



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*

ד"ר reports from Hizbullah operatives and condemning Israel for "disproportionate response" and "war crimes." For the officials that control the agendas of Amnesty and HRW, Israel- and America-bashing are far more lucrative in money and in promoting their own power and influence than taking on Putin's Russia.

The centrality of power (real, not soft) in the UN Security Council was

Events...

Sunday September 7

The BAYT Israel Action/Bet El Twinning Committee and Canadian Friends of Bar Ilan University sponsor a lecture by **Professor Gerald Steinberg** on "**Paying for the Propaganda War Against Israel: Europe, Canada and Jewish Organisations**" at BAYT.

Commentary...

Power, Gravity and the State of Nature By Gerald Steinberg

The speed with which the Russian army crushed Georgia is a stark reminder of the fundamental role of raw military power. Power in politics is the equivalent of gravity in physics - an immutable natural law that can be avoided temporarily, but eventually reasserts its dominance.

There has been no change in what political philosopher Thomas Hobbes described as the immutable "state of nature war," in which survival requires the ability to defend vital interests. History did not end with the fall of communism, and international law is often abused to justify the brutality of major powers.

From the beginning, Georgia was hopelessly overpowered by Russia, and President Mikheil Saakashvili's strategy, which relied on wide international support for an embattled democracy and quick intervention by NATO, was never realistic. Vladimir Putin's resurgent Russia has been steadily eating into Georgian territory by supporting breakaway movements, and Saakashvili sought to reverse this process and gain international sympathy. He thought Georgia could make its move during the Beijing Olympics, when Putin would not want to be seen as a ruthless attacker. This was a foolish and costly mistake - Putin had no interest in protecting his image.

At the same time, Washington is focused on nuclear threats from Iran and the ongoing war in Iraq. Both require some cooperation from Moscow, and the Americans have no interest in a confrontation in the Caucasus.

IN PARALLEL, European envoys shuttled uselessly among various capitals, wringing their hands and talking about diplomatic solutions as Russia's armored columns rolled across the border and its air force bombed targets in Tbilisi. In the "old Europe," following the catastrophe of two world wars and the Holocaust, military power is ridiculed (and confused with militarism), Hobbes and political "realism" are disdained or not even discussed, and nothing has been learned from the failed deterrence that led to war in Serbia and Kosovo. Europeans cling to the myth they can always buy the oil to maintain their economies, whether from the Arabs or from Russia, and so there is no need to defend vital interests with an army.

Similarly, the much heralded use of "soft power" as a modern globalized substitute for military and economic force was shown again to be irrelevant, particularly where democracy and liberal norms are absent. The two international human rights superpowers said to embody the soft power of international norms - Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch - issued a few limp and carefully phrased press statements which "called on all sides to respect the absolute ban against targeting civilians or carrying out attacks that indiscriminately harm civilians."

Although four days of fighting in Georgia have reportedly resulted in more casualties than the six-week Lebanon War in 2006, these self-proclaimed moral watchdogs were far more active in the latter, mostly in repeating false

also apparent. Russia, a nuclear power and permanent member of the council, has vetoed all resolutions that hinted at criticism of its aggression in Georgia. Here as well, it is far easier to get a consensus to condemn Israel and appease the Islamic powers and oil producers that can devastate the European and Asian economies, regardless of the issue at hand. In the UN and other international institutions that use the façade of morality and international law, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and where Russia can prevent any action, it is old-fashioned Hobbesian power that counts.

HOWEVER, THIS realistic analysis, albeit quite bleak, should not be taken to mean that there is no role for ethical principles such as democracy and human rights. Instead, to go beyond empty slogans and the manipulation of NGO officials, realism requires the use of power in the service of these principles. In the past, America has been able to use its dominance and power to defeat totalitarian regimes and advance democracy and human rights. These were also the main goals behind the intervention in Iraq, but these were undermined by America's weakness in implementing a simplistic policy as well as an economic crisis. These developments also encouraged Russian and Chinese resurgence.

