews, since its founding in 1987. In its charter, its founding document, which is replete with antisemitism, Hamas repeatedly makes clear that its main purpose is to engage in the destruction of Israel.

Ever since, the main characteristic of Hamas activity is to continue to spout the language of hate toward Israel and its people, and periodically bombard Israel with rockets deliberately targeting Israeli civilians. In other words, both in its rhetoric and in its actions, Hamas has been an organization committed to hate, extremism and destruction.

In this context, what took place this past weekend, at a time when Jews celebrate one of the most joyous holidays in their calendar, Simchat Torah, was, of course, far, far worse than anything that preceded it, but in no way inconsistent or out of character to what Hamas has been for decades.

Unfortunately, while many labeled Hamas a terrorist group, others have given it legitimacy and support – including organizations and others here in the U.S. – which had to play a role in what took place this weekend.

And so let's be clear, what needs to happen is for the international community to recognize that Hamas needs to be eliminated. Israel must have wide support for the difficult task ahead to eradicate Hamas.

As Dennis Ross, former U.S. advisor on the Middle East, has said, Hamas's actions demonstrate absolutely no regard for the Palestinian citizens of Gaza. They know full well that this kind of brutal attack leaves Israel no choice but to launch its most major assault on Hamas, with its inevitable consequences for the residents of Gaza, even as Israel does what it can to limit civilian casualties.

The challenges ahead are profound. But those people who are sincere about moving forward Israeli-Palestinian peace, and not in scoring propaganda points, should support Israel in its efforts to eradicate Hamas. Only once they are successful can there be hope for true peace and progress.

For the Jewish people, at a time of surging antisemitism in the U.S. and elsewhere, what took place on Saturday was a body blow of immense proportions. As Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt and others have pointed out, Oct. 7 was the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust.

While we are a resilient people, Israelis and Jews elsewhere will need a long time to recover from this trauma. But the horror that took place, and that is still ongoing with the reality of scores of hostages in Hamas hands, reminds us of both the need to come together as a people no matter our political views and the need to reinforce the message of Never Again, which has underlain Jewish activism since the Holocaust, and now once again needs to be part of our worldview going forward.

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This piece was written using facts and figures available at the time of writing. New information suggests the appropriate figures would be over 1,200 people murdered and over 250 people kidnapped by Hamas on October 7, 2023.

Hamas's Deep-Rooted Antisemitism

Oct. 13, 2023

The atrocities committed by Hamas against Israeli civilians compel us to revisit the long history of antisemitism. That history is comprised of fantasies about the Jewish people which led to and justified hatred, discrimination, isolation and murder. Simply put, a broad array of negative motives and actions were attributed to Jews that had nothing to do with reality.

This anti-Jewish fiction reached its modern apex with the emergence of the fraudulent document The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion. This purported revelation claimed to expose the secret plans of Jewish leaders to take over the world. Given the long history of antisemitic tropes, millions of people who were exposed to the Protocols believed it to be real because for centuries these ideas in various forms had been taught and believed. The Protocols were seen to confirm long-held views about Jews.

And so it is that the idea of a Jewish state came into existence. With the creation of the movement for a Jewish return to Israel it was hoped that maybe some of these fantasies would disappear. More significantly, there was a belief that finally the Jewish people would have power to protect themselves in the face of Jew-hatred. Of course, the Jewish state came into existence too late to save the Jews of Europe but it did finally emerge.

Having this new power to defend Jews, however, added a layer of complexity to the assessment of antisemitism. Possessing real power generated a significant element of responsibility for the Jewish state and with it the recognition that criticism of Jews, in this case the Jewish state, was no longer automatically based on fantasies but could indeed be based on legitimate criticism of misuse of power.

And so came the discussions about when criticisms of Israel were legitimate and when they were antisemitism. Clearly, old conspiracy theories such as false accusations of Israelis using the blood of dead Palestinian children for religious purposes fell into the antisemitism category.

Similarly other forms of demonizing the Jewish state and concluding from that that there should be no Israel fell into that category.

And then there was the massacre on Simchat Torah. It is safe to say that this was by far the most egregious manifestation of antisemitism ever directed at the Jewish state. Let's be clear: what took place had nothing to do with one's views on the wisdom or morality of Israeli policies or behavior.

It had only to do with antisemitic fantasies that have historically plagued the Jewish people and ultimately led to the Holocaust. Jews are evil. Jews are conspiratorial. Jews are subhuman. All of which we have seen in Hamas literature and rhetoric for decades.

The result of such attitudes is, of course, that one doesn't merely attack communities, but one feels justified in murdering innocent civilians, beheading babies, raping women and taking hostages.

This is a clear manifestation not of the complexity of the era of Zionist power and distinctions between criticism and hate, but old-fashioned Jew-hatred now linked to the Jewish state.

In that context, the demonstrations that have now surfaced in the U.S. and elsewhere in support of the Palestinians are shameless and inherently antisemitic as well in justifying and defending the mass murder of Jewish civilians. Signs such as "by any means necessary of f--- the Jews" are not about the complexity of Israeli-Palestinian issues, but about the reversal to old-fashioned, classic antisemitism. Terrorism against Jewish men, women and children is acceptable and necessary because Jews are subhuman and poisonous. Sound familiar?

Going forward, we need to clearly call out those who justify this egregious Jew-hatred and not allow it to be obscured by claims that all they are doing is standing up for the Palestinians who are being oppressed by the Israelis.

At the same time, we also should make clear that we support the need for a positive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian issue in which both peoples can live in peace and security. That understandably seems far off now but it is the right thing to do and one that will reinforce the message that what has happened these past few days is the moral opposite of that which we aspire to achieve.

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Hamas Massacre Proves Without a Doubt that Iran Should Never Go Nuclear

Oct. 20, 2023

An unintended consequence of the massacre of innocent civilians by Hamas is the forging of unity, along several fronts, in opposition to Hamas and its state sponsor, Iran.

We now see the Israeli public, which this year had been divided as never before in the history of the country, coming together as one nation to deal with the horror that has hit the country. This is reflected in the huge numbers of reservists reporting for duty, in the numbers of Israelis abroad quickly returning to serve, and in the number of people giving blood and volunteering for all kinds of support groups.

American Jews have similarly come together. A community increasingly divided by issues at home and in Israel is now demonstrating support at levels that we haven't seen in years. This manifested itself in a very large community rally at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza opposite the United Nations. For nearly two decades, when the community thought there was a need for some kind of rally to stand with Israel, the response has been that we won't be able to attract a crowd, so better not to do it. This time, thousands came.

Finally, the vast majority of Americans support Israel and its right to respond to protect its citizens against further jihadist violence.

There is another area, however — the most existential issue of all — where it is vital that a common understanding and determination be reached in light of the Hamas massacre. That is Iran's undying commitment to develop a nuclear capability and its willingness to use it.

Of course, it has been the position of the U.S., the European Union and others that Iran must not achieve a nuclear capability. The rhetoric is fine, but on the ground, that determination has been largely breached. Most nuclear and intelligence experts agree that Iran is getting closer and closer to achieving its goal.

The absence of a true sense of urgency here was of serious concern before Oct. 7 — now, it is appalling.

The two main characteristics of the Hamas terrorist atrocities are the irrationality of its violence and the vicious hatred of Jews underlying it.

Irrationality? Hamas had to know that a massacre of this kind would entail a response from Israel that they have never seen before and would lead to

massive civilian deaths, even though Israel will seek to avoid civilian casualties. More significantly for Hamas, the deaths of all or most of its leaders and the elimination of the organization's control of the Gaza Strip will be likely, if not inevitable. But they did it anyway.

And that speaks to the challenge with Iran. With all the claims and sanctions on Iran to prevent them from gaining nuclear weapons, it is not as if the world is particularly focused on the issue. Indeed, the international community goes about its daily business as if there were no nuclear threat from Iran. But the irrationality at the heart of the Hamas attack must now be seen as likely to apply to Iran as well.

Underlying the lack of urgency on the Iran nuclear issue is the belief that the Iranians, as destructive as they can be, are governed by a significant degree of rationality. That is why — it is argued — that Iran is not rushing to break out on the nuclear issue. There is an unstated belief that it is unlikely Iran would ever use a nuclear weapon if it ever got it because it knows that Israel has an extensive nuclear program, and an Israeli response to a nuclear attack would bomb Iran back to the Stone Age.

Whatever comfort Western defense and diplomatic officials may have drawn from this thinking must end right now. The level of irrationality combined with obsessive hatred of Jews must lead all of us to recognize that we cannot assume an Iran with a nuclear bomb would not, at a moment, deploy it against Israel, recognizing that Israel is a tiny state in a tiny area that such a bomb could destroy.

And so, a new sense of urgency should be a major priority for the international community, but particularly for the United States. U.S. and Israeli leaders will need to coordinate even more closely, and American sophisticated weapons should be available to Israel to make a military option more realistic.

It is not for us to focus on the specifics of what needs to be done militarily. It is for us to see to it that a new sense of urgency prevails after the Hamas massacre and as the West's Middle East policy moves forward.

Misperceptions of Israeli Vulnerability

Oct. 24, 2023

As the conflict between Israel and Hamas deepens, there is much commentary and concerns about the possibility that the war could expand to Hezbollah, Syria, the West Bank or even Iran. Whenever there is conflict in the Middle East, the rhetoric heats up, but one should not always assume it will lead to action.

There is, however, a new element in the equation which should be very worrying. While we have rightly been focusing on the barbarism of October 7, the biggest takeaway for many in the Middle East may well be a new sense of Israeli vulnerability.

Over the years, haters of Israel, who engage in all forms of misinformation, have created an image of Israel being an oppressor, a violator of human rights, a nation that should be isolated and boycotted. At the same time, and this has been critical, with all the hate came a recognition that Israel was a powerful force in the region, had remarkable intelligence and military capabilities and was a state not to be toyed with.

Now, if indeed there is a belief that the dynamic has fundamentally changed, that the Hamas attack exposed Israel to be a paper tiger, that could lead to the most dangerous decisions and acts by various players in the region.

It has almost been a cliché over the decades to say that many in the Arab world, if they had the opportunity, would gladly destroy the Jewish state. But because Israel was so strong militarily and economically, not only was that not a realistic option, it also left them with the idea that – considering the limited options – maybe they ought to think about making peace with Israel.

Of course, Iran continued to talk about its certainty that Israel would disappear from the map of the region and while they never truly backed that up with action, the very fact that they were developing a nuclear weapon gave them some credibility. Now, the Iranian foreign minister said after October 7 that “Israel’s time is up.” These kinds of comments are not new for Iran but may well have a certain resonance in the region that they never had before.

Here we have to get into the arena of perceptions and reality. Undoubtedly, many terrible lapses took place in Israeli intelligence. Its slow military response and the divisions that had ripped apart Israeli society for months all made possible the events of October 7.

To conclude from all this, however, that Israel is now a weakened and vulnerable society is to ignore the reality of the nation. It was amazing how

quickly the public came together to create a sense of unity after months of disunity. This was reflected in the massive and enthusiastic response of reservists to a call up, to the numbers of Israelis giving blood and volunteering in all kinds of ways to bolster the atmosphere after the massacre of Simchat Torah.

All of which points to Israelis not only having the emotional intelligence and determination to defend the nation but the capability as well. The military remains the preeminent one in the region, with the most sophisticated weaponry and training. When one hears government representatives or military leaders expressing the view that Hamas will regret what it did or that Hezbollah should not repeat its mistake of 2006, that is not mere idle boasting, but a reflection of Israeli military superiority on many levels which would come to bear in any conflict.

The glee of anti-Israel elements in the Middle East and elsewhere over the massacre of October 7 was not only about the murder of as many Jews as possible. It was also about a sense that the powerful Jewish state was now exposed as vulnerable. This view holds the greatest danger for the region and the world if it takes hold because it could lead to further reckless attacks on the Jewish state. Israel will prevail in such a situation but the pain and suffering will be immense.

This is why it is so important that Israel succeed in decimating Hamas to re-enforce the sense that Israel is a force to be reckoned with. And it is also why it is important for American and international diplomacy to rid the region of such misperceptions that would only lead to more bloodshed.

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People No Longer Love Dead Jews

The message of early protesters was explicit: murder of Israelis is a legitimate and positive activity.

Oct. 30, 2023

Two years ago, the novelist Dara Horn came out with a book titled, “People Love Dead Jews.”

At a time of a dramatic surge of antisemitism in America and around the globe, Horn’s book was a major contribution to our understanding of what the focus on the Holocaust and the other stories of historic antisemitism ultimately mean.

Without dismissing the importance of teaching the history of antisemitism and learning about it, Horn suggested that the obsession with the past tragedies was a way for people to show that they cared about Jews and Jewish suffering while absolving them from caring about or fighting against antisemitism in the present. Jews as victims are commemorated, Jews standing up for themselves today are to be condemned.

And then came October 7 and its ongoing aftermath. Horn’s insight, which we should still keep in mind as we move forward, was radically upended. In a word, the reaction to the atrocities in Israel revealed in many circles that in fact, not only did many people hate live Jews, as indicated by the surge in antisemitic incidents, but they hated dead Jews as well.

It started even before Israel had a chance to defend itself against the terrorists. Within a day of the massacre, signs at protests gleefully stated, “resistance by any means possible.” In other words, killing Jews is a completely legitimate activity, and we are delighted by what happened – the killing of women, children and the elderly – because resistance against the devil, the Jew, is a legitimate and positive activity.

This was most blatantly expressed by a Cornell professor on video who screamed over and over that the Hamas massacre was “exhilarating,” suggesting that the murder of innocents was a blessing to shift the balance of power away from Israel.

In sum, Jews got their comeuppance. The message of those early demonstrators was explicit if not as explosive in rhetoric as the Cornell professor.

Soon, the open gleefulness about the dead Israelis took another form: stop the Israelis from defending themselves and finding some measure of justice for the barbaric murder of 1,400 people. A ceasefire now was the call.

While this is framed in more subtle terms, talking about civilian deaths as if Hamas ever gave a damn about either Israeli or Palestinian civilian deaths, the real point of this call was to resist any effort to legitimize Israeli retaliation because the Hamas murders were legitimate or acceptable. This is a more subtle version of “hating dead Jews,” but one can’t be sure whether the earlier or later version is worse.

Here, Horn’s illuminating insight took a direct beating. There was no effort even to hint that there was any human caring about murdered innocent Jews, rather the dead brought on their own demise and what happened on October 7 is a good thing.

In this sense, the reaction by some is very similar to the Nazi justification for the Holocaust. Jews got what they deserved because they poison everything they touch and think how much better off we are with these dead Jews.

And then to top it off, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, in speaking before the Security Council, looking at what was happening in Israel and Gaza, essentially blamed Israel for the murder of its 1,400 civilians.

Repeating the long-held lies that have characterized the UN’s position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for decades — simply blaming Israel for the situation, ignoring Palestinian rejectionism, terrorism and education of their youth to hate Israel and Jews — Guterres appeared to justify the murders on the grounds that Israelis have occupied the Palestinians for fifty-six years. The blood of 1,400 Israelis was hardly dry and the UN chief is glorifying in the massacre.

Guterres could only have reached that despicable level because the UN’s Human Rights Council has been demonizing Israel for decades. Under the guise of protecting rights, the Council has condemned Israel so many times over the years as compared to any other state that it seemed like a very bad joke being repeated over and over. The Secretary General’s shameful statement reminds us that the UN is no joke.

