



## ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel  
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of  
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

Tel Aviv University  
before joining the  
Israel Foreign Ministry.

I am a proud Israeli - along with many other non-Jewish Israelis such as Druze, Bahai, Bedouin, Christians and Muslims, who live in one of the most culturally diversified societies

## Quote of the Week...

### BAYT Letter of Appreciation Sent to Minister Jason Kenney

February 23, 2009

The Hon. Jason Kenney, MP

Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism

Dear Minister Kenney:

For some time we have been impressed by the initiatives of your government and your personal support for the concerns of our community. Many of us participated when you were very appropriately honoured by OU/NCSY, an organization very close to our hearts. We were touched by your words one year ago in our synagogue when we marked the terrorist murder at Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav in Jerusalem of eight teenagers. We have heard you on Israeli radio talk about your government's support of Israel with pride. Now, having read your speech of February 17, 2009 delivered in London to a conference on the subject of anti-Semitism, we felt the obligation to write to you.

As representatives of the Thornhill Jewish community, we believe in the importance of Hakarat Hatov, expressing appreciation.

We believe your comments on anti-Semitism, recent anti-Semitic incidents in Toronto, Mumbai and elsewhere, and the position that our beloved State of Israel finds itself in were the most appropriate we have heard spoken - by anyone - in a very long time. In your remarks, you captured the feelings and the emotions of a Jew living in 2009, and by expressing them the way you did you have shown yourself and your government to be our true friends. We would suggest that very rarely in the history of the Jewish diaspora have Jews experienced such sensitivity from their governments as you have shown to us.

Your comments, and the ongoing support your government and our Prime Minister have demonstrated for Israel in its war against terrorists, make us very proud to be Canadian.

So, from the bottom of our hearts, we thank you.

We would welcome the opportunity for you to visit our synagogue again at your convenience so that we may demonstrate this appreciation in person.

Yours very truly,

Baruch Taub, Rabbi

Chaim Yoseph Ackerman, Assistant Rabbi

Jonah Turk, President

Dr. Leon Rucker, President-Elect

cc: Peter Kent, MP, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (Americas)

Prime Minister Stephen Harper

[Kol Hakavod to BAYT's leadership! - Ed.]

## Commentary...

### Lost in the Blur of Slogans By Ishmael Khaldi

For those who haven't heard, the first week in March has been designated as Israel Apartheid Week by activists who are either ill intentioned or misinformed. On American campuses, organizing committees are planning happenings to once again castigate Israel as the lone responsible party for all that maligns the Middle East.

Last year, at UC Berkeley, I had the opportunity to "dialogue" with some of the organizers of these events. My perspective is unique, both as the vice consul for Israel in San Francisco, and as a Bedouin and the highest-ranking Muslim representing the Israel in the United States. I was born into a Bedouin tribe in Northern Israel, one of 11 children, and began life as shepherd living in our family tent. I went on to serve in the Israeli border police, and later earned a master's degree in political science from

and the only true democracy in the Middle East. Like America, Israeli society is far from perfect, but let us deal honestly. By any yardstick you choose - educational opportunity, economic development, women and gay's rights, freedom of speech and assembly, legislative representation - Israel's minorities fare far better than any other country in the Middle East.

So, I would like to share the following with organizers of Israel Apartheid week, for those of them who are open to dialogue and not blinded by a hateful ideology:

You are part of the problem, not part of the solution: If you are really idealistic and committed to a better world, stop with the false rhetoric.

We need moderate people to come together in good faith to help find the path to relieve the human suffering on both sides of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Vilification and false labeling is a blind alley that is unjust and takes us nowhere.

You deny Israel the fundamental right of every society to defend itself: You condemn Israel for building a security barrier to protect its citizens from suicide bombers and for striking at buildings from which missiles are launched at its cities - but you never offer an alternative. Aren't you practicing yourself a deep form of racism by denying an entire society the right to defend itself?

Your criticism is willfully hypocritical: Do Israel's Arab citizens suffer from disadvantage? You better believe it. Do African Americans 10 minutes from the Berkeley campus suffer from disadvantage - you better believe it, too. So should we launch a Berkeley Apartheid Week, or should we seek real ways to better our societies and make opportunity more available.

