



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*

rockets are falling on nursery schools, the IDF will respond.)

I recall talks in the barracks between me, a religious settler from over the Green Line, and nonreligious soldiers. We'd have deep conversations about religion, country, nationalism, etc. The ones I'd always

argue with were those from North Tel Aviv - the yuppies. They saw me as a right-wing fanatic, though I consider myself politically in the center.

One day there was a suicide bomb in a Tel Aviv dance club. A few were killed, many were wounded. Two weeks later we found ourselves picking up one of those responsible for planning the bombing.

After this terrorist was cuffed and brought to the vehicle, it was my friend's turn to "lose it." So here I was, the "right-wing, fanatic settler," holding back my "left-wing, enlightened" friend, preventing him from kicking the s--- out of the terrorist responsible for injuring some of his friends.

For each one of our missions, we had very explicit orders defining what degree of danger we were going to be in, what type of man we were looking for - whether suicidal or an intelligent, honorable man, whom we were to treat with respect.

When entering suspicious houses, we were to call every person outside, asking them if everybody was out of the house. We'd repeat the questions again to confirm that no child or old or disabled person had been left behind. And then we'd ask again for the last time - this time with the threat that if any person was found in the building, he was probably hiding, had malicious intentions, and was in danger. Only after we'd made sure they understood all this, and again confirmed that no one was in the house, only then would we enter it.

Another standing order we were given was that if a known terrorist was spotted and he was surrounded by civilians or holding a child, he was to be left unharmed.

During the Lebanon war, we found ourselves beyond the IDF's supply lines. There we were, deep in an area controlled by Hizbullah, which had just abducted two of our soldiers for no reason other than to provoke us to war. We were hungry, thirsty and cold. We could have just taken anything we needed from the locals, but we paid for everything: water, flour, jackets.

In another instance, while hiding out in an abandoned house, waiting for nightfall, dirty from hiking through open fields, tired and hurting, we moved the rugs and sat on the floor so we wouldn't dirty the furniture. Every civilian was spoken to with suspicion, but with respect.

This is the moral conduct that I learned from my religious upbringing, and the conduct expected from IDF soldiers.

I think of the conditions in which Israeli POWs have been returned. If they were still alive, they had been brutally tortured. When dead soldiers were returned, their bodies had been hideously mutilated.

Does anyone remember the West Bank town of Ramallah in October 2000? Two reservists accidentally entered Ramallah and were taken to the Palestinian police headquarters there. A mob charged in and tore the soldiers apart limb by limb, disemboweling them and proudly displaying their bloody hands. They showed that humaneness has no place on the other side of the battlefield.

These days, there are two battlefields. There is the obvious, physical war zone in which we, young conscripts and reservists (Jewish, Druse, Christian and Beduin), find ourselves fighting - not necessarily out of patriotism, but out of the desire to protect our lives and families.

It is very difficult to find the town or city that terrorism or rockets haven't reached. In the North, they come from Hizbullah. In the South, from Hamas. In the center - you name it.

On a recent Saturday night, some unknown terrorist group attempted but failed to blow up a shopping mall in Haifa. Even old Saddam managed to traumatize Israelis with his Scud missiles during the Gulf War; and now Iran's Ahmadinejad threatens to do the same.

The other battlefield is the media arena, the fight for public opinion. There, anything goes - even total distortion, libel and defamation of me and my brothers in IDF uniform.

I've seen the flags of my enemy. The Hamas banners are colored green

Events...

Response to Attempt to Boycott Israel: Sunday April 5, 1:00 to 3:00pm

*A demonstration called "Apartheid Isn't Kosher" is scheduled to take place on Sunday, April 5 at 1:00- 3:00 PM at the LCBO, 10 Scrivener Square (at the Summerhill subway station) calling for a boycott of Israeli wines, organized by "Coalition Against Israel Apartheid" and "Not in My Name." **People are encouraged to come to the liquor store at that time to buy Israeli wine.** Please note that not all Israeli wines at the LCBO are kosher.*

Commentary...

