



## 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*

2002, calls for Israel to commit national suicide by removing itself to within the indefensible 1949 lines and accepting millions of hostile foreign Arabs as citizens in its rump state in exchange for "regular" relations with the Arab world.

### Events...

Sunday, April 19, 7:30pm

Professor Alan Dershowitz's film *The Case for Israel: Democracy's Outpost* will be screened at Shaarei Shomayim, followed by a discussion with Robert Friedman.

### Commentary...

#### Appeasing Child Killers By Caroline Glick

We were not supposed to see Shlomo Nativ's name in the newspapers. At least, we weren't supposed to know who he was for several years. He was just a 13-year-old boy. He was loved by his family and friends. He had brothers and sisters, parents and grandparents. His life was not our business. And, to a certain extent, now that it is over, it still shouldn't concern us.

What should concern us is his death. Nativ was murdered last Thursday at the hands of a Palestinian ax murderer just a few meters from his home in Bat Ayin. And his death should interest us for what it teaches us, first of all about the nature of the Middle East and Israel's place in it.

The mainstream media in Europe and the US and even here maintain that Nativ's death tells us little we didn't already "know" if we are right-thinking people. By this view of things, the cold-blooded terrorist murder of civilians - even of children - is to be expected when the victims in question are Israeli Jews who live beyond the 1949 armistice lines. It isn't nice. It isn't pleasant to say. But as far as the right-thinking people of the Western media are concerned, Israeli Jews like Nativ, who live in Gush Etzion in Judea, are simply asking to be murdered.

Today, the media's view is shared by both European governments and the Obama administration. For years now the Europeans have accepted the legally unsupportable Arab claim that all Jewish presence in areas beyond the 1949 armistice lines is illegal. Since 1993, supported by the Israeli Left, the US government has gradually moved toward adopting this view. And today this view stands at the center of President Barack Obama's emerging policy toward Israel and the Palestinians.

At base, this view assumes two things. First, it assumes that the root of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the absence of Palestinian statehood, and therefore the solution is the establishment of a Palestinian state. The second thing it assumes is that the Palestinian demand that any territory that Israel transfers to Palestinian control must first be ethnically cleansed of all Jewish presence is completely innocent and acceptable.

Obama made clear that this is the view of his administration on two occasions in the past week. First, at a news conference before he departed for his European tour, he announced that as far as his administration is concerned, the only way of contending with the Arab conflict with Israel is by establishing a Palestinian state. In his words, "It is critical for us to advance a two-state solution."

And second, last Thursday in London, Obama made clear that he supports the mass expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (as well as the Golan Heights), when he announced his support for the so-called Saudi peace plan.

The Saudi plan, issued as a propaganda stunt by Saudi King Abdullah during a meeting with New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman in

### חג כשר ושמה

Shlomo Nativ's murder shows clearly that Obama and his supporters are viewing the Arab conflict with Israel through a distorted lens. Their interpretation of both the nature of the conflict and its likely resolution are wrong.

It takes a certain type of person to hack a child to death with an ax. In the case at hand, Nativ's murderer actually tried to kill seven-year-old Yair Gamliel as well. But unlike Nativ, the first grader managed to escape with a fractured skull.

Nativ of course was not the first child to be brutally murdered by Palestinian terrorists. Kobi Mandell and Yosef Ish-Ran were also 13 when they were stoned to death by a mob as they gathered wood for a bonfire in 2001. In 2003 five-month-old Shaked Avraham was shot in her crib by a Palestinian terrorist who pushed his way into her home. In 2002 five-year-old Matan Ohayon, four-year-old Noam Ohayon and their mother Revital Ohayon were murdered in their home in Kibbutz Metzger.

And the list goes on and on and on.

It takes a special type of person to murder a child. And it takes a special type of society to support such behavior. Palestinian society is a special society. It has become routine, indeed it has become expected that in the aftermath of successful murders of Israelis - including children - Palestinians distribute candy in public celebrations.