You are betraying the moderate Muslims and Jews who are working to achieve peace: Your radicalism is undermining the forces for peace in Israel and in the Palestinian territories. We are working hard to move toward a peace agreement that recognizes the legitimate rights of both Israel and the Palestinian people, and you are tearing down by falsely vilifying one side.

To the organizers of Israel Apartheid Week I would like to say: If Israel were an apartheid state, I would not have been appointed here, nor would I have chosen to take upon myself this duty. There are many Arabs, both within Israel and in the Palestinian territories who have taken great courage to walk the path of peace. You should stand with us, rather than against us. (San Francisco Chronicle Mar 4)

*The writer is deputy consul general of Israel for the Pacific Northwest.*

### Are You Proud To Be A Leftist? By Caroline Glick

In an interview with Teheran Times two weeks ago, Norman Finklestein, the notorious Hizbullah and Hamas supporter and all-purpose anti-Semite, called Israel a "vandal state," and "insane state," a "terrorist state," and a "satanic state."

Last week Finklestein was the keynote speaker at both Emory University and Fordham University during their weeklong annual anti-Israel hate festivals. Speaking to a cheering crowd at a packed auditorium on Emory's Atlanta campus, Finklestein claimed that Israel conducted its recent Operation Cast Lead in Gaza for two reasons. These did not include Hamas's deliberate targeting of Israeli civilians, Hamas's alliance with Iran, its charter that calls for the physical eradication of the Jewish people, its illegal imprisonment of Israeli hostage Gilad Schalit, or its decision to renew its attacks against Israel after a six month period of relative restraint.

In Finklestein's view, the first reason Israel launched Operation Cast Lead was because Hamas had begun expressing interest in peace. In his words, "Hamas were being too moderate, too reasonable. They wanted a

diplomatic settlement to the conflict. To Israel, this is a recurring nightmare."

The second reason that Finklestein alleged that Israel launched its offensive was because, well, Israel is just plain mean. As he put it, the operation was Israel's way of "reminding the Arabs who were [sic.] in charge." It was an attempt to "restore the Arab world's fear of Israel."

Finklestein cited an unnamed "chief military analyst" to support his claim that Israel conducted a "massacre" in Gaza and did so with malice of forethought.

According to Emory's student paper, for his libelous, wholly fallacious remarks, Finklestein received a prolonged standing ovation.

In 40 university campuses throughout the US and Canada as well as in Europe and South America, last week students marked what Palestinian terror apologists have dubbed "Israel Apartheid Week." This was the seventh such week in the US, and the fifth in Canada.

In the lead up to this annual Israel vilification week, pro-Israel students were physically assaulted at San Francisco State University and at York University in Canada by their anti-Israel counterparts. In both cases, university officials opened disciplinary proceedings against the pro-Israel students.

At SFSU, two students were arrested by police for assaulting college Republicans who held an anti-Hamas rally. The two - from the campus's Palestinian student club and its Socialist union - now insist not only that the charges against them be dropped, but that the university re-educate its students to ensure that they understand that criticizing Hamas and other genocidal terror groups is a form of prohibited hate-speech.

The libelous assertion that Israel - the only free, pluralistic, liberal democracy in the Middle East - is analogous to apartheid South Africa first took hold at the 2001 UN-sponsored anti-Jewish diplomatic pogrom at Durban, South Africa. In the action plan approved by the various non-governmental organizations that participated in the conference, activists were called on to bring about the international demonization of Israel as a racist state, and of Zionism - the Jewish national liberation movement - as a form of racism.

When Israel Apartheid Week was launched the next year, many local Jewish student and community activists in the US and Canada demanded that university authorities ban the clearly bigoted event from their campuses. To their chagrin, university presidents and administrators would do no such thing. Claiming that doing so would restrict academic freedom, the propaganda war against the Jewish state went forward and grew. And, in its wake, the freedom of pro-Israel students on college campuses throughout the West has become increasingly constricted and threatened.