Faith In Arms By Sgt. S.

When the cry from the other side is "Allah is greatest!" and "Death to the Jews!" it is hard to understand the objection to using faith while fighting for our lives in the face of terror.

When recently graduated high school teens are sent to defend their land, when "kids" who a few weeks earlier were playing soccer are sent to stare death in the face, why should anyone be blamed if these children need spiritual guidance?

I recall the deep rent in my soul - it accompanied me for a long time - after I discovered and "took care of" seven high-ranking terrorists deep in enemy territory, men responsible for the deaths of at least 100 Israeli civilians. No psychologist could help me, no parent could provide enough comfort. It didn't help me to hear that these were evil men; it didn't help to know that if I hadn't killed them, they'd have killed me.

I found my salvation in my faith, which taught me that killing - even terrorists - scratches the soul. That in itself showed that I was all right.

Those men who died by my hand killed children, women, husbands, fathers, elderly people, with no remorse. They lost part of their souls long ago - when they pressed the trigger for the first time and didn't feel a thing.

I learned this from my Torah.

I ONCE 'LOST IT,' though. I lost my self-control, and even my commanding officer was so struck by my actions that he was paralyzed for a few minutes. It happened during one of our searches for terrorists.

We knocked on a door to announce that we were going in to search the house for terrorists. A woman answered the door. Then, instead of retreating back into the house as required in Arab culture when a stranger is present, she stood her ground and yelled at us.

At this point, her husband, outraged at her "impure" behavior in front of their children, threw her to the floor, kicked her in the stomach, then started working on her face.

By the second blow to her head, with blood starting to flow, I lost it. I'm sorry, I don't know what international laws, Geneva conventions or UN decrees I pissed on at that moment, but I'd do the same again, and again. Anytime.

Instinctively I jumped forward, caught the man and threw him off his wife. I knew he would beat her, maybe even kill her, once we had left; so I took him outside and made him say he was sorry to his wife in front of the curious neighbors who were looking on. I then told him that I'd be back - if not next week, then the week after, to look in on her, and if anything had happened to her, I'd kill him.

A few weeks later I was back, and the woman thanked me.

That too, I learned from my religious upbringing.

(Some readers may respond that I missed the point: For was I not part of an "occupation army" terrorizing the Palestinian residents?)

Dear readers: As long as bombs are exploding in shopping malls and

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with the Shahadah, the Muslim declaration of belief. The other Palestinian brigades are also full of religious motifs.

The physical battlefield is a place where one meets his Creator pretty often. There are those who lose their humanity there, and there are those who can generate humanity even on the battlefield.

If the rabbis were not strengthening soldiers spiritually, if they were not giving some meaning and direction to those teens who hold the power of death in their hands, I would be dismayed. (Jerusalem Post Mar 29)

The writer served as a sergeant in an IDF special forces unit. He cannot be named due to security considerations.

Remembering Olmert's True Record By Caroline Glick

Last week's reports that during Operation Cast Lead Israel bombed truck convoys in Sudan transporting medium-ranged Fajr-3 missiles to Gaza from Iran couldn't have come at a better time for outgoing Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Even as defense officials were following standard practice of neither confirming nor denying the reports, Olmert was bragging like a teenage boy. In an address at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya last Thursday Olmert crowed, "We are operating in every area in which terrorist infrastructures can be struck. We are operating in locations near and far and attack in a way that strengthens and increases deterrence. It is true in the north and in the south. There is no point in elaborating. Everyone can use their imagination. Whoever needs to know, knows."