In 2002 for instance, when word got out about the terrorist who barged into Nina Kardashov's bat mitzva party in Hadera and massacred six people, the masses took to the streets in neighboring Tulkarm to celebrate.

That particular attack was carried out by a Fatah terrorist employed by the US-trained Palestinian Authority security forces. The Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) and the IDF now reportedly believe that Nativ was also murdered by a Fatah terrorist.

To celebrate the terrorist murder of children and to glorify child murderers as heroes is to celebrate and glorify the nullification of life - or at least the life of the target society. This is the case because at the most basic philosophical level, children represent the notion that life is intrinsically valuable. Since children haven't yet had the chance to accomplish great and lasting things for humanity, all they can give us is the promise of a future.

The fact that Palestinian terrorists target children specifically - both inside and outside the 1949 lines - and that Palestinian society celebrates their murder tells us that the two foundational assumptions upon which Obama and his supporters base their policies toward Israel and the Middle East are false. It is not the absence of a Palestinian state that stands at the root of the conflict, and it is not the presence of Israeli communities, or "settlements," beyond the 1949 armistice lines that renders the conflict intractable.

Instead, the root of the conflict is the Arab world's rejection of Israel's right to exist - regardless of its size. And the reason the conflict is intractable is because hatred of Israel and Jews is so deep and endemic in both Palestinian society and the wider Arab world that they view the very existence of Jews - including Jewish children - in Israel as an unacceptable affront to their sensibilities. Indeed, the Jewish presence both within and beyond the 1949 armistice lines is so unacceptable that murdering Jews at every opportunity is perceived as an acceptable and indeed heroic undertaking.

This being the case, the question necessarily arises, why are these

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basic facts so assiduously ignored by people like Obama who should know better? Why did Sen. John Kerry, who chairs the US Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, say in late February, "Nothing will do more to make clear our seriousness about turning the page [in US relations with the Arab world] than demonstrating - with actions rather than words - that we are serious about Israel's freezing settlement activity in the West Bank?"

Why did Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attack Israel during her visit last month for lawfully destroying illegal Arab houses in Jerusalem?

Why are Obama's supporters from Peace Now to the Arab League to The Washington Post and Haaretz editorial boards urging him to coerce the Netanyahu government to accept a complete halt to all building activities for Jews in Judea and Samaria?

The answer unfortunately is that in their actions, Obama, his colleagues and supporters are not motivated by facts. Instead they are motivated by a desire to ignore the facts. They wish to believe that the existence of Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria is a primary obstacle to peace because doing so allows them to ignore the fact that the reason there is no peace is because Palestinians and their Arab and Iranian brethren refuse to peacefully coexist with Israel regardless of its size. Accepting such bitter realities would make it impossible for them to move forward with their agenda of appeasing the Arab world because it would force them to acknowledge that the Arab world is unappeasable.

And that's the thing of it. At base, the so-called settlements are nothing but an excuse for appeasers to curry favor with the Arabs by blaming Israel for the absence of peace while ignoring the Arabs' bigotry, hatred and aggression. What these Israeli communities represent is nothing more than an assertion of Israeli rights to land - whether that land is within or beyond the 1949 armistice lines. If these communities didn't exist - as they no longer exist in Gaza - then a surrogate, such as the IDF which protects other Israeli land, would be found to replace them.

And if the IDF weren't around - as it isn't in Gaza or in southern Lebanon - then the appeasers would blame another surrogate, such as the Israeli naval quarantine of Gaza, or Israel's control over the town of Ghajar along the Lebanese border for the Arabs' bigotry, hatred and aggression against it.

Here it should be noted that there is no difference in principle between the way the likes of the Obama administration and its supporters treat Israel and the way they treat the US and its non-Israeli allies. When on Sunday Obama responded to North Korea's launch of a long-range ballistic missile by announcing that he wishes to all but disarm the US of its nuclear arsenal, he was effectively arguing that US strength is to blame for North Korea's aggression. He did what amounts to the same thing when he apologized to the Iranian regime for supposed US arrogance. By Obama's lights, now that the US is humble, the Iranians may one day stop calling for its destruction, waging war against it in Iraq and Afghanistan and building a nuclear arsenal.

