



ADC SPECIAL REPORT

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Editor's Introduction

Isi Leibler, a former president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, now resides in Jerusalem and is the senior vice-president of the World Jewish Congress. He is a commentator and critic who writes frequently on issues affecting Israel and world Jewry. While this article first appeared as a Jerusalem Post internet posting on 4 October 2002, Mr. Leibler's comments remain relevant today, particularly in light of recent statements by President Bush on the necessary democratisation of the Middle East. The article is reproduced with the author's kind permission. The views expressed are Mr. Leibler's own, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ADC.

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Evil is Evil

Although in all likelihood we will still undergo more bloodshed before we see the dawn, all indicators suggest that we are moving in the right direction.

Those who insisted that military responses have no impact on terror have been proven resoundingly wrong. Operation Defensive Shield not only substantially reduced the terror toll; it also brought many Palestinians to the realization that our chaotic exit from Lebanon was not after all a dress rehearsal for our expulsion from the territories and ultimately our disappearance from the map.

Many Palestinians are now questioning the direction in which Yasser Arafat has led them and beginning to realize that terrorism has been a prescription for self-induced misery and brought them to the brink of disaster.

But that should not blind us to the enormously difficult challenges that still face us on the political and diplomatic fronts. As we have seen... our identity of interest with the United States has its limitations. Indeed, it is not inconceivable that once the Iraqi threat has been overcome, the Bush administration may feel pressured to rebuild its bridges with the Europeans and others, including the so-called moderate Arab nations, at the expense of our security needs.

Any return to negotiations with the Palestinians, using Taba or even Camp David as a benchmark, would be disastrous. Yet there are still a number of politicians in Israel who would support such a course despite the fact that the irresponsible ministers

who orchestrated these negotiations during the chaotic dying days of the Barak government were acting without the endorsement of their prime minister and the Knesset, not to speak of the people.

There is therefore an urgent need to mount a campaign to convince our friends and many Diaspora Jews that we can never return to the Taba formula.

We should also explain that it could be suicidal for us if we acceded to pressure from the international community and prematurely endorsed statehood for the Palestinians before that society has undergone truly fundamental changes.

Two years ago we were deeply divided over how to deal with the Palestinians. Not so today. The consensus now shared by the vast majority is that we have no ambition to rule over the Palestinians, but we still oppose territorial concessions until such a time as the Palestinians become reconciled to our right to exist in peace and security as a sovereign Jewish state. To display that, they must first demonstrate that they can elect a government with new leaders who exhibit the will and ability to impose law and order and are prepared to ruthlessly root out terrorism.

Today if we are to effectively promote our cause, we must once and for all put an end to our inclination to understate the virulence of the hatred that suffuses Palestinian society at all levels. Since Oslo, a tendency to sanitize the true objectives of the Palestinians has been a hallmark of Israeli foreign policy. Everything negative was swept under the carpet by government spokesmen more eager to promote the virtues of Arafat as a peace partner than confront unpleasant realities.

We must therefore convince the world that what we face is not a conflict between two people over territory or "occupation." That was clearly demonstrated when Arafat rejected prime minister Ehud Barak's offer to cede 97 percent of the territories over the Green Line.

Nor are we merely a party to "a cycle of violence." What we face is an existential struggle with neighbors who time and again clearly verified that their overriding objective is to destroy us even if this is to be achieved in phases over a long period.

THIS IS not paranoia. It is chapter and verse of the Palestinian war against the Jewish state. And since the intent of that war is evil, those who conduct it are evil.

Indeed the Jews have faced no such evil since the Nazis. That should not be construed as a racist statement or a primitive demonization of an entire people. It is calling a spade a spade. US President George W. Bush refers to evil states. Our Palestinian neighbors who seek the destruction of the Jewish people represent the essence of evil and barbarism. And now is the time for us to say so to the world at large, loud and clear. We are not suggesting that the Palestinian people are intrinsically or genetically any more evil than the Germans were under Hitler. We are saying that, like the Nazis, the Palestinian leaders have succeeded in indoctrinating their people and transforming them into a society which is inspired by evil.