Dara Horn was right in saying that people love dead Jews. Until now.

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This piece was written using facts and figures available at the time of writing. New information suggests the appropriate figures would be over 1,200 people murdered and over 250 people kidnapped by Hamas on October 7, 2023.

The Farce of Moral Equivalencies About Israel

Nov. 1, 2023

The desperation to create a moral equivalency between Israel and Hamas since October 7 has taken on two forms. First in reaction to the atrocity itself, and second since Israel's response to events of October 7.

At demonstrations, in statements by various figures, including the Secretary-General of the United Nations, one sees this trend in justifying the murder of Jews by saying the context for the massacre was the 56 years of Israeli occupation. This is also evident in language used in certain academic circles, including in a letter signed by a large number of Columbia faculty which refers to the horrors of October 7 as a "military operation." In sum, they argue, Israel got its comeuppance for its behavior against the Palestinians.

At the same time, there is a rush to accuse Israel of genocide, as represented by the quickness to accept Hamas lies that Israel was responsible for an attack on a Gaza hospital, and the failure by some to point out that Hamas deliberately embeds its operational quarters in civilian areas.

Where does this urgency come from not to allow Israel to be seen as the aggrieved party even when 1,400 people were slaughtered, thousands more injured and over 230 innocents being held hostage?

I believe it stems from an earlier urge to find moral equivalence for which a terrible price is being paid now. That is the tremendous sense of guilt and resentment in so much of the world about the Nazi murder of six million Jews, and the effort by the Jewish people and others to get nations to come to grips with what happened and what their role was in the Holocaust.

A way was found to ease that guilt and resentment: accusing Israel as acting like Nazis toward the Palestinians. In effect, creating a canceling out of moral condemnation. We had our Nazis and now you have your Nazis. Over the years, these accusations would surface in different places but they didn't always take this extreme and direct form. At other times it was more subtle: we had our persecutors of the Jews now you have your persecutors of the Palestinians.

This effort to create a moral equivalence between Israel and the Nazis who exterminated two thirds of the Jews of Europe, as obscene as it was, set the stage for what has happened now. After all, if the Jews are like Nazis or if the Jews are simply persecutors, then anything goes against the Jews just like anything was justified in actions against the Nazis. So that is how it comes to outright justification of the barbarism by Hamas as seen in ban-

ners like “by any means necessary.” That’s how it enabled Guterres, the UN Secretary-General, with the blood of Jews hardly dry, to contextualize the slaughter by referring to Israel’s occupation. That is why a group of Columbia professors could use language that intentionally diminishes the barbarity of Hamas by referring to it as a military operation.

These efforts to create a moral equivalence between Jews and the biggest enemies of the Jewish people are disgraceful but must be addressed. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been going on for close to a century and there is plenty of room for different perspectives, including criticism of Israel. Whether Israel has done enough for peacemaking, the role of settlements, issues of security impinging on Palestinian life are legitimate subjects for discussion and criticism.

To ignore the Palestinian role in this conflict, however, is to willfully and dangerously distort its history. Just a reminder: it was the Palestinians who rejected the UN partition plan of 1947 which would have given them a state. It was the Palestinians who participated in the Arab war to destroy the nascent Jewish state. It was the Palestinians, who, under Yasser Arafat, developed a charter calling for Israel’s destruction before Israel was occupying any land. It was Hamas, a Palestinian terrorist group, that initiated a charter in 1988 that called for Israel’s destruction and the killing of Jews.

And in the first decade of this century, Israel offered the Palestinians multiple opportunities to develop their own state including at Camp David in 2000 and at Annapolis in 2007. In each instance, Palestinian leadership rejected it and turned to violence.

The point is simple: Israel’s role can be questioned, but the primary reason why October 7 happened is Palestinian extremism and rejectionism. Efforts to see the conflict as a struggle between the oppressor, Israel, and the victim, the Palestinians, is to violently distort the truth and is the cause of so much of the horrific reactions these days.

In sum, moral equivalency between Israel and Hamas is as obscene as trying to create a moral equivalence between Israel and the Nazis. It is time for all good people to denounce these efforts for what they are: continued threats to the very existence of the Jewish people.

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This piece was written using facts and figures available at the time of writing. New information suggests the appropriate figures would be over 1,200 people murdered and over 250 people kidnapped by Hamas on October 7, 2023.

It's Open Season on the Jewish People

Nov. 6, 2023

The horrific story out of Dagestan in Russia where rioters stormed a plane from Tel Aviv, reportedly calling to kill Jews, is a reflection of a new sense of an open season on Jews. Antisemites the world over see new opportunities to go after Jews following the barbarism of Oct. 7 and the rationalizing, if not support of events that day. This was done most prominently by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who argued that Hamas's actions did not occur in a "vacuum" – an implication that Israel bears some level of responsibility for the massacre of its citizens.

Indeed, the Oct. 7 Hamas massacre generated this development because it showed antisemites around the world that it is possible to murder large numbers of Jews, and that those murders can be rationalized and even legitimized. This is a poisonous brew that ends up inviting an open season on Jews.

It has been commented that Oct. 7 was the deadliest attack on the Jewish community since the Holocaust. One could add that the overt, violent antisemitism of the kind we are seeing today has not been as prevalent since the Holocaust. Indeed, for decades the shame about the Shoah and how centuries of antisemitism had led to the murder of six million acted as an inhibitor on the carrying out of antisemitic attitudes.

Now all bets are off.

Let's be clear, the protests against Israel, like the massacre of Oct. 7, have nothing to do with the complicated political situation that is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They are instead a sign of resurgent antisemitism, shameless in its transparency, that we haven't seen for years.

The failure of many societal leaders to stand up unequivocally to denounce the barbarism of Hamas, the appearance in too many demonstrations of a variety of blatantly antisemitic signs – including "by any means necessary" which justifies the murder of Israeli innocents, "from the river to the sea," which is an outright call for Israel's destruction, and "kill the Jews" – have set the stage for further attacks on the Jewish people.

Many important and good people have stood up, particularly President Biden. But the equivocating by many others, particularly presidents of universities, as if the demonstrations on their campuses were just about free speech, have sent a message, even if unintentionally, that the killing of Jews is now acceptable as long as it is framed as resistance.

The lowest moment in this respect were the remarks of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Talking about giving credibility to those inclined to violence against Jews: this important figure, the leading individual at the UN, has given license to Jew haters everywhere.

His comments are reminiscent of when the UN passed the infamous “Zionism is racism” resolution in 1975, and how it enabled hostilities toward Israel all around the world. As bad as that resolution was, Guterres’s comments are worse because of the violence that already occurred, and how it may inspire other acts of violence against Jews.

If the words “Never Again” are to have any meaning, there is an imperative for political, religious and cultural leaders to stand up and stand together against this devastating antisemitism, not only manifested by Hamas but by others who are seizing on the moment to attack Jews. None of this is to stifle legitimate conversation on Israeli-Palestinian relations and what can be done to move toward a better future.

It is, however, imperative to make clear that what Hamas represented for so long, culminating in its atrocities on Oct. 7, has no place in a civilized society. Those who seek to attack Jews must be stopped and denounced by society without reservation or qualification.

This is truly a critical moment for the future of our civilization. When Hitler came to power after publishing his plans in *Mein Kampf*, he was not taken seriously until it was too late.

The Jew haters are now having a field day. They are acting as if the future is theirs. We must all act immediately to stop them, not only to prevent future pogroms against Jews, but also for the soul of civilization itself.

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Remembering Kristallnacht in the Context of Oct. 7

Nov. 8, 2023

As we commemorate Kristallnacht, the inevitable comparisons to what took place in Israel on Oct. 7 surface. This is particularly so because in recent years there is an effort by a few European Jewish communities to change the name of what happened on Nov. 9, 1938 to Pogromnacht.

The argument here was that the violence against the Jewish community of Germany that night had a number of characteristics, and the breaking of glass of synagogues and Jewish business throughout the country, as graphic as it was, was only one of several violent attacks against Jews leading up to the Holocaust. Jews were rounded up, Jews were assaulted, Jews were humiliated, and most of all Jews were murdered. There was one word that historically described such events: Pogrom.

Whichever side one takes in this debate — and there are legitimate arguments to retain the title Kristallnacht — the timing of this speaks to the current crisis in Israel and the pogrom that took place on Simchat Torah when Hamas launched a surprise attack in Israel from Gaza.

Let us understand why we commemorate Kristallnacht even when elsewhere in the calendar is the observance of Yom HaShoah, or Holocaust Memorial Day, which recognizes and remembers the culmination of Nazi determination to wipe the Jewish people off the face of the Earth. As much as it is to articulate continuing sympathy for what the Jews of Germany went through, there was a need to recognize that the Shoah didn't just happen: that there were stages leading up to the extermination, and Kristallnacht (or, "night of broken glass") was one of the most significant.

Hatred starts with words — Hitler put it all down in *Mein Kampf* in 1925 — and then moves to different levels of discrimination and humiliation, to violence, and finally to organized genocide. Continuing to commemorate Kristallnacht, though the events of that evening pale in comparison to the totality of the Shoah, speaks to the need to address such hate early on before it reaches the point of no return.

And so, this year's observance should not only remember the German Jews who suffered, whether murdered or taken to the camps or seeing their beloved synagogues burned to the ground. It also should take the message to heart of standing up to hate even when it has manifested itself already in an extremely barbaric way, to make sure it doesn't even evolve into something worse.

What happened in Israel on Oct. 7 was the worst pogrom in the tragic history of pogroms against the Jewish people. The staggering numbers, over 1,400 dead, the brutality of gleeful assaults on men, women, and children and the taking of more than 240 hostages, are hard to fathom without thinking back to the Shoah and Kristallnacht. The deliberate murder of as many Jewish civilians as possible has few points of comparison other than the Holocaust. And it's not lost on anyone that this was the deadliest attack against Jews at any time since the Holocaust ended in 1945.

But this story is far from closed: Antisemitism, ironically after Jews were slaughtered, has a new legitimacy which hasn't existed since the 1930s and 1940s. While decent human beings focus on the level of atrocities that happened on Oct. 7, antisemites and their standby allies see a new possibility to murder Jews – and with it a belief that such actions will be rationalized, and even supported by, significant numbers of people around the world.

We see examples of the new boldness of antisemites in Dagestan, where a mob rushed a plane from Tel Aviv, searching for Jews to attack. We see it on American campuses, such as Harvard, NYU, Columbia, Cooper Union, where Jews are verbally harassed and physically assaulted and fear for their safety. And we see it in the halls of the UN where the Secretary-General rationalized the deliberate murder of Israeli civilians by contextualizing it in relation to 56 years of Israeli occupation. Never mind the fact that there's been no Israeli occupation in Gaza since 2005.

Antisemitic incidents globally and in the United States since Oct. 7 have skyrocketed by hundreds of percentage points.

Fortunately, good people and leaders have not been silent in the face of all this. Political leaders are developing plans to stand against this surge in Jew-hatred. And publics have largely recognized that Jews face new dangers.

So, this Kristallnacht commemoration, let us never forget what happened that night in Germany and what it led to. And let us recommit ourselves to remember what happened on Oct. 7 and to take action in any way to ensure that that horror won't evolve into something even worse for the Jewish people.

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When Antisemitism Moves into the Neighborhood

Nov. 21, 2023

When antisemitism started to surge in America seven or eight years ago, the same polarization that had contributed to the environment for that resurgence surfaced in explanations for it. Those on the left characterized the new Jew-hatred as solely a phenomenon of white supremacy and right-wing extremism. And those on the right saw left-wing antisemitism on campuses and elsewhere, manifested as anti-Zionism, as the real driver.

Those of us who were troubled that the destructive polarization had now even infected the reading of Jew-hatred said that the test of a leader's sincerity when he or she claims to stand up to antisemitism is whether they are willing to condemn it wherever it comes from, right or left, majority communities or minority communities. This is not to say that each manifestation is the same, distinctions are important, but not to be selective on the basis of a priori political assumptions.

After Charlottesville and the massacre of Jews in the Pittsburgh synagogue, right-wing extremist antisemitism was considered an immediate danger because of the lethal combination of classic antisemitic ideology out of the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion – remember the Pittsburgh murderer wrote in his manifesto that he had to kill Jews because they are all-powerful in allowing illegal immigrants to come to this country – and the willingness to use violence to rid the country of the poisonous Jew.

On the other hand, the left-wing variety was seen as not representing an immediate physical threat, but more problematic in other ways because it was gaining respectability in influential circles in the media, universities and corporate America. Under the label of legitimate criticism of Israeli policies, this form of antisemitism devolved into a rejection of Israel's very legitimacy and opened a pathway to excluding Zionists from legitimate civil rights activities. So, if one considers that an overwhelming majority of American Jews consider Zionism an integral part of their Jewish identity, this exclusion had the potential to exclude a very large number of people.

And then came October 7 and its aftermath. Suddenly the notion that left-wing antisemitism was more a long-term problem evaporated overnight. The reactions by many activists on the left were replete with violent rhetoric and behavior. Signs like “by any means necessary” and “from the river to the sea” were extreme in justifying the barbarism of October 7 and in calling for Israel's elimination. At the same time, they opened a path to intimidation,

violence and exclusion directed at Jewish students on campuses across the country. Now there was a new dimension to the left-wing antisemitism discussion. Jews now felt directly threatened from the left as well.

What has not been discussed sufficiently, however, and is highly relevant to the mounting concerns of the Jewish community, is the issue of geography.

The white supremacists of the world, spouting Jew-hatred of a classic ilk, such as “The Jews will not replace us” at Charlottesville, are generally not residing in areas of large Jewish populations. That doesn’t mean they can’t move around to other places and locate Jewish sites to cause harm. That’s what happened in Pittsburgh. That requires some degree of organization and planning which lacks the quality of randomness.

On the other hand, the current surge of Jew-hatred is surfacing in the heart of Jewish life in America, either on campuses that have significant Jewish student populations like Columbia, Penn or Tulane, or in neighborhoods like Brooklyn or Manhattan that are home to large numbers of Jews. Those engaging in intimidation and even violence may themselves live in those neighborhoods and surely attend the same schools.

To date, we have not seen the level of violence exhibited by right-wing extremists at Pittsburgh and elsewhere and we can only hope it never comes to that. However, because so many of the demonstrations and extreme rhetoric are taking place where large numbers of Jews live, the level of fear and insecurity in the Jewish community has risen to new levels.

The result is a heightened sense of insecurity, the potential for random acts of violence, and, for significant numbers of American Jews, a level of anxiety we haven’t seen for decades. The potential for confrontational activity toward Jews, either through rhetoric, violence or exclusion is significantly heightened by virtue of proximity.

And that increases the need for government leaders and law enforcement as well as cultural leaders to be particularly proactive in making sure that the Jewish residents of these communities and the Jewish students at these universities are safe and not feeling isolated. The failure to do so will increase the disturbing sense of alienation among Jews that has already crept into conversations.

The ideology of hatred under the pretense of criticism of Israel is bad enough. The geographical factor brings it home to Jews in an unprecedented fashion, seen in the huge rise in antisemitic incidents since October 7. It must be dealt with appropriately before it gets completely out of hand.