Then too, when Denmark's Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen reportedly agreed to apologize to the Islamic world for Denmark's independent Jyllands-Postens 2005 publication of cartoons of Muhammad in exchange for Turkish support for his candidacy for NATO secretary-general, he was accepting that it is Western civilization - with its freedom of speech - that is to blame for Islamic aggression and intolerance.

In the end then, the truth exposed by Shlomo Nativ's brutal murder on Thursday in Bat Ayin is twofold. First, it demonstrated that the so-called settlements have no relevance whatsoever to the intractability of the Arab-Israeli conflict. When your enemy hates you so much that he hacks your children to pieces, there is nothing you can do, short of committing suicide, that will appease him.

Second, it reminded us of what appeasement places at risk. By attempting to appease the unappeasable, all that successive Israeli, American and European governments have done is strengthen our enemies at the expense of our security and freedom. (Jerusalem Post Apr 6)

## **Saving Labor From Itself** By Sarah Honig

The requiem for Labor is premature. Labor isn't terminally decrepit. Nevertheless, its demise is inevitable if it fails to save itself from itself.

What's at stake isn't merely Labor's misfortune but that of our entire body politic, which must be able to count on two responsible mainstream alternatives. Kadima - an opportunistic concoction without a weighty past, a promising future or any true adhesive to bind its cynical melange of expedient self-seekers - isn't one.

Labor is Kadima's latest victim. Parasitic Kadima didn't bite into the Likud but it devoured the Left. That said, Labor wasn't just temporarily harmed. It had been steadily declining throughout the decade and won't get back to what it once was until its hotshots first understand what made them such easy prey to Kadima's predations.

Obviously a party claiming to be socialist cannot afford to alienate the common man. This transcends the fact that Labor has paradoxically become the party of big business, of the millionaires and billionaires and their emulators who aspire to sidestep pesky Jewish travails and struggles, live high on the hog and pretend they're in Davos all year round. Belittled plebeians are uncannily perceptive. They see right through the hypocrisy.

Indeed, the commoners' estrangement from Labor's preachy elites isn't just on pocketbook issues. The proletariat Laborites profess to represent is patriotic and retains commonsense self-preservation instincts. The jetsetters hadn't entirely debilitated the basic existential logic of regular folks - once the hallmark of Labor under its mutating monikers.

What started out as Poalei Zion (Zion's Workers) and became Mapai (Hebrew acronym for Workers Party of Eretz Yisrael) eventually opted to ditch all reference to Zion or the Land of Israel. Thus Labor began losing its soul. The 1977 upheaval that brought the Likud to power gave further impetus to Labor's psycho-political disintegration. Shimon Peres, isolated after his electoral defeat, became Yossi Sarid's and Yossi Beilin's virtual captive. Far to his left, both eventually meandered to Meretz, yet at the time the Yossis became Peres's sole sounding-boards and filters to the outside world.

Transformed, Peres later brazenly hoodwinked his party into the Oslo fiasco but the party (which he ultimately abandoned for Kadima's allure) remains unrepentant, as if deliberately doing its darnedest to achieve irrelevance and turn its face backward to avoid today's reality. If anything, Labor's excesses flirt with post-Zionism.

David Ben-Gurion, Labor's greatest leader, must have spun in his grave when education minister Yuli Tamir (of Labor) included the Nakba (Arabic for calamity - the Arab propaganda-loaded synonym for Israeli independence) in the Jewish state's school curriculum. Intuitively that grates against ordinary Israelis' sense of justice.

Labor will never regain its standing of old until it again acknowledges this mass sentiment, which survives despite the Left-dominated media's shrill cacophony. Failure to realize that will marginalize Labor and leave it to vie with Meretz for the same mini-constituency.