Unfortunately, Olmert's bravado doesn't stand up to even the flimsiest scrutiny. What about the weapons smugglers along the Philadelphia corridor? More than Sudan, Philadelphia - Gaza's international border with Egypt - is the choke point of weapons transfers from Iran to Gaza. And along that border, during his three years and two months in office, Olmert has failed to even temporarily cut off the flow of Iranian arms entering Gaza. Throughout his tenure as prime minister, Israel never once launched a sustained operation aimed at blocking Hamas, Fatah and their sister organizations in Gaza from transporting ever more lethal weapons systems into the area through its border with Egypt.

This week Ehud Olmert will finally leave office. Ironically, the cause for his early departure from power - the multiple criminal probes being conducted against him - has nothing to do with his actual performance as prime minister. That is, the failures that brought him down were not his failures in office, but his private failings which predated his rise to power.

Israel's political memory is notoriously short. In the space of a few short years, politicians' past failures in office are frequently forgotten by their parties and the public. Consequently, Olmert can easily assume that if he is able to fend off the multiple felony indictments awaiting him on his return to private life, he many one day soon return to lead us.

It is due first and foremost to the prospect of Olmert one day returning to politics that it is critical to consider his actual record of service as prime minister. Only by understanding what he has done over the past three years and two months can we ensure that he will be properly remembered for what he is: the worst prime minister Israel has experienced to date. Only by recognizing his tenure in office as an unmitigated disaster for the country will we be able to avert the danger that he may one day return to office.

Olmert's failure to stop weapons smuggling into Gaza at the Philadelphia corridor and his attempt to obfuscate this failure by exaggerating the strategic significance of the reported IAF strikes in Sudan are his stock in trade. Olmert, as the only prime minister to have led the country in two wars in one term of office, does not hesitate to use force to project an image of fearless manliness to the public. And as the only prime minister to have led Israel to defeat in war - and indeed, in his case, in two wars - Olmert is the only prime minister to have wielded the sword with utter strategic incompetence.

Olmert entered office in January 2006 pledged to unilaterally surrender Judea, Samaria and large areas of Jerusalem to the Fatah terrorist organization. Olmert was both politically and ideologically committed to the Left's belief that wars are unwinnable and consequently enemies need to be appeased rather than defeated.

In light of his political predisposition, both Lebanese and Palestinian aggression presented Olmert with a difficult political challenge. In both Lebanon and Gaza, Israel had previously adopted his strategy of preemptive appeasement by unilaterally surrendering territory to its enemies. Hizbullah's and Fatah/Hamas's post-surrender aggression exposed Olmert's political platform as both wrongheaded and dangerous.

Beyond the political embarrassment Olmert suffered in the wake of both Hizbullah's 2006 aggression and Gaza's post-withdrawal transformation into an Iranian-controlled jihadist hub, he had to contend with the public outcry against their unprovoked and unrelenting attacks. In both July 2006 and in December 2008, the public demanded that Olmert

defend the country by using force to defeat our enemies. Yet even in the face of the public outcry, Olmert remained ideologically committed to the belief that war is inherently futile.

Olmert's ideologically driven political and strategic mind-sets caused him to prosecute both wars as little more than mindless, violent engagements with enemy forces. In Lebanon, IDF units were sent into tactical battles that lacked any operational objectives.

The strategic aims that Olmert announced at various stages of the war in Lebanon - first to defeat Hizbullah and, later on, to "send Hizbullah a message" - were strategically illogical since they lacked any connection to the manner in which IDF forces were deployed. Absent an order to conquer southern Lebanon and defeat Hizbullah as a fighting force, the IDF could not hope to defeat Hizbullah.

Given Hizbullah's commitment to Israel's destruction and its complete subservience to Iran, there is no way for Israel to deter the group. As a result, the only "message" Israel conveyed was one of military incompetence and ideological weakness.

Although the public responded to Olmert's performance in outrage, for Olmert the outcome of the war in Lebanon was the best of all possible worlds. By failing to accomplish any strategic objectives through fighting, Olmert was able to continue to argue for preemptive appeasement in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem as well as on the Golan Heights.

