

Date and Time: Saturday, May 4, 2024 2:41:00AM EEST

Job Number: 223498891

Documents (100)

1. [*Diaspora Jews and the war*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

2. [*Israel presses its attack on Gaza Death toll in attacks rises to 280, with 600 wounded Hamas leaders vow revenge*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

3. [*Swiss gov't official slams ADL for 'non-factual' ads. Campaign claims Swiss - Iranian energy deal 'legitimizes' Ahmadinejad, supports terrorism*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

4. [*Letters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

5. [*Israel presses its attack on Gaza Death toll in attacks rises to 280, with 600 wounded Hamas leaders vow revenge*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

6. [*AXIS OF ADVENTURE Revelation on the road to Damascus Peter Hughes is overwhelmed by the sites - and the hospitality shown to him - in a country he had expected to be difficult*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

7. [*On history's front line*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

8. [*Olmert dodging ceasefire meetings*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

9. [*Hamas softens terms for ceasefire; Egypt meetings. Temporary truce would see Israel withdraw as talks continue*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

10. [*Why Should This Advocacy Group Get State Taxpayer Funding?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

11. [*Olmert dodging ceasefire meetings*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

12. [*The Week In Letters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

13. [*Letters to the Editor*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

14. [*Al-Qaida's tactics mean it quickly wears out its welcome*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

15. [*Free speech, not free soapboxes*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

16. [Former Olmert ally seeking job; Israeli foreign minister has become prime minister's toughest critic](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

17. [Israeli tanks expected in Gaza as foreigners are allowed to flee](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

18. [Egypt providing help to wounded Palestinians](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

19. [Ground offensive expected as Israel allows foreigners to flee](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

20. [The right of self-defence](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

21. [*A Palestinian View: War crimes in Gaza put PA in awkward place*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

22. [*Kicking away the gun*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

23. [*A global crusader for common sense*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

24. [*Don't catch this bouquet*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

25. [*Israel kills 4 Palestinians*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

26. [ALSO SHOWING](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

27. [Don't write it off yet UN Human Rights Council](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

28. [US weighs Lebanon cash plea](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

29. [U.S. must expose al-Qaida brutality](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

30. [U.K. leader offers up his cabinet New foreign minister criticized Iraq war](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

31. [*Bush contrasts Arab, Israeli paths*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

32. [*Ticking Time Bomb*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

33. [*Thinking Right CRCT, menthol, a 'bloody fortune'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

34. [*Handicapped kept as slaves*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

35. [*Terror's Purse Strings*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

36. [*International briefs*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

37. [Comment - Philing the gaps in US foreign policy Trinity's Philosophical Society would do better to keep the conspiracy theories to a minimum](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

38. [Hamas threatens more bombings in Israel](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

39. [A mixed message](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

40. [Thinking Right: CRCT, menthol, a 'bloody fortune'](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

41. [Terror's purse strings Counterfeit luxury](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

42. [Weekend: BROTHERS IN ARMS: As a boy in Baghdad, Ghaith Abdul-Ahad was taught that Iranians were the 'worms of the earth'. Now, 20 years after the Iran - Iraq war, he visits Tehran to seek out veterans, officers, dissidents and Islamists, to hear their stories. How does he feel today about his old enemy?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

43. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

44. [The long wait for Ariel Two years ago Israeli leader Ariel Sharon fell into a coma. Family and supporters still cling to the hope that he will recover, RORY MCCARTHY reports](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

45. [Film & Music: Jazz, folk, world, etc: 'Governments can go to hell': Bringing together 12 musicians from across the Arab world was 'nuts', Music Matbakhs Justin Adams tells Dorian Lynskey, but the result has been harmony, not conflict](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

46. [True blue mufti](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

47. [Comment & Debate: As it turns 60, the fear is Israel has decided it can get by without peace: This nation was forged in refuge, not imperialism. But its people have grown cynical about hopes for a deal with Palestinians](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

48. [The once and future child murderer](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

49. [World Diary](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

50. [ABORTION MUST REMAIN AVAILABLE](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

51. [*Gaza crisis: a crossroads for Obama*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

52. [*Al-Jazeera , Gaza and a message to Qatar*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

53. [*Hypocrisy over Libertas funding*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

54. [*Column: Unconditional support of Israel must change*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

55. [*The war in Iran we might need*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

56. [*LEVERAGE NEGOTIATE FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

57. [Police find dynamite hidden in Paris store Warning demands Afghan withdrawal](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

58. [Survey of Israelis' Attitudes Toward Politics Finds Disgust and a Growing Apathy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

59. [World Report](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

60. [Picking up the pieces after the missiles stop falling Seen up close, conflict in Middle East is much more complex than outsiders realize](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

61. [Brit puts war critics in Cabinet](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

62. [*Iranians seek reform in today's vote; 43 Million Voters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

63. [*New broom faces huge challenge as ruling party falls after 61 years*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

64. [*Another look at the Hebron Peace House*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

65. [*It's all about leverage*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

66. [*No deputy for Brown after he decides to fly solo as PM*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

67. [Reviews](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

68. [Hamas and Israel are fighting under same old Gaza rules](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

69. [His father's house](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

70. [In the dorms, an odd pairing leads to hopes for peace](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

71. [Force and compromise put country back on even keel](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type

Narrowed by

72. [*Antisemitic Incidents Rise in France as Worry Increases About Ethnic Divisions*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 200973. [*The war in Iran we might need*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 200974. [*Auntie, how could you?*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 200975. [*Darkness falls on Gaza as Israel takes revenge for rocket attacks*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 200976. [*Brown turns to youth for top cabinet roles*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

77. [*Lebanon rebels to fight to the death*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

78. [*The war in Iran we might need*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

79. [*BEIRUT, LEBANON*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

80. [*Hamas set to renew bombings*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

81. [*For Israel 's shrillest critics, a boycott too far*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

82. [*My Say: The struggle for Palestine*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

83. [*The hostage industry ANALYSIS Terrorist groups with few resources are increasingly using a weapon with big impact: kidnap. Why? And how can captives be freed?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

84. [*International: Gaza: Voices from the frontline: 'It's a living hell and my children are petrified'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

85. [*ISRAEL, HAMAS BOTH WRONG IN COMPETING PATHOLOGIES*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

86. [*Crude oil lust behind the lies*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

87. [*It's All About Leverage*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

88. [*Stress, trauma take toll on embattled Israelis*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

89. [*Sport: Tennis: Australian Open: Keothavong makes use of circuit break to put women back on map*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

90. [*Geez Louise*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

91. [*Quebec 's Muslim Moderates Fight Back; A new Web site--Point de Bascule, or 'Tipping Point' --provides a rallying point for French -speaking Islamic thinkers who reject extremism*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

92. [*A Ten-Point Plan for Fostering Arab Democracy The strategic Interest*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

93. [From drab to decadent: the evolution of Islamic TV](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

94. [TRUTH TO EVIL](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

95. [Iraqi Troops Begin Operation in South, While a Cleric's Movement Reorganizes](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

96. [U.S. - Iranian talks long overdue](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

97. [No regrets from a man famed for terror attacks Letter from Algeria](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type

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News

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

98. [Dracula and Mary Poppins fight it out on screen for the last votes](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

99. [World datelines](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

100. [Acknowledge Militant Islam's Threat, Then We Can Counter It](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

Diaspora Jews and the war

The Jerusalem Post

January 26, 2009 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 15

Length: 1275 words

Byline: ISI LEIBLER

Highlight: One can imagine the response during the Blitz had Anglo-Jews sought to divide funds raised to alleviate the suffering of British civilians with German noncombatants. Candidly Speaking

Body

The virulent global response to our struggle to defend our citizens against a cruel and evil foe confirms that Balaam's biblical depiction of Jews as "the people that dwells alone" remains valid to this day.

Notwithstanding unprecedented efforts to minimize noncombatant casualties among enemies ruthlessly exploiting their own women and children as human shields, we were once again demonized. Diaspora Jews had to endure a new torrent of frequently violent anti-Semitism with demonstrators displaying placards proclaiming obscene messages like "Death to the Jews," "We are all Hamas" and "Jews to the gas." Even more shocking, purportedly respectable liberals joined in some of these murderous hate fests.

Despite being vastly outnumbered by Muslims (other than in the US) and enveloped in a violent anti-Semitic climate reminiscent of the 1930s, most Jewish communities maintained their support for Israel. The fact that this time Israeli spokesmen effectively articulated their case undoubtedly encouraged many of the traditionally more timid Jewish leaders in smaller communities to speak up.

American Jewry, encompassing the vast majority of Diaspora Jews, remained steadfast in its support. AIPAC, despite having been the target of a radical Jewish campaign seeking to discredit it, retained its standing as a responsible and effective lobbying group supported by the leading American Jewish agencies.

It was gratifying to observe that the highly vocal fringe groups like J Street, Israel Policy Forum and other left-wing clusters who had been urging the US administration to exert pressure on the government were marginalized and to date have been utterly ineffective.

ELSEWHERE, THE response of the smaller Diaspora Jewish communities was sometimes more problematic and largely determined by the attitudes of individual leaders. The vast majority displayed considerable fortitude and responded to the anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic venom with public expressions of solidarity. Most Jewish community leaders were also attacked in the media for their support of Israel by people of Jewish origin, many of whose only involvement in Jewish affairs related exclusively to Israel bashing.

In Europe, the French under the leadership of CRIF, once again emerged as the most robust Jewish community. In the UK, even the Board of Deputies of British Jews which has a penchant for lying low and trying to avoid rocking the boat, responded to pressure from grassroots activists and endorsed public meetings expressing solidarity which were well attended.

Diaspora Jews and the war

Predictably, the obsequious Board of Deputies launched a major appeal for funds to provide medical assistance to be equally divided between civilians in "Gaza and in Israel" presumably to demonstrate that Anglo Jewry is no less distressed concerning the plight of Palestinians than about their own kinsmen. Supporting the humanitarian needs of Palestinians is, of course, commendable. Even residents of the South who endured Hamas missile attacks for eight years contributed aid to noncombatants in Gaza. However it is doubtful whether the "noble" sentiments displaying equal concern to both parties conveyed in the Board of Deputies appeal will impress anyone, including the general British public and certainly not the supporters of Hamas. One can imagine the response during the World War II Blitz had Anglo-Jews sought to divide funds raised to alleviate the suffering of British civilians with German noncombatants.

IN CONTRAST to the UK, the Australian Jewish community has a long tradition of maintaining a proactive approach. When prime minister John Howard, renowned for over a decade as one of Israel's greatest friends, was defeated, there was considerable concern that Australia's policy toward Israel could tilt toward the European model with its propensity to endorse moral equivalence. To the relief of the Jewish community, the new Labor Party Prime Minister Kevin Rudd unequivocally maintained his predecessor's policy of friendship to Israel. However last November, his government stunned the Jewish community by endorsing a UN resolution which went to the lengths of accusing Israel of breaching the Geneva Conventions. The Jewish community rallied and protested in a robust but responsible manner.

Subsequently, when the Gaza war erupted, the Australian government again emerged as one of Israel's few friends in the international arena and in the UN consistently justifying its right to take measures necessary to defend its citizens. This demonstrates how even a small Jewish community can have a positive impact if it is willing to stand up and be counted.

In that context, one must commend the courageous South African Jewish Board of Deputies which was not deterred from promoting the case for Israel despite the hostile environment surrounding it.

ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL level, the poor performance of the New York-based World Jewish Congress whose Plenary Assembly opens in Jerusalem today was highly disappointing. The raison d'être of this global Jewish body is to provide leadership and direction to the smaller Jewish communities, especially during periods of crisis. To his credit, WJC president Ronald Lauder did participate in the American Jewish Presidents Conference solidarity mission to Israel. Likewise, the European Jewish Congress, an autonomous offshoot of the WJC, did encourage its constituents to support Israel. But despite the global tsunami of anti-Semitism and its obligation to raise its voice in defense of Israel, the New York head office of the WJC has been virtually invisible over the past month.

Their incompetence is also exemplified by the ongoing Chavez fiasco. Last year, the WJC was criticized for groveling to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez after he had mumbled a few words about opposing anti-Semitism and signed a statement with the Argentinean and Brazilian presidents "condemning anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism." Despite being aware that Chavez remained totally committed to Iran and had been facilitating the penetration of Hizbullah into Latin America, the WJC leaders lavished him with praise and predicted that the Venezuelan ambassador previously withdrawn from Israel would soon return to Tel Aviv.

When the war against Hamas erupted, Chavez accused Israel of inflicting a "holocaust" on the Palestinians, demanded that their leaders be charged with war crimes, expelled the Israeli ambassador and called on Venezuelan Jews to dissociate themselves from Israel. The head of the local Jewish community, Avraham Benshimol, courageously defended Israel and condemned Chavez.

Following this, WJC secretary-general Michael Schneider was urged to speedily issue an appropriate statement and delete the lead story on the World Jewish Congress Web site which continued extolling the virtues of Chavez. Yet, weeks later, after Chavez had already formally severed relations with Israel and virtually every major Jewish organization had condemned the Venezuelan government, the WJC statements praising Chavez remain the lead story. Hopefully the global Jewish body will get its act together after its assembly.

If history is to be any guide, one can expect that sooner or later there will be another upheaval that will again put the Israel-Diaspora relationship to the test. One of the prime tasks of the new government following the February

Diaspora Jews and the war

elections should be to resurrect the ministry of Diaspora affairs which went into cold storage after the retirement of former minister Natan Sharansky. This ministry should become an essential instrument for the strengthening of ties between Jews everywhere in peace as well as in war.

ileibler@netvision.net.il

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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Israel presses its attack on Gaza; Death toll in attacks rises to 280, with 600 wounded; Hamas leaders vow revenge

The International Herald Tribune

December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1607 words

Byline: Taghreed El-Khodary and Ethan Bronner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Ethan Bronner reported from Jerusalem. Isabel Kershner contributed reporting from Netivot, Israel, and Robert Pear from Crawford, Texas .

*

Israeli airstrikes against Hamas facilities in Gaza continued for a second day on Sunday and the death toll rose to more than 280 as Israel retaliated for rocket fire from the area with its most severe campaign against Palestinian militants in decades.

The Palestinian groups again launched barrages of rockets and mortars into Israel on Sunday, extending their reach further than ever before, and the Israeli government approved the emergency call-up of thousands of army reservists in preparation for a possible ground operation.

Speaking before the weekly cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, Defense Minister Ehud Barak said the army "will deepen and broaden its actions as needed" and "will continue to act in Gaza."

Among the 30 or more targets hit Saturday night and early Sunday were the main security compound and prison in Gaza City known as the Saraya; metal workshops throughout Gaza; Hamas military posts; and the house of a chemistry professor from Gaza's Islamic University. The Hamas-owned Al-Aqsa television station was also struck, as was a mosque that the Israeli military said was housing armed men and was being used as a terrorist operation center.

Palestinian officials said that most of the dead in Gaza were security officers for Hamas, including two senior commanders, and that at least 600 people had been wounded in the attacks.

The Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, said on Sunday that "the patience, determination and stamina" of the residents of the Israeli home front would, in the end, determine the success of the Israeli military and diplomatic campaign.

Two rockets fell in the vicinity of the major Israeli port city of Ashdod, almost 40 kilometers, or 25 miles, north of Gaza, a military spokeswoman said. Others landed in the coastal city of Ashkelon. Several Israelis were lightly

Israel presses its attack on Gaza Death toll in attacks rises to 280, with 600 wounded Hamas leaders vow revenge

wounded by shrapnel. The hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens now within rocket range have been instructed to stay close to protected spaces, and an emergency has been declared.

Israeli military officials said that the airstrikes, which began on Saturday morning, were the start of what could be days or even months of an effort to force Hamas to end its rocket barrages into southern Israel.