For Israel, the speed and brutality of the Russian attack on Georgia are another reminder that our survival in the Middle Eastern "state of nature" requires a realistic assessment of the power balance in the region. In Lebanon and Gaza, the hope that European and UN forces will prevent Hizbullah and Hamas from acquiring and using weapons is dangerously naive. In the case of Iran's nuclear program, America may still act effectively to insure its own interests, but Israel's own power and ability to defend against and deter attacks remain the most effective forms of insurance.

The writer is executive director of NGO Monitor and chairman of the Political Studies Department of Bar-Ilan University.

[See above notice on Professor Steinberg's upcoming lecture at BAYT.

-Ed.] (Jerusalem Post Aug 12)

Don't Let It Happen Again By Batya Medad

No, I'm not going to rewrite the Tisha B'av kinot (dirges) in a modern context. It's just that....

Very early in the kinot, Shiloh is mentioned. I live in Shiloh, so I take these things more personally. From my house, here in ancient-modern, very holy and historic Shiloh, we can't see the ruins, the tel. Actually, we can't see much of a "view," because, baruch HaShem, there have been houses built all around. Yes, I'd rather see houses filled with Jews than gorgeous landscape and historical sites.

In the kinot we read of the "sins of Shiloh." That makes me uncomfortable. Many commentators say that it refers to the sins of the sons of Eli the Priest, the Cohen HaGadol. For that, Shiloh was destroyed.

Today, my mind is seeing this very differently. Like many Jews, I'm haunted by the latest, most modern Tisha B'Av disaster. It's a date which turns up like a bad penny as the date of disasters in Jewish history. Disengagement - the unilateral destruction of Jewish communities by the Israeli government and the forceful exile of innocent Jews from their homes - was scheduled for Tisha B'Av.

With few exceptions, world Jewry sat passively while Jews were forced from their homes, dead Jewish heroes were exhumed from their graves and lives were destroyed. Yes, "lives were destroyed." Even if they weren't shot

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and thrown into shallow graves like Babi Yar, life as they knew it was destroyed; and most are living, poverty-stricken, in refugee camps.

Only afterwards did some people wake up, and quickly geared up, for a fund-raising campaign to help the "poor refugees."

And now the same mistake is being repeated. They, Israeli rabbis and politicians, foreign Jewish organizations and international politicians and diplomats, keep touting their support for a "united Jerusalem," as if it's a prophylactic treatment to prevent destruction.

Today, "the sins of Shiloh" is something else. It's thinking that Shiloh is expendable. Why do so many Jews (and non-Jews, but they follow Jewish leadership) think that giving our precious Shiloh to the Arabs would protect Jerusalem?

Jerusalem can't stand alone.

Last week, when I toured Samaria, we were shown a map by the Chairman of the Samaria Regional Council. Compare the relative widths of pre-1967 Israel and Samaria.

It's a miracle that Israel survived those nineteen years without it. Does anyone in their right mind think that Israel would survive with an Arab terrorist state in Judea and Samaria?

Shiloh was the first Hebrew capital after Joshua brought the tribes into the Holy Land. The Tabernacle rested here for 369 years. Thirty years ago, seven young families and a fledgling yeshiva brought Jewish life back to Shiloh.

It's a sin to even think of destroying us. It's a sin to stay silent when others propose it.

That's my interpretation of these lines in the kinot:

The dread of the sins of Shiloh was swiftly fulfilled / by the conspirators against her. / They jeered, those wild boars of the forest, / "Where are her pious ones?" / They uncovered shameful acts in order to disgrace her. / And Zion spread her hands (in despair).

May the next ninth of Av be a joyous holiday, the dedication of the Third Holy Temple. (IsraelNationalNews.com Aug 11)

No Peripheral Vision By Moshe Arens

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is not as stupid as he looks. His almost daily bombastic threats against Israel, accompanied by his insistence that Iran has every right to continue enriching uranium - the raw material for a nuclear bomb - has succeeded in totally focusing most Israeli leaders on the Iranian threat, to the disregard of more immediate threats that are under our very nose. For some years now, most Israeli politicians have become like horses with blinders: They can only look straight ahead. They seem to have lost their peripheral vision.