If Labor forgets to put the Jewish connection to the Jewish homeland atop its agenda, it'll be lost. This doesn't oblige it to espouse the ideals of the Eretz Yisrael movement (which ironically arose from its own ranks following the Six Day War). It needn't avoid pragmatic remedies, but it mustn't paint Jews in Judea as occupiers.

Labor must be as vehemently and passionately insistent on our rights as Ben-Gurion sincerely was, even though he countenanced territorial compromise when that seemed the sole alternative. When consenting to the partition plan that left embryonic Israel in an untenable puny patchwork, he gave up what wasn't then in his possession. Yet subsequently Ben-Gurion resolutely hung on to land liberated in the bloody War of Independence which the Arabs foisted upon Israel.

And he didn't agree to partition jubilantly. On July 15, 1937, while recommending partition, he wrote: "The Jewish people have always regarded, and will continue to regard the whole of Eretz Yisrael as a single country which is theirs in a national sense and will become theirs once again. No Jew will accept partition as a just and rightful solution."

Soon afterward, he told the 20th Zionist Congress: "No Jew is entitled to give up the right of the Jewish nation to the land. It is not in the authority of any Jew or of any Jewish body; it is not even in the authority of the entire nation alive today to give up any part of the land... Even if, at any point, Jews choose to decline it, they have no right to deprive future generations of it. Our right to the entire land exists and stands forever."

This isn't about territorial divisions but about the enduring link, the collective memory that binds us and returned us here. Ben-Gurion knew that the Jewish people didn't surrender its link to its geographic cradle during two millennia of unimaginable persecution. That the sovereign Jewish state should weaken, if not altogether break that link would have been unthinkable under Ben-Gurion's Mapai, for all its manifold faults.

What is nationhood, after all, if not collective memory? Ben-Gurion knew it well. Testifying before UNSCOP in 1947, he noted: "Three hundred years ago, a ship called the Mayflower left for the New World... This was a great event in the history of England and America. But I would like to know: Is there a single Englishman who knows the exact date and hour of the Mayflower's launch? How much do American children - or grown-ups - know about this historic trip? Do they know how many people were in the boat? Their names? What they wore? What they ate? Their path of travel? What happened to them on the way? Where they landed?"

"More than 3,300 years before the Mayflower set sail, the Jews left Egypt. Any Jewish child, whether in America or Russia, Yemen or Germany, knows that his forefathers left Egypt at dawn on the 15th of Nisan. What did they wear? Their belts were tied and their staffs were in their hands. They ate matzot, and arrived at the Red Sea after seven days.

"He knows the path of their journey... The child can even quote the family names from the Torah. Jews worldwide still eat matza for seven days from the 15th of Nisan, and retell the story of the Exodus, concluding with the fervent wish, 'Next Year in Jerusalem.' This is the nature of the Jewish people."

Until we hear today's Laborites enunciate the same sentiments as forthrightly, as genuinely, as unambiguously and as proudly as Ben-Gurion did, they won't win back the people's hearts. Until Labor retreats from the post-Zionist brink and retakes the Zionist high ground, it'll continue losing ground. That'd be a tragic shame because a viable Labor is vital for Israeli democracy. Labor deserves to be rescued from its own bungling radicals-cum-apparatchiks. (Jerusalem Post Apr 2)

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### **In Israel, A Voice Of Realism** By Jeff Jacoby

If Avigdor Lieberman's first speech as Israel's new foreign minister did nothing else, it certainly vexed the media.

The Associated Press called it a "scathing critique of Mideast peace efforts" that had diplomats "cringing," while other reports said Lieberman had "dropped a political bombshell," "sparked an uproar," "repudiated a key accord," and "reinforced fears." The New York Times pronounced Lieberman's remarks "blunt and belligerent," describing the foreign minister as a "hawkish nationalist" who is "not known for diplomacy" and heads an "ultranationalist" party that is "seen by many as racist." Headlines summed up Lieberman's debut as an attack on peacemaking: "Lieberman dashes peace hopes," "Israeli official hits peace efforts," "Lieberman dumps peace deal."