American Interests and the Israel-Hamas War

Dec. 6, 2023

At a White House briefing the other day, one journalist asked whether the fact that the U.S. is perceived as siding with Israel in this conflict will give an opportunity for our adversaries – China, Russia, Iran – to gain more influence in the region.

It is not surprising that this has become and will likely become even more of an issue as the conflict continues. This is so because there is a long history of people questioning whether U.S. support for Israel is in our interest.

Indeed, during the many years of the Cold War, this was the favorite theme of critics of the American-Israeli relationship. Since the Arabs were opposed to Israel and the United States was Israel's main supporter and provider of aid, it was argued that this left an opening for the Soviet Union to make significant inroads in the Arab world. Even if there was a moral argument for American support on the basis of common democracies and Judeo-Christian values, American interests lay in a different direction, went this reasoning.

The counter to this was best articulated by the late Henry Kissinger in his monumental memoir. He argued to the contrary that American support for Israel, particularly when it was under attack, was critical in stabilizing and enhancing American influence in the region.

The argument was that the region was divided between extremist states like Syria and Iraq in those days who drew their support and arms from the Soviets and moderate states. The moderate states, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, were constantly evaluating their posture based on their own sense of security and insecurity. If the United States, their preferred ally, was strong and victorious, they would stay close to America. If, however, America was perceived as weak and on the losing side, they would gravitate to the Soviet Union.

Israel's conflicts during the Cold War were generally between them and clients of the Soviets. Israel's winning those wars led the moderate states to stay and rely on the Americans. Therefore, Kissinger argued, it is critical that the U.S. stand with Israel and do everything it can to assure Israeli victory over the radicals.

This logic extends today even in a very different geopolitical environment. There no longer is a Soviet threat, but the Islamic Republic of Iran presents a model for extremism in the region in its anti-Western, anti-democratic, anti-Israel and pro-terrorist obsessions. Even more than the Soviets,

they have direct involvement in the radicalism of their clients, fueling the ideological and militaristic efforts of Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis.

Meanwhile, many of the Arab states who have come a long way in their relationship with Israel, five of whom have peace treaties, are both fearful of Iran – a motivating factor in the Abraham Accords – and also wary of antagonizing Iran if there is any sign of weakness on the part of their would-be allies. The stronger the U.S. is perceived to be in support of its allies, the more inclined these Arab states are to move closer to America and its ally Israel. If they perceive American weakness, then we may see some efforts to pacify the Iranians because the Arabs are feeling vulnerable.

And so, in the tradition of the Arab world, whenever Israel is in conflict with an Arab party, there is significant criticism of Israeli behavior but, at the same time, there is a close eye on how Israel, supported by the United States, does in its war.

More specifically, there was a lot of talk before October 7 that the Saudis were moving close to normalizing relations with Israel. Indeed, it appears (maybe instead – some argue) that Hamas's fear that such a step would largely end their efforts to delegitimize the Jewish state was the main motivation for their attack on October 7. While it is dangerous to make predictions in the Middle East, a good case can be made that only a clear-cut Israeli victory in the war, in which Hamas is largely dismantled and the hostages brought home, will lead the Saudis to continue on the path to normalization. Anything less may lead to Saudi rethinking, wondering whether an alliance with Israel is worth the criticism it is bound to get.

The massacre on October 7 exposed a degree of Israeli vulnerability not evident until then. A victory over Hamas can remedy at least some of that.

All of which suggests that again American interests lie with a strong Israel supported steadfastly by the United States. The process of normalization is a profound American interest and the best way to stabilize and enhance it lies with Israel showing once again that it is a strong nation who can lead the way in countering the extremists in the region.

The International Community's Shameful Embrace of Palestinian Rejectionism

Dec. 13, 2023

Abba Eban, Israel's diplomat supreme, once famously said that the Palestinians "never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." Back then he was talking about the Palestinian rejection of the UN partition plan in 1947, which, had they accepted, would have given them a state when there were no Palestinian refugees.

He could have also been talking about the post-War of Independence fought by Israel in which Arabs could have offered Israel a peace. Or about the opportunity following the Six-Day War when there was the possibility of moving forward on a deal before there were any settlements in the territories. Or about Camp David in 2000, the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, and the Annapolis conference in 2007, all of which offered the Palestinians the chance to move toward an independent state, only to see more Palestinian rejectionism.

The ideology of Palestinian rejectionism, which has only disdain for Israel and the Jewish people, is at the root of this extremism.

But what is so stark and continues to be true today following October 7 is not only that the ideology is still alive, but also that the international community has failed even to try and separate the Palestinians from a worldview that has been so destructive to them. This reality is one of the great moral and practical failures of our time, having a terrible impact both on Israel and on the Palestinians themselves.

Whatever one's view of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, it is self-evident that the fantasies of Palestinian triumphs over Israel have, at least until October 7, hurt the Palestinians themselves more than harming Israel.

And this ideology has been reinforced in a multitude of ways by the international community.

The latest version of this surrounds all the anti-Israel activity and statements after the massacre. It is not only that rationalizations of the deliberate murder of civilians, illustrated by leading figures like UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and former President Barack Obama, are despicable. It also further reinforces for the Palestinians the conviction that they don't have to change their behavior because they have world support.

Similarly, the worldwide demonstrations with their messages of “resistance by any means necessary” or “from the river to the sea” are, of course, grossly immoral in justifying the killing of Jews and espousing the destruction of the Jewish state. But again, on a practical level, not only is this generating anti-Israel and anti-Jewish hostility, it is reinforcing once again that the Palestinians need change nothing in their behavior.

And similarly, when the UN Human Rights Council passes resolution after resolution only condemning Israel, the Palestinian status quo is assured.

In sum, the international community has been complicit in the plight of the Palestinians. How ironic that is, because they claim their intention is to support the Palestinians in the face of Israeli oppression. But by misdiagnosing the problem, putting all the blame on Israel, they play into Palestinian fantasies about destroying the Jewish state. In the process, they help to leave the Palestinians exactly where they have been for decades, and open a path for new atrocities against Israelis.

Real friends of the Palestinians and real humanitarians would make clear that there will be no international support until they change their ways. Furthermore, their fantasies about eliminating Israel will no longer be legitimized both because they violate basic international law and because they stand in the way of any hope for progress toward a normal life for both Israelis and Palestinians.

If the international community truly wanted to bring change, it would insist in calling out all forms of Palestinian hatred, whether reflected in terrorism against Israel, rejection of any steps toward acceptance of the Jewish state or in the education of their youth to hate Israel and Jews.

Instead, we find ourselves in a deteriorating situation in which the most barbaric attack in the long history of this conflict has taken place, and still international leaders convey to Hamas and intransigent Palestinians that they will have support.

A responsible international community at this time should be empathizing with Israel and using the terrible events of October 7 to finally to bring sanity and responsibility to Palestinian leadership.

Are Jews Really Alone?

Dec. 22, 2023

A couple of weeks ago, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer made an impassioned and important statement before the Congress about the surge of antisemitism. He was also critical of important voices, including those who the Jewish community stood in solidarity with for years, for not standing with us in the face of the barbarism of Hamas on October 7 and the continuous barbarism of the hostage crisis.

This was a very important statement in its honesty and bluntness and deserves serious attention. Schumer was speaking both in his capacity as the Democratic leader of the Senate and also as a proud Jew, a combination that doesn't often take place. Schumer went on to say that at this moment of crisis Jews are feeling alone.

The question, however, is: are Jews really alone? Or, are they interpreting their sense of betrayal by what they consider their natural and historic partners as a reflection of aloneness when it really speaks to something else?

In fact, Jews are not alone. Significant parts of the American public were outraged by the events of October 7 and fully or partially supported Israel's efforts and determination to destroy Hamas. It's just that among those supporters, only a partial element consists of people on the left, mostly older individuals, while the significant part of the support comes from Americans in the center and on the right ideologically. Schumer's statement that Jews are alone is a reflection of how difficult it is for the leader of the Democratic Party to admit that the other side, whom he has lambasted in recent years, is, in fact, the group most supportive of Israel at this critical time.

With everything politicized these days, one could view Schumer's comment as playing politics but, in this case, I don't even think he was approaching it that way. It seems more so that he can't imagine that people on the right would be doing the right thing while his own left-wing allies were failing the moment.

Indeed, it would be nice if he and others would acknowledge this reality. All one has to do, irrespective of one's political views, is to watch tv and cable coverage of the war and see the huge difference overall between Fox and other networks. On Fox alone there has been continuous advertising in the name of Fox for viewers to contribute funds to Israel during these terrible times.

The right has its own divisions over American foreign policy, with a certain segment heading toward a potentially isolationist position. Still, the

historic Republican position on global U.S. leadership as well as support for our ally Israel remains at the forefront of some of its leadership and many of its supporters.

At the same time, the polarized politics of America intrudes on an understanding of where Americans stand with regard to how the White House is handling the current crisis. Repeatedly the figure appears that 70 percent of Americans think Biden is doing a bad job in handling the crisis.

In fact, the actual support for the President's handling of it is much larger. Most of the real opposition is coming from young people on the left. But because individuals on the right are so inculcated with the idea that there is nothing positive that one can say about the Biden Administration, when asked about Biden they answer in the negative even though they actually are on the same wavelength as the President in their outrage at what Hamas did and in Israel's primary goal to destroy Hamas.

It is not actual support for Israel that is weak but the willingness to give the President any political credit for his actions.

There is potential space for common ground. ADL has been leading the way coalescing supporting for two critical measures to address the historic and startling rise of antisemitism:

The inclusion of \$1 billion in additional funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program as part of the supplemental aid bill for Israel. Schumer deserves credit for introducing the national security supplement which included the historic funding for the program that provides nonprofits, including houses of worship with grants to improve their physical and cyber security.

Comprehensive legislation to implementation the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism through appropriating funding for the plan, holding the White House accountable to its commitments, and ensuring that the fight against antisemitism lasts beyond any one administration.

Kudos to Chuck Schumer for his honesty and courage in the face of many of his political allies who have failed him and the community. But we are not alone.

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The History of Antisemitism and the Hamas Massacre

Dec. 29, 2023

The history of antisemitism is largely the history of fantasies about the Jewish people, which led to and justified hatred, discrimination, isolation and murder. Things were attributed to Jews that had nothing to do with reality.

All of this reached its climax in the emergence of the fraudulent document *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, which claimed to be the discovery of the secret plans of Jewish leaders to take over the world.

Millions of people, when exposed to the Protocols, believed it to be real because for centuries various forms of conspiracies of Jewish control and power had been believed despite the reality of a largely disempowered and persecuted people. For so many, this document merely confirmed long-held views about Jews.

Decades later, when a modern Jewish state came into existence, Zionist leaders and supporters hoped that these fantasies about Jews would disappear, but more significantly they believed that this statehood would finally provide the persecuted and marginalized Jewish people with the power to protect themselves in the face of Jew-hatred.

Having this new power to defend Jews, however, added a layer of complexity into the assessment of antisemitism. Having real power generated a significant element of responsibility for the Jewish state and with it the recognition that criticism of Jewish power, in this case of the Jewish state's power, was no longer automatically based on fantasies but could indeed be based on legitimate criticism of the misuse of power.

And so came the discussions about when criticisms of Israel were legitimate and when they were antisemitism. Some such expressions were obviously antisemitic, such as the recycling of old conspiracy theories such as false accusations of Israelis using the blood of Palestinian children. Similarly other forms of demonizing the Jewish state and concluding from that that there should be no Israel are also in the antisemitic category.

And then there was the Hamas massacre on Simchat Torah. What is so striking in the almost three months since the massacre is the extent to which so many tried to rationalize what happened on October 7 as a legitimate reaction to Israeli policy.

It is safe to say that this was by far the most egregious manifestation of antisemitism ever directed at the Jewish state. Let's be clear: What Hamas perpetrated on that day had nothing to do with one's views on the wisdom or morality of Israeli policies or behavior.

It had only to do with antisemitic fantasies that have historically targeted the Jewish people and ultimately led to the Holocaust: Jews are evil. Jews are conspiratorial. Jews are subhuman. All of which we have seen in the Hamas charter, literature and rhetoric for decades, and which shaped and motivated the brutality, murder, rapes, mutilations and kidnappings perpetrated by the Hamas terrorists on that terrible day. This was a clear manifestation not of the complexity of the era of Zionist power and distinctions between criticism and hate, but of base, old-fashioned Jew-hatred now directed at the Jewish state and its inhabitants.

In that context, rhetoric at a large number of demonstrations that have now surfaced in the U.S. and elsewhere in support of the Palestinians is shameless and antisemitic in justifying and defending the mass murder of Jewish civilians. Signs such as "by any means necessary," and "resistance is not terrorism" and "Zionism is a cancer" are not about the complexity of Israeli-Palestinian issues, but about the reversal to old-fashioned, classic antisemitism. Terrorism against Jewish men, women and children can be justified and even considered necessary because "Zionists" are a poisonous disease, and their power represents a danger to the world. Sound familiar?

To be clear, one can advocate for the Palestinians – and criticize Israeli actions – without engaging in rhetoric that echoes and elevates age-old anti-Jewish tropes and conspiracies. We need to call out those who justify this egregious Jew-hatred that was the foundation of October 7 and not allow it to be legitimized.

At the same time, we also should make clear that we support the need for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian issue in which both peoples can live in peace and security. That understandably seems far off now, but it is the right thing to do and one that will reinforce the message that what has happened these past few days is the moral opposite of that which we aspire to achieve.

The Protocols Are Alive and Well

Jan. 5, 2024

As antisemitic incidents surge around the world, it becomes clear that decades of minimal manifestations of Jew-hatred were much more a pause than a transformation.

In particular, for years the shame of Auschwitz, the realization what centuries of conspiracy theories and fantasies about Jews had led to, operated as an inhibiting mechanism. Antisemitism may not have disappeared, but the willingness to act it out was affected by that shame.

That shame has surely eviscerated as survivors pass away, as the emotional impact of the Shoah weakens, as anti-Israel activity became more organized and more radical.

And so, we are seeing not only a huge surge in incidents following October 7, but a noticeable loss of shame about expressing classic antisemitism. While couching antisemitism through the prism of criticism of Israel is surely a powerful element of this surge, what is so stark is the blatant character of the assault on Jews: phrases like “gas the Jews,” “Hitler was right,” “resistance by any means necessary” and “from the river to the sea.”

What is particularly disturbing is the realization that the theme of the most infamous antisemitic document ever published, the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion, is alive and well in its modern context. The Protocols, created by the Russian secret police at the turn of the last century, claimed to be the discovery of secret plans by Jewish leaders around the world to dominate. All this at a time when Jews had no power, no state, no military, no political influence.

What was as significant as the document itself was the fact that millions of people everywhere believed the fraudulent document to be the real thing because they had been inculcated for centuries that indeed Jews were poisonous, all-powerful.

Now fast forward to today. Jews are no longer powerless with the state of Israel. But the depiction of Jewish power as the most negative force on earth reeks of the Protocols in modified form.

Yes, it is generally true that conspiracy theories about Jews today generally don't rise to the level of the Protocols which embodies 23 chapters detailing the many ways in which the Jews are allegedly planning to take over the world. Still, the theme of poisonous Jewish overwhelming power has seen a significant revival.