Both through formal speech codes barring criticism of anti-Israel propaganda and violence, and through academic and physical intimidation of pro-Israel students by an increasingly vocal and aggressive coalition of pro-Palestinian professors, Muslim and leftist students, Israel's supporters on university campuses find themselves under assault. Today, seven years after the Durban Conference, Israel Apartheid Week has become a mainstay on the academic calendar, nearly as taken for granted as Homecoming Week and mid-terms.

The use of the term "apartheid" to describe Israel was a deliberate move on the part of Israel's enemies. It was aimed at neutralizing the capacity of Israel's supporters to defend the Jewish state and attack its enemies. Case in point is the campus debate which preceded Israel Apartheid Week at the University of Toronto. The student paper published two topical opinion pieces on the upcoming events. One asserted that Israel is an apartheid regime. The other argued that Israel isn't an apartheid regime.

On the surface, this seems fair enough. But it is nothing of the sort. Israel is the only free country and free society in the region. Pinning its defenders down by confining discussion of the region to the pros and cons of a complete lie serves to only obfuscate the depravity of Israel's enemies, not to enlighten the public about Israel.

While Israel provides the full rights of citizenship to its Arab minority, Jews are denied the rights of citizenship in every Arab League member state, and the Palestinians' fundamental demand is that no Jew be permitted to live in a future Palestinian state.

Then too, while Israeli women enjoy full equality under the law, women and girls in the Arab and Muslim world are systematically subjugated and enslaved. Muslim men who wantonly murder their wives, sisters, mothers and daughters can expect to receive little to no punishment for their crimes. The same holds for men who abuse their female relations. For their part, women in the Muslim world have either no legal rights to citizenship and civil rights or those rights are severely limited.

Gay, blacks, migrant workers, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists are systematically persecuted for their sexual preferences, their skin color and their religious beliefs. Even dogs feel the wrath of these societies where, since they are considered "unclean," children and adults alike routinely engage in their torture and killing.

But under the full protection of self-described liberal university professors, administrators and presidents, and due to the indifference of groups like the World Council of Churches, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Organization of Women, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, anti-Israel propagandists have been allowed to co-opt the language of liberty to advance the political fortunes of terrorists who aim to destroy liberty.

The active and passive support conferred on anti-Israel leftists and Muslims by these officials and groups has provided them with the ideological cover to take their activism to the next level: anti-Jewish violence aimed at intimidating states, universities, businesses and private organizations into cutting off all ties to Israel. Evidence of the success of this campaign is rife throughout Europe today.

In just one notable instance, for the past week Israeli tennis players, Amir Haddad and Andy Ram have been suffering the consequences of the Left's collusion with these anti-Jewish groups in Sweden. Haddad and Ram competed in the Davis Cup tennis championships in Malmo, Sweden.

In an article in Yediot Ahronot on Sunday, Ram wrote, "In my entire athletic career, I have never before experienced such hatred and such a mixing of sports with politics."

In spite of repeated entreaties by Israel, Swedish authorities refused to move the games from Malmo to Stockholm. With its enormous Muslim population, in recent years Malmo has been the site of some of the worst Islamic violence against non-Muslims - and particularly Jews, women and girls - in the Western world.

Due to threats of violence against Ram and Haddad, Swedish authorities barred fans from attending their tennis matches. As they played their opening match in an empty stadium on Saturday, thousands of violent Muslims and leftists rioted against police and attempted to break down the barriers protecting the stadium with the stated aim of killing Ram and Haddad.

The protesters claim that their desire to murder Israeli tennis players is due to Operation Cast Lead. But this is pure propaganda. Their desire to murder Ram and Haddad stems not from Israel's military actions to defend its citizens from murder, but from the protesters' hatred of the Jewish state. And that hatred stems from the same source as their misogyny, their hatred of the US and their support for the likes of Osama bin Laden and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

A 2005 Swedish government report indicated that in 2004, incidents of rape had increased 50 percent throughout the country. A Malmo police report noted that 68 percent of the rapists were minorities. As Islamic scholar Robert Spencer has noted, Islamic teaching views rape as a legitimate act against women and girls who behave in "non-Islamic" ways. In much of Scandinavia as well as in Muslim neighborhoods in France, women have begun wearing veils in order to protect themselves against roving gangs of Muslim young men.