In the meantime, Hezbollah and Hamas are doing Iran's work. In the north and the south they continue to erode Israel's deterrent capability. Tehran must be saying, we don't need a nuclear bomb to wipe Israel off the map - so long as we keep Israel hypnotized by the Iranian nuclear threat, Hezbollah and Hamas rockets will do the job much more cheaply. As far as they are concerned, Jabotinsky's "iron wall," which Ben-Gurion adopted as the basis for Israel's defense strategy, has in recent years become no more than a wall of paper, easily pierced.

Last week our defense minister uttered another vacuous threat. "If Israel is provoked, the IDF is ready to attack Iran and succeed uncompromisingly," he

told an Italian newspaper. This is the man who sent Israel's deterrent capability downhill eight years ago, when as prime minister and defense minister he ordered the unilateral withdrawal of the IDF from the south Lebanon security zone.

His threats at the time - that any Hezbollah provocation after the withdrawal would be met by an extreme Israeli response - turned out to be nothing more than empty words. The years that followed not only brought a number of Hezbollah provocations, but were years of Hezbollah fortifying itself in south Lebanon and being armed by Iran with thousands of rockets, many of which came down on Israel during the Second Lebanon War.

Ariel Sharon, who followed Barak as prime minister, and Benjamin Ben-Eliezer and Shaul Mofaz as his defense ministers, watched as Hezbollah's capabilities grew to a point where they were beginning to deter Israel from taking pre-emptive action to halt them. It was not long before Israel's civilian population ended up paying the price for the torpor that had seized our leadership in the face of this threat.

The repeated declarations by Ehud Olmert that we had won the Second Lebanon War, and that one of its great achievements was UN Security Council Resolution 1701, have turned out to be just so much nonsense. Not only is Hezbollah much stronger now than it was before the war and the threat to Israel that much greater, but Hezbollah - in the wake of its victory over the IDF and the government's foolish approval to exchange Samir Kuntar for the bodies of two Israeli soldiers - has just about taken over Lebanon. It is receiving praise from Lebanon's new president, Michel Suleiman, and its right to take military action against Israel has now been endorsed by the new Lebanese government. So much for the "restraining effect" of the UNIFIL forces and the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon, which was heralded by the Olmert government as one of Israel's great achievements in the war.

In the south, the government, with Ehud Barak as defense minister, has followed the same policy as in the north, and can expect the very same results. Israel may have to pay very dearly for this policy, based on the assumption that doing nothing is the best of all alternatives.

Now along come two new contenders for the leadership of Israel: Shaul Mofaz and Tzipi Livni. Both were senior partners in the mistakes made by the Olmert government. What have they got to offer?

Mofaz, like Olmert and Barak, is hypnotized by Ahmadinejad. All he can talk about is the nuclear threat from Iran. In Tehran they must be laughing up their sleeves, as they notice that this aspirant for the leadership of Israel also has the same blinkers, and seems to pay little attention to what is going on in Lebanon and in Gaza.

And Tzipi Livni? She has only one thing in her head: establishing a Palestinian state, which she seems to think is the solution to all of Israel's problems.

These politicians better take the blinkers off and take a good look in all directions. Danger may be lurking in what are to them unexpected places. (Haaretz Aug 12)

Post-Zionism's Fatal Flaw By Martin Sherman

If Israel is not Zionist, it won't be Jewish; if it's not Jewish it won't be democratic

In my understanding, the concept "Post Zionism" is - at the ideological level - a demand for democratization of the state - i. e. a call for a liberal democratic state in the Western mode. - Prof. Uri Ram -- from "The Anti Zionist Congress" Israel Radio (Reshet Bet) 27-4-2008

This quote from one of the leaders of the post-Zionist school in Israeli academia is representative of the moral hypocrisy, intellectual shallowness and pompousness, and grossly misplaced self-righteousness that characterize the adherents of this self-contradictory philosophy.

For it takes only the most elementary analytical skill to identify the glaring flaw in the logic of post-Zionist positions which - allegedly in the name of enlightened liberal values - call for the conversion of Israel from a "Jewish State" to a "state of all its citizens." It requires no extraordinary intellect to grasp the fact that should such a change indeed take place, the resulting realities would in fact be the exact antithesis of the values invoked for making it.