Since the current surge of antisemitism following the barbaric Hamas attack of October 7, it is appropriate to begin with the world seen through the eyes of Hamas.

In its founding charter, Hamas cites the Protocols as proof of a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world.

Other examples abound.

The UN Human Rights Council issues annually three-quarters of its condemnations toward the State of Israel, this while massive human rights violations take place all around the world. And Israel's record is comparatively much better than most countries, let alone authoritarian regimes that make sport of condemning it.

Following the greatest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust and the worst terrorist event since 9/11, significant elements blamed the Jews for their victimization based on Jewish misuse of power.

Explanations for American support of Israel following October 7 attribute it to overwhelming Jewish power.

Blame for the absence of an Israeli-Palestinian peace process is simply put on Israel, as if the Palestinians have not rejected every opportunity to achieve a solution.

The murderer of 11 Jews at the Pittsburgh synagogue justified his brutality on the grounds that Jewish control of government led to the immigrant flow to the U.S.

DEI programs on many U.S. university campuses and corporations omit any reference to Jews or antisemitism despite the millenia-old history of prejudice against Jews because Jews are seen as powerful, as oppressors rather than oppressed, as white rather than multiracial, and as part of the problem not the solution.

Criticism of Israeli policy and use of its power is not in itself illegitimate or antisemitism. But when it is completely out of proportion to reality, either by hyping it many times over or by ignoring far more egregious examples elsewhere, it becomes reminiscent of the scenario out of the Protocols. It becomes one where Jews are depicted as uniquely powerful and uniquely evil.

History has told us where such thinking can lead. It established the baseline from which the Nazis justified the slaughter of millions.

In today's world, the rationalizations and equivocation about the massacre on October 7 point to the harm already caused and the danger going forward if these perspectives are allowed to flourish.

Never again must not be only a Jewish motto but one that civilization itself needs to heed. To do otherwise is to head down a path that we should never want to see again.

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South Africa's Criminal Case against Israel Is a Sham

Jan. 22, 2024

The effort by the government of South Africa at the International Court of Justice to accuse Israel of genocide in its war against Hamas must be combated and rejected forcefully. The accusation doesn't come close to meeting that extreme description either by the context of what is happening or by the clear intent of Israel in its struggle against a terrorist group.

Let us not forget that Israel's military operation in Gaza only happened because Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023, engaged in the most barbaric assault on Israeli civilians. More than 1,200 Israelis were murdered, scores of women were raped, and more than 200 were taken hostage. Hamas has made clear that this effort to murder as many Israelis as possible would continue going forward absent Israeli action against it.

In sum, Israel had no choice but to act in the most forceful terms, not only to redeem the trust between the Israeli public and its leadership after the worst day in Israel's history but to prevent future massacres.

Indeed, if ever the term "genocidal" were relevant, it belongs to Hamas and its founding charter, which states very clearly the group's genocidal intent vis-a-vis Israel and Jews. Added to this context is South Africa's bias against Israel long before this war. That government has labeled Israel an apartheid state, and used other extreme terms that makes clear their initiative on this issue lacks any credibility and reflects an inherent hostility to the Jewish state.

More than the context are the facts about the war itself. The combination of Israel's multiple efforts to avoid civilian casualties, as well as its repeated stated purpose of the war together with Hamas's disregard for its own civilian safety, make a mockery of the genocide charge against Israel.

Here are some of the steps Israel has taken to avoid civilian casualties.

It has in advance called on Palestinians to leave areas where Hamas terrorists are located so as to limit the danger to them, which results in Israel tipping its hand to Hamas about where attacks will be coming from.

It has provided advance notice to civilians when a particular building will be targeted as a Hamas hideaway.

It has allowed humanitarian aid to be distributed to civilians even as Israel recognizes that some of that aid will be stolen by Hamas.

And it has made clear in repeated statements, backed up by actions, that Israel's goal is to destroy Hamas, not to harm Palestinian civilians.

On the other side, showing how absurd the South African proposal is, is the way Hamas conducts itself in Gaza, with the goal of maximizing Palestinian civilian casualties as a way to enhance public pressure on Israel. Hamas deliberately embeds itself in heavily populated areas and specific sites like hospitals in order to discourage Israel from attacking those areas, and it has gone so far as to prevent the movement of civilians from areas that Israel is planning to attack.

The ultimate irony of South Africa's intervention is that a complete defeat of Hamas would actually provide an opportunity for Palestinians in Gaza to pursue another path and flourish. Therefore, it is imperative that the governments of those nations whose judges sit on the International Court of Justice bench and will decide this case make clear their unequivocal rejection of the charge of genocide against Israel, even if they have legitimate concerns about civilian casualties.

Supporting the genocide charge will have multiple bad effects, including allowing Hamas to survive and continue its terrorism, undermining Israel's basic right to defend itself, generating more attacks against Jews around the world, and undermining the credibility of the International Court of Justice as an impartial judicial body.

The world must stand up to avoid another atrocity against the State of Israel and the Jewish people.

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Oct. 7 Must Not Become the Focal Point of Holocaust Remembrance Day

Jan. 23, 2024

Despite how disastrous October 7 was, as International Holocaust Remembrance Day approaches, we should do nothing that would erode the understanding of the uniqueness of the Shoah, even in light of this latest monstrous assault on the Jewish people.

Ever since the tragic day of October 7, there has been a tendency to invoke the Holocaust as a point of comparison to the barbaric behavior of Hamas that day. This includes comments by far-right Israeli Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who referred to Gazans as “Nazis,” and the decision by Israeli UN Ambassador Gilad Erdan to wear a yellow star during his UN appearances.

Those of us who have been critical of analogies to the Holocaust both because they inevitably minimize what the Shoah was about and because it is disrespectful to the six million Jews who were murdered, should apply the same logic in the case of October 7.

It is, of course, factual to say that that day was the worst for the Jewish people since the Holocaust.

It is also helpful to point out that some of the logic behind the terrorist attack shared thinking of the Nazis. Like the Germans, Hamas, in their charter, depict Jews as the party responsible for every major evil in the world since the French Revolution. The charter also references the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion, that fraudulent document which claimed to be Jewish plans to take over the world.

Still, evidence abounds of the diminution of understanding and recognition of what took place under Nazi rule between 1933 and 1945. Polls indicate that very few young people here and abroad have any knowledge of the Shoah. And as most survivors are passing away, not only will it be more challenging to communicate powerfully what the Holocaust was about, it will also open a path for Holocaust deniers.

Moreover, the Holocaust is being diminished right before our eyes as the war in Gaza continues. The assault on Israel at the International Court of Justice, thanks to a submission by South Africa accusing Israel of genocide, is not only a complete distortion of what the current situation is, but also inevitably undermines the understanding of the Shoah.

It does so first by making a mockery of the term genocide and devaluing its meaning by ignoring the basic act of self-defense by Israel in the face of the worst kind of terrorism. And second, by attributing the motive of extermination of a people to Israelis and Jews, when Hamas's charter contains such a clear intention against Jews.

Beyond that, it is similar to epithets directed at Israel over the years calling them Nazis.

It is a not-so-subtle attempt to even the score and create a moral balance: the Jews suffered genocide from the Nazis, now the Jews are guilty of genocide so everything cancels each other out.

So this Holocaust Remembrance Day, let us reassert what made the Holocaust unique among genocides. Not only was there a systematic plan by the Nazis to exterminate all Jews – and they succeeded in murdering two thirds of European Jews – but Jews were targeted completely independently of the World War that dominated events. It didn't matter whether Jews lived under Nazi rule or in countries that opposed Nazism; Jews were in peril from the Nazi madness.

Let us reassert the purpose of the day to educate the world about what happened and why it happened in order to prevent anything similar from happening again.

The Holocaust could not have happened without antisemitism inculcated for centuries. All parties to the extermination of European Jewry – the perpetrators, the collaborators and the bystanders – were all affected in their behavior by that history of antisemitism.

And it is now clear that the centuries-long antisemitism has not disappeared, but just paused for some time by the residual shame of the Holocaust.

The massacre of Jews on October 7 set loose a barrage of classic Jew-hatred on a wider scale than anything since World War II. Maybe it was lurking there all the time, and a new sense of Jewish vulnerability has sparked a coming out of antisemitism renewed.

If International Holocaust Remembrance Day is to have meaning post-October 7, there must be a recommitment to understand what it was and why it happened, and a new seriousness in taking a stand against antisemitism resurgent.

The Importance of an Israeli Peace Initiative

Feb. 1, 2024

As the war against Hamas rages on, one hears more and more talk: What about the day after?

It is instructive in this regard to look back at the very different experiences in Israel at two other difficult times, the First and Second Intifadas.

During the Palestinian uprising beginning in December 1987, which was not nearly as violent as the later one, Israel went through internal splits that added significantly to the challenges the nation faced. In the initial period, the country was united in opposing Palestinian violence, but as the Intifada dragged on, more and more political figures on the center and left began to question Israel's position. In crude terms, the argument was made: while we don't like the Palestinian violence, one can't blame them since the Israeli government was offering them nothing that would open a possibility of bringing change to their situation. As a result, as the violence continued for several years, Israel was rife with dissension and disunity.

Now fast forward to the Second Intifada which was far more brutal, characterized by suicide bombings which cost Israel – and the diaspora – many lives.

Internally, however, it was a completely different situation. Israel, just prior to the outbreak of Palestinian violence, had offered the Palestinians at Camp David the opportunity to build an independent state on land that Israel was ready to withdraw from. And so, when the Palestinians rejected it and turned to terrorism, the Israeli public and political leadership were united in standing against the violence and in support of a strong Israeli response. This meant that as difficult as the Second Intifada was, Israel was in a much better place – from a societal perspective – to defeat it, compared to the First Intifada.

Now fast forward to today. Let's be clear, what happened on October 7 was far, far worse than any of the prior conflicts, and was the most traumatic day in Israel's history. And so the need to strike at Hamas in unprecedented ways was understood by the public in Israel. It was imperative to do so in order to repair the broken social contract between the Israeli authorities and people on that horrific day.

But as the war continues, the question of what about the day after persists. And while the most positive element of these terrible days has been the unity of the country through it all, let's remember how divided the country

was before the war and how disunity can break out again when things quiet down. Hopefully, all sides will realize how destructive the judicial overhaul issues were to the nation's psyche, and sanity, moderation and consensus will prevail.

That takes us to the Palestinian issue. Obviously, as long as Hamas controls Gaza there is nothing to talk about. But assuming there is a new reality in Gaza after a few months, the question for Israel is what to do next. Most of the conversation understandably focuses on who will control Gaza, and already there are widely differing perspectives.

In the longer term, however, the question is whether the peace process should be at the top of the agenda. Indeed, in light of the controversies surrounding the war, one can be sure that the international community, including the United States, will be raising this fundamental issue.

The case can be made that Israel should start thinking about what steps it should take vis-a-vis the Palestinians even before the war is over. One says this even while recognizing that the chances of a true peace partner on the Palestinian side in the near and medium term are tenuous at best.

Instead, Israel should take an initiative for its own interests, both at home and externally.

At home, the center and left in Israel have largely put on hold their protests against the government which dominated during the year prior to October 7. Even if the government gives up on its judicial program after the war, resentments will remain high.

One way to ease some of that is by the government, no matter who is in power, showing a willingness to move forward on the Palestinian issue in ways that consider the new security challenges Israel faces, but also recognize the need to bring the population together in addressing this key underlying issue.

A disaffected public, having gone through two traumas, the battle over the judiciary and the barbaric terrorist attack, needs to find a new approach to the Palestinians for its own sake.

The issue of keeping Israel both Jewish and democratic should never leave the consciousness of Israelis as time marches on and no change is in the air.

In sum, internally, it is important to do this not because peace is on the horizon, but because Israel needs to reestablish for itself the image of being the peacemaker that it was for so long.

Similarly, on the external level one needs to be realistic. Those who have shown their hostility toward the Jewish state, denying its legitimacy, will not be moved by any Israeli initiative. But there are important world leaders and communities, particularly in the U.S., who would react positively to an Israeli peace initiative following the trauma of October 7, together with the controversies surrounding the war. It is almost inevitable that if there is no action on the political front by Israel, criticism of the Jewish state – even by those that largely stood by her during the war – will increase exponentially.

What exactly a peace initiative should look like is, of course, up to Israel's leadership. Regardless, it needs to be serious both on the political side for the Palestinians and the security side for Israel.

Such a step will have the dual benefit of helping to bring disaffected Israelis back into the fold, while, at the same time, tamping down some of the criticism and hostility toward Israel that will undoubtedly surface after months of bloody warfare.

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Reform of UNRWA Is Long Overdue

Feb. 9, 2024

The story that recently emerged about 12 members of the UNWRA staff in Gaza participating in the massacre of Israelis on October 7 was both shocking and not surprising.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency was established after the first war between Israel and its Arab neighbors when, following Israel's declaration of statehood on May 14, 1948, five Arab armies invaded the Jewish state in an effort to make its birth stillborn. Out of that conflict emerged the Palestinian refugee issue, in which many thousands of Palestinians fled their homes in Israel, most to avoid the consequences of the war, but some either because Arab leaders called on them to flee and let the Arabs murder the Jews, or because they were forced out by the Israelis.

In light of the refugee issue, the United Nations established a body to facilitate humanitarian aid to refugees wherever they were, but mostly in Gaza. UNRWA not only provides aid to Palestinians, but also runs educational institutions for Palestinian children.

The underlying themes of UNRWA for decades were twofold: provide needed assistance to Palestinians and make sure that the refugee issue did not disappear. This latter point is particularly unique to the Palestinian refugee issue, since elsewhere around the world, where millions upon millions of refugee problems had surfaced during and after WWII, solutions were found to resettle refugees. Only in the case of the Palestinians, thanks to organizations like UNRWA, was the purpose not resettlement but sustaining a Palestinian sense of grievance and the need to use the refugee issue as leverage to generate support for a Palestinian state.

The most egregious example of this primary goal was the fact that even when Palestinians had control of Gaza, they still kept alive refugee camps, rather than dissolving them into Palestinian society.

Meanwhile, over the years, numerous reports surfaced about UNWRA's educational system inculcating the children of Gaza with the most poisonous notions about Israel and Jews. And over the years there were calls for reducing funding to UNWRA and other steps to limit UNRWA activities.

Still, just as no one expected the level of barbarism coming out of Hamas on October 7, few thought that UNRWA staff, as biased as they have been against Israel, would participate in the slaughter of Israeli civilians.

Now that we look back on the history of Hamas, particularly its antisemitic charter, there is less surprise that they did what they did. And similarly, considering the barrage of anti-Israel messages coming out of UNRWA over the years lessens the initial surprise about the fact that at least 12 staffers participated in the attack.

The question going forward: is UNRWA redeemable? What is necessary as long as the Palestinian issue continues unresolved is some sort of institution that provides assistance to the Palestinians. So if UNRWA is going to continue to play a role, it must be reformed.

It must be adequately supervised so that all staffers that support Hamas are ejected from the organization. And most importantly, there must be an overhaul of their educational programs if there ever is to be a chance of peace.

The poison that has come out of UNRWA played a role in setting the stage for October 7. The international community needs to revisit its role toward the Palestinians so that the atmosphere that made October 7 possible will no longer be maintained.