After the initial airstrikes, dozens of rockets were fired into southern Israel, sending thousands of Israelis into bomb shelters. One man was killed Saturday in the town of Netivot, the first death from rocket fire since it intensified a week ago.

A number of governments and international officials, including leaders of Russia, Egypt, the European Union and the United Nations, condemned Israel's use of force and also called on Hamas to end the rocket fire. But in strong terms, the Bush administration blamed Hamas for the violence and demanded that it stop firing rockets.

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, a fierce rival of Hamas, urged the Islamic militant group to renew a truce with Israel that had collapsed last week, news services reported.

Early Sunday morning in New York, the United Nations Security Council issued a statement expressing concern about the escalation of the conflict and calling on both parties for an immediate end to all violence. The statement came after the 15-member council met for more than four hours in closed session.

A military operation had been forecast and demanded by Israeli officials for weeks, ever since the rocky cease-fire between Israel and Hamas fully collapsed more than a week ago, leading again to rocket attacks in large numbers against Israel and isolated Israeli operations in Gaza. The Israeli Army says that Palestinian militants have fired more than 300 rockets and mortars at Israeli targets over the past week, and 10 times that number over the past year.

Still, there was a shocking quality to the Saturday attacks, which began in broad daylight as police cadets were graduating, women were shopping at an outdoor market and children were emerging from school.

The center of Gaza City was a scene of chaotic horror, with rubble everywhere, sirens wailing and women shrieking as dozens of mutilated bodies were laid out on the pavement and in the lobby of Shifa Hospital so that family members could identify them. The dead included civilians, including several construction workers and at least two children in school uniforms.

By afternoon, shops were shuttered, funerals began and mourning tents were visible on nearly every major street of this densely populated city.

The leader of the Hamas government in Gaza, Ismail Haniya, said in a statement that "Palestine has never witnessed an uglier massacre." Later, in a televised speech, he vowed to fight Israel. "We say in all confidence that even if we are hung on the gallows or they make our blood flow in the streets or they tear our bodies apart, we will bow only before God and we will not abandon Palestine," he said.

In Damascus, Hamas's supreme leader, Khaled Meshal, said in an interview with Al Jazeera television that he was calling for a new Palestinian intifada against Israel, including the resumption of suicide attacks within Israel for the first time since 2005. Hamas, he said, had accepted "all the peaceful options, but without results."

"We wanted to attack military targets while the terrorists were inside the facilities and before Hamas was able to get its rockets out that were stored in some of the targets," said a top Israeli security official, briefing a group of reporters by telephone on condition of anonymity.

"Right now, we have to hit Hamas hard to stop the launching," he added. "I don't see any other way for Hamas to change its behavior."

Israel presses its attack on Gaza Death toll in attacks rises to 280, with 600 wounded Hamas leaders vow revenge

Hamas had made it known in recent weeks that it doubted Israel would engage in a major military undertaking because of its coming elections. But in some ways the elections have made it impossible for officials like Barak not to react. The Israeli public has grown anxious and angry over the rocket fire, which while causing no recent deaths and few injuries is deeply disturbing for those living near Gaza.

Israeli officials said that anyone linked to the Hamas security structure or government was fair game because Hamas was a terrorist group that sought Israel's destruction. But with jobs increasingly scarce in Gaza because of an international embargo on Hamas, young men are tempted by the steady work of the police force without necessarily fully accepting the Hamas ideology. One of the biggest tolls on Saturday was at a police cadet graduation ceremony in which 15 people were killed.

Spokesmen for Hamas officials, who have mostly gone underground, called on militants to seek revenge and fight to the last drop of blood. Several compared what was happening to the 2006 war between Israel and the Lebanese militia Hezbollah, when Israel reacted to the capture and killing of soldiers along its northern border with air raids, followed by a ground attack. Hezbollah is widely viewed as having withstood those assaults and emerged much stronger politically.

The Arab League initially called an emergency meeting of foreign ministers for Sunday in Cairo, but later postponed it to Wednesday to give ministers time to respond.

The Palestine Liberation Organization, dominated by Abbas's Fatah movement, called a one-day commercial strike throughout the West Bank and urged Palestinians to take to the streets in peaceful protests.

Governments that dislike Hamas, like Egypt's, Jordan's and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, are in a delicate position. They blame Hamas for having taken over Gaza by force 18 months ago after its victory in elections for the Palestinian Parliament, and they oppose its rocket fire on Israeli towns and communities.

But the sight of scores of Palestinians killed by Israeli warplanes outraged their citizens, and anti-Israel demonstrations broke out across the region.

Egypt, worried about possible efforts by Palestinians to enter the country, has set up machine guns along the Gaza border. But on Saturday it temporarily opened the Rafah border crossing in order to allow the wounded to be brought to Egyptian hospitals.

Hamas is officially committed to Israel's destruction, and after it took over Gaza in 2007, it said it would not recognize Israel, honor previous Palestinian Authority commitments to it or end its violence against Israelis.

Israel, backed by the United States, Europe, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority, has sought to isolate Hamas by squeezing Gaza economically, a policy that human rights groups condemn as collective punishment. Israel and Egypt, which control routes into and out of Gaza, have blocked nearly all but humanitarian aid from going in.

The result has been the near death of the Gazan economy. While enough food has gone in to avoid starvation, the level of suffering is very high and getting worse each week, especially in recent weeks as Israel closed the routes entirely for about 10 days in reaction to daily rocket fire.

Opening the routes to commerce was Hamas's main goal in its cease-fire with Israel, just as ending the rocket fire was Israel's central aim. But while rocket firings did go down to 15 to 20 a month from hundreds a month, Israel said it would not permit trade to begin again because the rocket fire had not completely stopped and because Hamas continued to smuggle weapons from Egypt through desert tunnels. Hamas said this was a violation of the agreement, a sign of Israel's real intentions and cause for further rocket fire. On Wednesday alone, some 70 rockets from Gaza hit Israel.

Israel presses its attack on Gaza Death toll in attacks rises to 280, with 600 wounded Hamas leaders vow revenge

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Swiss gov't official slams ADL for 'non-factual' ads. Campaign claims Swiss-Iranian energy deal 'legitimizes' Ahmadinejad, supports terrorism

The Jerusalem Post

April 10, 2008 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 1144 words

Byline: HAVIV RETTIG

Body

A Swiss government official on Wednesday blasted the Anti-Defamation League for "not corresponding to the facts" in an ad campaign claiming that a 25-year, multi-billion-dollar Swiss-Iranian energy deal would contribute to international terrorism.

The deal, signed by the state-owned National Iranian Gas Export Company (NIGEC) and the private Swiss company EGL in March, will see some 5.5 billion cubic meters of gas per year flowing from Iran to Europe by 2012. Depending on market factors, the deal's value could reach more than \$30 billion.

The deal was signed in Teheran on March 17 in the presence of Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey, who stated that it did not violate either UN sanctions - which Switzerland has joined - or even US law, which sanctions companies that invest large sums in Iran's energy sector.

The US embassy in Bern criticized the deal in March, saying it sent "the wrong message at a time in which Iran continues to defy UN Security Council resolutions that demand a suspension of activities with respect to nuclear enrichment and processing."

At the time, Calmy-Rey explained that the purpose of the deal was to "decrease our dependence, and the dependence of Europe, on Russian gas." A representative of Swiss signatory EGL told The Jerusalem Post at the time that the company was not investing inside Iran, but had only signed a contract to purchase gas and deliver it out of the country.

Yet, "as the Swiss government pursues its own narrow economic interests, it is bankrolling the world's leading sponsor of terrorism," accused one of the ADL ads, published on Tuesday in The Wall Street Journal Europe, while another published in The International Herald Tribune bluntly called Switzerland "the world's newest financier of terrorism."

Similar ads were published in Swiss papers Le Temps, Le Matin Bleu, and Neue Zurcher Zeitung, as well as in The New York Times and The New York Sun.

According to the ADL, the deal means that "the [Swiss] government is funding an Iranian regime that viciously abuses the human rights of million of its own citizens, especially women and minorities."

But in a conversation with the Post on Wednesday, a Swiss government official rejected the criticism outright.

Swiss gov't official slams ADL for 'non-factual' ads. Campaign claims Swiss - Iranian energy deal 'legitimizes' Ahmadinejad, supports terrorism

"On what grounds does an NGO criticize a sovereign country like Switzerland for following its own long-term strategic rationale, which is in line with international considerations?" demanded Lars Kunchel, spokesperson for the Swiss Foreign Ministry in Bern.

"It is beyond the pale to accuse us of financing terrorism," he declared, adding that the accusations "are simply not true."

Noting that "the Swiss state is not party to the deal," which was signed with the private company EGL, Kunchel said the deal "fully conforms to all existing UN sanctions against Iran and is even in full conformity with the Iran Sanctions Act, which is a piece of American legislation that has extraterritorial ambitions. Most countries outside the US would not respect another national law as their own law, but even if you accept US legislation as internationally valid for all countries, the contract in question is 100 percent in line with this legislation."

Saying that his criticism of the ADL was his own opinion and not the formal response of the Swiss government, Kunchel listed 10 other countries that purchase energy from Iran, including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, South Africa, China, India and fellow European states France, Italy and Greece. These countries, he said, have not been the targets of ADL campaigns.

At the same time, "to my knowledge, the Swiss government was not even approached by the ADL, other than with these ads," he said.

Reached by phone, ADL director Abe Foxman said the Swiss state still had responsibility for the deal, noting that "this private deal was signed and delivered by the foreign minister, who flew to Teheran to conclude it. Why was that gesture necessary?"

According to Foxman, "Switzerland is hiding behind legalities" on the question of sanctions. "This is a moral question. Switzerland pretends and desires to be the conscience of society. It is the repository of so many international treaties because of its high standard. What kind of standard is this setting at this time?"

Switzerland was a target for ADL scrutiny, he added, because "this deal is being done now, after the ascendancy of [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad, after we know Iran is aiding and abetting Hizbullah and Hamas, while the deals of other countries have been in process for several years."

Foxman also took issue with the complaint that ADL had not approached the Swiss government before launching the media campaign. "Why do we need to discuss with them something they've already done, and done so publicly?"

Another American Jewish official who asked not to be named said the problem was not with the business side of the deal, but with the Swiss government's "legitimization" of the Iranian regime.

"Even if they're right," he said of Kunchel's remarks, "the Swiss have only themselves to blame. If [Calmy-Rey] conducts a highly publicized visit to a Holocaust-denying regime, is photographed in a head scarf smiling with Ahmadinejad, and permits material support to the economy of a regime that seeks to eliminate Israel, how do they think the Jews are going to react? The world is rightly going to be looking at this relationship under a magnifying glass and trying to understand its meaning."

According to the official, "it's not just the Jews who are upset. The American government is angry over this, too. What did the Swiss expect?"

The deal, ostensibly intended to secure Switzerland's energy supplies, may yet prove harmful to the country's energy security, according to Prof. Uzi Arad, a former Mossad director of intelligence who holds a PhD from Princeton in energy security and has worked closely with Swiss authorities in the past.

"Simply by strengthening this Iranian regime, the deal may be making Iranian gas the least secure on Earth," he told the Post on Wednesday. "The appeasing nature of [Calmy-Rey's] visit unquestionably strengthened Iranian

Swiss gov't official slams ADL for 'non-factual' ads. Campaign claims Swiss - Iranian energy deal 'legitimizes' Ahmadinejad, supports terrorism

defiance. In supporting an aggressive, hostile regime, it only brings us closer to the kind of crisis that [National Infrastructures Minister Binyamin] Ben-Eliezer, [French President Nicolas] Sarkozy or [US presidential hopeful John] McCain have warned about," explained Arad, referring to a possible military showdown with the West, or between Iran and Israel.

Such a confrontation would likely lead to the cancellation of the deal and the loss of the gas supply.

"This deal isn't only in bad taste, when many countries are willingly giving up on lucrative deals to help in the international effort to isolate Iran; it's also not clever on their part," Arad said. "Rather than increasing Swiss energy security, it only harms Switzerland's reputation."

Graphic

Photo: SWISS FOREIGN Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey met with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Teheran last month. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post
May 20, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1187 words

Byline: Jacob Chinitz, Michael D. Hirsch, Gary Fouse, Steve Kramer, Nina Zeldis, Gabor Frankel, Gloria Mound

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Citizens all round

Sir, - In "40% of Jews feel alienated from state" (May 19) one of the reasons given for the trend is globalization.

In a 1968 American Jewish Congress-Israel dialogue, celebrated scholar George Steiner said that to him, the essence of Jewishness was homelessness and therefore he was against having a Jewish state. At the time I asked, What passport does Steiner have - UN? Universe? Or British, since he lived in England?

I think globalization is a great hypocrisy as far as national identity goes. Those Israelis who would rather not have an Israeli passport (Avrum Burg?) would still accept some other national identity, despite "globalization." So why can't we be citizens of the world, loyal to it - and still have Israeli passports, and still defend this little part of the Big Globe?

JACOB CHINITZ

Jerusalem

Wake-up call

Sir, - Never would I have thought that a news item in the Post would enhance my prayers, but it has. Since reading "London's haredim targeted by anti-Semitic graffiti" (May 18), I have a much deeper appreciation of the blessing for the ingathering of the exiles, which we recite thrice daily as part of the Amidah.

When I read the quote by one of the London-based haredim - "It makes us feel that we are in exile" - I realized why the opening words of the blessing are "Sound the great shofar." Truly, this gentleman is in need of a wake-up call...

Sir, you are in exile. And as I see how misguided my Diaspora brethren have become, I appreciate all the more the blessing's closing: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Who gathers in the lost of His people Israel."

MICHAEL D. HIRSCH

Kochav Ya'ir

Hate festers at UCI

Letters

Sir, - This past week, we at the University of California at Irvine suffered through another Muslim Student Union hate fest. Make no mistake: The administration of UCI is negligent in allowing Muslim hatemongers to come to our campus each quarter to spout their filth.

Following are extracts from a letter I wrote to the New University campus newspaper:

Now that the Israel 60th birthday celebration and "Palestinian Holocaust" week have concluded, a few brief comments. The Israeli celebration was upbeat and happy, while some of the Muslim Student Union's speakers (not all) used inflammatory language to describe Israel and America. At least three - Amir Abdel Malik Ali, Mohammed Al-Asi and Norman Finkelstein - are vocal supporters of the Hamas and Hizbullah.

Two items on the "Wall" put up by the MSU drew my attention. The first was a quote from a former Black Panther, now in prison for murdering a police officer, that had nothing to do with any "struggle"; the second was a picture of Ariel Sharon, drawn in the old style of Julius Streicher's virulently anti-Semitic Nazi Der Stuermer newspaper: big hooked nose, big lips, etc. That a university would even allow this type of picture on its campus is a disgrace.

Hundreds, including professors and deans, came to hear Finkelstein speak. Yet the same week, about 20 people came to hear Nonie Darwish, a courageous former Muslim who has put her life on the line to defend Israel, America and condemn terror. I was the only faculty member present, and I am only a part-time teacher.

Political activist and author David Horowitz, in his campus appearance, singled out UCI as "the worst campus in this country" for anti-Semitic activity. In the question and answer period I informed him that 99% of the students at UCI have nothing to do with this ugliness. I also told him that there are two problems: the MSU, which brings in hateful speakers, and a university administration that is hiding under its desks - either out of fear or apathy, or simply uncaring about the concerns of its Jewish students.

The public needs to know what is going on at UCI, and I hope Horowitz and others keep the spotlight shining.

GARY FOUSE

University of California at Irvine

California

Go on, negotiate...

Sir, - I was chagrined to read that the northern Negev kibbutzim secretary, Ze'ev Shor, thinks the military approach to Hamas hasn't worked ("Kibbutz Movement head: Government should talk to Hamas," May 19). Doesn't he realize that Israel hasn't utilized a tenth of its military capacity against Hamas, courtesy of our government?