The defilement of women and girls, like gay bashing, has nothing to do with IDF operations in Gaza. It has to do with the pathological nature of the cultures that condone and encourage the violence, and the Western governments and intellectuals who make excuses for it.

All of this is hidden away from the public thanks to Western liberals' willingness to accept the legitimacy of events like Israel Apartheid Week. Due to the complicity of leftist authorities, the international discourse about the Arab and Islamic world and the cultures they have produced is diverted to false allegations against Israel.

Any attempt to point out that Hamas is genocidal; that Iran stones women to death, and systematically executes homosexuals; that Saudi Arabia is the most repressive society on the planet; that Egypt permits and indeed encourages female genital mutilation; that Jordan does not prosecute fathers, sons, husbands and uncles who murder their female relatives; is attacked and delegitimized. Those who raise these issues are accused of hating Muslims and of being secret Zionist agents.

So too, Islamic violence in the West is swept under the rug. For example, to date, no mainstream US media organ has reported that in Buffalo, New York Muzzamil Hassan decapitated his wife Aasiya on February 12 after he stabbed her to death. Just a few years earlier that same mainstream media had embraced this murderer as a paragon of

Islamic moderation after he established Bridges TV network, which was supposed to show the American public how moderate Islam is.

For some reason, the same media don't consider it noteworthy that their moderate Muslim poster boy chopped off his wife's head a week after she filed for divorce. Certainly, no connection can be drawn between her ritual slaughter and Islam.

Sunday was International Women's Day. Throughout the West, feminists spent the day congratulating themselves for their great sacrifices for women's rights. Last Wednesday Saudi authorities arrested a woman for driving. Her arrest drew no protest from her Western sisters. Obviously, they were too busy defending Finklestein's freedom to disseminate lies about Israeli women to ignorant college kids to care. (Jerusalem Post Mar 9)

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### **Misery Pays** By Dr. Rachel Ehrenfeld

Giving \$5.2 billion to the Palestinian Authority (PA) will do little to bring real change in the condition of the Palestinian refugees or security in the Middle East. Instead of rebuilding the "shelters" in the refugee camps as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has done for decades, this huge sum of money should go to build new communities, industry and a civilian infrastructure for a viable Palestinian state.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared the U.S. has "worked with the Palestinian Authority to install safeguards that will ensure our funding is only used where and for whom it is intended and does not end up in the wrong hands."

The World Bank recommending that the donors give their "budget support" to the PA directly through its Central Treasury Account. It also suggested direct donations through other organizations such as: "the EU-PEGASE, the World Bank administered PRDP-Trust Fund," and a few others.

The U.S., the World Bank and other donors rely on Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's promise that the money would not reach Hamas or be used for any terrorist activity. Yet, Fayyad, a former Resident Representative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the West Bank and Gaza, has little control over PA funds in Fatah-controlled West Bank, let alone in Hamas-controlled Gaza.

Fayyad himself stated many times that controlling Palestinian finances "is virtually impossible." Moreover, last month, despite Fatah-Hamas bloody disagreements, Fayyad diverted \$21.5 million sent from Israel to Gaza to pay PA employees' salaries, to rebuild the houses of Gaza residents that were destroyed during Operation Cast Lead. On March 7th, Fayyad announced his resignation, to facilitate the Fatah unity government with Hamas.

This was not the first time the Fatah-led government was sending money to Hamas. On Jan. 15, 2008, Fayyad's government declared it would give Hamas 40% (\$3.1 billion) of the \$7.4 billion that was pledged in December 2007 by international donors. Furthermore, in October, 2008, despite the bloody crackdown on Fatah members in Gaza, the PA was paying the salaries of at least 77,000 "loyal employees." Yet, before Hamas took over, there were only 21,000 PA paid loyalists in Gaza. Once the power-sharing negotiations between Hamas and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas are completed, billions of dollars will go to Hamas, which continue to call for the destruction of Israel.