Olmert brushed aside the public's demand for his resignation by empty, arrogantly and repeatedly pledging to correct his own mistakes. But of course, given his political and ideological blinders, he was incapable and unwilling to do so.

The IDF's improved tactical performance in Gaza two years later showed that to the extent it was able, it did learn from its mistakes in Lebanon. In contrast, Olmert's strategic leadership of Operation Cast Lead demonstrated that he remained committed to the same wrongheaded and dangerous strategic outlook with which he had led the country to ignominious defeat in Lebanon.

Diplomatic activities under Olmert were motivated by the same ideological dictates as its military engagements. Consequently, their results were equally disastrous.

By any objective measure, Israel's greatest diplomatic challenge for the past three years and two months has been to build an international consensus around the need to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. And yet, contending with Iran was nowhere near the top of our diplomatic agenda under Olmert. Indeed, Olmert and his deputy and successor as leader of the Kadima party outgoing Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni never developed any coherent position on Iran at all.

Instead of concentrating diplomatic efforts on convincing the nations of the world to prevent Iran from acquiring the means to destroy the Jewish state and to dominate the region and the oil economy, Olmert concentrated his diplomatic efforts on strengthening the Fatah terrorist organization against the Hamas terrorist organization.

This goal - which is the central component of Olmert's appeasement-based mind-set - required him to lead his colleagues and subordinates in ignoring certain basic facts about Fatah. Israel needed to ignore the fact that Fatah rejects its right to exist and openly calls for its destruction. Israel needed to ignore Fatah's continued direct involvement in terror attacks against it and its complicity with and support for Hamas and Islamic Jihad attacks. Israel had to ignore Fatah's cozy ties with Hizbullah, Syria and Iran and the leadership role Fatah occupies in the international diplomatic offensive and political war against the Jewish state.

Due to Olmert's willingness to turn a blind eye to Fatah's belligerence, the effect of his diplomatic efforts has been the legitimization not only of Fatah but of all of Fatah's allies and supporters. That is, the effect has been to legitimize all of our enemies and encourage them to maintain and expand their campaigns on every front.

In the case of Fatah for instance, by refusing for three years and two months to confront it on its involvement in terror, Olmert paved the way for its current campaign to prosecute IDF soldiers as war criminals in international tribunals. Moreover, due to Olmert's refusal to acknowledge Fatah's lead role in terrorism, he paved the way for the current state of affairs where Fatah forces are now being trained and armed by the US military.

By destroying the IDF's international reputation as a world-class fighting force by twice committing it to war and twice refusing to allow it to fight to victory, and by transforming the Foreign Ministry into a mouthpiece for Fatah and the PLO while ordering it to ignore Iran, Olmert wrecked Israel's reputation as a steady and reliable strategic ally in Washington. Moreover, he weakened its supporters both in the US capital and throughout the world by effectively accepting the lie that Israel itself is responsible for the radicalization of the Arab and Islamic worlds and

that only by cutting it down to size will the West be able to moderate the behavior of jihadists from Teheran to Karachi to Baghdad to London.

Olmert's massive incompetence has had another victim: the country's social fabric. Not only has his studied inability to defend the country attenuated many Israelis' faith in the state's ability to defend them, Olmert's refusal to countenance the public's demand that he resign after the war in Lebanon and his insistent postwar attempts to give away Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem to Fatah while wrecking the strategic alliance with the US have sown confusion and discord. This discord has led to a deepening of social and political fissures at a time when - due to the rising Iranian threat which he studiously ignored, and the steady delegitimization of Israel's right to exist that he engendered - we need to be united as never before.

To sum up then, Olmert's ideological and political commitment to appeasement, his personal arrogance and his contempt for his countrymen have made his tenure an unrelenting and unmitigated disaster for the country. Today, rather than acknowledge his failure, Olmert is using the disclosure of IAF attacks in Sudan as yet a new way to obfuscate the fact that for three years and two months he has failed to adequately protect the state.