Indeed, it is not difficult to foresee the inevitable chain of events that such a move would trigger. First, the significance of a simple but far-reaching truth must be recognized: If Israel is indeed defined as a "Jewish state," there is a valid rationale and a viable justification for the existence of an entire range of elements that characterize the conduct of national and public life in the country, such as: the Star of David on the Flag; the "Menora"



candelabrum as the state emblem; the words of the national anthem that refer to the "yearning of the Jewish soul"; and the status of Hebrew as the dominant vehicle of communication between the citizens of the state. The same is true for a considerable body of "Judeo-centric" legislation such as the Law of Return granting any Jew immediate citizenship on immigrating to Israel.

However, should Israel be re-defined as a "state of all its citizens," there will be no valid rationale or viable justification for any of these features. As an inevitable consequence, there will neither be rhyme nor reason why any Jew (apart from those ultra-devout few who regard living in the Holy Land a religious command) would choose to live their life in a "non-Jewish Israel" rather than in any other "state of all its citizens" where the rigors of daily life are less demanding and less stressful. No Jew (apart from the handful of ultra-pious souls who believe in the divine sanctity of the Land of Israel) would insist on living their life in a country, where instead of the blue Star of David, the national flag displays stripes – whether vertical or horizontal – of different colors even if these include nostalgic tinges of blue and white.

Accordingly, not only would there be a dramatic increase in the number of Jews who leave the country (and who of course no longer will be called "Yordim" but merely "emigrants"), but also an almost total termination of the number of Jews arriving here. After all, if Israel is not a Jewish state, there will be absolutely no motivation for, nor reason, why highly educated, highly skilled and highly trained Jews from across the developed world should aspire to make their homes here – not scientists, not doctors, not engineers not entrepreneurs, not academics.

There would be no mass "aliyah" from lands where Jews were oppressed and sought safe haven in the Jewish state. Obviously the extraordinary phenomenon of the huge inflow of Jewry from the former USSR, with its huge contribution to every aspect of life in the country, would be inconceivable if Israel became just another "state of all its citizens" on the fringes of a desert at the gateway to the Levant.

Moreover, if Israel became a state of all its citizens, there would be little grounds for preventing the massive influx of migrants from neighboring lands from pouring into the country – whether to fulfill the "right of return" or merely to make a better living – since, initially, the chances of finding a more lucrative livelihood would still be higher here rather than there.

Inevitably, these processes will bring about a continual erosion of the Jewish population. As the composition of the population in the land becomes similar to that in the other states of the region, there is no reason to suppose that the realities that prevail in it will not also become similar to those prevailing in those states – including the level of economic development, standard of living and lifestyle, status of women, nature of the regime, and the liberties it allows those living under it. It is difficult to imagine that even the post-Zionists, with their bias and selective view of the world, are unaware of the fact that that in the entire Arab world – from Casablanca to Kuwait – there is no semblance of any "liberal democratic state in the Western mode" for which they allegedly yearn with such passion.

Indeed, in view of the stark contrast between their declared objectives and the nature of the realities that the endeavor to achieve that objective is likely to create; in light of manifest contradiction between their purported aspirations and the consequences likely to result from the pursuit of those aspirations, it is difficult to determine whether the post-Zionists are motivated by nastiness or naiveté; whether they are being mean-spirited or only feeble-minded.

However, whatever the explanation may be, all those genuinely desirous of "liberal democratic state in the Western mode" in this neck of the woods must recognize a basic inescapable truth: If Israel is not Zionist, it will not be Jewish; if it is not Jewish it will not be democratic. (Ynet Aug 11)

How Israel Became the Boy Who Cried Wolf By Evelyn Gordon

Kadima has set several records during its brief existence. No other ruling party has generated so many criminal proceedings against its representatives, nor has any previous government so successfully outpaced public desire for its ouster. But perhaps its most devastating record is how thoroughly it has shredded Israel's deterrence.