Sure, negotiate with Hamas, whose raison d'etre is the destruction of Israel. Maybe they'll allow us six more months of existence (the cease-fire) while they increase their supply of weapons for the next round of fighting.

STEVE KRAMER

Alfei Menashe

...with those who

choose terror

Sir, - Kudos to America for insisting on elections in the Palestinian Authority. How else to show that when given the opportunity to choose between peace and terror, the Palestinians choose terror?

Whatever Mr. Obama learned at Harvard, it wasn't the Philosophy of Logic ("Obama turns up heat on Bush, McCain over Iran, Hamas policy," May 18).

Letters

NINA ZELDIS

Ra'anana

Let Pearl's humanity

be his legacy

Sir, - As they very often do, the detractors of Larry Derfner misinterpreted his piece on the slain Daniel Pearl ("Dignity & courage," Letters, May 18). Far from any intention to destroy Pearl's integrity, my hunch is that Derfner simply felt that by blowing those famous words ("My father is Jewish. My mother is Jewish. I am a Jew") out of proportion, those interested in epos-creation do a disservice to the human being himself - and to historical reality.

Derfner, rightly, pointed out that the victim was a martyr rather than a pawn-like, constructed "hero," simplified for general consumption. Perhaps Daniel Pearl, a journalist who worked for The Wall Street Journal, would not have wanted that, either.

Derfner took nothing away from Daniel Pearl's credibility, character and memory. On the contrary.

GABOR FRANKL

Budapest

Uncovering identities

Sir, - Further to "A Prologue to WWII" (Ervin Birnbaum, May 15): A few years ago, the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women in the UK, with the aid of archivist Martin Sugarman, compiled a comprehensive list of Jewish participants in the Spanish Civil War, including the Botwin and Lincoln Brigade fighters, showing the country of origin of each one. For many, their involvement was clearly a way of expressing a hitherto hidden Jewish identity. Our institute is proud to have the only copy in Israel, which can be viewed at our library.

Even so, the Jewish origin of many of the Republican fighters, particularly the Spanish ones, remains unrecorded.

At the end of the Civil War and the capitulation of the Republican Army, many soldiers fled across the border into France and after imprisonment there were sent to concentration camps, particularly Mauthausen, where the majority died from the indescribable treatment.

We at Casa Shalom hold a small amount of detail on these men, and are hoping that with the opening of the new Holocaust Archives at Bad Arolsen in Germany, more information about their places of origin will come to light. We already know that a number came from the Balearic Islands, and would greatly appreciate any information Post readers may have.

Kindly email marrano@aquanet.co.il

GLORIA MOUND Executive Director

Casa Shalom Institute

for Marrano-Anusim Studies, Gan Yavneh

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Israel presses its attack on Gaza; Death toll in attacks rises to 280, with 600 wounded; Hamas leaders vow revenge

The International Herald Tribune

December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1607 words

Byline: Taghreed El-Khodary and Ethan Bronner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Ethan Bronner reported from Jerusalem. Isabel Kershner contributed reporting from Netivot, Israel, and Robert Pear from Crawford, Texas .

*

Israeli airstrikes against Hamas facilities in Gaza continued for a second day on Sunday and the death toll rose to more than 280 as Israel retaliated for rocket fire from the area with its most severe campaign against Palestinian militants in decades.

The Palestinian groups again launched barrages of rockets and mortars into Israel on Sunday, extending their reach further than ever before, and the Israeli government approved the emergency call-up of thousands of army reservists in preparation for a possible ground operation.

Speaking before the weekly cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, Defense Minister Ehud Barak said the army "will deepen and broaden its actions as needed" and "will continue to act in Gaza."

Among the 30 or more targets hit Saturday night and early Sunday were the main security compound and prison in Gaza City known as the Saraya; metal workshops throughout Gaza; Hamas military posts; and the house of a chemistry professor from Gaza's Islamic University. The Hamas-owned Al-Aqsa television station was also struck, as was a mosque that the Israeli military said was housing armed men and was being used as a terrorist operation center.

Palestinian officials said that most of the dead in Gaza were security officers for Hamas, including two senior commanders, and that at least 600 people had been wounded in the attacks.

The Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, said on Sunday that "the patience, determination and stamina" of the residents of the Israeli home front would, in the end, determine the success of the Israeli military and diplomatic campaign.

Two rockets fell in the vicinity of the major Israeli port city of Ashdod, almost 40 kilometers, or 25 miles, north of Gaza, a military spokeswoman said. Others landed in the coastal city of Ashkelon. Several Israelis were lightly

Israel presses its attack on Gaza Death toll in attacks rises to 280, with 600 wounded Hamas leaders vow revenge

wounded by shrapnel. The hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens now within rocket range have been instructed to stay close to protected spaces, and an emergency has been declared.

Israeli military officials said that the airstrikes, which began on Saturday morning, were the start of what could be days or even months of an effort to force Hamas to end its rocket barrages into southern Israel.

After the initial airstrikes, dozens of rockets were fired into southern Israel, sending thousands of Israelis into bomb shelters. One man was killed Saturday in the town of Netivot, the first death from rocket fire since it intensified a week ago.

A number of governments and international officials, including leaders of Russia, Egypt, the European Union and the United Nations, condemned Israel's use of force and also called on Hamas to end the rocket fire. But in strong terms, the Bush administration blamed Hamas for the violence and demanded that it stop firing rockets.

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, a fierce rival of Hamas, urged the Islamic militant group to renew a truce with Israel that had collapsed last week, news services reported.

Early Sunday morning in New York, the United Nations Security Council issued a statement expressing concern about the escalation of the conflict and calling on both parties for an immediate end to all violence. The statement came after the 15-member council met for more than four hours in closed session.

A military operation had been forecast and demanded by Israeli officials for weeks, ever since the rocky cease-fire between Israel and Hamas fully collapsed more than a week ago, leading again to rocket attacks in large numbers against Israel and isolated Israeli operations in Gaza. The Israeli Army says that Palestinian militants have fired more than 300 rockets and mortars at Israeli targets over the past week, and 10 times that number over the past year.

Still, there was a shocking quality to the Saturday attacks, which began in broad daylight as police cadets were graduating, women were shopping at an outdoor market and children were emerging from school.

The center of Gaza City was a scene of chaotic horror, with rubble everywhere, sirens wailing and women shrieking as dozens of mutilated bodies were laid out on the pavement and in the lobby of Shifa Hospital so that family members could identify them. The dead included civilians, including several construction workers and at least two children in school uniforms.

By afternoon, shops were shuttered, funerals began and mourning tents were visible on nearly every major street of this densely populated city.

The leader of the Hamas government in Gaza, Ismail Haniya, said in a statement that "Palestine has never witnessed an uglier massacre." Later, in a televised speech, he vowed to fight Israel. "We say in all confidence that even if we are hung on the gallows or they make our blood flow in the streets or they tear our bodies apart, we will bow only before God and we will not abandon Palestine," he said.

In Damascus, Hamas's supreme leader, Khaled Meshal, said in an interview with Al Jazeera television that he was calling for a new Palestinian intifada against Israel, including the resumption of suicide attacks within Israel for the first time since 2005. Hamas, he said, had accepted "all the peaceful options, but without results."

"We wanted to attack military targets while the terrorists were inside the facilities and before Hamas was able to get its rockets out that were stored in some of the targets," said a top Israeli security official, briefing a group of reporters by telephone on condition of anonymity.

"Right now, we have to hit Hamas hard to stop the launching," he added. "I don't see any other way for Hamas to change its behavior."

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Hamas had made it known in recent weeks that it doubted Israel would engage in a major military undertaking because of its coming elections. But in some ways the elections have made it impossible for officials like Barak not to react. The Israeli public has grown anxious and angry over the rocket fire, which while causing no recent deaths and few injuries is deeply disturbing for those living near Gaza.

Israeli officials said that anyone linked to the Hamas security structure or government was fair game because Hamas was a terrorist group that sought Israel's destruction. But with jobs increasingly scarce in Gaza because of an international embargo on Hamas, young men are tempted by the steady work of the police force without necessarily fully accepting the Hamas ideology. One of the biggest tolls on Saturday was at a police cadet graduation ceremony in which 15 people were killed.

Spokesmen for Hamas officials, who have mostly gone underground, called on militants to seek revenge and fight to the last drop of blood. Several compared what was happening to the 2006 war between Israel and the Lebanese militia Hezbollah, when Israel reacted to the capture and killing of soldiers along its northern border with air raids, followed by a ground attack. Hezbollah is widely viewed as having withstood those assaults and emerged much stronger politically.

The Arab League initially called an emergency meeting of foreign ministers for Sunday in Cairo, but later postponed it to Wednesday to give ministers time to respond.

The Palestine Liberation Organization, dominated by Abbas's Fatah movement, called a one-day commercial strike throughout the West Bank and urged Palestinians to take to the streets in peaceful protests.

Governments that dislike Hamas, like Egypt's, Jordan's and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, are in a delicate position. They blame Hamas for having taken over Gaza by force 18 months ago after its victory in elections for the Palestinian Parliament, and they oppose its rocket fire on Israeli towns and communities.

But the sight of scores of Palestinians killed by Israeli warplanes outraged their citizens, and anti-Israel demonstrations broke out across the region.

Egypt, worried about possible efforts by Palestinians to enter the country, has set up machine guns along the Gaza border. But on Saturday it temporarily opened the Rafah border crossing in order to allow the wounded to be brought to Egyptian hospitals.

Hamas is officially committed to Israel's destruction, and after it took over Gaza in 2007, it said it would not recognize Israel, honor previous Palestinian Authority commitments to it or end its violence against Israelis.

Israel, backed by the United States, Europe, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority, has sought to isolate Hamas by squeezing Gaza economically, a policy that human rights groups condemn as collective punishment. Israel and Egypt, which control routes into and out of Gaza, have blocked nearly all but humanitarian aid from going in.

The result has been the near death of the Gazan economy. While enough food has gone in to avoid starvation, the level of suffering is very high and getting worse each week, especially in recent weeks as Israel closed the routes entirely for about 10 days in reaction to daily rocket fire.

Opening the routes to commerce was Hamas's main goal in its cease-fire with Israel, just as ending the rocket fire was Israel's central aim. But while rocket firings did go down to 15 to 20 a month from hundreds a month, Israel said it would not permit trade to begin again because the rocket fire had not completely stopped and because Hamas continued to smuggle weapons from Egypt through desert tunnels. Hamas said this was a violation of the agreement, a sign of Israel's real intentions and cause for further rocket fire. On Wednesday alone, some 70 rockets from Gaza hit Israel.

Israel presses its attack on Gaza Death toll in attacks rises to 280, with 600 wounded Hamas leaders vow revenge

End of Document

AXIS OF ADVENTURE Revelation on the road to Damascus Peter Hughes is overwhelmed by the sites - and the hospitality shown to him - in a country he had expected to be difficult

The Daily Telegraph (LONDON)

April 12, 2008 Saturday

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Section: TRAVEL; SYRIA; Pg. 7

Length: 1494 words

Byline: Peter Hughes

Body

SYRIA BASICS

Peter Hughes travelled with Steppes Travel (01285 880980, www.steppestravel.co.uk). Ten days' b & b for two sharing

costs from pounds 1,745 per person.

That includes economy-class flights, private transfers and transport, services of a private English-speaking guide, entrance fees and Syrian visas.

Recommended guidebook:

Syria & Lebanon (Lonely Planet, pounds 13.99).

Damascus has had a corner in conversions for 2,000 years, since Saul of Tarsus saw the light and metamorphosed into St Paul the Apostle. I too underwent a transformation on the road to Damascus, not Pauline exactly, but definitely opinion-changing. My revelation was Syria.

I had gone to Syria because I thought it would be difficult. It's a country of which the West is suspicious, to say the least, and whose borders prickle with petty obstructions. I doubt if I would have obtained a visa had I admitted to being a journalist, certainly not so readily; and no one with an Israeli stamp in his passport will get farther than a Heathrow check-in desk. It was a country of which I was not just ignorant but mildly apprehensive. But then for most of us, our vision of Arabia is the version we have been fed, not an Arabia we have ever seen for ourselves.

Perhaps this was a case where travel could bypass politics, and contact between countries made people to people could make just the tiniest contribution to international harmony. God knows, it was worth a try.

First impressions were not too promising. Syria is, of course, a dictatorship, something of which you are continually reminded by the ubiquitous, clichéd posters of the president, Bashar al-Assad. Except that in Bashar's case he comes over not so much as glorious leader as employee of the month. He has troubled eyebrows, maybe because there are almost as many, much wilier portraits on display of his authoritarian father who died eight years ago. The only time my guide Mahmud's smile faltered was when I suggested that the president always looked worried.

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There is also a mild feeling of being, if not on the front line, somewhere near it. Drive out of Damascus and there are road signs to Baghdad and Beirut; the war memorials have 20th century-missiles as their emblems and in the desert a squadron of tanks was on manoeuvre. On my second day in Damascus a leader of Hezbollah was killed in the city by a car bomb.

But these were the politics I had gone there to sidestep. Strip away the system and the headlines and what you find is a relaxed and welcoming people, whose innate hospitality moved me more than once, and a country whose mixture of the spontaneous and the set piece makes it hugely fulfilling for travellers.

The old cities of Damascus and Aleppo are both World Heritage sites - the country has five - and so are themselves set pieces, but I remember them as much for my unplanned experiences.

Old Damascus is a confusion of houses from the 18th century and before. They bend confidentially over a tangle of tiny streets running in dark gullies beneath overhanging rooms. Buildings are propped up with wooden poles angled like brackets. Window frames are dislocated and there are large holes in the plaster. But there are also pockets of restoration. Enough for there to be a restriction on how many old buildings can be turned into new restaurants.

This is the longest continuously inhabited spot on earth, a fact that lends it an unexpectedly soothing sense of maturity. If you have a history that has been rolling for 6,000 years, you are unlikely to find much to impress you in news that rolls for 24 hours. The index of Damascus's occupants includes half the alphabet of marauding tribes, zealous sects and ruthless empires that have scavenged in the Middle East - from Assyrians and Chaldeans, through Persians, Greeks, Nabateans, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs and Crusaders to the Mamelukes, Ottomans and French. The city has an A-list of historical celebrities: Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, Hadrian, Saladin, Tamerlane and Lawrence of Arabia as well as St Paul.

The Great Umayyad Mosque occupies a site sacred for 3,000 years. Hadad, the Levantine rain god, was worshipped here, so, by the Romans, was Jupiter. Ruins of his temple survive. The Byzantines built a Christian cathedral to enshrine John the Baptist's head. His tomb stands now in the middle of the mosque's prayer hall. Before the mosque was completed in 715, the church was shared by Christians and Muslims; it is still held that one of the minarets will be the conduit for Jesus's descent on His return to earth.

I attended Friday mid-morning prayers. Past the sign for the "Putting on Special Clothes Room", where foreign females are required to don full-length robes, I crossed the one-and-a-half acre marble courtyard to enter the hall. It had the air of a very large, five-star hotel foyer made even larger by the absence of furniture. Beneath the high eau de nil ceiling and a glittering line of chandeliers, men sat around on the luxurious red carpet, propped against pillars, chatting or reading. Some snoozed. Children played with electronic games. They and the women were confined to their own bit of carpet. Shoes were strewn along the walls and piled against the colossal square columns under the dome.

Yesterday the Hezbollah leader had been assassinated. I wondered if it would figure in the imam's sermon. Instead, he spoke about the importance of love. Yes, he had taken his text from events of the previous day: it had been St Valentine's Day.