A changed UNRWA, and a changed Palestinian society absent Hamas, offer the best chances for peace and a secure future for Israelis and Palestinians.

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Why the Iranian Revolution Remains a Threat to Global Stability

Feb. 15, 2024

February 11 marked the 45th anniversary of the Islamic revolution in Iran. It is safe to say that the event, in which the Islamic Republic was established, was one of the most significant negative global events since World War II.

The world has already paid a huge price and is still paying the price for that revolution.

First, the Iranian people have suffered under the regime for forty-five years, particularly women, the Bahais, the Kurds and the Jewish community, which has shrunk to 8,500, a historic low.

Second is the terrorism employed around the globe by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The Jewish community of Argentina paid the highest price for this when 85 people were murdered in a 1994 terrorist bombing hatched by the Iranian regime.

Moreover, the Islamic Republic set the stage, through its combination of extreme Islamist ideology and support for terrorism, for the later dramatic rise of Islamist terror from Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Even though at times they both were foes of Iran, it is hardly a coincidence that such thinking and behavior followed the example of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is for this and so many other reasons that Tehran is called the leading state sponsor of terrorism in the world.

Third is Iran's creating surrogates among Shiites in the region to carry out its nefarious policies against Israel, but not only Israel. The most egregious is Hezbollah which has largely taken over Lebanon and is armed with more than 140,000 rockets and missiles aimed at Israel.

On top of that is Iranian surrogate activity in Iraq and in Yemen, as well as non-Shiites who share an Islamist extremist ideology, such as Hamas.

And, of course, none of this is past history. The world today is a much more dangerous place because of the multitude of destabilizing policies of the Islamic Republic. Hamas could never have carried out its massacre of October 7 without Iran's military, financial and ideological help. How deeply involved, if at all, was Iran in planning the event is still a question, but in any event, its role was a necessary ingredient in making it happen by sustaining and building Hamas's power in Gaza.

With regard to the Houthis in Yemen, it was a classic case of Iran leaving few fingerprints in its early support of these Shiite revolutionaries, but now it is clear that the attacks on shipping in the Red Sea are directly a product of Iranian influence in its war against the West.

In the case of Hezbollah, the most egregious example of Iranian influence, the current potential for escalation remains at a high level, if nothing else because Israel cannot live with hundreds of thousands of its citizens having evacuated their homes in northern Israel in light of Hezbollah attacks. Either the Lebanese group will move back from the border or Israel will need to right the situation through military force. In any case, Iran has built up Hezbollah with hundreds of thousands of missiles which Israel has to contend with at this time of conflict, and surely so if Israel finds itself in direct conflict with the Islamic Republic.

Which brings us to the most obvious peril coming from Iran, which, on the occasion of the Islamic Republic's 45th anniversary, deserves much greater attention than the international community is giving it: the development of a nuclear capability. As the issue often takes a backseat to war in the region, more and more reports indicate that Iran is closer to crossing the nuclear threshold.

The consequences for the Middle East would be immense. Israel would find itself with an existential threat as the events of October 7 demonstrate that Islamist extremist ideology can lead to the most barbaric and irrational behavior. There is no guarantee Iran would not use a nuclear weapon against Israel, Israel's own arsenal notwithstanding.

Moreover, a nuclear Iran could generate a nuclear arms race, particularly among the Gulf States, already fearful of an expansionist Tehran. The consequences for the world are beyond one's imagination.

In sum, we return to our theme: that this anniversary reminds us of how 1979 changed history for the worst in a dramatic way, for which the region and the world are paying an even higher price today than in the past.

What to do about it should be at the top of the agenda in Western countries, led by the United States.

Winning the War and Freeing the Hostages

Feb. 27, 2024

As the war against Hamas continues, the Israeli government is insisting that the best way to free the hostages is to increase the military pressure on Hamas. They cite the fact that already over 100 hostages have been freed as Israel besieges the terrorist group.

Others, including families of those held hostage, argue that freeing the hostages should be the number one priority and even that Israeli military actions might endanger the remaining hostages held by Hamas.

In the midst of these different perspectives, the Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI) asked a binary question in one of its public opinion surveys. They gave the public two scenarios to choose from: one, the hostages are returned but Hamas remains in power; two, the hostages are not returned but Hamas is no longer in power.

A significant plurality opted for the second scenario in which Hamas is ousted but the hostages are not returned.

This is a finding which has layers of history and emotions behind it. Going back to the difficult three years when Gilad Shalit was held by Hamas, the overwhelming majority of Israelis demanded the government do more to free him, including, if necessary, the release of Palestinian prisoners who may have committed violent acts against Israelis.

The logic that was often cited during that difficult time was that the majority of Israelis identified with the family of the kidnapped soldier and recognized that it could be their child who was being held rather than Shalit. And if it were their kin, they would insist the government do everything to free him, including taking risks with Israeli security by releasing future potential terrorists.

In the end, Israel obtained Shalit's release but gave up 1,300 Palestinian prisoners, including Yahya Sinwar, who is currently the Hamas leader in Gaza, and others who committed deadly attacks against Israelis.

Today's situation is so different. First, it is not one Israeli being held but over 134. Moreover, the trauma of people being seized from their homes and held hostage pervades Israeli society. The sense that Israeli leaders have a moral obligation to return the hostages safely is powerful.

Secondly, all this comes after the trauma of October 7. As much as Israelis could emotionally associate themselves with the innocent individuals being held in Gaza and what they must be going through mentally as well as

physically after more than four months of captivity, there is nothing theoretical or abstract about Hamas staying in power.

For most Israelis, as reflected in the binary question of JPPI, it is not only the deep scars of October 7 which are far from healing, but the perspective, and a visceral one, that if Hamas is not eliminated, it could happen all over again, as Hamas leaders promised, and be a perpetual part of Israeli life.

The very fact that JPPI asked the question as it did reflects the uncertainty at best as to whether the government's theme that it could both return the hostages and eliminate Hamas was achievable. Even more uncertain is the logic that it is military pressure on Hamas that gives the best chance of returning hostages. Undoubtedly, the vast majority of Israelis would like to believe that the government's assessment of the interconnectedness of the two issues is accurate. The question was intended to force people to choose in case both are not achievable.

The public opinion answer is instructive as to the mindset of the Israeli body politic; the trauma of October 7 is deeply embedded in the psyche of every Israeli. It should not be taken as instructive, however, for the policies of the government as if one goal should supersede the other. Success in this war requires the attainment of both goals even as some believe they are at cross purposes. Policymakers need to focus on solutions to this conundrum even as many focus on binary choices.

Indeed, the binary perspective in itself ignores the fact that there is a wide spectrum in between; that is why there are negotiations. The focus on binary choices ultimately further divides the public and plays into the hands of the enemy.

Whether both goals can be realized remains uncertain. What does seem certain is that Israel cannot afford to give up on either of these goals. It will be intolerable if the war ends with Hamas still in power, but it would also be intolerable if Hamas were toppled but the hostages were not returned.

Let us hope that those in authority in Israel are doing all they can to obtain the quick release of all the hostages even while they figure out a way to ensure that doing so won't prevent them from pursuing the larger vital priority of ultimately eliminating the Hamas threat from the south.

The New York Times Must Rethink Providing Peter Beinart a Platform for Anti-Zionism

Apr. 2, 2024

Peter Beinart, in his New York Times piece, “The Great Rupture in American Jewish Life,” gets it wrong both regarding American Jews and the Middle East.

His regular pattern of only blaming Israel for the problems in the region is now mirrored in his blaming American Jews who support Israel in these difficult times.

To the contrary of Beinart, the American Jewish community has long supported both Zionism and liberalism. These values are not at odds, despite Beinart’s claims.

Israel is not exactly like the United States, but it is the only democracy in a region that struggles with the idea of it and it upholds many of the key elements of liberalism such as freedom of expression, freedom to assemble, equality for all, and an independent judiciary. When American Jews largely supported liberal causes in America, they correctly saw no problem supporting Israel as a democratic society.

Beinart not only creates a straw man in trying to see contradictions in American Jewish support for Zionism, he also fails to take into account that in certain circles, it is liberalism that has changed and this has produced a gap between traditional liberal Jews and the new illiberalism.

It is liberalism in the United States that has seen a transformation, not across the board, but in significant spots, particularly on campus. What has replaced in too many places the historic liberal approach, which was good for America and good for its Jewish community, is an illiberalism which inevitably leads to anti-Israel and antisemitic outcomes. The vast majority of American Jews continue to support liberalism, its beliefs in equality, in civil liberties, in judging people by their individual behavior and in rejecting a priori categorical thinking. And in that vein, they continue to support Israel, even if they may disagree with some of its policies, because the legitimacy of the Jewish state is a fundamental belief of the Jewish community.

Beinart gets it wrong in his comments on Israel and the Palestinians. But his inclination to blame Israel alone for the conflict over the years when there’s plenty of blame to go around on all sides is typical of Beinart. Just as in the United States where there are legitimate divisions over a whole range

of issues which don't result in anti-Americanism, so one can have different perspectives on Israeli policy without delegitimizing the Jewish state.

What is unstated in this piece but is critical for understanding it is that Beinart has become non-Zionist, specifically stating that he no longer believes in the legitimacy of a Jewish state. Seeing the conflict and the response of the American Jewish community, which has rallied behind Israel since October 7, through this prism goes a long way toward understanding Beinart's views.

If Israel does not have the right to exist as an independent state, then one inevitably looks to exaggerate the dissension in the Jewish community from its support and one finds fault with those American Jews who continue to stand by Israel.

The problem here lies with Beinart's disenchantment with the very concept of Jewish sovereignty. He is entitled to his perspective, no matter how abhorrent it is, but the reader of the article should be made aware that that is where Beinart is coming from.

More significantly, the Times decision to give so much space to an individual who supports the disappearance of the one Jewish state is disturbing to say the least. In no other case of delegitimizing an existing entity would the Times find it acceptable to publish it.

Since October 7, this is not the first time that the Times has given major space to Israel deniers. In its February Sunday edition, it devoted its front-page magazine story to raising questions about Israel's founding and whether all of today's problems are the product of that questionable historic moment.

It seems that one significant lesson of October 7 for the Times is to re-open the question as to whether or not there should be a Jewish state.

Shame on the Times.

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Egyptian-Israeli Peace Remains Vital for Regional Security

Apr. 5, 2024

Recently, on March 26, we commemorated the 45th anniversary of the historic Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. The current turmoil in the region lends additional perspective to that unique moment in the modern history of the Middle East.

During the past few years with the signing of the Abraham Accords and the prospect of Saudi Arabia normalizing relations with Israel, these breakthroughs were often contrasted in their wholeness compared to what was often described as the cold peace Israel achieved with Egypt.

So, it was noted that, for example, with the UAE, as opposed to Egypt, Israel was already engaging in person-to-person activities, in economic cooperation, in efforts to work together to promote true acceptance one of the other. None of those things have materialized in the Egyptian-Israeli relationship all these years. Indeed, oftentimes, when Egyptian individuals or groups sought relations with their counterparts in Israel, they were met with the sharpest condemnation back home.

It is also noted that the Egyptian peace did not catalyze others in the Arab world to follow suit. Indeed, Anwar Sadat, the President of Egypt who initiated the process with Menachem Begin, was widely condemned in the Arab world for breaking the taboo that had existed from the founding of Israel of recognizing and legitimizing the Jewish state, and for going it alone without specifically addressing the Palestinian issue.

And it took another 15 years, at a very different time, post the Cold War, for another Arab leader, King Hussein of Jordan, to venture into a peace deal with Israel.

Having said all that, none of the breakthroughs that have happened since could have taken place without the initial one that many had believed would never happen. For years, it had become conventional wisdom, in certain Jewish circles and beyond, that no Arab leader would recognize Israel because Islam was fundamentally opposed to Jewish equality in the region, and Jewish sovereignty was the most significant manifestation of that equality.

Anwar Sadat's peace made clear that things didn't have to be this way. He saw peace with Israel as enhancing Egyptian security, of opening relations with the United States and distancing Egypt from the Soviets, and he hoped

that Egypt's economy could benefit from the absence of war and American assistance. The circle of hopelessness and bloodshed was not inevitable, and it took a combination of courageous leadership on both sides and the right circumstances for things to change.

And with all the criticisms that only a cold peace has emerged, it should not be taken for granted that through thick and thin over many years, the agreement has held up. Many crises have arisen, whether the assassination of Sadat, revolution in Egypt during the Arab spring, several wars in Lebanon, conflicts between Israel and Hamas, where things could have gone off the rails.

For Israel, that has meant when it faced other challenges in the region, and there have been many, not only did they not have to worry about Egypt joining hostile forces against Israel, but many times Israel has been able to turn to Egypt to play a mediating role.

As we look at the current chaos in the region, the criticism of Egypt back in 1979 that it was abandoning the Palestinians seems highly relevant. As Israel looks to Egypt to open up its border temporarily to take in Gazans to avoid Israeli military actions, the fact that Egypt is refusing to do so is consistent with a long history, preceding the peace treaty.

Let us not forget that Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip after Israel's war of Independence, and maintained control there until the 1967 Six Day War. At no point did Egypt work to lead Palestinians in Gaza to some level of independence. And when they left Gaza, it was with a huge sigh of relief.

The consistent point here is that Egypt follows what it perceives to be Egyptian interests at any given time. Sometimes this works to the benefit of Egyptian-Israeli relations, other times it works against them. So too with regard to the Palestinians, though usually Egyptian rhetoric on behalf of the Palestinians far outstrips their acts on the ground, as their current border policies reflect.

All in all, as we commemorate the anniversary of the peace treaty, we need to value that moment in time, and acknowledge that difficult as things are now, and how many would like to see Egypt play a more constructive role, things would be far worse if not for March 26, 1979.

What Is the Alternative to Israel's Gaza Operation?

Apr. 12, 2024

As the war between Israel and Hamas continues into its seventh month, criticism of Israel has widened, even to include the Biden Administration. Talk of conditioning aid to Israel, or even cutting it off, has become part of the daily outpouring of criticism of Israel and its conduct of the war.

As opposed to those who blamed Israel early on for the massacre on October 7, wherein it was easy to label such commentary as offensive, even antisemitic, things are much more complicated now as civilian casualties rise in Gaza.

Even with all the legitimate caveats—this was a war brought on by the worst assault on Jews since the Holocaust; Hamas not only precipitated the conflict but is largely responsible for the numbers of civilian casualties because it has embedded itself deliberately in civilian centers such as hospitals; and the reported numbers of civilian casualties are significantly based on Hamas reporting — which to say the least has no credibility — the reality of a humanitarian crisis cannot be avoided.

The problem with all of this negativity toward Israel, that at least on the surface has a degree of credibility unlike what came immediately after October 7, is that no one has come up with a sustainable alternative for Israel to follow.

Let us recall not only what Hamas did on October 7, but what it was about in its fundamental ideology, and what it has promised to do to Israeli civilians going forward assuming they survive this war. Hamas, from its founding charter, has said its purpose is to destroy the State of Israel. It has made clear that it is motivated by Jew-hatred, indicating that Jews have been responsible for every world catastrophe since the French Revolution.

What it did on October 7 therefore was a fulfillment of its ideology. And its promise to repeat the massacre with more in the future is the challenge that Israel faces every day.