Last week's column analyzed what Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) chief Yuval Diskin deems the worst blows to the nation's deterrence over the past three years: the disengagement from Gaza, Hamas's subsequent takeover of the Strip and the Second Lebanon War. Kadima, of course, deserves "credit" for all three: It comprises all the politicians most responsible for the first (and indeed was formed for that purpose), while the latter two occurred under its rule.

Yet far from learning from these mistakes, it proceeded to compound them.

In the South, rocket attacks from Gaza more than tripled following the mid-2005 disengagement, to over 1,000 a year in 2006 and 2007. And the mid-2006 Lebanon war effectively undercut previous excuses for inaction. Not only did it prove that such barrages, if not stopped, destroy morale at home and deterrence abroad (since the enemy concludes that Israel fears to confront it), but it also produced a military consensus on how to counter them: a major ground operation to drive the launchers out of range.

Yet the government refused to order such an operation, instead relying on the same failed tactic it used in Lebanon: aerial assaults. That reinforced Arab belief that the IDF is afraid to confront the far smaller and more poorly equipped Hamas.

Even worse, however, were its nonstop threats that we would "soon" lose patience and invade Gaza. Since that never happened, Israel became the boy who cried wolf. It has lost any ability to make credible threats, as its enemies will consider them mere hot air.

THEN, IN June, the government capitulated completely, accepting a truce on Hamas's terms – which Diskin termed a "lifesaver" for the organization. Specifically, after having said repeatedly that any cease-fire must bring Gilad Schalit home and prevent weapons smuggling, it accepted a truce without Schalit and with no provisions on smuggling except Egypt's umpteenth empty promise to combat it. It thereby proved once again that our "red lines" are meaningless.

The Palestinians soon violated this truce: Hamas itself refrained from firing rockets, but declined to stop other organizations from doing so. Yet Israel never responded militarily, and though it did initially close the border crossings it had opened under the truce, it immediately reopened them at Egypt's request. The lesson was clear: Terrorist organizations can violate deals with impunity since Israel will honor its commitments anyway.

Moreover, Palestinian analysts say the truce bolstered support for Hamas, because it achieved through force what Fatah failed to achieve through negotiations: a cessation of IDF operations in its territory. In short, rather than showing that peace pays better than terror, Kadima showed that terror pays better than peace – thereby encouraging it.

Finally, Hamas has exploited the truce to prepare for future conflict. It is training troops and smuggling in masses of arms (i.e. four tons of explosives). It is stockpiling nonmilitary essentials such as food and fuel, since the truce, with its reopened border crossings, more than tripled the volume of cargo entering Gaza. And it is building bunkers with cement supplied courtesy of the lull. All this will increase IDF casualties in any future Gaza operation, making governments even more reluctant to approve one.

In short, rather than Israel deterring Hamas, Hamas is deterring Israel.

THE PICTURE in the North is identical. The Lebanon war, which followed years in which Hizbullah amassed an arsenal while Israel did nothing, underscored the dangers of letting terrorist organizations arm unimpeded. Yet since the war, Hizbullah has tripled its rocket supply, to about 40,000, and now has virtually all of Israel in range rather than the North alone. And again we did nothing.

Moreover, Hizbullah's rearmament enabled it to seize control of Lebanon's government this spring, further increasing its ability to threaten Israel.

But not content with mere inaction, Kadima actively undermined its chances of mustering effective diplomatic pressure against the smuggling via its indirect negotiations with Syrian President Bashar Assad.

For Assad, the benefits were immediate: After years of international isolation, he was welcomed back to the world stage, including a starring role in last month's Mediterranean Union summit.

Israel, however, got nothing in exchange. Defense officials begged the government to condition talks on a halt to Hizbullah's arms smuggling from Syria, but the government refused. Now, having belatedly woken up, Kadima wants the world to pressure Syria to stop the smuggling. But as a senior official told Haaretz last week: "The fact that we are conducting negotiations with Syria doesn't make it easier to [explain] our position to the world." After all, if the government doesn't consider this issue important enough to employ its own diplomatic leverage against Syria, why should other countries deem it important enough to employ theirs?