But the headlines were wrong, as anyone can ascertain by reading Lieberman's short address. Far from disparaging peace, Israel's new foreign minister called for pursuing it with the respect and realism it deserves. And far from "dumping" agreements entered into by his predecessors, he explicitly committed himself to upholding the Roadmap -- a step-by-step blueprint to a "two-state solution" adopted by Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and the international Quartet (the United States, the United Nations, Russia, and the European Union) in 2003.

"I voted against the Roadmap," Lieberman acknowledged, but it was "approved by the Cabinet and endorsed by the Security Council" and is therefore "a binding resolution and it binds this government as well." However, he insisted, it must be implemented "exactly as written" and "in full." The Road Map imposes specific obligations that the Palestinians must meet prior to achieving statehood -- above all, an unequivocal end to violence, terrorism, and incitement against the Jewish state -- and Israel will not agree to waive them in order to negotiate a final settlement.

If Lieberman is as good as his word -- and if he is backed up by Benjamin Netanyahu, the new prime minister -- we may finally see an end to Israel's fruitless attempts to buy peace with ever-more-desperate concessions and retreats. Under Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert, Israel surrendered the entire Gaza Strip, released hundreds of terrorists from prison, expelled thousands of Jews from their homes, and even offered to divide Jerusalem with the Palestinian Authority. "But none of these far-

reaching measures have brought peace," said Lieberman. "To the contrary." The steeper the price Israel has been willing to pay for peace, the more it has been repaid with violence: suicide bombings, rocket attacks, kidnapped and murdered soldiers, and wars with Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

It is time, Lieberman is saying, for Israel to stop genuflecting to a feckless and counterproductive "peace process" and to return instead to the pre-Oslo policy of deterrence. "The fact that we say the word 'peace' 20 times a day will not bring peace any closer," he noted. It only makes Israel seem weak and irresolute, encouraging its enemies not to halt their murderous jihad, but to redouble it. Sixteen years of appeasement have left Israel more demonized and isolated than ever, the foreign minister observed. And when was Israel most admired in the world? "After the victory of the Six Day War," when no one doubted the Jewish state's audacity or resolve.

"If you want peace, prepare for war," Lieberman declared. That belief may offend the smart set and leave diplomats "cringing," but Israel's new foreign minister is scarcely the first to express it. "To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace," affirmed President George Washington in his first address to Congress in 1790. Nearly two centuries later, Ronald Reagan told the world much the same thing. "Peace is made by the fact of strength," said the leader who would go on to win the Cold War. "Peace is lost when such strength disappears -- or, just as bad, is seen by an adversary as disappearing."

Perhaps the world would more clearly understand the nature of Israel's adversary if the media weren't forever fanning moral outrage at the Mideast's only bulwark of freedom and democracy.

In recent weeks, the Palestinian Authority has warned Arabs that it is "high treason" punishable by death to sell homes or property to Jews in Jerusalem; shut down a Palestinian youth orchestra and arrested its founder because the ensemble played for a group of elderly Israeli Holocaust survivors; and celebrated the deadliest terrorist attack in Israel's history -- a PLO bus hijacking that left 38 civilians dead -- with a TV special extolling the massacre. On Thursday, after a Palestinian terrorist used an axe to murder a 13-year-old Jewish boy, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades -- a wing of the supposedly "moderate" Fatah party -- issued a statement claiming responsibility.

There is no appeasing such hatred, and demonizing those who say so will not change that fact. "If you want peace, prepare for war." How refreshing, at last, to hear an Israeli leader say so. (Boston Globe Apr 5)

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### **The Personal Code Of The IDF Soldier: 'May Our Camp Be Pure'**

By Danny Zamir

A number of articles published recently in The New York Times quoted or were based on words spoken by myself and by graduates of the pre-army leadership development program which I head (the "Rabin Mechina") - graduates who participated as combat soldiers in Operation Cast Lead and who met recently to process personal experiences from the battlefield.