Therefore, any solution to what is happening must take into account this primary need of Israel to secure itself from this inevitable terrorism promised by Hamas, not to mention the ongoing horror of 133 innocents being held hostage for over six months. There is no country on earth that should be expected to live with a threat like this, one that tragically has proven not to be idle rhetoric, but the most devastating day of terror since the 9/11 attacks.

And so it is, with all the criticism of Israel and all the calls for action, we have not seen, at least publicly, an approach that Israel can live with going forward.

A permanent cease-fire? That would leave Hamas intact ready to attack again.

A cutting off of arms to Israel? That too would give life to the terrorists.

A Security Council resolution condemning Israel and demanding a halt in operations? Same result.

It is legitimate for governments and commentators to call on Israel to figure out ways to limit civilian casualties even beyond what they have done so far, as long as they take into account the caveats discussed above, and not engage in threats toward the Jewish state. Those can only embolden Hamas and increase the chances that it can hold onto power in Gaza.

It is also legitimate for calls on Israel to develop plans for the day after, who will be in control in Gaza and what steps can be taken on Palestinian issues.

It is not as if the Israeli people are completely happy with the way the government has conducted this war. Thousands demonstrate regularly demanding more be done to free the hostages. There was widespread criticism of the tragic killing of the aid workers in Gaza. And many feel Israel needs to do more to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches its intended destination, civilians in Gaza.

One thing, however, unites Israelis, as it would any people in any country that went through a trauma like October 7. There is a palpable fear if they don't act now to eliminate Hamas as a power in Gaza, October 7 could happen again.

Any condemnation of Israel that does not take this reality into account should not be taken seriously.

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Iran's Malign Behavior Must Be Taken Seriously

Apr. 26, 2024

After last week's massive launch by Iran of drones and missiles at Israel, there was much attention given to whether and how Israel might retaliate. This was understandable and now that Israel has reportedly reacted, discussion goes on about its significance and potential consequences. At the same time, it also distracts from an important element of the April 13 event: What was the meaning of the Iranian missile assault?

Much of the commentary focused on the uniqueness of what Iran had done. Attacks on Israel and the Jewish communities around the world, most notably the terrorist act against the Jewish community of Argentina in the 1990s, had been going on for years. All, or most of these, however, were conducted by surrogates of the Islamic regime. And even when the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps was involved in some action, there was an effort by Iran to conceal it.

Now, it was noted, Iran attacked Israel directly and openly from Iran's own territory. Unanswered, however, is: why the change? Speculation involved the Islamic Republic's need to save face after Israel killed two leading Iranian generals in Syria.

We may never know the exact thinking of the regime, but it well could be the beginning of testing Israel's defenses leading up to the moment that, if realized, would change the Middle East when and if Iran becomes a nuclear power.

The last six months make clear that past assumptions about the meaning of a nuclear Iran must undergo change. The international community's opposition to Iran's developing a nuclear capability until now has focused on the danger it would create in the region by propelling a nuclear arms race throughout the Middle East.

As to the threat to Israel, this generally was downplayed by virtue of the fact that Israel has a significant nuclear arsenal of its own. It was assumed that Iran would never use its weapon against Israel as that would lead to a massive Israeli nuclear retaliation.

Beginning with the massacre on October 7 and now with the first huge missile attack against the Jewish state, one must question these assumptions. When Hamas, clearly supported by Iran, committed its barbaric attack on the people of Israel, they had to know that Israel would react in the most fe-

rocious manner that might destroy Hamas, but at the very least lead to huge damage and harm to the civilian population.

Despite the obvious qualifiers – that Hamas didn't care about what happened to its civilian population, that it was aware that Israel's response would inevitably lead to pressure on Israel to stop – the irrational character of Hamas's decision to plan and engage in such brutality even while recognizing the price to be paid, speaks volumes about the irrationality of the Islamist extremist mentality.

In that context, it is time to question the assumption of the rationality of the Islamist regime in Iran. The focus must move to the vital need to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon primarily because of the very real possibility down the road that Iran might decide, rationality aside, to use a nuclear weapon against the Jewish state.

Through this prism, we can see the assault on Saturday, April 13, which was hailed as a triumph by Israel and its allies in preventing the missiles from hitting their targets, as a first testing ground by Iran. The Iranians may not have succeeded in causing damage on the ground, but they may have begun to learn what they may have to do going forward to make the success of a future nuclear attack a real possibility. We need to keep an eye out for all Iranian activity which could be seen as learning how to penetrate Israel's missile defense that worked so well on April 13.

In this regard, the main conclusion from the assault should not be whether Israel will respond or not – Israeli leaders will have to continue to decide, even after its limited action – but a recommitment to isolate Iran and prevent it from continuing on a path toward a nuclear capability.

Strategies must now be developed by the U.S. and our allies to begin to reverse the path of Iran's nuclear development. A comprehensive approach, including expanded sanctions, political pressure on those assisting Iran, intelligence work and military options – should all be part of a more serious approach to the Iranian nuclear challenge.

Let's focus on the real existential threat to Israel.

The Weaponization of the Holocaust Against Israel

May 3, 2024

This is a particularly hard Yom Hashoah commemoration because of the suffering in Israel from October 7, deemed the worst massacre of Jews since the Shoah, and because over 100 are still being held hostage by the terrorists. These events, together with the worldwide surge in antisemitism, remind us, while not comparing anything to the horror of the Shoah, that the world hasn't learned a lot since that great tragedy.

It is particularly difficult, however, in another way. The purpose of Yom Hashoah and all the activities surrounding it is to remember the millions who perished, and to commit to never again. But what we are seeing too often in the past six months is not a commitment towards avoiding a future Holocaust, but the turning of the Holocaust into a weapon against the Jewish people.

It begins with the most basic theme of hostility toward Jews: Holocaust denial. Over the years, books were written "proving" that the Shoah never actually happened and that it was a fantasy concocted by Jews who controlled the media and sources of information to win support for Israel and the Jewish people. It had the additional motivation of trying to restore the legitimacy of fascism, a political ideology that was widely supported in Europe before WWII, but which lost any legitimacy with the evidence of the Holocaust.

We see today such denialism popping up all over with regard to October 7. Stories on social media and in certain Islamist circles simply deny that there was a massacre or rapes by Hamas. The claim again is Jewish control of the media. And the political purpose is to present Hamas not as having committed the worst terrorism since 9/11, but as a resistance group to alleged Israeli oppression. All of this even as there is wide circulation of videos produced by Hamas to celebrate their barbarism.

Second is the quickness to accuse Israel of genocide. Here again, the irony is that the very concept of international condemnation of genocide and commitment to prevent it, grew out of the genocide of the Nazis against the Jews. It is no accident that so many are quick to attribute that unholy word to Israel, considering the history of anti-Zionism and the guilt that pervades the West over the murder of six million Jews.

Let us recall that it was in 1975 that the UN voted to deem Zionism, the liberation movement of the Jewish people in pursuit of self-determination in

their ancestral homeland, to be equal to racism. This meant that the founding of Israel, which was what Zionism was about, was beyond the pale. It was in that light, with the dissemination around the world for decades of this prejudicial judgment against the Jewish state, that the most horrific attack took place. And then when Israel did what any government would have to do, defend its people, the world was set up to denounce the victims as committing genocide.

The other element in this assault on Israel's good name, is the need to psychologically balance the sense of guilt. The more that was learned about the Shoah over the decades, the more it became evident that it never could have happened without centuries of deeply embedded anti-Jewish attitudes which had an impact on the perpetrators, the collaborators and the bystanders. Now there was an opportunity to even the score by saying "you Jews have your genocide committers just as we had ours."

Third, is the tendency to put Israel and Jews who support it in the oppressor class. Those who hold those views see events since October 7 as further proof that the Jewish state represents the colonialist oppression of indigenous people.

This glib pronouncement that has so much power in certain circles simply ignores three realities about the Jewish people and the state of Israel.

First, for many years, a significant proportion of the Jews of Israel were survivors of the Shoah who made it to Israel after the most harrowing experiences, including often the murder of their entire families by the Nazis. And, as time has passed and survivors pass away, it is their children who have to live with the knowledge of what their parents lived through and how arriving in Israel was their redemption from pure evil.

Second, it ignores the fact that over half the Jewish population of Israel are from the Middle East, their families have lived in the region for centuries, and they ended up in Israel when life became intolerable for them in their countries of origin.

And third, the Jewish people survived for millennia in the diaspora often under the harshest of conditions simply on the hope and aspiration of returning to their ancestral homeland as a nation, the basis for the existence and identity of the people, the land of Israel.

To deem Israel a colonialist nation is to ignore all three factors.

In sum, the effort to use the Holocaust against the Jewish people is despicable but not surprising. The worst periods of anti-Jewish hatred rely on lies and fantasies that justify their actions.

For many years, the Jewish people worried that the passage of time and the passing away of survivors would lead to forgetting about the Shoah. Now there is an additional factor, the use of the Holocaust against Israeli actions in Gaza and the Jewish people, which can only play into Holocaust denial, already a growing phenomenon.

Let us all stand up against this dangerous antisemitic development.

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This Yom Ha'atzmaut Let's Be Extra Thankful

May 10, 2024

As the years pass and a country moves from its younger period to adulthood, there naturally is a waning of the spirit that motivated its residents to establish the state in the first place.

So was the case in Israel as it moved over the years from an economically needy entity to a sophisticated, high-tech nation. National spirit as reflected in Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations remained fairly high, but along with it came a complacency about the meaning of Israel.

October 7 and its aftermath have changed all that. One cannot ever forget that Israel reconstituted the Jewish state after 2,000 years in exile at the lowest point in the history of the Jewish people. Six million Jews, two-thirds of the Jews in Europe, had been murdered by the Nazis as the world stood by. After the Holocaust, it would not have been surprising if the Jewish people sunk into lethargy, potentially signaling the end of a long and glorious history.

Instead, with the resurrection of Jewish sovereignty in the historic homeland, hope, as reflected in the title of the nation's national anthem, became the hallmark of the people.

Despite the suffering, despite the personal tragedies of so many who arrived in Israel after the Shoah, in many cases their entire families decimated, there now was a future that they could look to.

Over the years, with celebrations and commemorations of Israeli Independence Day and Holocaust Remembrance Day, the modern import of the Jewish state was kept alive. Naturally, however, a certain jadedness crept in as Israel established itself, as some of its Arab neighbors finally came to accept the Jewish state, and as the years passed.

And then came October 7 and what has followed. The massacre, the support that Hamas continues to receive, the huge increase in antisemitism around the world, particularly in the United States where Jews have felt freer and safer than anywhere else, and the surge in calls for the destruction of Israel, were a metaphoric kick in the stomach for Israelis and Jews around the world.

And so we come to this year's celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut. On the one hand, there will undoubtedly be a more somber tone as long as hostages are being held, as long as Hamas is still around to spread its barbaric and genocidal ideology and to commit future atrocities, as long as antisemitism flourishes in circles that had been deemed friendly to Jews.

On the other hand, it is a time to realize once again in a visceral way, unfelt for many years, how much the existence of the state of Israel means to the Jewish people.

The legitimacy of this connection doesn't solely depend on Jewish security; rather, it's rooted in the everlasting connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel. The formation of the nation was tied to the Holy Land. The survival of the people through 2,000 years of exile and discrimination was kept alive by the aspiration of return to Zion. And the United Nations decision to partition the land, which was rejected by the Palestinians, was predicated on that history.

Now, however, it is the issue of the safety and security of the Jewish people that has come back to haunt us in a way that it hasn't since the Holocaust. It is important first to keep things in perspective. While we are deeply concerned by the sharp rise in antisemitic activity around the world, Jewish communities and individuals must not give in to fear. In many countries around the world, particularly in the U.S., Jewish life is strong and thriving.

At the same time, the surge of antisemitism and violence against Jews in the Middle East and elsewhere is a reminder that the age-old desire to harm Jews is very much alive.

And so, let us cheer the existence of Israel on this Independence Day. Let us be thankful, even with all the terrible blunders that allowed October 7 to happen, that now unlike during the Shoah, the Jewish people are not powerless. It is Israel's strength and ability to defend itself against its enemies that give meaning and substance to hopes for the future.

And let us cheer the many friends, political leaders and individuals around the world who understand the meaning of Israel and who support the only democracy in the Middle East against the Jew haters. We are not alone and, on this Yom Ha'atzmaut, we need to bring closer those who stand up against the haters.

Am Yisrael Chai!

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The Dangers of Prematurely Recognizing a Palestinian State

May 22, 2024

As reports indicate that several European states are planning to recognize a Palestinian state, it is important to engage the issue as both a moral abomination as a reward for Hamas terrorism, and a practical disaster that will make any possibility of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict even more difficult. This action follows the recent UN General Assembly vote in support of Palestinian membership, and the U.S. veto of a UN Security Council resolution on the issue.

Let's be clear at the outset: for many of us, the ultimate goal is to achieve a two-state solution that will bring peace and security to both peoples in the region. Opposition to unilateral decisions to recognize a Palestinian state is not only not an indicator of opposition to two states, but is, in fact, a necessary ingredient to achieving that goal.

To start with, unilateral recognition is morally bankrupt as a response to October 7. It is not only a reward for barbarous behavior – the brutality towards over 1,200 people in Israel, including murder, rape and kidnapping – but clearly a justification for that day by implying support for the notion, so widespread, that Hamas actions that day were actually a form of resistance to Israeli occupation and the absence of a Palestinian state.

Indeed, the appropriate response after October 7 should have been a clear rejection of Hamas, support for Israel's goal to eliminate the terror organization, and an imperative to demand that Palestinians reject terror so that down the road real negotiations between the sides could begin.

Second, recognition of a Palestinian state seeks to sidestep the only path that could eventually lead to true peace and reconciliation between the parties, negotiations. This is not a pro-forma call as much as a necessary element in determining whether the Palestinians have finally given up their policies of rejection of Israel that have poisoned the atmosphere for decades, and hurt the Palestinians even more than the Israelis. A unilateral approach makes no effort to determine where Palestinian leadership stands and, particularly after the terrorism, will make Israelis more cynical about the idea of a Palestinian state, which would look to many as one more terrorist vehicle.

On the Israeli side, there have been repeated offers to the Palestinians which could have resulted in a sovereign state. Ehud Barak at Camp David in

2000, Ariel Sharon in 2005 in Israel pulling out of Gaza, and Ehud Olmert at Annapolis in 2007, all took initiatives and actions that could have been converted into Palestinian independence, only to be rejected.

Having said that, Israel has not done enough in recent years to engage on these issues, including its approach to the building and expansion of West Bank settlements. It is legitimate for the international community to push both sides to come to the table and have serious conversations. Only through such direct talks can it be ascertained whether the parties are ready to move forward or whether the old obstacles, mostly Palestinian fantasies about destroying Israel – enhanced by October 7 and its aftermath – still dominate the field.

Unfortunately, the initiatives to recognize a Palestinian state undermine the already difficult task of creating an atmosphere for negotiations. Israelis are understandably cynical about Palestinian intentions not only due to the massacre but also to the significant support that it received from the broader Palestinian community.

And Israel's current government is insisting that there can never be a Palestinian state which would reinforce terrorism and rejectionism.

What needs to be done therefore is the very opposite of unilateral recognition of a state which sends the worst kind of message to the Palestinians: reward for terror and no need to change their ways which have been so devastating for decades. Instead, there must be a three-stage process to generate a different environment.