It is in light of this that it is imperative that the public understand his record. For in the final analysis, it is not simply our ability to ensure that Olmert never returns to lead us that stands in the balance. Our wherewithal to survive with the strategic wreckage he has laid before us depends on our capacity to understand and remember the dimensions of Olmert's incompetence. (Jerusalem Post Mar 30)

Latter-Day 'Queen For A Day' By Sarah Honig

Way back in the antediluvian era of American media, there was a daytime TV offering called Queen for a Day. Many consider it the early forerunner of at least some reality television genres - the sort that focus on family tragedies, personal agonies and other assorted heartrending crises. Each episode featured four contestants vying for the "most miserable" or "most pitiable" distinction. The dubious winner's bitter lot was rewarded with big-prize giveaways.

It was up to the audience to judge which of the four unfortunates was closer to rock bottom and therefore worthy of their sympathy. That sympathy was grotesquely measured by an "applause meter." The loudest clapping presumably meant that the circumstances unfolded in one of the competing sad stories were the harshest.

All these decades later, the Queen for a Day format - more lurid and exploitative than ever - thrives shamelessly in this country. Staged on an incomparably larger scale, playing to a nationwide gallery and for far higher stakes, it's the most manipulative tearjerker in our real-life existential drama. Nevertheless, few of us recognize it for what it is, and even fewer dare say so.

It's not easy to even whisper criticism of hostage Gilad Schalit's family or the opportunists who feed on its despair for their own ulterior motives. No sane person would want to be in Noam and Aviva Schalit's shoes. That, coupled with natural sympathy for their 1,000-day torment, shields them from disapproval. Because we all wish them well, we also place them on an enshrined pedestal.

But, perhaps ill-advised by cynical self-seekers or bolstered by the outpouring of compassion, the snatched soldier's parents opted to risk the above-reproach status which fellow Israelis lovingly granted them. They themselves opted to participate in a Queen for a Day-like spectacle, to press for instant and full payment of every last bit of the exorbitant ransom demanded by Hamas terrorists for their son, never mind any other consideration.

Thereby they pitted themselves against the bearers of other, perhaps greater sorrows. We, the general public, were involuntarily drafted to serve on the panel of adjudicators in this bizarre Queen for a Day takeoff.

The Schalits, egged on and abetted by opinion-molders, set up a protest tent outside the prime minister's residence to clamor for Gilad's immediate liberation, implying that Israeli higher-ups hold the key to his freedom and/or are to blame for his continued captivity.

From rival tents nearby, the parents of Hamas atrocity victims sent out pleas that their children's murderers not be let loose. They warned that emptying prisons of the most heinous of convicts would reduce justice and scrupulous due process to utter mockery; that arch-villains returned to circulation will shed more blood; that their torchbearers will learn they can butcher Jews with impunity; that in the future, soldiers will be loath to risk life and limb to apprehend wanted miscreants because it's only a matter of time before these mortal foes are out the revolving door again.

As in Queen for a Day, each contending narrative was compelling and could potentially tug our heartstrings. But though the public was cast as the

jury, it had little chance to weigh the cases impartially. No effort was spared to influence, prejudice and instill unbridled favoritism beforehand, sabotaging any fair assessment. This game episode was hardly on the up-and-up.

No objective observer, the media overtly became an overactive player themselves. They not only championed the Schalits campaign for our minds and hearts, they hyped it. They orchestrated a sensationalist, circulation-boosting, ratings-grabbing onslaught geared to brainwash for profit - both political and commercial - and distort the odds.

No deeper yellow ever tinted our newsprint or boob tubes. Four-fifths of Ma'ariv's page one was devoted to a pretend letter from Gilad to the government. Unabashedly splashed on Yediot Aharonot's front page was a selection of Gilad's childhood photos to crank up the naive masses' proven susceptibility to kitsch.