Since the Oslo Accords, the PA received some \$14 billion to \$20 billion in international aid, according to a 2007 Funding for Peace Coalition (FPC) report to the British Parliament. Each Palestinian received \$4,000 to \$8,000 per year. However, of the \$7 billion pledged international aid, only \$5 billion were spent to assist more than 5 million Tsunami victims in more than 15 countries on two continents.

If the newly pledged \$5.2 billion are distributed, each of the 4 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza would receive \$1,300 dollars. In comparison, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), provided only \$100 per person annually in humanitarian aid for 2.5 million Darfur refugees from 2003 to 2006.

The PA uses a large amount of the aid it receives to support the terrorist activities against Israel. Each Palestinian or Israeli Arab, imprisoned in an Israeli jail, is entitled to financial assistance from the Palestinian Authority, if he (or she) was sentenced for activity connected to the "struggle against the Israeli occupation."

Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi documented at least \$40 million per year, paid to at least 11,600 (in March 2008) Palestinian terrorists in Israeli jails. In

addition, the PA uses its budget to assist thousands more released prisoners and pay bonuses to the families of suicide bombers. Thus, foreign aid to the PA should be given only when the PA publicly denounces terrorist activities against Israel and stop the support to the terrorists.

The billions of dollars poured into Gaza since Israel pulled out in 2005, have resulted in the strengthening of the radical Islamic Hamas. It keeps the Palestinians under its thumb poor and oppressed and uses their children and women as human shields. Hamas strives not only for the destruction of Israel. It hosts other terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda, and uses the Gaza Strip as training grounds. With Iran's help, it threatens to undermine pro Western regimes in the region.

The only way to ensure the \$5.2 billion produces real change to the lives of the impoverished Palestinian in Gaza is by conditioning this money on the PA's cessation of all terrorist activities. Moreover, to ensure the funds do not reach Hamas and are used properly, the money should not be administered by any Palestinian organization, or Hamas-supporting UNRWA, but by an international monitoring group. (Huffington Post Mar 9)

*The writer is Director of American Center for Democracy and author of Funding Evil: How Terrorism is Financed -- and How to Stop It.*

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### **Netanyahu as Prime Minister - Déjà Vu?** By Daniel Pipes

With Binyamin Netanyahu about to become Israel's next prime minister, one wonders whether he will stick to his more controversial campaign promises - not that of confronting the Iranian threat, which is widely backed, but such as ending Hamas control of Gaza or keeping the Golan Heights.

Two indicators suggest what may lie ahead: (1) the general pattern of the four Likud prime ministers since 1977 and (2) specifically, Netanyahu's own record as one of those four.

Levi Eshkol once acknowledged the deceit of Israeli politics: "I never promised to keep my promise!" In this spirit, three out of the four Likud leaders campaigned right and governed left, breaking their campaign promises not to retreat from territories Israel seized in 1967.

- Menachem Begin was elected in 1977 on a nationalist platform that included annexing parts of the West Bank, he instead removed all troops and civilians from the Sinai Peninsula.
- Yitzhak Shamir ran on a platform against giving land to Arabs and kept his word.
- Netanyahu promised to retain the Golan Heights but nearly traded away that territory; opposed the Oslo Accords but ceded more control in the Hebron and Wye accords to the Palestinian Authority.
- Ariel Sharon won the 2003 elections arguing against a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, then did exactly that, withdrawing all troops and civilians.

Surveying the Likud's history, Nicole Jansezian notes with irony at Newsmax that "while Palestinian, American and European leaders worry how Israel's shift to the right will negatively impact the peace process, perhaps the only ones who need to fear an Israeli right-wing government is the Israeli right wing."

Shamir's opinion of Netanyahu plummeted after watching his actions as prime minister, seeing him by 1998 as willing to do just about anything "to continue to be elected and to hold on to the seat of prime minister." I went through a similar process of disillusionment, celebrating Netanyahu's accession in 1996 but so soured on his lack of principles that I reluctantly preferred his Labor opponent in the 1999 elections.