It is evil when a society extols as heroes those who target civilians at gatherings such as a Pessah Seder, a bar mitzva, or a discotheque.

It is evil when a society sanctions the revival of the ancient custom of child sacrifice.

It is evil when a people bestows the highest level of merit on suicide bombers whose objective is to kill the maximum number of Jews.

It is evil when mothers display themselves on television conveying pride that their children have become "martyrs" and expressing the hope that their younger offspring will follow in the same tradition and also die killing Israelis.

It is evil when the proud parents of "martyrs" are publicly rewarded for sacrificing their children by being provided with \$25,000 from Saddam Hussein and lauded for their contribution by Arafat himself.

It is evil when children in kindergarten are taught songs and poems which extol the virtues of killing Jews. When four year-olds are taught at summer camps how to shoot Jews and indoctrinated into accepting as role models the "heroic martyrs" who died in order to kill the "wicked" Jews who "usurped" their land.

One video repeatedly shown on Palestinian television incorporates a children's song with the lyric "How pleasant is the smell of a martyr, how pleasant the smell of the land, the land enriched by the blood, the blood pouring out of a fresh body."

It is evil when an entire religious establishment calls on its faithful to hate Jews because they are Jews; to "have no mercy on the Jews wherever they are, in any country. Fight them wherever they are. Whenever you meet them, kill them because they established Israel here, in the beating heart of the Arab world, in Palestine." That extract from a Gaza mosque sermon broadcast on Arafat's television station, is typical of the daily diet of Islamic fundamentalist incitement directed against Jews.

And if not evil incarnate, how can one explain or justify the joyous street celebrations that erupt as soon as there is news of Israeli women and children having been blown apart by one of the heroic "shahids"?

How else to view such behavior other than as evidence of a truly evil society?

Recent statements by some Palestinian leaders suggesting that in view of international revulsion to these killings, Jews living beyond the Green Line should now become the primary targets as opposed to those living within it in no way detracts from this evil.

There are no protests or expressions of dissent to the targeting of innocent civilians. Of course the mafia-like summary executions of men and women accused of collaboration do not encourage those opposed to the regime to raise their voices.

But the truth is that the majority have been sufficiently brainwashed from an early age by the religious and cultural environment to endorse the evil. Palestinian polls show that 80% of the people enthusiastically support suicide bombers. This is why we must convince our allies and all people of goodwill that while most of us would be delighted to separate ourselves from the Palestinians immediately, no fences or borders would be able to provide us with security from neighbors committed to such evil behavior. To simply walk away and permit a people so suffused with blind hatred to create a state on our doorstep would be a prescription for self-destruction.

THIS IS not to say that peace and accommodation with the Palestinians can never be achieved. On the contrary. It must remain our ultimate objective.

But we must face the truth that as of now, our neighbors are no less suffused with evil than were the people of Germany under Hitler. And just as the Germans were eventually de-Nazified, so must the Palestinians be de-Arafatized and obliged to elect leaders able to enforce law and order. If in the absence of such a change we

were to agree to a Palestinian state or grant territorial concessions which would become launching pads for even more intensive efforts destroy us, we would simply be recycling the mistakes of Oslo and once again gambling with the lives of our children. Israel was and remains a just and democratic society committed to Jewish and universal humanistic values at the heart of which lies respect for upholding the sanctity of life.

In any war innocent bystanders die. But in stark contrast to our enemies who deliberately target women and children, many of our soldiers lie in graves because we sought to minimize civilian casualties and refrained from using the awesome military power at our disposal.

The vast majority of us yearn for peace and have no desire to rule over another people. On the day the Palestinians decide to reject evil, we will be willing to make generous compromises with them. But until then, like any nation facing an existential threat, we are obliged to do whatever is necessary to defend ourselves and protect the life and limbs of our citizens.

That is the message we should be promoting to the world.

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