Both explicitly and by insinuation, the articles claim a decline in the IDF's commitment to its moral code of conduct in combat, and moreover, that this decline stems from a specific increase in the prominence of religious soldiers and commanders in the IDF in general, and from the strengthening of the position of IDF Chief Rabbi Avichai Ronsky in particular.

It was as if the media were altogether so eager to find reason to criticize the IDF that they pounced on one discussion by nine soldiers who met after returning from the battlefield to share their experiences and subjective feelings with each other, using that one episode to draw conclusions that felt more like an indictment. Dogma replaced balance and led to a dangerous misunderstanding of the depth and complexity of Israeli reality. The individual accounts were never intended to serve as a basis for broad generalizations and summary conclusions by the media; they were published internally, intended for program graduates and their parents as a tool to be used in the process of educating and guiding the next generation.

I chose as well to submit the soldiers' accounts to the highest levels of the IDF, directly to the chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, out of my deep faith in the solid moral foundations of IDF policy and in complete confidence that the accounts would receive serious and thorough attention,

including both investigation and corrective measures, if and when necessary. This faith was and is based on my personal experience of more than two decades - as a combat soldier, a major in the IDF and as mentor for hundreds of the Rabin Mechina's graduates who are soldiers serving in combat units (active and reserve).

There are, to be sure, important political differences between myself as a social-democratic Zionist and Zionists of other political opinions. But there exists among us a very broad consensus regarding the moral character of combat - a moral character to which the IDF is committed and educates its soldiers, a character positively influenced by religious mechinot and by the special personal qualities of my colleague Rabbi Ronsky.

The guiding principle that directs IDF combat soldiers, both in their planning and conduct in combat, encompasses a balance between two needs: to defend soldiers' lives and to minimize harm to the civilians behind whom terrorists try to hide. This is expressed in the tension between the necessity of opening fire when the soldiers' security and battle conditions require, even when there's a danger to civilians (providing advance warning to the extent possible), and the absolute obligation to hold fire and to act with due compassion toward civilians when it appears that they have no evil intent. In addition, basic respect toward civilians' belongings and their religious and spiritual property is part of this moral code.

These guidelines and the obligation to uphold them are an inseparable part of the Jewish-Zionist world of IDF soldiers, and deeply anchored in generations of Jewish heritage, particularly in the doctrine of military conduct renewed by the early socialist-Zionists a century ago. They called this principle by a name that's unlikely to have been given by any other nationalist movement fighting for its independence: "Purity of Arms" - that is, preventing harm to those not involved in or supporting the combat.

This moral commandment remains a central motto of the IDF; it is the complete opposite of the code of conduct of Islamist terror organizations such as Hamas, whose judgment on every Israeli and Jew is death. "Purity of arms" is not part of their world, not even in theory.

The outsider may not understand this, but we - the Jews of the State of Israel - live this every day, every hour.

In order to appreciate this moral code, one must note the context in which it operates. The State of Israel is under a prolonged attack by the Hamas movement - a fundamentalist Islamic terror movement, based on a racist and ultra-nationalist ideology that seeks the killing of Jews for being Jews and the actual elimination of the State of Israel as its declared aspiration, and formally part of its foundation platform. And bear in mind that Hamas is not a marginal extremist underground, but a movement freely chosen by the Palestinians to head their elected government.

Our war against an unrestrained terror organization that uses civilian populations as human shields in various ways, such as hospitals and masquerading as women and children, presents the IDF - an army obligated to an ethical code of combat based on humanism and international law - with almost impossible complexities. The nature of combat in complex conditions (such as in Gaza) brings with it difficulties and failures. The greatness of an army fighting under such conditions lies in its aspiring to "zero errors" and in its openness to examining its failures - finding them and fixing them.