First, pressure on the Palestinians to reform their leadership and to promote through education and political activity a policy and culture of accommodation with the Jewish state.

Second, with such movement, Israel would then have to get past this terrible year of massacre, rape and hostage-taking to reevaluate its attitude toward the Palestinians.

And third, pressure and persuasion on both sides is necessary to enter a new period of negotiations.

These steps, if implemented, offer hope. International recognition of a Palestinian state without such change offers the region more heartbreak and tragedy.

The Things Not Being Said at Protests

Jun. 2, 2024

In assessing the many anti-Israel demonstrations across the country, there is much focus, understandably, on the hateful themes, including chants of “from the river to the sea,” “by any means necessary,” “we are Hamas,” and “genocidal Israel.”

Still, as important in determining what these demonstrations are and are not about, is what is not being said. What would one expect to see if these were merely pro-Palestinian protesters, as they are so often characterized in the media and elsewhere?

To start with, one would expect to hear at least some mention of the reality of the hostage situation. One would think if there were real interest in presenting oneself as occupying the moral high ground, even while speaking of Palestinian suffering, that there would at least be a mention if not an emphasis on the more than 125 individuals who continue to be held in captivity for over seven months. The complete absence of such comments speaks to the inhumanity of the demonstrations, and reveals in the most explicit way that the pro-Hamas comments are actually far more representative of these demonstrations than one can imagine. It surely would generate good public relations for the demonstrators, even if they didn’t mean it, but they can’t bring themselves even to utter a single word of sympathy for the hostages and their families.

The second theme that is notably absent is the complete failure by demonstrators to call for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This has particular resonance since media coverage around the country consistently refers to what’s going on as pro-Palestinian activity.

Had the protesters had anything in mind beyond pure hate of Israel and Jews, they would have looked toward a solution that would provide a safe future for both Israelis and Palestinians. Indeed, they could have criticized the government of Israel for not supporting such an outcome. Of course, for many Israelis, particularly after October 7, the thought of a Palestinian state is frightening, but this still would be seen as a legitimate protest emphasizing the rights of Palestinians as well as Israelis.

Instead, the total omission in any of the demonstrations about how to bring about peace and normalcy to both sides make clear that the language of “from the river to the sea” and “we are Hamas” is not mere rhetoric, but reflects what these demonstrations are all about. All of which leads to the

conclusion that the underlying spirit of the demonstrations is that of anti-Jewish hate, reminiscent of the hate-fest in Charlottesville seven years ago.

Thirdly, is, of course, what started this all, the massacre of October 7. In this case it is a combination of what is said and what is left unsaid. As noted, when protesters address the issue at all, it is always to represent the barbarism as legitimate resistance, summed up by the phrase “by any means necessary” that appeared within days of the massacre.

Indeed, this phrase preceded Israel’s invasion of Gaza.

What one never hears from these protesters is even one iota of sympathy for Israeli citizens who were murdered, raped and butchered that day. One could fiercely disagree with Israeli policy but still show the most elemental form of decency by expressing pain for the suffering of the families.

In all these cases, what is not said tells us almost as much as what is said about the nature of these protests. Imagine the sympathy the protesters could have garnered had they pushed for the release of the hostages and demanded that the parties engage immediately in negotiations toward a two-state solution. They apparently can’t bring themselves to do that, even with all the public opinion potential, because their goal is very different.

And so we are left with the usual mix when it comes to hostility toward the State of Israel. On the one hand, damage is done to Israel’s image as we see demonstrations spread and public opinion in support of the Jewish state weaken, though not to a significant degree.

On the other hand, history is repeating itself – to the detriment of the Palestinians – but this time with a huge multiplier effect.

Whenever there are voices condemning and delegitimizing the Jewish state, the Palestinians have read the wrong message time and again: that the move to isolate and demonize Israel is progressing, and they need do nothing to change their ways. This may even be more so now.

As calls for Israel to take action on the Palestinian front after the war increase, the hateful demonstrations may once again lead the Palestinians to self-destructive conclusions.

What Accounts for the Rise in Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Sentiment?

Jun. 7, 2024

As demonstrations, violence and hate against Israel and Jews spread around the country, we must ask: how did we arrive at such a moment when it was thought until recently that Jewish life in America was the best and safest for any Jewish community in the 2,000 years of the diaspora?

Some have been focusing on sinister outside support and funding. Undoubtedly, the activists have benefited psychologically and practically from these outsiders. Indeed, there is a need to initiate serious investigations into this critical matter. However, this doesn't address the deeper elements historically that have brought us to this moment.

Three factors come to mind.

First goes way back to 1975 when the Soviet Union led an international effort at the United Nations to pass a resolution equating Zionism, the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, with racism. Even back then this accusation, endorsed by the international community, was extremely damaging to Israel. Even though the UN 18 years later rescinded the Zionism is racism resolution, the damage had been done.

From 1975 and up to today, the narrative that Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East which represents the realization of the Jewish people's return to their historic homeland, is illegitimate, has seeped into any conversation about Middle East issues. In this sense, the Soviets had succeeded in their anti-Western, anti-Jewish philosophy even long after the demise of the Soviet Union, far beyond the original action.

Today's delegitimization of Israel that has motivated these demonstrations is partly a result many years later of the seeping into any discussion about Israel of the Zionism is racism idea.

Second, is the trend on college campuses to move away from classic liberalism, which over the years brought positive change to America and has been good for Jews, to illiberalism under the guise of social justice. Dividing the world simplistically into categories of oppressors and oppressed, not judging behavior on individual actions but on preconceived categories, and a rejection of pluralism and diversity of thought, are all characteristics of this illiberalism.

Once, however, these views became dominant, it was inevitable that Jews would be a target. Israel was quickly deemed an oppressor state, partly again because of the embedded Zionism is racism idea. And Jews were deemed to be part of the oppressor class, not only by being called white but because of the images of Jews as wealthy capitalists.

Third, the anti-Israel, anti-Jewish forces realized that October 7 presented a unique opportunity. This is counterintuitive, since one would have thought that it would lead to sympathy for Israel when 1,200 civilians were brutally murdered and raped, and hundreds more taken hostage by a barbaric terrorist group.

What was missed was that a major element over the years constraining anti-Israel activity was the perception that Israel was too strong and successful a society, particularly in its military and security capabilities, and therefore taking on Israel could only go so far.

October 7 changed that mentality. There suddenly arose a perception that the past image of Israeli strength may not have been so true. The way a terrorist group outfoxed Israeli intelligence, and committed the worst violence against Jews since the Holocaust, generated a new sense of opportunity. And the anti-Israel groups seized the moment. With it came open calls for the destruction of the Jewish state, support for Hamas and its barbarism, and assaults both figuratively and actively, on Jews. Antisemitic incidents immediately surged dramatically.

This sense of opportunity to heighten anti-Israel activity was reinforced when Iran launched hundreds of missiles at the Jewish state late in April. Though Israel successfully thwarted the attacks, this helped generate another round of opportunity in seeing Iran as testing the waters and preparing the day when it had a nuclear capability. It is no accident that the second surge on campuses, embodied in the encampments, began within days of the Iranian assault.

In sum, the outrages on campus reflect the coming together of a long-term influence, the Zionism is racism resolution, medium-term rethinking, the conversion of liberalism into illiberalism, and short-term opportunity, a new perception of Israeli vulnerability.

Understanding these factors is important in trying to devise successful strategies to combat the dangers that are growing and spreading.

When It Comes to Hatred of Jews, the End of Shame

Jun. 24, 2024

Often referred to as the oldest hatred, antisemitism traces back to the pre-Christian era. This enduring animosity escalated thereafter, becoming deeply embedded in Western life for millennia.

Reaching its nadir in the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis, the shame of the images from Auschwitz and other concentration camps began a period of delegitimizing antisemitism. It was no longer easy for blatant antisemites to express their hatred in public.

Here in the United States, famous individuals like Henry Ford, Father Charles Coughlin and Charles Lindbergh could circulate the most brutal form of antisemitism and still be adored by millions before the war. After the war, that generally wasn't the case. Moreover, there were serious efforts over the years to reverse the culture that had generated the antisemitic impulse for centuries. This included Holocaust education, major changes in the Catholic Church, and political leaders denouncing public expressions of Jew-hatred. And so grew the belief that, unlike in previous centuries, antisemitism was no longer legitimized in society.

Still, there were those who expressed Jew-hatred, but felt a need to camouflage their views. They made it appear as though they were merely criticizing what they considered abhorrent Israeli policies.

While criticism of Israel was, of course, legitimate, too often these views represented what came to be known as the new antisemitism: disguising Jew-hatred in a post-Holocaust world under the guise of anti-Zionism. In fact, it was the demonization and delegitimization of the Jewish state which made it clear that these positions were not mere criticism of Israel, but antisemitism in a new form. Still, because of the general atmosphere in the post-Holocaust world, the impact of the new antisemitism was somewhat limited.

Which brings us to current events.

I would argue that we are at a watershed moment where, for the first time in decades, open and blatant antisemitism, unencumbered by camouflages, has surfaced and is widely spreading.

This has manifested itself in several ways:

First, in the reaction after October 7, the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust and the worst terror attack since 9/11. The widespread victim

blaming and willingness to support Hamas's atrocities committed against Israeli men, women and children, represented by the phrase "by any means necessary," became mainstream. This trend is reminiscent of past pogroms against Jewish communities, where residents of the attacked communities hailed the violence and blamed the Jews. Such outward delight about the slaughter of Jews had not been seen for decades.

Second, in the protests on campuses and elsewhere. In environments where the slightest microaggression against other minorities generates swift, unequivocal condemnation and action, the intimidation and harassment of Jewish students is rationalized and even defended. Too many Jewish students are experiencing fear and exclusion, often encouraged by faculty, which exacerbates the situation. At the same time, anti-Israel protests have abandoned any pretense of solely criticizing Israel. The most recent examples include the abhorrent protests outside the Nova Music Festival Exhibition in New York City and the vandalizing of Brooklyn Museum directors' homes with Hamas symbols.

Third, in the increasing use of classic antisemitic expressions and tropes toward the Jewish state. They have existed for years, but the sheer quantity of them indicates a new era with implications for Jews everywhere. Anti-Zionist activists claim that Israel is genocidal after the true genocidal party, Hamas, committed its atrocities. They claim that Israel is a racist and apartheid state, while it is the only true democratic entity in the region and does more to protect minority rights, including Arabs and other minority communities, than any other country in the region. They claim that Israel is a baby killer, reminding us of the centuries-old blood libel charges. There is legitimate criticism of the way Israel has conducted this defensive war, but the clear implication that Israel deliberately targets children is outrageous and reminiscent of past conspiracy theories. This demonization of the Jewish state has roots in classic antisemitism.

What is now clear is that the oldest hatred had never disappeared, it was just hidden by the shame of the Holocaust for decades. Now, as that shame has evaporated and, most importantly, events of October 7 seemed to reveal a new Jewish vulnerability, antisemitism has been legitimized in the mainstream once again. History tells us that when that happens, it is not only bad for the Jews but bespeaks ill for the society at-large.

The fight against this mainstreaming of antisemitism must therefore be one that engages political leaders and individual citizens. This effort is not only crucial for victory but also for the health of democracy itself.

Wikipedia's Serious Problem: Bias Against Israel

Jul. 1, 2024

The report that Wikipedia's volunteer editors are labeling the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) as an unreliable source of information on certain topics – including antisemitism related to Israel and Zionism – is a much more serious problem than an attack on a particular institution. Instead, it speaks to how much the bias against Israel and the indifference to antisemitism have spread to other organizations and informational platforms in this country.

There are those in the Jewish community who go so far as to claim that any criticism of Israel is really a cover for antisemitism. This is absurd. Israel is a country like any other, and its policies are subject to criticism, and even condemnation, as we see taking place within the country itself. Serious people, including those at ADL, reject outright the idea that Israel is beyond criticism, and that when criticism of Israel appears, it is a manifestation of antisemitism.

On the other hand, equally absurd – but much more dangerous because it is accepted in certain mainstream institutions – is the notion that any form of criticism of Israel can never be classified as antisemitism. This is a dangerous and misinformed idea, which underlies the spread of hate that we have witnessed since October 7. The most extreme manifestation of this was the rationalization or outright denial of the barbaric Hamas massacre of October 7. This attack – the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust – was supposedly framed in terms of legitimate resistance to Israeli policies. In other words, nothing Israel could do to defend itself is defensible.

While the distortion embodied in these justifications for the murder of 1,200 Israelis, the rape of scores of women, the taking of more than 200 hostages is so obvious, it wasn't the most perilous form. Even a person with hostile views toward the Jewish state could see through the immorality of justifying one of the worst acts of terrorism since 9/11.

Far more dangerous, because of its respectability, is the concept that no criticism of Israel can ever be antisemitism. This is often expressed with phrases like, "we don't hate Jews, we hate Zionism." And those sources – such as ADL – which identify areas where hostility toward Israel can be a form of antisemitism and a generator of antisemitic incidents, are treated as biased and unreliable by Wikipedia and other groups and publications.

In fact, the manifestations of anti-Israel activity and the explosion of anti-Jewish behavior in a multitude of areas of society cannot be separated from classical antisemitism.

Jews were demonized for centuries – from being accused as “Christ killers,” to charges of blood libels and murders of children for ritual purposes, to sinister conspiracy theories as embodied in the fraudulent Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion document, which accuses Jewish leaders of plotting to take over the world.

All of this deeply embedded hatred culminated in the Holocaust, the Nazis’ systematic murder of two-thirds of the Jews of Europe.

After the horrors of the Nazi extermination of the Jewish people, out-right Jew-hatred was stigmatized – but millennia of prejudice against the Jewish people did not suddenly disappear. Over time, it transformed itself into something more legitimate: hatred of the only Jewish state in the world.

To those who cared, like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., it was obvious that delegitimizing the Jewish state was merely a post-Holocaust form of antisemitism.

While these ideas existed for decades, it was October 7 that gave them new life. Beyond the rationalization of the Hamas terrorism itself, the anti-Israel protests on campuses were characterized by classic demonization and delegitimization of the Jewish state and its Jewish supporters.

Denial of the fundamental right of the Jewish state to exist – as embodied in the popular protest phrase, “from the river to the sea” – is along the historic lines of delegitimizing Jews through conspiracy theories.

Demonization of the Jewish state through denying what Hamas did, or justifying or labeling Israel’s struggle to defend itself after the worst day since the Holocaust as genocide – or accusing Israel of deliberately targeting children, in the spirit of blood libel charges – are only some of the ways in which expressions have not been mere criticism of Israel.

And the effect of all this – the attacks on Jews on campuses and elsewhere – was highly predictable. Hate speech, whether from the right, the left, or Islamist, inevitably leads to hate incidents.

In deeming ADL reporting as “unreliable,” this subset of Wikipedia’s editors has ignored all these forms of antisemitism that have emerged over the last eight months. For us, we will continue to do our work, always recognizing the distinction between free speech and criticism of Israeli policies and the demonization and delegitimization of the Jewish state, which fits into the pattern of historic antisemitism.

It is important that leaders in society make clear that they know what's going on here – that it's exactly this kind of thinking that has produced the opportunity for antisemitism to openly raise its ugly head in a way that we haven't seen for decades. If people don't confront the reality, this hatred – legitimized by mainstream sources – will spread and create even greater dangers for American Jews and American society.