Never once was I made to feel uncomfortable about the West's policy in Iraq or anywhere else. Other misgivings were eroded, too. You don't get pestered in the streets. You can eat well, if without much variety, on very fresh, Lebanese-style mezes, salads and grills. Most restaurants serve alcohol. At one lunchtime six locals polished off a bottle of J&B scotch.

There are some hotels of real character. I especially liked the Talisman in Damascus, despite its being painted a ferocious ruby red. Built around two courtyards of a former house in the old Jewish quarter, it has spacious bedrooms, antique furniture puddled with mother of pearl inlay, and oodles of intricate Arab style without the usual Arab clutter.

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As for Syria's monuments, they are magnificent. If they were better known they would be leaping on to those "wonders to see before you die" lists. Palmyra, 150 miles from Damascus, is the skeleton of the great desert city the Romans built. A staging post for caravans bringing silk, spices and slaves from the east, it has a grand, colonnaded, dorsal street that was left unpaved for the sake of the camels. The desert is still spiny with its beige columns and strange towers containing tombs.

Apamea, nearer the coast, may not share the sandy spectacle of Palmyra, but it is four times the size. At Apamea more than 400 pillars of silvery stone lining its mile-long Grand Colonnade have been restored. Antony and Cleopatra once walked in their shade. Today men on motorcycles zoom around the ruins flogging fake antiques.

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55-foot pillar, it was for centuries the largest and most important church in the world.

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I was invited to a ceremony of condolence for the family of a man who had died the day before. In a long, brightly lit room with purple curtains, a cross between a ballroom and chapel of rest, male relatives of the deceased stood in line to receive the mourners. They too were men. The sight of so many men in dark suits ritually embracing was a bit like a scene from The Godfather. Tomorrow a similar event would be held for women.

We were given small cups of strong coffee and glasses of hot lemon water and sat for a respectful few minutes on chairs in facing rows on either side of the room. At the far end a muezzin intermittently intoned verses from the Koran through an amplifier with the echo turned up.

On the way to Palmyra, in the desert subfusc, stripped of everything but shadow and shape, Abu Ahmed, a Bedouin shepherd, made tea for me in his tent. Prolonged drought was making a hard life even tougher. I asked how he managed in winter's icy nights. "It would be warmer with two wives," he quipped. He refused to accept anything for the tea.

Syria was a revelation.

Load-Date: April 12, 2008

On history's front line

The Advertiser (Australia)

May 17, 2008 Saturday

1 - State Edition

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Section: MAGAZINE; Pg. 13

Length: 1583 words

Byline: PETER HUGHES

Body

For more than 6000 years, Damascus has been at the centre of world events. PETER HUGHES is overwhelmed by the sites - and the hospitality shown to him - in a city he had expected to be difficult.

DAMASCUS has had a corner in conversions for 2000 years, since Saul of Tarsus saw the light and metamorphosed into St Paul the Apostle. I too underwent a transformation on the road to Damascus, not Pauline exactly, but definitely opinion-changing. My revelation was Syria. I had gone to Syria because I thought it would be difficult. It's a country of which the West is suspicious, to say the least, and whose borders prick with petty obstructions. I doubt if I would have obtained a visa had I admitted to being a journalist, certainly not so readily; and no one with an Israeli stamp in his passport will get farther than the airport check-in desk. It was a country of which I was not just ignorant but mildly apprehensive. But then, for most of us, our vision of Arabia is the version we have been fed, not an Arabia we have seen for ourselves.

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Continued 14

From 13

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Getting there

Peregrine Adventures has a 14-day tour which discovers the secrets of Syria and Jordan. Highlights include visiting the Omayyad Mosque, the historic bazaars and alleyways of the old city in Damascus, the National Museum and the 2nd century AD Synagogue, with its brightly coloured frescoes. You will visit the Souk al-Hamidiyya, a grand covered arcade of shops and one of the most atmospheric places in the Middle East. Other highlights include a visit to Bosra, dinner in a Bedouin tent outside Palmyra and Syria's fairytale fortress, Krak, which dates back to 1031. Other destinations visited include Petra and Amman.

For details, phone Peregrine Travel Adelaide on 8223 5905 or visit www.peregrineadventures.com

Load-Date: May 16, 2008

Olmert dodging ceasefire meetings

The Australian

January 15, 2009 Thursday

2 - All-round First Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 7

Length: 746 words

Byline: John Lyons, Middle East Correspondent

Body

ISRAELI Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is ignoring a call by Defence Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni for a week-long ceasefire in Gaza to allow humanitarian assistance into the strip.

As the death toll from the 19-day offensive approaches 1000, reports emerged in Israel yesterday that Mr Olmert was avoiding a meeting with his two key ministers, Mr Barak and Ms Livni, in order to allow the military operation to continue.

Mr Olmert was not planning to convene the war cabinet overnight so as to again avoid confronting the issue with the ministers, both of whom support a ceasefire.

The newspaper Haaretz reported Mr Barak was concerned that when Barack Obama takes office next week, he will demand an immediate ceasefire -- putting enormous pressure on Israel.

It said Mr Barak had accepted the view of one of his commanders, Major General Yoav Galant, that expanding the operation could require a deployment of up to a year.

UN Secretary-General Ban

Ki-moon arrived in Cairo last night at the start of a week-long visit to Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Turkey to find an end to the conflict. He is not scheduled to meet Hamas officials.

So far, 970 Palestinians have been killed and an estimated 4400 injured since Israel began the attack on Gaza on December 27. Thirteen Israelis have been killed, including 10 soldiers in the Gaza, and several civilians injured from Hamas rockets fired into Israel.

The possibility of a second front for Israel was raised again last night after three rockets were fired from southern Lebanon into northern Israel. They caused no injuries or damage.

Last week, three rockets were fired from Lebanon, but Israeli officials believed they were isolated incidents and not part of any planned new war by Hezbollah.

The UN has estimated that 40per cent of Palestinians killed in Gaza have been women and children.

Olmert dodging ceasefire meetings

The apparent division between Mr Olmert and his two key ministers came as moderate Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas accused Israel of trying to "wipe out" Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

On the ground, fighting yesterday was heaviest in the south, near the Rafah crossing on the Egyptian border, and in the outer streets of Gaza City.

Israel has targeted the Rafah area because it believes Hamas has been using an extensive system of tunnels to smuggle weapons into Gaza, which are then used against southern Israel.

Israeli intelligence officials said yesterday Israel has yet to cripple the military wing of Hamas or destroy the group's ability to launch rockets.

Israel has delayed its all-out assault on the heart of Gaza's population centres because it believes that local leaders of Hamas have been shocked by the ferocity of Operation Cast Lead and want to end the fighting.

Despite the disagreements in cabinet, Mr Olmert remains determined to launch "phase three" of the operation, but hopes that the prospect of Israeli troops advancing with overwhelming firepower into Gaza's most built-up areas will deepen the tensions emerging within Hamas and force it to accept Egypt's ceasefire plan.

Amos Gilad, Israel's chief negotiator, has stayed away from talks in Egypt until the Hamas position becomes clearer, but the Defence Ministry announced he would go today for "decisive" talks on a ceasefire.

A senior Israeli military intelligence official said Khaled Mashal, the exiled Hamas chief in Damascus, and the group's Iranian and Syrian backers were determined that Hamas should keep fighting. He claimed, however, that the movement's leaders in Gaza had been so shaken by the offensive that they wanted it to end swiftly.

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But one soldier sent to Gaza recently said that he had handled phosphorous grenades and that tanks equipped with white phosphorous shells were in operation. "We've been using it responsibly ... it's been around the whole time," he said.

For more news on Gaza, go to theaustralian.com.au

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

Hamas softens terms for ceasefire; Egypt meetings. Temporary truce would see Israel withdraw as talks continue

The Gazette (Montreal)
January 15, 2009 Thursday
Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A14

Length: 678 words

Byline: RICHARD BOUDREAUX and FAYED ABU SHAMMALEH, MATTHEW FISHER, Los Angeles Times; Canwest News Service

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

After 19 days under Israeli military assault and Egyptian diplomatic pressure, Hamas softened its terms for a ceasefire yesterday as fighting in the Gaza Strip pushed the death toll past 1,000.

Hamas altered its stance in talks with Egyptian mediators in Cairo. It was the first sign of progress toward a deal to end the punishing offensive and halt rocket fire from Gaza into southern Israel.

Israel announced that it would send an emissary, Defence Ministry official Amos Gilad, to Cairo today to discuss a ceasefire proposal with the Egyptians. Officials and analysts on all sides said at least several more days of talks might be needed to reach even the first stage of an accord.

But as fighting raged on between the two sides yesterday, diplomacy took centre stage as Israeli and Hamas officials looked for a way out of a conflict that seems stalemated. The stated goal of Israel's relentless ground and air attacks, stopping years of rocket fire, remains unfulfilled; Hamas's 15,000-man paramilitary force, although still dangerous, has been weakened.

Hamas previously demanded that Israeli forces halt the offensive, leave Gaza and lift a crippling blockade of the territory as a precondition for a ceasefire.

Yesterday, the group offered a temporary truce that would give Israel five days to withdraw its forces while talks continued on issues underlying the conflict: Hamas' insistence on open borders and Israel's demand for a halt to arms smuggling from Egypt into Gaza.

A senior Hamas official in Cairo disclosed the group's position on condition of anonymity after Egyptian and Hamas officials decided not to comment publicly on details of the talks.

Hamas altered its terms after Egypt reportedly pressed for a 10-day temporary truce. Israel's relentless air and ground attack also apparently swayed Hamas' leaders, who have sounded more open to a deal in recent days.

Hamas softens terms for ceasefire; Egypt meetings. Temporary truce would see Israel withdraw as talks continue

With international clamour for a ceasefire growing louder, there was a feeling in Israel that the war, which has so far cost 13 Israeli lives, was in its final stages. This sentiment has gone hand-in-hand with intense speculation here that Israel wants most or all of its troops out of Gaza before U.S. president-elect Barack Obama is sworn in on Tuesday.

"We can and should do all of this by the 20th," Giora Eilan, a retired major-general who was Israel's national security adviser from 2004 to 2006, told a small group of foreign journalists yesterday.

The Israeli media have also made much of bickering between Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who, it is said, wants to continue the war and Defence Minister Ehud Barak, who does not.

Also yesterday, a new audio message believed to be from Osama bin Laden called for Muslims to launch a holy war against the Jewish state. Islamist websites carried what was reported as a new audio message from bin Laden, urging a holy struggle over the Gaza offensive.

"We are with you and we will not let you down. Our fate is tied to yours in fighting the Crusader-Zionist coalition, in fighting until victory or martyrdom," the voice on the tape says.

On the battlefield yesterday, Hamas and its allies fired at least 14 rockets at Israel. Israel struck back with 60 air strikes and assaults on what its military described as "approximately 20 terrorist sites," including nine areas used by rocket launchers. Several intense firefights were reported.

Three rockets were also fired at Israel from Hezbollah-controlled southern Lebanon. Israel countered those attacks with air strikes on the launch sites.

Of the Palestinians who have died in Gaza, more than 40 per cent are women and children, according to medical workers in the enclave. Mark Regev, who is Olmert's spokesman, expressed regret to the BBC over the civilian deaths, but said Hamas is to blame because it insists on fighting in heavily populated areas.

Israel also released an update on the delivery of 111 truckloads of humanitarian aid and 104,000 litres of fuel to Gaza yesterday. International aid agencies have said that this was not nearly enough assistance to alleviate a humanitarian crisis there.

Graphic

Colour Photo: ABID KATIB, GETTY IMAGES; Palestinians cover their faces as smoke rises from an Israeli air strike in Gaza City yesterday. Fighting pushed the death toll there past 1,000. ;

Load-Date: March 21, 2009

Why Should This Advocacy Group Get State Taxpayer Funding?

Richmond Times Dispatch (Virginia)

February 29, 2008 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. A-13

Length: 732 words

Byline: A. BARTON HINKLE

Body

Why in the world is the Commonwealth of Virginia giving taxpayer money to the National Rifle Association?

Even passionate defenders of the right to keep and bear arms - including yours truly - might be shocked to learn that Virginia has been shoveling money into the pocket of the gun lobby for years. Law-abiding citizens have a right to own firearms. But that doesn't mean the state should be underwriting a political advocacy group.

Gun-rights activists say the money isn't being spent on political advocacy; they say it subsidizes the NRA's many other valuable services. Those include its Eddie Eagle Gunsafe program, which teaches children in elementary schools, "If you see a gun: STOP! Don't Touch. Leave the Area. Tell an Adult." (And, yes, that is indeed an extremely valuable message.) The NRA's Law Enforcement Activities Division hosts tuition-free seminars for police officers and sheriff's deputies; the program is so popular participants must be chosen by lottery. Then there is the educational work performed at the National Firearms Museum, which features (among many other things) muskets and pistols from Colonial times. All very commendable.

Trouble is, you can't corral money that easily - any more than you can pour water into the shallow end of a pool without raising the level in the deep end, too. Giving the NRA taxpayer dollars for its other services enables the NRA to spend more money on . . .

WHOOOPS! HOLD ON a second. Got my notes mixed up. It turns out Virginia hasn't been giving money to the NRA for years. It's been giving money to the abortion-rights group Planned Parenthood for years. And now Republican lawmakers want to bring the practice to a halt.

On Wednesday the State Senate narrowly voted for a budget amendment introduced by Ken Cuccinelli of Fairfax to cut off state funding for Planned Parenthood. The House of Delegates has long been on record opposing such funding, but this is the first time the Senate has concurred.

Abortion-rights supporters are, of course, up in arms (pardon the expression). They say the taxpayer money goes to programs that enable Planned Parenthood to prevent teen pregnancy, screen for cancer, test for STDs, and walk on water.

Listening to its friends, you would never know Planned Parenthood is the nation's largest abortion provider. According to State Sen. Janet Howell, the group provides "contraceptive planning which prevents abortions.... Planned Parenthood probably prevents more abortions than any other organization in the country." Uh-hunh. That's

Why Should This Advocacy Group Get State Taxpayer Funding?

like saying that because the NRA supports instant background checks, it probably has done more to keep guns out of the hands of criminals than any other organization. But the NRA is the nation's leading gun-rights group - just as Planned Parenthood is the nation's leading abortion-rights group. Indeed, it was a principal litigant in the major abortion-rights cases before the Supreme Court such as *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* and *Gonzales v. Carhart* (which incorporated *Gonzales v. Planned Parenthood*).

THERE'S NOTHING inherently wrong with that, either: Women have a right to reproductive autonomy - up to a point. Gun rights stop short of the right to harm innocent persons, and abortion rights ought to do likewise. The precise location of that point is debatable, but it certainly should preclude partial-birth abortion - a grisly procedure whose purpose is to guarantee not a healthy woman, but a dead baby. Planned Parenthood has vigorously fought against any attempt to circumscribe such infanticide. Its stance regarding abortion is even more extreme and absolutist than the NRA's stance on guns.

All of which is, in the end, irrelevant. The real question isn't whether Planned Parenthood's position on a particular question is correct. The real question is why it gets taxpayer funding in the first place.

Doing good works is not sufficient reason. Every group in existence, from the Catholic Church and the Girl Scouts to Hezbollah and the Hell's Angels, claims to be doing some good, somehow. If good works alone justify state funding, then all of them - and the NRA, too - deserve state funding. But they don't - and neither does Planned Parenthood.

* * * *

My thoughts do not aim for your assent - just place them alongside your own reflections for a while.

| - Robert Nozick.

Contact A. Barton Hinkle at (804) 649-6627 or bhinkle@timesdispatch.com

Graphic

DRAWING

Load-Date: March 5, 2008

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Olmert dodging ceasefire meetings

The Australian

January 15, 2009 Thursday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 7

Length: 743 words

Byline: John Lyons, Middle East Correspondent

Body

ISRAELI Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is ignoring a call by Defence Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni for a week-long ceasefire in Gaza to allow humanitarian assistance into the strip.