Nothing of the sort was done for the terror victims. No tabloid featured pictures of young Shvuel Schijveschuurder's father Mordechai, mother Tzira, sister Ra'aya (14), brother Avraham (four) and sister Hemda (two). They were all slain in the Sbarro pizzeria in Jerusalem on August 9, 2001. In all, that suicide-bombing took 15 innocent lives, seven of them children. Ahlam Tamimi, who escorted the bomber to the targeted eatery, and Abdallah Barghouti, who engineered this and other massacres (in all claiming 67 lives) top Hamas's list of hundreds of convicts it seeks to spring in return for Gilad. Shvuel came out to demonstrate against their release. At the time, premier Ariel Sharon personally promised him that under no condition would these mass-murderers be allowed out.

But our press is unimpressed. The dead are gone. Gilad is news. He might maybe be saved. Nothing else need count, including the interests of any member of the collective who may be the next to pay for yet another misguided swap.

In 1985 three soldiers, abducted by terror linchpin Ahmed Jibril, were exchanged for 1,150 convicted terrorists, including Kozo Okamoto, perpetrator of 1972's infamous airport massacre. In their book Intifada, Ehud Ya'ari and the late Ze'ev Schiff determined that "over a third of all those set free in the Jibril deal renewed terrorist activity within a year. The rest joined after the eruption of the intifada's first wave of hostilities... Jibril crowed, justly, that his transaction sowed the intifada's seeds."

But neither those already in the grave nor as yet nameless candidates for future early graves matter. Celebrities matter. They arrived in droves to "strengthen" the Schalits (and hog a little limelight). Pilgrimages by politicians out to score a few popularity points were prominently reported. Protagonists of previous exchange cliffhangers - the Goldwassers, Regev and Arads - showed up and the sentimentality surged.

Nothing could surpass this - not even the March 15 terrorist ambush-murder of two traffic cops. By Ha'aretz and Ma'ariv standards, they merited only obligatory marginalized mention, while day after day the Schalits were accorded outsized banner headlines.

Things got so oppressive that for a while the victims' kin pulled up stakes and folded their tents. They felt they failed to affect us. According to the skewed applause meter, the Schalits emerged unbeatable winners. Yet Noam and Aviva went home empty-handed - at least temporarily. In yesteryear's show, they would have been crowned like royals to the exuberant accompaniment of "Pomp and Circumstance," draped in red velvet robes, given a dozen long-stemmed roses, plus junkets, a fully-paid night on the town and goodies galore.

In our here and now, they violated all haggling rules of this region's ruthless Levantine bazaar. They emboldened the kidnapers, raised their asking price and gave them incentive to nab more hostages.

Distraught parents may ignore such gut-wrenching truths, but any government would be recklessly remiss if it did. (Jerusalem Post Mar 27)

Want To Improve Israel's Image? Stop Ceding Territory

By Evelyn Gordon

Most Israelis need little convincing that under current circumstances, further territorial withdrawals will only produce more terror; that is why parties opposed to such withdrawals won a majority in February's election. But it is increasingly becoming clear that such pullouts also have another, equally devastating consequence: They are turning this country into an international pariah and sparking anti-Semitism worldwide.

That may sound counterintuitive. After all, the world relentlessly demands more pullouts and lauds each one that occurs; hence the Oslo Accords, the withdrawal from Lebanon and the disengagement from Gaza all initially boosted our international popularity. In each case, however, the boost proved temporary, and the subsequent decline left the country worse off that it was before the pullout.

Indeed, the situation has gotten so bad that The New York Times ran a front-page article on the subject on March 19, titled "After Gaza, Israel grapples with crisis of isolation." Israel, the article declared, "is facing its worst diplomatic crisis in two decades. Examples abound. Its sports teams have met hostility and violent protests in Sweden, Spain and Turkey. Mauritania has closed Israel's embassy. Relations with Turkey, an important Muslim ally, have suffered severely. A group of top international judges and human rights investigators recently called for an inquiry into Israel's actions in Gaza. 'Israel Apartheid Week' drew participants in 54 cities around the world this month, twice the number of last year, according to its organizers."