If it's possible to learn something from the real Israel - and not that which the media (including Israeli media) makes such efforts to portray - it would be from the uproar of emotions and the frank discussions that have taken place within Israeli society in the wake of the soldiers' accounts. It is out of their commitment to the moral code that the soldiers spoke and their accounts were submitted; purity of arms requires continuous examination of our actions and intentions.

"May our camp be pure." This is the watchword borne by my soldiers in the IDF, not only because this is how they've been educated by their commanders and their officers, but because this is the essence of their belief and their national heritage, a belief and heritage shared by and uniting us all: secular and religious, right and left, in the IDF and outside it. It is a source of pride and of confidence in our way, even in times of venomous attacks from every quarter - such as transforming a sensitive, personal discussion among combat soldiers back from the battlefield to mendacious claims of policies that involve so-called war crimes.

And so may it be. (Jerusalem Post Apr 7)

*The writer, and attorney and a Major in the IDF reserves, is the Director of the Yitzhak Rabin Pre-Army Leadership Development Program.*

## **What to Speak With Hamas About** By Shlomo Avineri

Recently, more and more voices have been heard saying that the only way to reach an Israeli-Palestinian accord is by talking to Hamas. These voices are not only in Europe but also in the United States. New York Times columnist Roger Cohen, for example, and Brent Sowcroft, who was national security adviser to the first president Bush, have said that without a dialogue with Hamas there will be no peace between Israel and the Palestinians. And if Israel refuses to do so, the Europeans or the Americans should begin a dialogue with Hamas.

Similar statements can also be heard in the margins of Israeli politics.

I believe they are right, but not for the reasons they cite. The question is what to talk to Hamas about. It is clear we have to talk with them - and Israel indeed does speak with them indirectly - about freeing kidnapped soldier Gilad Shalit and achieving calm.

I believe we must talk to Hamas about other things too, like about what is written in their founding covenant. Most Israelis, as well as the Europeans and Americans, know that Hamas espouses the destruction of Israel. What most of them do not know is that Hamas' founding document includes a much more comprehensive attitude, not merely to Israel and Zionism, but to the Jews.

The prologue to the covenant states that Hamas' aim is a war - not against Israel or Zionism but against the Jewish people at large, since the Jews, and not merely Israel and Zionism, are the enemies of Islam.

And in order to remove any doubt, the entire chapter 22 is devoted to detailing the iniquities of the Jews.

According to Hamas, the Jews are responsible for all the ills of modern society - the French Revolution; the Communist revolution; the establishment of secret associations (Freemasons, Rotary and Lions clubs, B'nai B'rith) designed to help them gain control of the world by secret means. They control the economy, press and television; they are responsible for the outbreak of World War I, which they initiated in order to destroy the Muslim caliphates (the Ottoman empire), to get the Balfour Declaration and set up the League of Nations with the aim of establishing their state. They also initiated World War II in order to make a fortune from selling war materials; they use both capitalism and communism as their agents.

Sound familiar? Yes, some of it is taken directly from "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," and some, particularly the parts dealing with the world wars, is original.

Don't tell me that these are merely words and Hamas must not be judged only on the basis of its covenant. Would anyone dare say that if a similar movement were to arise in Europe or America and, in addition to statements like these, was busy killing Jews?

Compared with what is written in the Hamas covenant, Austria's Joerg Haider and Jean-Marie Le Pen in France are moderates.

It is clear that if a movement like this were to come out of Europe, no one would even imagine proposing that negotiations be held with it, or that it be asked to join a government. It would not merely be declared illegal but denounced by humankind. An abomination like that has no place in any political discourse.

But perhaps it is nevertheless worthwhile talking to Hamas - not about its contribution to peace but rather about what is stated in its covenant. Perhaps those who espouse the view that we must talk with Hamas will first talk with it about these subjects? Who knows, perhaps it will change its principles? I do not expect this to happen exactly, but I am certainly curious to know what those who think Hamas is the key to peace in the Middle East will say about these things.

And perhaps they are actually correct, perhaps Hamas is the key. If that's the case, it's difficult to expect that peace can be established in our region. (Haaretz Apr 6)