As the death toll from the 19-day Israeli offensive approaches 1000, reports emerged in Israel yesterday that Mr Olmert was avoiding a meeting with his two key ministers, Mr Barak and Ms Livni, in order to allow the military operation to continue.

Mr Olmert was not planning to convene the war cabinet overnight so as to again avoid confronting the issue with the ministers, both of whom support a ceasefire.

The newspaper Haaretz reported Mr Barak was concerned that when Barack Obama takes office next week, he will demand an immediate ceasefire -- putting enormous pressure on Israel.

It said Mr Barak had accepted the view of one of his commanders, Major General Yoav Galant, that expanding the operation could require a deployment of up to a year.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arrived in Cairo last night at the start a week-long visit to Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Turkey to find an end to the conflict. He is not scheduled to meet Hamas officials.

So far, 970 Palestinians have been killed and an estimated 4400 injured since Israel began the attack on Gaza on December 27. Thirteen Israelis have been killed, including 10 soldiers in the Gaza, and several civilians injured from Hamas rockets fired into Israel.

The possibility of a second front for Israel was raised again last night with reports that two rockets had been fired from southern Lebanon into northern Israel.

Last week, three rockets were fired from Lebanon, but Israeli officials believed they were isolated incidents and not part of any planned new war by Hezbollah.

The UN has estimated that 40per cent of Palestinians killed in Gaza have been women and children.

The apparent division between Mr Olmert and his two key ministers came as moderate Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas accused Israel of trying to ``wipe out" Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Olmert dodging ceasefire meetings

On the ground, fighting yesterday was heaviest in the south, near the Rafah crossing on the Egyptian border, and in the outer streets of Gaza City.

Israel has targeted the Rafah area because it believes Hamas has been using an extensive system of tunnels to smuggle weapons into Gaza, which are then used against southern Israel.

Israeli intelligence officials said yesterday Israel has yet to cripple the military wing of Hamas or destroy the group's ability to launch rockets.

Israel has delayed its all-out assault on the heart of Gaza's population centres because it believes that local leaders of Hamas have been shocked by the ferocity of Operation Cast Lead and want to end the fighting.

Despite the disagreements in cabinet, Mr Olmert remains determined to launch "phase three" of the operation, but hopes that the prospect of Israeli troops advancing with overwhelming firepower into Gaza's most built-up areas will deepen the tensions emerging within Hamas and force it to accept Egypt's ceasefire plan.

Amos Gilad, Israel's chief negotiator, has stayed away from talks in Egypt until the Hamas position becomes clearer, but the Defence Ministry announced he would go today for "decisive" talks on a ceasefire.

A senior Israeli military intelligence official said Khaled Mashal, the exiled Hamas chief in Damascus, and the group's Iranian and Syrian backers were determined that Hamas should keep fighting. He claimed, however, that the movement's leaders in Gaza had been so shaken by the offensive that they wanted it to end swiftly.

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But one soldier sent to Gaza recently said that he had handled phosphorous grenades and that tanks equipped with white phosphorous shells were in operation. "We've been using it responsibly ... it's been around the whole time," he said.

For more news on Gaza, go to theaustralian.com.au

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

The Week In Letters

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

July 28, 2008 Monday

National Edition

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Section: EDITORIALS; Pg. A12; The Week In Letters

Length: 698 words

Byline: Paul Russell, National Post

Body

Every week, the Post receives hundreds of letters to the editor, providing a snapshot of our readers' collective state of mind. In the column below, our letters editor highlights some of the more passionately argued letters we received last week that did not make it into the paper.

A scaleless amphibian managed to create quite a stir among Post readers last week. It started after Christopher Hitchens figuratively held up a blind salamander to argue that its vestigial eyes are proof of the theory of evolution, in contrast to the "growing stupidity [of] godly design." Dozens of readers fired back, arguing that our columnist was blinded by his own atheist beliefs.

"Mr. Hitchens crows that he may have 'stumbled on the outlines of a point,' " said Sheldon Schwartz. "That being, 'Why would God create salamanders with vestiges of eyes?' In reality, what Mr. Hitchens has stumbled upon is his own blind arrogance -- like a child who concludes that his father is in error because he doesn't understand his reasoning."

"It is not worth my time to dispute the poisonous, libelous and convulsive content of the article," added A. Ambruz, "but the fact that the slanderous contribution was printed by the National Post is unbelievable. Why is a prestigious Canadian paper giving space to this foreigner, when a good number of Canadian correspondents are underemployed?"

Conversely, another letter writer asked why we would give space to those attacking Mr. Hitchens.

"Most of Hitchens' critics have absolutely nothing constructive to say," said Avi Gazit. "Their letters can be boiled down to: 'Hitchens is an ass. I hate him.' I had assumed that the letters page is a forum for those who have something constructive to add, not an outlet for derision and snarky behaviour." - Post readers really, really seem to like the Toronto pop group The Barenaked Ladies. After the arrest of lead singer Steven Page on drug-related charges in the United States, messages of support flooded in, many asking why we reprinted his solemn police mug shot so prominently.

"News and photos of the fall from grace of BNL's Steven Page did not merit the Post's front page," wrote Sal Santos. "The continued drop of [the] national crime rate [a page four story] would have."

The Week In Letters

After we printed some letters claiming that Mr. Page was a great father and role model, this note came in. "All these letters of empathy are amusing," wrote N. Gillen. "But people need to ask themselves: druggie rock star, druggie factory worker -- what's the difference? If it walks like a duck... ." - Another deluge of responses rolled in late last week after a letter-writer claimed that women in Islamic cultures are treated well and that Jews led a "peaceful life under Islamic rule." Many detailed letters, backed up with numerous historical examples, refuted both claims. As Fred M. Avertick noted: "One is entitled to their opinion, but not to change the facts." - The recent swap of live Hezbollah fighters for dead Israeli soldiers bothered many readers. But Eli William Benyacar Cadesky raised a question that may have gone unasked: "If captured alive, how did those two brave soldiers die? Isn't it contrary to UN regulations to murder captured soldiers or fail to supply them with necessary medical attention? If that is the case, why are we not hearing outcries of human rights violations ? I have asked this question to several papers and human right organizations and have never received a reply." - The Post stylebook notes that "a quality newspaper regards itself as the standard bearer of language ... we take that role seriously." So it is refreshing to hear that we are achieving that goal.

"In this age of text messaging and overuse of four-letter words, the column writers of the National Post are doing their part to keep the richness of the English language alive," wrote Leone Wright. "What a treat to come across words like 'extrapolating,' 'surreptitious' and 'acquiescing' in this morning's National Post. Now, if most Englishspeaking people would stop using the word 'guy' for everything and the word 'right' at the end of most sentences, Shakespeare would stop turning in his grave."

prussell@nationalpost.com

Graphic

Color Photo;; Steven Page. ;

Load-Date: July 31, 2008

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Letters to the Editor

The Philadelphia Inquirer
August 13, 2008 Wednesday
CITY-D Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL; Inq Opinion & Editorial; Pg. A12

Length: 717 words

Body

Europe's responseIn 1935, Soviet dictator Josef Stalin famously observed, "The pope? How many divisions has he got?"

What followed was the Soviet Union's invasion of Poland, decades of post-war occupation of Eastern Europe, and tens of millions murdered and imprisoned. Recent years have witnessed Europe pandering to North Korea and Iran while celebrating terrorists from Fatah, Hezbollah and Hamas, all while still under the protection of U.S. soldiers still standing guard in Europe more than 60 years after the end of World War II.

NATO members have slashed their defense budgets while European demonstrators and public officials deride those who ensure their freedom to protest. Now another Russian leader has sent tanks to destroy a neighboring democracy ("Russia demands Georgia disarm," Aug. 12). Brutal aggression is greeted by silence from Europe's streets and inaction from its largely powerless leaders.

How many divisions has NATO got? Unfortunately for the people of Georgia, not enough.

John R. Cohn

Philadelphia

Looking presidentialI was troubled by the photos accompanying the article "McCain, Obama rebuke Russia for attacks on Georgia" (Inquirer, Aug. 11). One photo had Barack Obama walking on the beach, relaxing with a buddy as though nothing whatsoever is going on in the world. The other photo showed John McCain behind a podium, looking "presidential." Have you no shame? This juxtaposition of images has the power to lodge in the deep recesses of voters' psyches and has no place in a newspaper readers expect to be neutral and fair.

Lou Ann Merkle

Plymouth Meeting

Pro-life dishonestyCongratulations for Jennifer Lin's story "China deports Lansdale protester" (Inquirer, Aug. 11) about Michael McMonagle, our local "pro-life" activist. Lin correctly refers to McMonagle as an "antiabortion activist," rather than the misleading label more commonly used by those who work to end abortion rights.

The inherent dishonesty in the "pro-life" community is troubling. If you consider yourself "pro-life," do you support war? Are you in favor of the death penalty? Have you worked to improve women's lives? How do you stand on

Letters to the Editor

funding programs whose sole benefit goes to children and poor families? Have you spoken out vigorously against the murder of doctors who perform abortions?

It should be perfectly clear that no one is in favor of abortion; it is the right to choose that is in question. Antiabortionists, if you want all babies born, you must do the hard work to ensure that they live with dignity.

Louis Farrell

Hatfield

McCoy repugnantPlease explain to those of us offended by the Glenn McCoy cartoon of Michelle and Barack Obama (Inquirer, Aug. 11) in what way it was either funny or had anything enlightening to point out to us. As usual, McCoy's figures were grotesque, but in this case the message is unclear.

I find it difficult to understand why, with Tony Auth on staff, you should ever have to stoop to publishing McCoy. There are lots of talented political cartoonists out there who represent different perspectives who are not as repugnant as McCoy.

Susan Miller

Sumneytown

Museum neededValley Forge National Historical Park is indeed a treasure, but an underutilized one ("Valley Forge not unique in including private land," Aug. 11). The addition of a museum would go a long way in drawing more visitors, creating funds for improvement and helping Americans understand why the Revolution, and Valley Forge's part in it, are so significant. A history lesson highlighting the great story of how America came to be is more valuable in my mind than preserving land for people to run with their dogs.

Nancy Mullen

Glenmoore

Energy policyTwenty years ago we were told that drilling for more oil in the United States would not solve our energy problem ("Democrats, want to win? Drill for oil now," Aug. 11). That group was wrong then and it is wrong now. More available oil means more supply and lower prices. Every other country in the world with oil reserves off its coast line is drilling.

Fossil fuels will drive our economy and the world's for at least the next 20 years. We delude ourselves if we think a comprehensive energy policy does not include more drilling, nuclear power, clean coal and other alternative energy sources.

Michael G. Del Rossi

Lower Gwynedd

Load-Date: August 13, 2008

Al-Qaida's tactics mean it quickly wears out its welcome

The Record (Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario)

January 16, 2008 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: INSIGHT; Pg. A11

Length: 686 words

Byline: GARY ANDERSON, Washington Post

Body

The conventional wisdom is that al-Qaida is making a comeback from its rout in Afghanistan. Many point to its success in killing Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan and to its support of Islamic insurgents there as evidence. Not so. Al-Qaida is waning. Its decline has less to do with our success than with the institutional limitations of the al-Qaida organization. Simply stated, to know al-Qaida closely is not to love it.

Every place where al-Qaida has gained some measure of control over a civilian population, it has quickly worn out its welcome. This happened in Kabul and in al-Anbar province in western Iraq. It may well happen in Pakistan as a reaction to Bhutto's assassination.

No one likes to be brutalized and dominated by foreigners. The weakness of al-Qaida is that everywhere it goes, its people are strangers. This is no way to build a worldwide caliphate.

We may not be loved in Iraq and Afghanistan, but compared with the deliberately brutal methods of Osama bin Laden's associates we become a palatable alternative. This is particularly true because, like visiting grandchildren, we will eventually go home.

Bhutto once responded to a friend who was concerned about her safety by saying, "Muslims don't kill women." She was only partly right; real Muslims don't do that, but al-Qaida does. Its members have killed more Muslim civilians than have misdirected coalition air strikes in Iraq and Afghanistan combined. The difference is that the Americans and their allies regret and investigate such incidents; al-Qaida plans and celebrates them.

Why, then, are we supposedly losing the information war in the Muslim world, and why has there not been more of an outcry among Muslims over this slaughter of innocents? A big part of the reason is that we spend too much time wanting to be liked rather than turning Muslim anger on our enemies.

We preach some values that are viewed as alien and threatening to the traditional order of things. Our popular culture is seen as decadent at best and downright threatening at worst in traditional cultures. Our message isn't selling. We can't change what we are, nor would we want to. No matter how much the government may disapprove, the government's official propaganda will be overwhelmed by the deluge, both positive and negative, from the popular media. We need to accept this fact and move on, rather than waste more millions on strategic communications "charm campaigns."

Al-Qaida's tactics mean it quickly wears out its welcome

What we can do is to expose our Islamic extremist enemies for what they are. The people of Afghanistan and al-Anbar found this out the hard way and threw the rascals out. But when al-Qaida kills scores of innocents, we report it as a statistic without context. We may see weeping relatives and bloodstained bodies from a distance, on video or in photographs, but they are depersonalized, and people quickly become desensitized to anonymous images. Ironically, Josef Stalin was right: One death is a tragedy; millions are a statistic. We need to help Muslims understand how these people really treat other Muslims.

The original Islamic movement spread its doctrine by a combination of military action and compassion. Charity was a key tenet. This is largely why Hamas and ***Hezbollah*** gain a degree of popular support in the areas they control. That ingredient is missing in the al-Qaida/Taliban approach to the world. To them, winning hearts and minds means, "Agree with us or else." That is largely the reason that the U.S. government dropped its early "for us or against us" approach. It has taken us some time, but we seem to be recovering from that approach.

If I were directing the U.S. strategic information campaign, I would spend my dollars on collecting photos of the Muslim innocents al-Qaida has killed and putting below them quotations from the Qur'an decrying such practices. These advertisements would appear in every newspaper and TV station in the Muslim world where I could buy print space or air time.

We may not be losing the war on terrorism, but we are not doing all that we can to win it.

Gary Anderson led a study of al-Qaida from 2003 to 2005 for a Defence Department contractor.

Graphic

Photo: ASSOCIATED PRESS , U.S. army soldiers escort suspected al-Qaida members in Baqouba, Iraq, in July 2007. Al-Qaida's tactics may be harming the extremist organization.

Load-Date: January 16, 2008

Free speech, not free soapboxes

University Wire

October 1, 2007 Monday

Copyright 2007 Cavalier Daily via U-Wire

Section: COLUMN

Length: 783 words

Byline: By Josh Levy, Cavalier Daily; **SOURCE:** U. Virginia

Dateline: CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va.

Body

A few weeks ago, the Iranian Embassy called Columbia University and asked it to host a speech by controversial Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Columbia President Lee Bollinger happily obliged. And then the backlash started.

It seems like everyone, left and right, had a cross to bear. New York tabloids had a field day with headlines like "Madman Mahmoud" while the U.S. government was dismayed. Human rights activists deplored the treatment of women and homosexuals in the Islamic Republic and Jewish groups marched against Ahmadinejad's Holocaust denial. Finally, William Kristol, speaking on behalf of the right, cried foul that Columbia would "host the president of a terrorist regime ... while Columbia students cannot enroll in ROTC."

But no matter how much you resent what someone has to say, you can't force them to be silent. America's tradition of individual liberty has survived for so long because it trumps the vagaries of public opinion. In the greatest defense of free speech, John Stuart Mill's "On Liberty," censorship is likened to "robbing the human race." "If the opinion is right," he argues, dissenters "are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by collision with error."