And one could add many other examples, such as the tens of thousands who flocked to anti-Israel demonstrations worldwide during the recent Gaza operation, often chanting anti-Semitic slogans (like " Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the gas," featured at one Dutch rally).

Equally important, anti-Semitic incidents, especially in Europe, have risen in parallel to anti-Israel sentiment, with the worst spikes in both being recorded during major military campaigns: Operation Defensive Shield in the West Bank (April 2002), the Second Lebanon War (July-August 2006) and Operation Cast Lead in Gaza (January 2009).

The reason for this is simple: In a world where pictures of bleeding victims are recycled on television and computer screens 24/7, nothing undermines a country's international image more quickly than bloodshed. And it turns out that our territorial pullouts have not merely increased our casualties, they have also increased Arab casualties.

Statistics on Palestinian fatalities compiled by B'Tselem show this clearly. During the first intifada, when we controlled the territories, our forces killed 1,070 Palestinians over the course of six years (1987-93). That is equal to the number killed during a single year (September 2001-August 2002) of the post-Oslo second intifada and fewer than the 1,324 killed (according to the Palestinian Authority Health Ministry) in a mere three weeks in post-disengagement Gaza (Operation Cast Lead).

Moreover, Palestinian fatalities in the West Bank plummeted after we reoccupied it in mid-2002. After climbing from 281 in the intifada's first year to 667 in the second year (September 2001-August 2002), they fell by almost two-thirds in the third year, to 242, then to 199 in the fourth, to between 105 and 125 in each of the next three, and finally to 52 in the year that ended in September 2008. That is a mere quarter of the 211 killed in a single month at the intifada's height, in April 2002.

In Gaza, by contrast, Palestinian fatalities have risen since our mid-2005 withdrawal. In fact, the year that ended in September 2008, which produced the lowest number of West Bank fatalities since the intifada began, produced the highest number of Gazan fatalities - 532, almost 100 more than the previous worst year. And this year is already far worse: The 1,324 Gazans killed in Cast Lead is more than eight times the 162 killed in the single worst month in Gaza until then.

The reason for these trends is also simple: If the IDF controls a given territory, it does not need to wage war to halt terror; it can rely on intelligence and policing operations. Suspected terrorists can usually be arrested rather than killed; fatalities (including civilians caught in the crossfire) occur mainly when suspects resist arrest rather than coming quietly.

When the IDF does not control territory, however, police action is impossible: We cannot arrest suspects in territory formally ceded to Palestinian control. Therefore, the only way to fight terror is by military means - namely, killing the terrorists.

Moreover, there are only two forms such military operations can take. One is aerial assaults, which, being long-distance, naturally entail a risk of collateral civilian casualties. The other is full-scale invasion, which usually produces even greater casualties, even when it is managed properly: Defensive Shield, for instance, produced only about one-sixth as many enemy fatalities as either the Second Lebanon War or Cast Lead, while achieving far better results than either. But it was still the single worst month of the intifada for West Bank Palestinians, with a fatality level 50 percent higher than the second worst month.

Thus as long as territorial withdrawals lead to terror, they leave this country with only two options: It can let its citizens be attacked with impunity, which is hardly a tenable long-term response, or it can respond militarily, which will inevitably produce large-scale enemy casualties and therefore an upsurge in anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiment. Indeed, it is noteworthy that while Defensive Shield, the Second Lebanon War and Cast Lead all drew tens of thousands of protesters worldwide, protests against the ongoing occupation of the West Bank draw far smaller crowds - precisely because the occupation has kept Palestinian fatalities too low to generate massive outrage.