What now, as Netanyahu prepares to take office again? Neither his party's history, nor his own biography, nor his character, nor murmurs coming out of Israel suggest that he will keep his electoral promises. Indeed, Netanyahu already flunked his first test: after 65 of 120 members of the Knesset informed President Shimon Peres that they supported Netanyahu for prime minister, Peres on February 20 gave him a chance to form a government.

Netanyahu proceeded to ditch those allies in favor of forming a "national unity" government with leftist parties. He even announced that his biggest mistake in 1996 had been not to form a government with Labor: "In retrospect, I should have sought national unity, and I'm seeking to correct that today." Kadima and Labor appear to have decided to go into the opposition, foiling Netanyahu's plans. But that he preferred a coalition with the Left reveals the lightness of his campaign statements.

Along these lines, when asked by an interviewer, "You're not the right-wing hawk they describe in the papers?" Netanyahu proudly recalled the betrayal of his promises in the 1990s: "I'm the person who did the Wye agreement and the Hebron agreement in the search for peace." On the Golan Heights, diplomacy has apparently begun. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says the importance of Syria-Israel talks "cannot be overstated."

Despite Netanyahu's ostensibly rejecting these negotiations, a close aide observed that a breakthrough with Damascus would curry favor with the US administration and Netanyahu would expect Washington "to give him a break with the Palestinians."

Insiders assure me Netanyahu has matured, and I hope they are right. But a Likud leader observed while watching the coalition talks, "Bibi is selling everything out to the coalition partners. He doesn't care about us. He only cares about himself."

Similarly, Netanyahu's opponents expect him to pursue his personal agenda: Yaron Ezrahi, a political scientist at Hebrew University, says Netanyahu has little compunction "in sacrificing an ideological position as long as it keeps him in power." Even as I hope to be pleasantly surprised, familiar patterns do make me worry. (Jerusalem Post Mar 10)

*The writer is director of the Middle East Forum and Taube distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University.*

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### **The Little That Remains On The Temple Mount** By Nadav Shragai

For years, the Jerusalem District Police "benefited" from the fact that few Jews visited the Temple Mount, sparing the police this "headache." But now the situation is changing. The halakhic consensus that Jews are forbidden to ascend the mount has been broken. More and more rabbis are permitting Jews to visit, and more and more Jews are seeking to do so.

The police have not come to terms with this new situation. They are confused and are confusing others, and have inverted the natural order of things on the mount, which is both the world's most sensitive site and the Jewish people's holiest site. Not much remains for Jews on the Temple Mount. The Temple is gone. Prayer is forbidden there. The mount's antiquities have been destroyed, and its mosques have become founts of religious and nationalist incitement against the State of Israel.

The little the Israeli government has left to Jews on the mount, the minimum possible, is the right to visit their holiest site without feeling that they are being restricted and despised or doing someone an injustice. This natural right is enshrined in the Law for the Preservation of the Holy Places, which ostensibly permits freedom of access to members of all religions. But now that the halakhic rulings are changing, and theory is turning into practice, some people in the police - unofficially, of course - see this as tantamount to a threat to public safety and are making it as hard as possible for Jews to visit the mount, especially in groups.

The long lines at the mount's entrance, even though the site is open to Jews only in the mornings (meaning during work hours) and is closed entirely on Fridays and Saturdays, attest to Jews' growing interest in the site. But the fact that someone is taking the trouble to organize and transport groups of Jews to the mount - from Ma'alot, Netanya, Hadera and every corner of the country - has distorted the police's judgment. The sight of thousands of Jews on the mount - Jews with a Jewish/religious outlook, as opposed to a secular/Israeli or touristic one - is unjustly perceived by the police as a threat, as something that disturbs the peace on the mount, as a situation that must be prevented.

This is particularly true regarding the ultra-Orthodox and religious Zionist communities, which naturally have a national, religious, historic and cultural interest in the mount. It is unacceptable for Jews to wait in line for hours at the site's entrance, for the police to limit their entry to small groups, for them to bar each new group from entering until the preceding one has left, and for policemen and Waqf personnel to treat all Jews who look religious as potential suspects, to search their belongings and assign them an escort for as long as they remain on the mount.