So by inviting Ahmadinejad, Columbia has given us an opportunity to challenge the Iranian president's flawed views and reaffirm our commitment to liberal democracy. This duly befits an institution of higher learning. Or so Bollinger would have you believe. But why invite Ahmadinejad and not, say, the grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan?

For starters, Columbia has a history of sparking controversy about the Middle East. Rashid Khalidi, the Edward Said Professor of Arab Studies, attracted much media attention for implying that Israel has no right to exist; he has even been documented verbally attacking Israeli students in his classes. In 2003, anthropology professor Nicholas de Genova called on American soldiers to murder their commanding officers in Iraq and wished for as many American casualties as possible. But controversy for the sake of controversy doesn't seem to accomplish Mill's ideal: There must be a limit to the otherwise pervasive requirements of free speech.

In fact, that line was drawn 20 years ago. In 1987, a young woman wanted to run a story about divorce and teen pregnancy in her high school newspaper. The ensuing legal battle ended up in the Supreme Court and, in *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier*, the Court ruled that public high schools could censor school-sponsored student newspapers. The case itself centers on technical issues, but the underlying idea behind the ruling is clear: Although

Free speech, not free soapboxes

organizations have an obligation to respect the free speech of individuals, they are not required to provide a platform for such expression.

So there is no double standard for free speech -- only one: Namely, that you can express whatever views you please, no matter how inflammatory, but no one has to help you express them. It's bad policy for Columbia not to offer ROTC courses, as we need educated officers, but liberalism can't demand classroom space. Similarly, Ahmadinejad can delude himself that "we don't have homosexuals" in Iran (because they are either shot or imprisoned), or that "women are respected in Iran" (unless they go outside alone) or even that "there is no indication that Iran has deviated from the peaceful path of its nuclear program" (both the UN Security Council and IEAE would disagree) and stand on a street corner proclaiming his views all day. But Columbia need not give him a platform and lend him its credibility to spew such nonsense. And the speech truly was worthless.

Despite his discursive musings, Ahmadinejad seemed to make three points: First, the West is actively denying Iran access to nuclear technology -- not controversial. Second, Iran does not sponsor terrorism -- apparently Hezbollah acquires Iranian artillery by black magic. Third, the Palestinian people are suffering because of the Holocaust, "if it is a reality." Notably absent was any mention of the role of Palestinian terrorism or the failures of the Arab states. He argues for self-determination for the "Palestinian nation" while conveniently forgetting that they have twice rejected a path towards statehood: once in 1947 and again in 2000. In short, despite all the hype, Ahmadinejad said nothing new.

The Economist once remarked that in "the American constitutional tradition, everything is allowed unless it is forbidden." But just because something is allowed doesn't mean you have to help it along.

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Load-Date: October 1, 2007

Former Olmert ally seeking job; Israeli foreign minister has become prime minister's toughest critic

The Vancouver Province (British Columbia)

August 17, 2008 Sunday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. E51

Length: 703 words

Byline: Jonathan Ferziger, Bloomberg News

Dateline: TEL AVIV

Body

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, a one-time Mossad agent whose mother robbed a train to advance the Zionist cause against the British, has cast herself as the polar opposite of Ehud Olmert, whom she hopes to replace.

Olmert's promise to resign after his Kadima party picks a new leader makes Livni, the deputy premier, the front-runner in the Sept. 17 contest and may mean she becomes Israel's first **female** prime minister since Golda Meir left office in 1974.

Livni, 50, once an Olmert ally, has distinguished herself over the past two years largely as his in-house critic, calling for the premier's resignation because of successive corruption probes and poor decisions in the 2006 war against Lebanon's **Hezbollah** militia. At the same time, Olmert appointed her chief negotiator in peace talks with the Palestinian Authority.

"Not only is she clean in the legal sense, but she is an honest person, a person of integrity," said Yehuda Ben Meir, a former member of parliament for the National Religious Party who is now a research fellow at Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies. "The question is whether honesty alone is enough to win election and run a government in the very rough arena of Israeli politics."

Livni has the backing of 38 per cent of Kadima voters, making her the favourite to succeed Olmert as party leader, a recent Dahaf Institute poll of 500 supporters showed. Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz, a former general and chief of staff, followed with 33 per cent. Also in the field are Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter and Housing Minister Meir Sheehrit.

Even after he resigns, Olmert will remain a caretaker prime minister until the new party chief can form a coalition government that controls at least 61 seats in the 120-seat Knesset, a process that could take months. Kadima currently has 29 seats and counts on support from the Labor, Shas and Pensioners parties for a majority.

If Kadima or another party can't attract enough allies, the Knesset may vote to dissolve itself and call new elections. In that case, the Likud party and former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu are favoured to return to power, the Dahaf poll showed.

Former Olmert ally seeking job; Israeli foreign minister has become prime minister's toughest critic

Livni, who favours grey pantsuits and has her blond hair cut in a bob, grew up in Tel Aviv, the daughter of Polish-born immigrants. Before the state of Israel was declared in 1948, both parents were jailed for taking part in attacks against the British authorities in pre-state Palestine. Her father broke out of prison and was later elected to the Knesset with the Likud party. Her mother once disguised herself as a pregnant woman and helped rob a train carrying salaries for British officials.

The daughter carried on the family tradition, enrolling in a training course for Mossad operatives and working for the espionage agency in Paris. She left spying to get married to Naftali Spitzer, who runs a Tel Aviv advertising agency, and worked in corporate law. They have two children.

Livni was appointed head of the Government Companies Authority in 1996, where she oversaw efforts to regulate Israel Aircraft Industries Ltd. and sell off other state-owned firms. She was elected to the Knesset for Likud in 1999 and served in a variety of ministerial positions overseeing justice, immigration and housing.

Livni helped found Kadima after joining former prime minister Ariel Sharon and Olmert in bolting from Likud in 2005 because of its opposition to territorial compromise with the Palestinians. When Sharon was incapacitated by a stroke, she became foreign minister and deputy premier to Olmert.

While Livni pushed for Olmert to quit, the two were political allies for years in the Likud party and worked together under Sharon planning the evacuation of Jewish settlements from the Gaza Strip. During the month-long Lebanon war two years ago, Livni was left out of decision-making while Olmert made critical mistakes, she told a government commission.

In a TV interview on July 29, Livni said that she'll run for party leader and seek to become prime minister on a platform of restoring confidence in government.

"The public wants to know that their leaders give priority to the interests of the country and respect the law," she said.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Reuters; Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni hopes to succeed Ehud Olmert for the Kadima party leadership. ;

Load-Date: August 17, 2008

Israeli tanks expected in Gaza as foreigners are allowed to flee

The Times (London)

January 3, 2009 Saturday

Edition 1

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THE TIMES

Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 697 words

Byline: James Hider; Sheera Frenkel

Body

Israel was poised last night for a big ground offensive in the Gaza Strip after allowing hundreds of foreigners to leave the devastated territory.

The Times understands that by this morning Israeli troops and tanks could be operating inside the area as part of large-scale operation to prevent Hamas from firing rockets into southern Israel.

One of the main thrusts of the attack could be the so-called Philadelphi Road that runs along Gaza's border with Egypt, under which Hamas has smuggled arms, missiles and men through a network of tunnels. Israel controlled the border until its army withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005.

A week of airstrikes has killed at least 430 Palestinians and left scores of buildings as rubble, despite diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire.

Hamas rocket attacks have killed four Israelis since the fighting began.

Despite the looming onslaught, the rocket squads fired yet more projectiles into southern Israel yesterday.

Hamas vowed that its barrage, which has lasted for years and which finally provoked the Israeli campaign, would not stop. "I call on the resistance to continue pounding Jewish settlements and cities," said Sheikh Abdelrahman al-Jamal at the funeral of Nizar Rayyan, a Hamas political leader killed, together with his four wives and 11 children, in an Israeli airstrike on his home. "We will remain on the path of jihad until the end of days." The funeral was held outdoors because an earlier air raid had smashed the mosque where the service had been due to take place.

Israel said that the building had been used to stockpile weapons.

Among the mounting Palestinian death toll yesterday were three young brothers, aged 7 to 10, who were killed in one of the 30 or so strikes carried out by Israeli warplanes. All along the border, Israeli tanks and troops have turned fields into muddy, makeshift camps from which to launch their offensive.

Israeli tanks expected in Gaza as foreigners are allowed to flee

The Government has already mobilised more than 6,000 reserve troops and has given the green light to call up almost 3,000 more. Artillery barrages were also fired into the strip, while aircraft bombed the open ground that the hundreds of troops will need to cross, and where Hamas has placed mines and dug tunnels to outflank the invaders.

Support for Operation Cast Lead remains high in Israel, with polls showing that almost 85 per cent of the public back the campaign.

Hamas has an estimated 15,000 fighters who have used the 18 months that they have controlled the Gaza Strip to hone their skills in anticipation of open combat with Israel.

The onslaught has provoked large anti-Israeli demonstrations around the world, with protests yesterday in India, Indonesia, Turkey and Australia.

But Hamas's calls for a "day of wrath" in the Palestinian territories produced only a lukewarm response in the face of clampdowns by Israeli security forces. Several thousand protesters marched through the West Bank city of Ramallah and youths in east Jerusalem threw stones at Israeli security forces and 50 women demonstrated outside the Friday prayers at the al-Aqsa mosque. The protesters directed their anger at their own Palestinian leaders, and heads of Arab countries whom they felt had not done enough to stop Israel's incursion.

"[President] Abbas is with the Jews, not with the Arabs. If he really was supporting and working in favour of our Arab brothers in Gaza, this would not have happened," Um-Mahr, a 66-year-old resident of east Jerusalem said. Akram Jwaeibis, 58, said that Arab leaders were afraid to do more than voice criticism of the Israeli Government.

"That is why we are waiting for [the Hezbollah leader Hassan] Nasrallah.

Or [the Hamas leader Ismail] Haniya to do something more." Diplomatic efforts to contain the crisis were growing after Israel's surprise offensive. "We are working towards a ceasefire that would not allow a reestablishment of the status quo ante where Hamas can continue to launch rockets," Condoleezza Rice, the outgoing US Secretary of State, said.

A high-level European delegation is due in the region this weekend, as are President Sarkozy of France and Tony Blair, the international community's envoy to the Middle East.

Letters, page 19

Graphic

Israeli soldiers and their armour just outside northern Gaza

Sheera Frenkel

Load-Date: January 3, 2009

Egypt providing help to wounded Palestinians

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

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Length: 677 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger New York Times News Service

Body

EL ARISH, Egypt -- Egyptian ambulances have already brought 43 wounded Palestinians from Gaza to this southern city's general hospital, with 15 of them needing respirators to keep them alive, said Dr. Muhammad al-Gabr, who has been trying to get them to more sophisticated surgical hospitals in Cairo.

The nine who remain here, including a young boy, are all in critical condition with blast and fracture wounds, and Gabr hoped to medevac them out on Tuesday night. All the patients sent here were civilians, as far as he knew, he said.

"Gaza was part of Egypt if you go back in history, so there is a special feeling," he said. "But we don't look at borders this way; we are helping the people."

That is easily said for a doctor. But the crisis across the border has confronted Egypt's longtime president, Hosni Mubarak, with a difficult political dilemma -- needing to show solidarity with the Palestinians under attack even as he refuses to open the border between Egypt and Gaza to anything but carefully monitored humanitarian missions, like the 30 ambulances seen going toward Gaza on Tuesday.

Egypt is facing condemnation from elsewhere in the Arab world, and there is even criticism here, where people are normally very careful about what they say publicly about their president: Egypt, they say, must do more while Gaza is under such heavy attack from Israeli warplanes.

"Egypt is helping the wounded and sending supplies for the people," said Hishmat Abu Bakr, 63, who fought in the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973. "But we'd prefer bigger help. We'd like to break the border and go die there with our brothers."

Harsher criticism of Mubarak was rare on Tuesday in southern Egypt, where the landscape and the architecture are nearly identical to that in Gaza, and where the economy is linked to smuggling food, supplies, arms and explosives there.

Near the border -- closed to visitors, including journalists, both ways -- there is a heavy presence of police, military and secret police, the Mukhabarat, and numerous checkpoints along the roads on the way to the split border town of Rafah, which has been declared a military zone.

The Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, and his ally, the **Hezbollah** leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon, have called on Egypt to open the border and the Egyptian people to break down the barriers. But Egyptian forces have clashed with Palestinians trying to leave Gaza, and Mubarak has said firmly that the border will remain closed.

Egypt providing help to wounded Palestinians

Egypt would reopen the Rafah crossing only if the Palestinian faction Hamas reconciled with the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah, and allowed him to reassert his authority over all Palestinian territory, including Gaza, Mubarak said Tuesday in a nationally televised speech.

Mubarak condemned Israel's "savage aggression." But in a riposte to Arab critics who live at a distance, Mubarak said, "We say to those who are trying to make political capital out of the plight of the Palestinian people that Palestinian blood has a price."

Bakr, the 63-year-old war veteran, refused to believe it when told of Mubarak's speech. "Mubarak could not say something so wrong," Bakr said. "The Palestinians are his brothers."

Muhammad Ahmad, 25, who owns a dress shop called Farha, or Happiness, said Egypt was doing what it could. "If they open the border just like that, it will be chaos like last year," he said. "That's why we need an agreement. Here in El Arish, we're so close to Gaza and yet there's nothing we can do. It's sad, but we're powerless."

Two young men from Rafah had come to this seaside city, some 20 miles away, "to look at young women and to rest my head," said Hassan Salem, 22. When the Israelis were bombing near Rafah to try to destroy the many smuggling tunnels that run between the Egyptian and Gazan side of the once-unified city, "we were almost knocked out by the noise," said his friend, Khaled Kamal, 25, a postman.

Everyone in Rafah has family on both sides of the border, Salem said, "so there's a lot of worry -- everyone on both sides of Rafah is worried."

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

End of Document

Ground offensive expected as Israel allows foreigners to flee

The Times (London)

January 3, 2009 Saturday

Edition 2

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THE TIMES

Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 711 words

Byline: James Hider; Sheera Frenkel

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Letters, page 19

Online

Pictures: the victims, protests and devastation timesonline.co.uk/mideast

Graphic

Israeli soldiers and their armour just outside northern Gaza

RONEN ZVULUN / REUTERS

Load-Date: January 3, 2009

The right of self-defence

Ottawa Citizen

June 21, 2008 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. B6; David Warren

Length: 779 words

Byline: David Warren, The Ottawa Citizen

Body

It will be recalled, by readers who follow world news, that the President of Iran has on many occasions unambiguously declared both the desire to annihilate Israel, and the expectation that Israel will soon be annihilated. It will also be recalled, that on the balance of evidence, the Iranian state has been working assiduously to acquiring the means for this act of genocide. Iran is in direct defiance of UN resolutions to stop enriching uranium, and playing Saddam-like games with UN inspectors.

If a man were threatening to kill you, and declaring that you will soon be dead, while reaching for a gun, I think most readers would allow you were within your rights to kick that gun out of his reach.

The word "genocide" -- which has been seriously cheapened and abused by rhetorical posturing in the "culture wars" of the West -- does have a meaning. It is an awkward word, with the Latin for "kill" tacked onto the Greek for "tribe," but it acquired a reasonably precise definition in international law when the convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was promulgated through the United Nations in 1951 (after a little watering down to appease the Soviet Union).

And while that Convention was obviously inspired by the Holocaust in which at least six million European Jews were annihilated by Nazi Germany, work towards it had begun much earlier. Curiously enough it had not borne fruit in the days of the League of Nations, owing to the need felt in the 1930s to appease the demands of Nazi Germany.