The first step in standing up against this spreading support for hate is to express support for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism, which articulates when legitimate criticism of Israel becomes antisemitism.

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Hezbollah and the International Community's Silence

Somehow, the world only started caring about displaced citizens when they weren't just from Israel.

Jul. 12, 2024

It is understandable that the conversation these days about the conflict in the Middle East is focused on preventing a wider war.

A full-scale war between Israel and Hezbollah would inevitably cause great harm both to Israelis and Lebanese, as well as the possibility of spreading to other states.

Having said that, many of those who are speaking the loudest now were the very ones who could have prevented the terror and aggression that make the likelihood of a wider conflict much more significant.

There is a repeated trend that has taken place over many years in reaction to events in the Middle East: ignoring or rationalizing Islamist attacks on Israel, which forces Israel to deal alone with the threats, leading to the inevitable condemnation of the Jewish state when it defends its territory and its people.

We saw this in Lebanon in July 2006, when Hezbollah seized and killed several Israeli soldiers. We saw this in Gaza when Hamas repeatedly launched rockets into Israel and eventually committed the massacre of October 7.

In each case, the international community either minimized the evil or argued, falsely, that there are problems on both sides. This willful ignorance had dual effects. Instead of an international effort to prevent these attacks against the Jewish state, Israel reached a point where it had to defend itself.

All this seems particularly relevant as we mark the anniversary of the 2006 Lebanon war and as Israel's northern border heats up. The conversation to some extent has shifted away from the war in Gaza and toward a much more frightening potential conflict with Hezbollah.

Once again, we are seeing this pattern. For months on end, while Israel understandably had its eyes on Hamas, Hezbollah has been using that reality to launch rockets and drones on a regular basis into northern Israel, resulting in many Israeli casualties.

Life for Israeli residents in the north has become intolerable, and about 80,000 people were forced to evacuate their homes and have been living as internally displaced persons across Israel for many months. One would have

thought that all this time the international community would have sharply condemned Hezbollah's actions and worked to stop the ongoing attacks.

Rarely, however, was this the center of attention, until more recently, when Israel indicated the situation was unacceptable and may have to be solved militarily. Suddenly, the world woke up, and the theme of preventing escalation became a primary focus.

What seemed to be tolerable to the international community – the displacement of nearly 100,000 Israelis – was now replaced by something that was deemed intolerable: a full-scale conflict.

Here, too, there were dual impacts of this approach: the failure to address the continued assaults by Hezbollah had brought the area to the brink of war; and the problem, ignored for many months, was turned on its head. It is now presented as a war that must be prevented in order for civilians on both sides to return to their homes. Which is to say, the world only started caring about displaced citizens when they weren't just from Israel.

This willful, inappropriate attempt to be evenhanded was the inevitable result of the long silence, taken together with panic over the possibility of full-scale war.

And with the failure to accurately place blame where it belonged – on Hezbollah's unprovoked aggression spurred on by its patron Iran – condemnation of an Israeli military operation in Lebanon would surely surface full-blown.

These two elements are directly interconnected. The failure to take Islamist aggression seriously forces Israel to deal with it militarily. The level of military action is directly correlated both to the nature of the aggression and the fact that Israel knows that it is only its own actions that will provide security for its citizens.

So Israel may inevitably be forced into what many might consider a "disproportionate response" in order to create deterrence which the international community failed to do. And then invariably will come international condemnation of Israel's military actions as disproportionate.

This cycle of indifference followed by condemnation is one that could be avoided if the international community took its role seriously. There needs to be serious education about the Islamist role in the region, fueled by Iran, that seeks to destroy the Jewish state through missiles and terrorism, and stands in the way of progress between Israel and the Palestinians toward a peace that provides security for each people.

It is time for serious conversation, but not only about preventing a full-scale war by pressing Hezbollah to move back from the border. It must also be about the nature of the Islamist threat.

The need to stand up early against their aggression is the best way to prevent future wars.

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Thirty years after AMIA, the Iranian Threat Remains

The world's apathy after Argentina and now October 7 is the same inaction against the Islamic Republic's advancing nuclear capabilities. How does this end well?

Jul. 17, 2024

This week, we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the worst terrorist attack against Jews until October 7, the AMIA bombing in Buenos Aires. The attack claimed the lives of 85 people and wounded more than 300 others.

Thirty years ago, a suicide bomb was set off by a Hezbollah operative in the city, and, as is often true with Hezbollah, the Islamic Republic of Iran was responsible for the attack's planning and implementation.

Over the years, many efforts were made to bring those responsible to justice, including an Interpol declaration identifying several Iranians it held responsible. Yet, over the years neither the Iranian regime nor those specific individuals were ever held accountable. And as we commemorate the 30th anniversary, we commiserate with the families of the many victims not only for their grievous losses, but for this failure of the international community to fulfill its obligation to bring the perpetrators and their supporters to justice.

This failure to deal appropriately with Iranian terrorism against the Jewish people led directly to the murderous events of October 7. As ADL's lawsuit against three countries, including Iran, makes clear, October 7 would not have been possible without the Iranian regime's material, technical and political support of Hamas. Had the world taken appropriate and continuous action against the regime after the AMIA terrorist attack, the Islamic Republic may not have assisted and enabled Hamas's barbarous actions.

Despite this, the Iranian regime continues infringing on international law through their rhetoric and actions aimed at the destruction of the Jewish state.

And so, we see the escalation of Iran's assaults against the Jewish people, rising from 85 dead in Argentina to some 1,200 on October 7 in Israel.

The price the Jewish people are paying for the world's inaction is tremendous. It is time to reckon with the fact that if the world continues down this path of inaction and does not take the evil of the Islamic regime seriously, we could see far greater numbers of Jews targeted than we have yet witnessed.

This is surely the stated dream of the Iranians, and it is represented by the continuing distressing indifference to the fact that Iran is moving closer and closer to a nuclear capability. It is astonishing to see the same apathy the world exhibited after the AMIA bombing and leading up to October 7 in Iran's destructive actions now being manifested in the lack of action addressing Iran's destructive actions and its advancing nuclear capabilities.

Where is the sense of urgency?

Where is the wake-up call that should have transpired when Iran launched 300 missiles and projectiles at the Jewish state, clearly seen by Iran as a testing ground for something even deadlier down the road?

Where is the outrage that the regime continues to call for Israel's elimination in a post-October 7 environment that seems very different than before that day because there is a new sense of vulnerability about the Jewish state?

Where is the sense that the world needs to take stronger measures to isolate the Islamist regime as the irrationality of the extremist version of Islam becomes more apparent every day?

These are all questions that should be priorities for the world.

Without them, the phrase, "Never Again," which symbolizes the commitment to preventing anything like the Holocaust from happening again, would be rendered meaningless.

As we commemorate the AMIA terrorist attack 30 years later, the most respectful thing we can do to remember the victims is to stand up powerfully against the same ruling party that was responsible 30 years ago.

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Francesca Albanese, Shame On You

Aug. 3, 2024

It is highly disturbing, though not surprising, that UN Rapporteur on the Palestinian issue, Francesca Albanese, recently compared Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Adolf Hitler.

This extreme offensiveness by an official UN representative should disqualify her from her job. In fact, the seven largest Jewish communities around the world just sent a joint letter to top UN officials calling for her ousting from her position. However, the fact that she remains in her position after making similarly outrageous statements since the October 7 massacre offers little hope that she will be sacked.

A brief look back provides perspective to the latest outrage by Albanese.

Her comment about the Israeli Prime Minister reminds us of earlier outrageous and antisemitic remarks by Albanese. Most notably, in 2014 she accused the “Zionist lobby” of controlling American policy and later compared Israel to the Nazis.

More recently, following a statement by French President Macron defending Israel’s right to self-defense after October 7, Albanese parroted Islamist extremist propaganda. She claimed that the October 7 massacre of Israelis was not antisemitism but a reaction to Israeli oppression. The ignorance and maliciousness of Albanese in her reaction was astounding, even for a UN official. In doing so, she willfully ignored massive amounts of evidence to the contrary.

First, she ignored a basic international concept: there is never any excuse for terrorism, the deliberate murder of innocent civilians. Even if there were any validity to her charge about the reason for the Hamas attack, and there isn’t, there is never any justification or excuse for the deliberate killing of men, women and children, the rape of women, and the taking of over 200 hostages, some of whom are already dead.

For this alone, she should be fired from her job.

But it goes far beyond that. Her comments also ignored Hamas’s long history. The Hamas terrorist organization was founded in 1988, and Albanese must be familiar by now with the Hamas charter, its founding document, which states the purpose of the organization.

The charter clearly does not promote peace and a state for the Palestinians, but instead advocates for the elimination of the Jewish state. It repeats this goal in several places.

Furthermore, directly contradicting Albanese's outrageous statement, it blames Jews for everything bad that has happened in the world since the French Revolution. It cites the infamous fraudulent antisemitic document, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, which falsely claimed to uncover plans by Jewish leaders to take over the world. This document was used by the Nazis to justify the murder of six million Jews.

In other words, Hamas has been rooted in antisemitism from its outset, never seeking peace or recognition of Israel. Its horrendous acts of violence on October 7 were a culmination of its Jew-hatred.

At a time when antisemitism is surging around the world in light of the war in the Middle East, Albanese has continuously added fuel to the fire by attributing a legitimacy to the slaughter of Jews.

Not only was Albanese distorting who Hamas is and what its motivations were on October 7, but she did so with the transparent political aim of sustaining Hamas as Israel sought to appropriately eliminate it.

Early on in this war, Hamas leaders have made it clear that their future intention is to commit many massacres just like October 7, together with their consistent goal of destroying Israel. Many forces around the world were sympathetic to that goal. Indeed, so many of the calls for a cease-fire are surrounded by signs reading "from the river to the sea," a clear call of support for Hamas's goal of destroying Israel.

The Special Rapporteur, in her response to Macron, had at least implicitly aligned herself with that crowd by attributing a legitimate political motive, rather than unbridled hate, to Hamas actions. This served the fairly transparent purpose of allowing Hamas to survive Israel's military operation and to live another day to be able to conduct future terrorist attacks.

As much as Albanese's statement was intended to delegitimize Israel in the public's mind, it also had the consequence of further undermining Palestinian aspirations for a better life. As long as Hamas is in power in Gaza, there is no future for the residents of Gaza. A party that deliberates embeds itself in civilian institutions, that seizes humanitarian aid intended for the civilian population and does everything possible to impede efforts by civilians to go to safe places, is not one which shows much concern about its constituents.

Here too, Albanese had not only distorted the truth, but played into the hands of the most destructive elements in the Palestinian camp who are to blame for the continued rejection of Israel which has caused so much Palestinian suffering.

On every level, the Albanese statement is abhorrent and dangerous. To be sure, Albanese is far from the first UN special rapporteur that has shown overt bias against Israel and overt antisemitism, with little response from the UN system. But it is clear that if the UN wants to be a trusted entity, its officials must display impartiality, integrity and accountability. Albanese has shown none of this. She should have resigned immediately.

Now, the largest Jewish communities have come together, calling on the UN to do the appropriate thing. We hope that they will act, as they should have long ago. Instead she is still around and now comparing Israel's democratic prime minister to the murderer of 6 million Jews. Shameless.

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Not Your Grandma’s Democratic Convention

Unlike today’s pro-Palestinian activists, protesters at the 1968 DNC in Chicago didn’t target an entire community of U.S. citizens.

Aug. 16, 2024

Given the past 10 months, it is reasonable to expect that there will potentially be large and possibly violent demonstrations regarding Israel, the Palestinians and U.S. policy toward the State of Israel outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. It is equally likely that these demonstrations will be compared by the media and others to those that took place at the same convention in the same city in 1968.

While there are similarities between the two movements, including anti-war sentiment – in 1968 regarding the Vietnam War and today regarding Israel’s war with Hamas – the differences are far more significant, and it is important to preemptively address them before the convention.

The anti-Vietnam War protests, which in Chicago turned violent, were directed at our political leaders. The protesters claimed the war was a mistake, unnecessarily costing American lives and taxpayer dollars, and inflicting huge suffering on the people of Vietnam.

Whatever one’s views on the war then, there was a legitimacy to the protests because, with the exception of the convention, they were largely peaceful and did not target any particular group of Americans, other than our political leadership that had brought us into the war.

While today’s pro-Palestinian protests do share the anti-Vietnam anger towards the governing party and opposition to U.S. support for Israel, they are radically different because of the significant hate component that has characterized these protests since October 7.

The differences manifest in three ways. First has been the explicit or tacit support of the terrorism of October 7. Long before Israel took action to defend itself, protestors were either rationalizing or actually supporting Hamas’s terrorism. The phrase “by any means necessary” appeared almost immediately at the protests. Explicit support for Hamas has remained an element in the protests ever since.

Second has been the persistent theme of delegitimizing the Jewish state leading to calls for Israel’s disappearance as reflected in the phrase “from the river to the sea.” Other manifestations of this are false references to Israel as

an apartheid state as well as the genocide charge, and with it calls to boycott the Jewish state. These are not about policy disagreements but hate, things that were absent in the vehement protests in 1968.

Third, and in many ways most significant in distinguishing between what is happening now as opposed to 1968, is the targeting by the current protests of a particular community within the United States. In their attacks on Zionism, the focus has inevitably fallen on the vast majority of American Jews, resulting, in many cases, in the exclusion of Jews from social justice, literary, artistic and other movements in which they have long participated.

This targeting of a particular community was nowhere to be seen in the 1968 protests, and this type of antisemitism is of a kind that hasn't been seen in decades.

Most consequentially, the rhetoric of today's demonstrations has catalyzed the largest number of antisemitic incidents in America in years. For close to a year, the nonstop protests against Israel on campuses and elsewhere have inevitably generated not only hostility toward Israel but also an excuse to attack Jews in America. This has led to a 300 percent rise in antisemitic incidents and increased anxiety among American Jews. Whether it is on campus or out in the community, attacks on Jews have dramatically increased across the country and Jews are feeling more insecure than they have in years.

In sum, while the tradition of demonstrations at national political meetings is part and parcel of American democracy, it should be clear that the current anti-Israel manifestations have very little in common with past examples, particularly those of 1968.

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In assembling these pieces for the collection, we have corrected some typos and made some minor copy edits but there have been no substantive changes.

About Ken Jacobson

Ken Jacobson is ADL's Deputy National Director and serves in a number of capacities including representing ADL when CEO Jonathan Greenblatt is not available, writing extensively on ADL subjects, speaking to groups across the country and educating ADL staff and volunteer leaders about the history and legacy of the organization.

Ken joined ADL in 1971. He is the longest serving ADL professional and has served in many roles, including leading the International Affairs, Civil Rights, Marketing and Communications, and Education divisions at various times.

Ken has a B.A. in history from Yeshiva University, an M.A. in history from Columbia University and an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Yeshiva University.

About ADL

ADL is the leading anti-hate organization in the world. Founded in 1913, its timeless mission is “to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of antisemitism and bias, using innovation and partnerships to drive impact. A global leader in combating antisemitism, countering extremism and battling bigotry wherever and whenever it happens, ADL works to protect democracy and ensure a just and inclusive society for all.

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