Clearly, this problem would not arise if we could cede territory without it becoming a base for anti-Israel terror. But every piece of territory we have ceded to the Palestinians thus far has become a terrorist base. And that means the best thing the country could do for its international reputation may be the most counterintuitive of all: halt territorial concessions and reoccupy Gaza. Because as long as the terror continues, that is the only way to reduce Palestinian fatalities to a level that will cease generating international outrage. (Jerusalem Post Apr 1)

Israel's Hypocritical Critics: They Rip Netanyahu And Lieberman But Give Arab Leaders a Pass By James Kirchick

With Benjamin Netanyahu set to become Israel's prime minister, critics around the world are proclaiming the death of the peace process. And the fact that Avigdor Lieberman - who has called for all Israeli citizens (not just Arabs) to swear a loyalty oath and supports population transfers with the Palestinians - may become Israel's foreign minister has only exacerbated the fervor of these predictions.

In this analysis, it is the incoming conservative government of Israel which poses a threat to regional stability, not Palestinian rejectionism or the machinations of Iran and Syria and their proxies Hamas and Hezbollah. The height of this thinking was apparent at Tuesday night's White House press conference, when Agence France-Presse reporter Stefan Collison asked President Obama, "How realistic do you think those hopes [for Middle East peace] are now, given the likelihood of a prime minister who is not fully signed up to a two-state solution and a foreign minister who has been accused of insulting Arabs?"

When was the last time a journalist asked the leader of a democratic country whether Muslim states' not being "fully signed up" to the existence of Israel and having ministers in its employ who "insult" Jews threatened Middle East peace?

Examples of such anti-Jewish hatred abound. Mustafa Tlass, who served as Syria's defense minister for many years, once published a book alleging that Jews use the blood of Gentile children to make their unleavened bread. The Iranian government promotes Holocaust denial. Turn on state-sponsored television throughout the Muslim world and you're bound to see the most outrageous slanders about Jews, plenty of them aimed at impressionable children.

It's worth pointing out here that the people decrying the new Israeli government are the same ones who constantly call for the United States and Israel to "engage" with every rogue state and terrorist outfit in the region. If the Syrian Ba'ath Party, Hamas' Islamists and the mullahs of Tehran are all worthy of our engagement, surely we can deal with the likes of Netanyahu and Lieberman.

Of course Israel should be held to a higher standard because it's a democracy. And Israel's worst tendencies - its insularity, its indifference to the plight of its Arab citizenry - are embodied in the thuggish Lieberman.

But whatever his faults, Lieberman is hardly as extreme as the people with whom Israel must one day make peace. He does not advocate the destruction of Iran, as its leaders do of Israel.

He does not seek the wanton slaughter of Palestinians, as Hamas does of Jews. He supports the creation of a Palestinian state. If Lieberman's policies inspire epithets of "Jewish Hitler" and "neo-fascist," as many in the West call him, why is the expressly genocidal rhetoric of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad so easily dismissed as nothing more than political posturing?

If only Netanyahu's critics were as generous to him as they are of the despots and crime families who rule the region. This week, Netanyahu pledged that his government would be a "partner for peace" with a Palestinian leadership willing to work with him. In order to get leaders of the dovish Labor Party to join his coalition, he signed a deal obligating his future government to follow Israel's previously signed diplomatic agreements and committing it to a process of signing further accords with its neighbors.

And although Netanyahu has not come out expressly in favor of a two-state solution - the ostensible cause of the Kadima Party's unwillingness to join his coalition - he does not explicitly oppose it.

Perhaps Netanyahu will frustrate plans for Arab-Israeli peace. Or maybe he'll be Israel's Nixon, "opening" the Muslim world as the staunchly anti-Communist American President did China. But to obsess over the composition of Israel's democratically elected government while minimizing the perennial intransigence of its authoritarian antagonists demonstrates how skewed is the prism through which the world views this conflict. (New York Daily News Mar 27)

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