The examples then were the huge massacres of Armenian Christians, across what is now Turkey, of Assyrian Christians, in what is now Iraq, and of Greek Christians along the Black Sea coast, in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, during the First World War. To this day all these events are disputed in Turkey, and elsewhere in the Muslim world, but the weight of evidence is overwhelming. At least two million died in the death marches, obviously designed not to relocate, but to eradicate these ethnic groups, whose loyalty to the Ottoman cause was profoundly doubted.

The relativist phrase "One man's terrorism is another man's freedom struggle" has been popularized by the Left, and could as well be paraphrased, "One man's genocide is another man's self-defence." This playing on words, while avoiding the things the words signify, has become a commonplace of "political correctness" at the present day. A wanton confusion between "genocide," which is clear and factual and very bloody, and "hate speech," which is entirely interpretive, has by now been written even into various western criminal codes, including Canada's.

The right of self-defence

In international law "genocide" means specific acts intended to physically destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. These range from outright massacre, down to imposing conditions in which the group cannot reproduce itself, or its members are forcibly indoctrinated, its children kidnapped, its women systematically raped.

"Hatred" is an emotion. It should not even come into the discussion of what genocide means, and is only brought into the discussion to confuse the issue -- to use all the emotions associated with the Holocaust for the purpose of advancing some other dark agenda.

The Iranian state is officially represented not only by President Ahmadinejad, but also in similar statements made by other leading ayatollahs, promising the utter annihilation of Israel. Iran openly arms and funds Hezbollah and Hamas, which likewise publicly promise to annihilate Israel.

Actual command of a state, or at least a large paramilitary force, is moreover entirely necessary to make the threat of genocide meaningful. For an attempt at genocide requires the means. Some adolescent neo-Nazi, raving on an Internet thread, is not in a position to attempt genocide. President Ahmadinejad is in such a position.

Israel recently rehearsed a military operation over the eastern Mediterranean, on a scale and of a kind to foreshadow a raid on Iran's nuclear installations. Little attempt was made to conceal it, and we can only conclude it was meant to send a breeze up the ayatollahs' skirts. But rather than condemn the Israelis, reflexively and neurotically, for "war-mongering," we should confront the cold, hard reality.

Under the Genocide Convention, as currently received, Israel would be entirely within her rights to launch such a raid on Iran -- to, by analogy, "kick away that gun." Alternatively, Iran must demonstrably withdraw those genocidal threats, and unambiguously recognize Israel's permanent right to existence.

David Warren's column appears Sunday, Wednesday and Saturday.

Load-Date: June 21, 2008

A Palestinian View: War crimes in Gaza put PA in awkward place

Daily News Egypt

January 4, 2009 Sunday

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Length: 726 words

Body

The devastating Israeli bombardment of Gaza in the past few days did not come as a surprise to anybody. Its scale and magnitude, however, were unexpected by almost everybody except its perpetrators.

The attack, which Israel called "Operation Cast Lead", began around 11:30 am last Saturday when 64 aircraft delivered over 100 tons of explosives on 50 to 100 targets in the Gaza Strip. It was described by officials as the largest Israeli operation in Gaza since 1967. In that first attack, over 130 were killed and about 800 injured. The number of casualties on that day and the following few days has continued to rise and those slain come from a seemingly random sample of society: they include Hamas security forces and civilian men, women and children, among them seven UNRWA students and their instructor.

Israel's disproportionate and indiscriminate bombing of Gaza should invite experts of humanitarian and international law to seriously investigate the Palestinian claim that the attack is a war crime.

On the second day of the Israeli attack, the objectives of both Israel and Hamas were clear. Israel wanted to teach Hamas the same lesson that it meant to give Hezbollah in the summer of 2006: that there is a heavy price all Gazans will pay when Hamas launches any attack against Israelis. In addition, Israel wanted to destroy the smuggling tunnels from Egypt to Gaza without any promise of easing its siege on Gaza. In other words, Israel wanted to renew the truce while maintaining, and consolidating, the closure.

Hamas is even clearer in what it is striving to achieve from this confrontation. In the first official statement on the first day of the attack it declared that the "practical response to the Israeli attack is the opening of the Rafah crossing and the cutting of diplomatic relations between Israel and Arab states."

It is notable that following that declaration, which was echoed by all Hamas spokespeople, the call to open the Rafah crossing and criticism of Egypt for failing to do so became the main rallying call in almost all solidarity demonstrations across the Arab world. That is a strong indicator that there are well-organized groups taking advantage of Arab sympathy with the Palestinians of Gaza to make political gains on a regional level. The harmony between Hamas and Islamic political parties in the region is significant.

In spite of the heavy material and human losses, the Israeli attack on Gaza is strengthening Hamas politically and increasing public support and sympathy for the movement. Hamas is using this momentum to achieve an end to the

A Palestinian View: War crimes in Gaza put PA in awkward place

closure of Gaza, not by Israel opening the crossings it controls but by Egypt opening Rafah. The irony here is that if Rafah is opened on Hamas' terms, it will also secure a significant Israeli strategic objective, namely handing over effective responsibility for Gaza to Egypt.

In the meantime, the war in Gaza is also affecting the balance of power between the two main rival factions in Palestine, Fateh and Hamas. The Israeli attack has increased public sympathy and support for Hamas because it is the target of these attacks and because it is trying to fight back. The Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, meanwhile, finds itself in an awkward and difficult position.

For one thing, it has been marginalized and has been the target of criticism while being compared unfavorably with the role and position of Hamas in Gaza. This has led Fateh spokespeople and leaders to change their tone from trying to hint at Hamas responsibility for the suffering of Gazans to a more reasonable and rational tone, exemplified by President Mahmoud Abbas, who, during a meeting of the PLO's Executive Committee, suggested that the time is right for coordination between the different factions and invited all factions, including Hamas, to address this issue.

This change in tone could result in some positive momentum in the dialogue among the Palestinian factions that are under growing pressure from the public to reconcile.

Ghassan Khatib is coeditor of the bitterlemons family of internet publications. He is vice-president for community outreach at Birzeit University and a former Palestinian Authority minister of planning. He holds a PhD in Middle East politics from the University of Durham. This commentary is published by DAILY NEWS EGYPT in collaboration with bitterlemons.org.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

Kicking away the gun

Windsor Star (Ontario)

July 2, 2008 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL/OPINION; Pg. A6; David Warren

Length: 776 words

Byline: David Warren, Ottawa Citizen

Body

It will be recalled, by readers who follow world news, that the president of Iran has on many occasions unambiguously declared both the desire to annihilate Israel, and the expectation that Israel will soon be annihilated. It will also be recalled, that on the balance of evidence, the Iranian state has been working assiduously to acquire the means for this act of genocide. Iran is in direct defiance of UN resolutions to stop enriching uranium, and playing Saddam-like games with UN inspectors.

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David Warren is an Ottawa Citizen columnist.

Load-Date: July 2, 2008

A global crusader for common sense

Weekend Australian

June 2, 2007 Saturday

All-round Review Edition

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Section: REVIEW; Books; Pg. 11

Length: 725 words

Byline: Tim Johnston

Body

MATP

I Wouldn't Start from Here

By Andrew Mueller

Picador, 460pp, \$35

THEY say truth is the first casualty of war, but more often nowadays common sense is dead and buried long before truth is surprised by the thump of an incoming round. Andrew Mueller is a crusader for common sense. In his book *I Wouldn't Start from Here* he sets out to "understand why nations, peoples and faiths seemed so self-destructively keen to create unnecessary misery for themselves and others".

Armed with little more than an inquiring mind, his sense of humour and a wind-up rabbit called The Chicken, Mueller visits the places of modern nightmares: Baghdad, Kabul, Gaza, Abkhazia, Kosovo, ever onward and downward.

This is geopolitics for the MTV generation: fast paced, impressionistic and with judgments doled out in snappy one-liners.

And when every backpacker clutching an airline ticket and a well-thumbed Lonely Planet guide seems to think their banal observations and clunky insider jokes merit book-length treatment, Mueller manages to stand above the crowd. A London-based former rock journalist who was born in Wagga Wagga, NSW, he's an amusing and intelligent companion, an accidental war correspondent who goes to the right places and isn't frightened to ask some very frightening people the right questions.

But if Mueller is able to keep his head when all about him are losing theirs, he remains susceptible to his own ego. We learn more than needed about his romantic entanglements, and his chats with ubiquitous U2 frontman Bono that top and tail the book illuminate little more than that the author is well connected.

However, he avoids many of the more obvious shortfalls that spoil so many contemporary books of its type. *I Wouldn't Start from Here* isn't cluttered with irritating factoids culled from ill-researched travel guides. Mueller

A global crusader for common sense

instead mines his gregarious nature to get the insights of ordinary people whose ordinariness is an extraordinary achievement given the conditions under which many of them live.

This is an addition to the genre founded by P.J. O'Rourke's *Holidays in Hell*, but it is one that pushes the boundaries. If it starts as a romp through some of the world's hellholes, it ends as a polemic. Given that the episodes are not presented in chronological order, this isn't accidental; despite the levity, Mueller is angry, and he has a point to make. He is particularly angered by the convoluted arguments used by apologists to justify the manifest injustices of man's inhumanity to man: "astonishing nonsense", as he calls it at one point.

He talks to smug former Hezbollah fighters, key figures in the Irish Republican Army, a man who was once a leader of Algeria's FLN, and throughout he manages to keep his moral compass aligned despite the propaganda and bullying of the advocates of hatred, and in the context of the suffering that besieges the places he's visiting that's no mean feat.

But there are some common aspects at the roots of many of the conflicts he visits that are hinted at but not properly explored, particularly the outraged sense of victimhood that the leaders of all factions in internecine wars tend to nurture in their followers.

It may provide part of the answer to a question he asks after visiting a resurgent Tirana, the capital of Albania: "Why were some places able to rebuild, regenerate, rise above the violence and retribution, even when almost nobody outside their borders cared about them? And why did others sulk and fester and fight despite bottomless international concern, indulgence and expense?"

His broad conclusion seems to be that if people have the confidence to reject the divisive aspects of faith or nationalism or political dogma, and avoid the attractions of the apologists' view -- holding on instead to the fact young suicide bombers who kill women and children are murderers and not martyrs, for example -- the world has the potential to be a much nicer place.

In other words, he says, common sense could be the answer for much of the strife that plagues the world. He's got a point, but reading *I Wouldn't Start from Here*, particularly the sections on the Middle East, I couldn't help being haunted by the recollection of the old saw that if you think you know the answers, you probably don't understand the question.

Tim Johnston has reported extensively from central and Southeast Asia.

Load-Date: June 1, 2007

Don't catch this bouquet

The Times (London)

March 27, 2008, Thursday

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Section: FEATURES; Times2; Pg. 15

Length: 719 words

Byline: Wendy Ide

Body

What women really want is a wedding, Hollywood tells us. WENDY IDE seethes

27 Dresses 12A, 110mins **

Drillbit Taylor 12A, 102mins ***

Beaufort 15, 120mins ***

First Sunday 12A, 98mins *

The pioneers of the women's suffrage movement would be delighted to know that, a century or so later, sure, it's cool that we now have the vote but let's focus, ladies -isn't the real issue still about snaring a husband and buying into that fairytale wedding? 27 Dresses is the latest romantic comedy which posits that a woman is somehow incomplete until she has a ring on her finger and a billowing meringue of a dress.

The likeable Katherine Heigl stars as Jane Nichols, a young woman so enamoured with weddings that not only has she been a bridesmaid at 27 of them, she's also the go-to girl for frantic brides with a seating plan disaster or a canape crisis. But as Jane finds herself planning the wedding of her feckless younger sister to the man Jane herself secretly loves, it looks increasingly likely that she's going to end up -gasp! -an "old maid".

There's a suitor for Jane on the sidelines -Kevin Doyle (James Marsden) is a newspaper reporter who covers the wedding beat. But since he's a cynic who sneers at the ceremonies he covers and Jane is a hopeless romantic, their relationship is surely doomed. This cynical chick flick is formulaic and shallow, so no prizes for guessing how it all pans out. But the biggest problem is the uneven characterisation. The story requires an antagonist, so Jane's sister is painted as a monster for most of the film. At the end, however, she is reshaped as Jane's close friend and confidante. The film's credibility crumbles like stale wedding cake.

Heigl's Knocked Up colleagues, Seth Rogen and Judd Apatow, return with what is shaping up to be their own tried and tested formula for pop-culturally savvy underdog comedy. Rogen writes and Apatow produces Drillbit Taylor, a sweet natured high-school comedy that bears notable similarities to last year's Superbad. The central characters - the gauche geek, the chubby loudmouth and the oddball -could be junior prototypes for the trio at the heart of Superbad. The rapid-fire obscenity is toned down -this film is pitched at a younger audience -but the movie-literate in-jokes remain. The added ingredient here is Owen Wilson's Drillbit, an affable down-and-out who taps the affluent of Los Angeles for contributions to his beer fund. Drillbit is hired by the three kids as a bodyguard to protect them from a pair of bullies. The film relies a little heavily on training sequences consisting mainly of characters hitting or

Don't catch this bouquet

being hit -comic material is spread a little thin, particularly in the movie's sagging middle section. But it's an engaging enough picture, if a lesser work, from the talented Apatow stable.

Nominated for the Oscar for best foreign language film earlier this year, Beaufort is an airless Israeli drama set mainly in the tomb-like underground confines of an Israeli outpost in Lebanon towards the close of the first Lebanon war. Young soldiers sleep stacked up in a metal tube; the daily bombardment by Hezbollah rockets is heralded with the announcement "Incoming, incoming", delivered in a tone of bored resignation.

Liraz (Oshri Cohen) is the outpost commander and it's through his eyes that this claustrophobic drama unfolds. Young, idealistic and a by-the-book military man, Liraz begins, despite himself, to question his post and the failures of his superiors. A series of avoidable fatalities shake the young soldier's faith in the army and in himself. Not a polemical anti-war film, but rather a deeply human elegy for young lives lost.

The least funny man ever to make a career in comedy movies, Ice Cube hauls his sullen mug back in front of the cameras for the execrable First Sunday. A new low, even for Ice Cube, this is an astonishingly ill-judged film. He plays Durell, a petty criminal so desperate for cash after a shipment of stolen wheelchairs goes missing that he decides to rob a local church. So let's get this straight -Durell steals from the disabled, then threatens a little old lady with a gun and gaffer-tapes the pastor to a pew, all of which is done with Ice Cube's trademark glowering lack of charisma.

The film's only joke is the fact that we're meant to sympathise with him throughout.

Load-Date: March 27, 2008

End of Document

Israel kills 4 Palestinians

The Star (South Africa)

August 14, 2007 Tuesday

e4 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 710 words

Body

Gaza - Israeli ground forces killed four Palestinians today when they clashed with militants during a raid on the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, the Islamist group and hospital officials said. At least 12 Palestinians were wounded in the fighting. An Israeli army spokesperson said the operation was to try to find a suspected militant tunnel network and to prevent cross-border Palestinian rocket fire.

Denpasar - Indonesian prosecutors sought today a 14-month jail sentence for the brother of British celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay in a trial over heroin possession on the island of Bali. Ronald Ramsay (38) was arrested in February after entering a supermarket in Bali's main tourist strip of Kuta. Police said they seized 100mg of heroin from him. Ramsay did not make any comment in court.

Oslo - Norway's 35-year-old Princess Martha Louise, fourth in line to the throne, has come under intense media scrutiny for her involvement in the "angel school", that aims to teach people how to get in touch with angels. Observers question whether her work can be combined with official duties. A leading newspaper has called on her to renounce her title.

Seoul - South Korea's president will travel by land to this month's summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il in Pyongyang, local media reported. It is the first time a South Korean official will travel to the North's capital via restored links across the border dividing the peninsula. South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun and North Korea's Kim are to meet from August 28 to 30 in Pyongyang.