The unconditional talks with Syria also undermined Israel's deterrence in another way: They proved, as a senior Arab diplomat told Haaretz, that "it's possible to supply missiles to Hizbullah, be a patron of Hamas and be in Israel's good graces all at the same time."

If so, why should any Arab country not support anti-Israel terror?

Even after Assad flatly rejected direct talks last month – meaning that having already given him international legitimacy in exchange for no tangible benefits, Israel was not even getting serious negotiations – the government

still refused to end the farce. The message could not be clearer: One can support terror, refuse serious negotiations and still reap all the benefits of peace. No more thorough eradication of Israel's deterrent is conceivable.

Kadima inherited a country with a weakened but still extant deterrent posture and proceeded to systematically destroy it. Now, rebuilding deterrence must be a top priority. And Kadima cannot be trusted with the job. Its record speaks for itself. (Jerusalem Post Aug 13)

This Is Apartheid? By Warren Goldstein

Two weeks ago the editor of the largest newspaper in South Africa, The Sunday Times, wrote an article saying that Israel applies apartheid to Palestinian Arabs. In this scandalous accusation, he joins Jimmy Carter and others who have defamed the Jewish state.

The apartheid label is very dangerous. If it sticks, Israel's ability to defend itself diplomatically and militarily will be severely weakened. International pressure on South Africa's apartheid government eventually played a major role in ending its power. The apartheid label is calculated to break the resolve of the Israeli people, who are called upon to make terrible sacrifices for our Jewish state. Who wants to die for apartheid?

As Jews, we must fight this kind of mass defamation of our people. Israel's security and Jewish lives all over the world depends on it, as well as our historic God-given mission of being "a light unto the nations." To say that Israel is an apartheid state is as wildly outrageous as the blood libels of Europe.

To answer the editor of South Africa's Sunday Times, I wrote an article which he kindly published in last week's newspaper. Here follow its arguments:

TO ACCUSE Israel of apartheid is to diminish the victims of the real apartheid - the men, women and children of South Africa, who suffered for centuries under arrogant, heartless colonialism, and then for decades under the brutal policies of racial superiority, oppression and separation inflicted by the National Party. If everything is apartheid, then nothing is apartheid.

In the State of Israel all citizens - Jew and Arab alike - are equal before the law. Israel has none of the apartheid legislative machinery devised to discriminate against and to separate people. It has no Population Registration Act, no Group Areas Act, no Mixed Marriages and Immorality Act, no Separate Representation of Voters Act, no Separate Amenities Act, no pass laws or any other of the myriad apartheid laws.

On the contrary: Israel is a vibrant liberal democracy which accords full political, civil and other human rights to all its people, including its one million-plus Arab citizens, many of whom hold positions of authority throughout the Jewish state - including that of cabinet minister, Knesset member and judge at every level of the judiciary, the Supreme Court included.

All citizens vote on the same voters' roll in regular, multiparty elections, and there are Arab parties and Arab members of other parties in the Knesset. Due to Israel's proportional representation system, Arab voters, although a minority, have often been partners in various coalition governments and influenced major long-term decisions affecting the country.

Arabs and Jews live and work together, share all public facilities, including, importantly, hospitals and schools, and also malls, buses, cinemas and parks. Israel protects religious freedom and has been very sensitive and respectful in its management of the holy sites of all religions, granting easy access to everyone.

Arab Israelis, like all their compatriots, can express themselves and act freely as members of a transparent and open, democratic society, where criticism of the government in an aggressively free press is the norm.

In fact, Israeli Arabs enjoy more freedom and rights than do any other Arabs in the Middle East, where autocratic governments suppress democracy and freedoms, such as freedom of expression and of association, including outlawing labor unions. Israel is the only truly free democracy in the Middle East.

If there is apartheid in the Middle East, then it is the apartheid in Arab states against Jews, Christians and women, who are all denied the most basic human rights and treated as second-class citizens. Most Arab governments do not even allow Jews to visit, let alone live. In fact, more than 800,000 Jews have been expelled from Arab countries over the last five decades, where they lived peacefully for centuries, albeit with inferior status.