Something very fundamental is wrong with the thought process of those responsible for the mount at the Israel Police. The issue of freedom of access to the Temple Mount - for everyone, and especially for Jews - is not an act of grace. Jews' freedom of access to their holiest site cannot be just one interest among many that the police must balance, or part of a carrot-and-stick style of negotiations with the Waqf, the Palestinian Authority and Jordan. This freedom is axiomatic. That is what the government decided, and that is what the law says. The police must internalize this and make it

clear to all the interested Muslim parties that such visits are natural for us, just as praying in the mount's mosques is natural for them.

It seems doubtful that the welcome increase in the number of Jews seeking to visit the mount really threatens public safety. But even if it did, the police should crack down on those making the threats, not those being threatened. If the Jerusalem police's field units do not understand this, someone higher up needs to explain it to them.

Jewish provocateurs should be barred from the mount, and they are. But to treat every one of the thousands of Jews who seek to ascend the mount as a provocateur - and, even worse, to give them the feeling they are visiting our holiest site by grace of a foreign government, after having already been deprived of their natural right to pray there - defies common sense and attests to a serious loss of direction. (Haaretz Mar 11)

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### **Kindergarten Politics** By Moshe Arens

After celebrating an imaginary victory, she now tells the Pirme Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu "repeat after me - two states for two peoples." If he won't repeat this slogan, she is not prepared to play. And she has another slogan - the system must be reformed to provide the elected government a full four-year term to execute its plans. By that she means a four-year term for a government that would be headed by her. As for a Netanyahu-led government, she believes it should be brought down as quickly as possible. So now she is headed for the opposition.

In her state of euphoria she seems to have forgotten the very difficult challenges facing the State of Israel in the near future. Her intransigence puts serious constraints on Netanyahu in putting together a coalition. But why should she care? Her announced intention is to bring down the Netanyahu government as quickly as possible. As for the challenges facing the country, they will just have to wait. But they will not wait.

So far we have only experienced the tip of the iceberg of the economic crisis that is coming our way. In the United States this crisis is beginning to take on catastrophic proportions. Israel, whose economy is largely based on exports to the U.S. and other industrialized countries, all of them already deep in recession, cannot possibly escape the avalanche. Only a wise and energetic government economic policy, not giving in to panic and populist sentiments, can mitigate the damage this avalanche is going to cause the economy and the people of Israel. When Livni speaks now of bringing down the elected government in a matter of months, she has simply lost sight of the best interests of the country at this critical time.

But that is not all. The rockets launched by Hamas from the Gaza Strip keep falling daily in the south. Operation Cast Lead, for which Livni shares responsibility with Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert, not only did not achieve its aim of bringing about a cessation of the rocket fire on Israel, but has also made it exceedingly difficult to now complete the unfinished business the operation left behind. Livni's statement before the premature retreat of the Israel Defense Forces from the Gaza Strip, that if rockets were to be fired after the retreat, the IDF would return, has turned out to be nothing but an empty threat, another blow to Israel's deterrent capability. This most difficult problem, daily endangering the lives of Israeli citizens in the south, will not wait. The Netanyahu-led government will have to clean up the mess that was left behind, with or without Livni.

In the north Hezbollah, which had thousands of rockets before the fiasco of the Second Lebanon War, now has tens of thousands rockets, and has reached a dominant position in the Lebanese government while maintaining its own independent military arm. Much of Israel now lives under the threat of Hezbollah-launched rockets, based in Lebanon - a threat that will have to be neutralized by the Netanyahu government. With or without Livni.

And farther north is the threat of impending Iranian nuclear capability. That better not be ignored by the next government. With or without Livni.

"Two states for two peoples" is most certainly not on the agenda in the coming crucial months, and possibly not even in the coming years. In light of developments in the past few years, the Hamas takeover in Gaza and the continued weakness of Mahmoud Abbas, this paradigm for settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in urgent need of reexamination. In the years to come things may look entirely different. It is certainly no excuse for throwing monkey wrenches into the wheels of government at this time.

But Tzipi Livni, followed by her retinue of Kadima MKs, keeps marching to a different tune, a tune that bears little resemblance to the reality staring us in the face. It's time to wake up. (Haaretz Mar 10)

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