In 1967, as a result of a defensive war thrust upon it, Israel captured the territories known today as the West Bank and Gaza. Since then the status of these territories and their occupants has been unclear. It is incorrect legally, factually and even morally to speak of an occupation, which implies there was

once a Palestinian entity in these territories, and that this is now occupied by Israeli forces.

Before 1967 the West Bank was controlled by Jordan, and Gaza by Egypt. We should not speak of the "occupied territories," but more accurately of "disputed territories."

THERE HAS never been a Palestinian state in all of history. By contrast, the State of Israel is the third Jewish state on the same land, the first dating back 3,280 years to when Joshua led the Jewish people into the land of Israel. Furthermore, Israel has strong claims to the West Bank, which is part of the biblical Israel that the Jews have always lived in. One of the holiest sites of Judaism is there - Hebron, where the founding fathers and mothers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca and Leah, are buried.

Apart from the city of Jerusalem, the ancient capital of the Jewish people from the times of King David, the West Bank and Gaza were never annexed, pending the resolution of their status. For decades Israel tried to negotiate with various parties to permanently resolve the future of the disputed territories, but is still in search of a genuine peace partner to represent the Palestinian Arabs.

Yasser Arafat demonstrated his inability to relinquish his dream of destroying Israel when he rejected prime minister Ehud Barak's incredibly generous offer at the Camp David talks in 2000 - a rejection which even Prince Bandar, the official representative of Saudi Arabia at the talks, described as a crime.

And now Hamas, which states in its founding constitution its aim of destroying Israel completely, is the democratically elected majority party of the Palestinian people.

AS AN example of what they are talking about, the apartheid accusers point to Israel's security fence and checkpoints, which limit the movement of people from the disputed territories into the internationally recognized borders of the State of Israel. In this they are also wrong.

After the collapse of the Camp David talks, Arafat and other Palestinian groups dispatched suicide bomber after suicide bomber into Israel, targeting Jewish civilians. In the past eight years, terrorist attacks have led to more than 1,300 civilians being murdered and 10,000 wounded by the human guided missiles of the Islamic suicide bombers.

Given Israel's relatively small population, proportionately, such carnage in South Africa would mean more than 10,000 murdered and more than 80,000 injured. What would we South Africans do if so many of our fellow citizens were blown up by suicide bombers? Appreciate for the moment what this would mean in the context of the US, where the murder of about 3,000 people at the World Trade Center bombings led to the invasion of two countries. Proportionately, had the US sustained similar casualties to those suffered in Israel, almost 80,000 Americans would have been killed and about 600,000 injured.

THE TRAUMA inflicted on the Israeli people from the relentless barrage unleashed by the Palestinian leadership, enjoying widespread support from its people, is indescribable. Israel erected a security fence to shield it from the attacks launched from the disputed territories across its internationally recognized borders. Every sovereign country is legally and morally entitled to erect a fence to defend its people from attacks launched from the outside.

The fence has been remarkably successful and has reduced successful suicide bombings by up to 90 percent. Israel relies on the most fundamental moral and legal principle - the right to self-defense. Never before in recorded history has any nation endured such civilian casualties and responded with such restraint. The security fence is a defensive instrument, and the most humanitarian one possible in a situation where the alternative is heavy military action which would result in the death of thousands.

None of this has anything to do with apartheid, and everything to do with an ongoing war over the disputed territories, and over the very existence of the Jewish state. After nearly 2,000 years of exile, persecutions and genocides, the Jewish people are surely entitled to a tiny strip of country to call their own.

If there is an analogy to the South African situation, it is that Israel is like the African National Congress, which was forced into the armed struggle because it had no partner for peace. As soon as the National Party came around to wanting genuinely negotiations, the situation was resolved. Our South African experience has taught us that you cannot make peace unless both parties to the conflict wish to resolve it.

When the Arab world is ready to make peace, Israel will be there. Let us all pray to God that this happens soon so that the misery and suffering of all can be brought to an immediate end. (Jerusalem Post Aug 11)

The writer is chief rabbi of South Africa.