Seoul - Severe floods caused by days of heavy rains in North Korea have left at least 200 people dead or missing and will hamper the country's ability to feed itself for at least a year, an international aid group operating in the country said today. North Korean officials told the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies that 200 people were dead or missing across the country.

Taipei - A Taiwanese court today cleared the main opposition's presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou of corruption charges after a high-profile trial, a verdict expected to boost his chances in the race. While the ruling party cried foul, citing political interference, Ma, who chaired the nationalist Kuomintang party (KMT) until he resigned following his indictment, hailed what he called a "milestone ruling".

Washington - Democrats celebrated the resignation of master White House strategist Karl Rove, while a leading US daily excoriated President George W Bush's trusted adviser as a practitioner of politics as "blood sport". The New York Times urged lawmakers to pursue its probe into Rove's role in the firings of several federal prosecutors and other efforts to politicise government.

Israel kills 4 Palestinians

Jerusalem - Israeli opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu ran for re-election as head of the rightist Likud Party today, with pundits predicting an easy win for a man seen as Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's main challenger. Ex-premier Netanyahu has soared in opinion polls since last year's inconclusive war against Lebanese Hezbollah guerrillas and the rise of Palestinian Islamist group Hamas.

Baghdad - Gunmen early today slaughtered the pregnant wife of a police officer, his brother and 12-year-old son, while three women and a man were shot dead in their sleep. Police Major Akil Radi Edan from the Iraqi town of Suweira, 50km south of Baghdad, said his two other sons were wounded when armed men swarmed into his house and blazed away at those inside.

Sydney - An Australian cowboy claims he climbed a tree to escape two crocodiles in an outback swamp - and stayed up there for six nights. David George (53) said he was dazed after falling from his horse. When he regained his senses, he was in the middle of the swamp. A rescue operation began after his horse wandered home and he was spotted by an army helicopter crew on August 8.

Ankara - Turkey's presidential hopeful Abdullah Gul will visit opposition leaders today to drum up support for his bid to be elected head of state, but faces hostility from secularists wary of his Islamist past. The Islamist-rooted AK Party decided late yesterday to renominate Gul, Turkey's foreign minister, despite opposition from the country's powerful secular elite, including army generals.

Load-Date: August 14, 2007

End of Document

ALSO SHOWING

Arts & Book Review

March 28, 2008

First Edition

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Section: FILMS; Pg. 8

Length: 722 words

Byline: Anthony Quinn

Body

The Book of

Revelation (18)

Ana Kokkinos

**

As psychosexual mystery stories go, this one takes some swallowing. Daniel (Tom Long), the star of a Melbourne dance troupe, goes out to buy cigarettes for his girlfriend during rehearsals - and fails to return. As the tale unfolds, we discover that he has been kidnapped and subjected to 12 days of bizarre sexual abuse - the twist being that the perpetrators are a trio of black-clad women, like the witches in Macbeth. On being released, he reports his ordeal at the police station: "Lucky bastard," replies the copper.

Long is required to do quite a lot of "haunted" looks, while his dance mentor (Greta Scacchi) and a sympathetic policeman (Colin Friels) try to help him through the post-abduction stress. It's a sincerely felt movie (adapted from a Rupert Thomson novel) and quite decently acted, but it suffers from the irresolvable flaw of being completely unrealistic. This is not to question the likelihood of male rape - merely this particular portrayal of it.

You, the Living (15)

Roy Andersson

Imagine The Fast Show as directed by Ingmar Bergman, and you have a partial grasp on the whimsical world of Swedish film-maker Roy Andersson. His camera testifies to the fascination of watching people slowly fall apart. Some of these 50 or so vignettes are no more than snapshots of life's mundanity, while others deal in little dramas of confusion, dismay and alarming weather changes.

Hopper-like scenes of isolation contrast with jaunty bursts of Dixieland jazz. A schoolteacher abandons the classroom in distress: "My husband called me a hag," she cries. "What's that?" asks a pupil. "You'll have to ask him," she replies. In another, a man has a dream in which he messes up the tablecloth trick and accidentally

ALSO SHOWING

destroys a family's valuable dinner service; next thing he's being conducted to the electric chair. "It was over 200 years old," says its aggrieved owner.

The non-narrative mosaic and the sometimes enigmatic nature of the skits take some getting used to, while the bland, Ikea-style conformity of the decor may begin to creep you out. Yet Andersson's impassive, off-the-wall reflections on the human condition do feel unique, and the comedy, even at its bleakest, is oddly mesmerising.

First Sunday (12A)

David E Talbert

*

Whoever managed to persuade Ice Cube that he had any gift for light comedy deserves some kind of prize - and then a jail sentence.

This astonishingly dire caper, written and directed by David E Talbert, casts the Cube as a petty criminal down on his luck: his ex-wife's about to relocate to Atlanta and take their teenage son with her - "ma son", as Cube insists on calling him - unless he can raise \$17,000 to pay off her debt. In desperation, he decides the only thing for it is to rob the local church - with unhilarious consequences.

The cast mug and gurn, the camera lecherously eyes the female star's rear end, and the viewer marvels at the fact that Cube has managed to find a co-star - Tracy Morgan - who has even less comic brio than himself.

Beaufort (15)

Joseph Cedar

This contribution to the "war is hell" annals marks a grim sort of achievement, in that it strips soldiering of all glamour. Beaufort, a mountain redoubt in Lebanon, has seen some of the bloodiest fighting in the Middle East. Joseph Cedar, once a soldier, returns as director to tell the story of an Israeli commander (Oshri Cohen) trying to maintain morale over troops guarding the fort. Due to evacuate the place, they must still endure the daily payload of Hezbollah rockets. The film pokes at a still-raw wound, though its insights are more psychological than historical - how young men behave under the constant threat of death without any prospect of fighting back.

The Hottie &**the Nottie (12A)**

Tom Putnam

*

Toxic stuff. If the name Paris Hilton doesn't set your inner alarm bell ringing, then you might innocently settle down to this morality tale about "inner beauty" - and then you'll be sorry. Hilton plays the "hottie" who refuses to date her former schoolmate until he fixes up her unsightly pal, the "nottie" (Christine Lakin, left, with Hilton). Inept movies can be unwittingly funny, even endearing, but this one is neither; it's just very, very boring, and foreglimpses a dire future. As long as "celebrity" maintains its hold, I'm afraid we'll always have Paris.

Load-Date: March 28, 2008

Don't write it off yet; UN Human Rights Council

The International Herald Tribune

June 22, 2007 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 9

Length: 769 words

Byline: Peggy Hicks - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: GENEVA

Body

The United Nations Human Rights Council was former Secretary General Kofi Annan's dream child: a new, stronger institution to replace the much-maligned Commission on Human Rights, where human rights would be treated as the UN's "third pillar" along with security and development.

But the new council has had a rocky first year, which ended at midnight on Monday night when members agreed to a package of institution-building measures.

In its first year, the council shied away from taking action on most human rights crises, dropped its scrutiny of Iran and Uzbekistan, and managed to condemn Israel's human rights record without addressing violations by Hezbollah and Palestinian armed groups.

That disappointing record, however, should spur concerned governments into greater engagement rather than to write the council off.

The UN resolution establishing the council gave it a mandate to be stronger and better than the old commission. And the new election process helps put candidates' human rights record under a spotlight.

Just last month, Belarus, which has an appalling record of stifling basic freedoms, failed in its bid for a council seat. Belarus' unexpected defeat was due to a determined campaign by a few states, including the United States, and a group of nongovernmental organizations. It shows that when states stand up for a more effective council, they can make a difference.

There is still a long way to go. The same day that Belarus was defeated, Egypt, another serial abuser, was elected to membership after running unopposed. But if more governments were willing to stand up to states with poor records, fewer abusers would be elected.

The procedural reforms agreed to on Monday keep in place the greatest legacy of the council's predecessor - the system of independent experts on human rights issues, such as violence against women, and specific countries, including Burma and North Korea. But the council, bowing to political pressure, eliminated the experts for Belarus and Cuba - a decision impossible to justify on human rights grounds.

Still, the human rights records of those countries, as well as every other member of the United Nations, will be scrutinized under the new system of "universal periodic review" also set up by the council this week.

Don't write it off yet UN Human Rights Council

The possibilities of using these reviews to expose violations and push for change are vast, but the spirit of "protect our own," which has limited action by the council so far, could infect these reviews as well.

Critics have denounced the inclusion of a separate agenda item on Israel. The council should not single out one country in this way. However, the item refers to the "human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories," meaning that in principle, at least, the council can scrutinize both Israeli and Palestinian behavior.

The council has the potential to be far more effective than the commission - if governments that care about human rights do all they can to make it so. The council's failings can be blamed not only on the minority of members with troubling records, but also the poor performance of a broader group of states with a professed commitment to human rights.

These states have taken positions they could never justify at home, apparently relying on the belief that "what happens in Geneva, stays in Geneva." For example, governments that should have known better, including India, South Africa, Brazil, Japan, Mexico, South Korea and Switzerland, failed to oppose the council's decision to end scrutiny of Iran.

Putting the council on track requires building a working coalition of states that put allegiance to the cause of human rights above the need for regional consensus and the desire to avoid offense.

Two concrete steps will help this.

First, civil society groups must fill the information vacuum that protects states from the consequences of their actions in Geneva, so that governments are held accountable at home for their performance at the Human Rights Council.

Second, states that care about human rights need to make a concrete commitment to the council's future. They should dedicate the staff needed to make it work, including a senior official to lobby in Geneva and in key capitals.

Washington should decide that it wants the council to succeed, and should make the effort it expended on the Belarus election the rule, rather than the exception.

The Human Rights Council has a long way to go before it fulfills the promise that led to its creation, but that should inspire stronger action, not more hand-wringing.

*

Peggy Hicks is global advocacy director at Human Rights Watch.

Load-Date: June 22, 2007

US weighs Lebanon cash plea

The Australian (Australia)

May 24, 2007 Thursday

Vic Metro Edition

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Section: WORLD PHOTO; Pg. 7

Length: 760 words

Byline: Correspondents in Washington and Lebanon

Body

AP, AFP

THE US was last night considering a request from the Lebanese Government to provide about \$US280million (\$340million) in military assistance to help put down an uprising by al-Qa'ida-inspired militants operating from a Palestinian refugee camp.

The US Congress was yesterday debating a supplementary budget, drawn up by the Bush administration, which would provide about \$US220million for the Lebanese Armed Forces and another \$US60million for security forces.

The assistance would represent a significant increase over previous years.

"We are considering a request for additional assistance coming from the Lebanese Government," US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said yesterday.

He said \$US40 million in equipment and training was sent in 2006 and about \$US5 million is earmarked for the current year.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice yesterday said the Lebanese Government, led by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, was fighting against a very tough extremist foe.

"But Lebanon is doing the right thing to try to protect its population, to assert its sovereignty and so we are very supportive of the Siniora Government and what it is trying to do," Dr Rice said.

Fatah al-Islam Islamist guerillas have been locked in three days of ferocious gun battles with Lebanese troops since Sunday, in the deadliest fighting since Lebanon's 1985-1990 civil war.

Yesterday, thousands of Palestinians fled the impoverished Nahr al-Barad camp in Northern Lebanon during a ceasefire between militiamen and the Lebanese army.

Men, women and children continued to pour out of the camp in cars and pick-up trucks towards the Beddawi refugee camp further south or to the nearby Mediterranean port city of Tripoli.

Relief agencies were expected to bring in more aid to Nahr al-Barad, where more than 30,000 refugees had been caught in the line of fire.

US weighs Lebanon cash plea

Although the truce appeared to be holding, a UN official said two Palestinian civilians were shot dead when aid trucks moved in with food, medical supplies and generators.

"We don't know the source of the fire, and we had to leave the camp immediately," UN Relief and Works Agency spokeswoman Hoda Samra said.

All the food and medical supplies were successfully offloaded, but the water was hit and spilled.

Sultan Abul Aynayn, the head of Fatah in Lebanon, issued an urgent appeal for humanitarian organisations to come to the aid of the camp's residents, saying they were "totally destitute".

Lebanese officials have accused Fatah al-Islam of working for Syrian intelligence to stir up trouble. The group's Palestinian leader, Shaker al-Abssi, slipped in to Lebanon last year after serving three years in a Syrian jail.

White House press secretary Tony Snow appeared to support that accusation last night.

He said militants operating out of the refugee camp were trying to disrupt the nation's security and distract international attention from UN efforts to establish a special tribunal to try suspects in the 2005 assassination of former prime minister Rafik Hariri in Beirut.

Reaffirming support for Mr Siniora's Western-backed Government, Mr Snow said the US "will not tolerate attempts by Syria, terrorist groups or any others to delay or derail Lebanon's efforts to solidify its sovereignty or seek justice in the Hariri case".

"Those committing violence and their sponsors seek to deny the people of Lebanon the democracy, peace and stability they deserve," Mr Siniora said.

US air force Lieutenant Colonel Karen Finn said the Pentagon was "concerned about mounting evidence that the Syrian and Iranian governments, Hezbollah, and their Lebanese allies are attempting to topple Lebanon's legitimate and democratically elected Government led by Prime Minister Siniora".

DEATH CAMP

- * A home to Palestinian refugees since Israel's war of independence in 1948, Nahr al-Barad, 16km north of Tripoli, was established by the League of Red Cross Societies in 1949 to accommodate refugees from northern Palestine
- * The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East took over its administration in 1950
- * Factional violence inflicted a heavy toll during the Lebanese civil war in the 1980s. The camp was left overcrowded and its infrastructure damaged
- * It houses 31,023 registered refugees, 8627 of whom are listed as special hardship cases by the UNRWA and receive food handouts
- * There is one kindergarten, with only 22 places, and 10 preparatory schools serving 5686 pupils
- * One health centre treats a daily average of 494 patients, and rehabilitation centres for disabled refugees have only 64 places

Load-Date: May 23, 2007

U.S. must expose al-Qaida brutality

The Record (Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario)

January 30, 2008 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: INSIGHT; Pg. A11

Length: 702 words

Byline: GARY ANDERSON, Washington Post

Body

The conventional wisdom is that al-Qaida is making a comeback from its rout in Afghanistan. Many point to its success in killing Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan and to its support of Islamic insurgents there as evidence.

Not so.

Al-Qaida is waning. Its decline has less to do with our success than with the institutional limitations of the al-Qaida organization. Simply stated, to know al-Qaida closely is not to love it.

Every place where al-Qaida has gained some measure of control over a civilian population, it has quickly worn out its welcome. This happened in Kabul and in al-Anbar province in western Iraq. It may well happen in Pakistan as a reaction to Bhutto's assassination.

No one likes to be brutalized and dominated by foreigners. The weakness of al-Qaida is that everywhere it goes, its people are strangers. This is no way to build a worldwide caliphate.

We may not be loved in Iraq and Afghanistan, but compared with the deliberately brutal methods of Osama bin Laden's associates we become a palatable alternative. This is particularly true because, like visiting grandchildren, we will eventually go home.

Bhutto once responded to a friend who was concerned about her safety by saying, "Muslims don't kill women." She was only partly right; real Muslims don't do that, but al-Qaida does. Its members have killed more Muslim civilians than have misdirected coalition airstrikes in Iraq and Afghanistan combined. The difference is that the Americans and their allies regret and investigate such incidents; al-Qaida plans and celebrates them.

Why, then, are we supposedly losing the information war in the Muslim world, and why has there not been more of an outcry among Muslims over this slaughter of innocents? A big part of the reason is that we spend too much time wanting to be liked rather than turning Muslim anger on our enemies.

We preach some values that are viewed as alien and threatening to the traditional order of things. Our popular culture is seen as decadent at best and downright threatening at worst in traditional cultures. Our message isn't selling. We can't change what we are, nor would we want to. No matter how much the government may disapprove, the government's official propaganda will be overwhelmed by the deluge, both positive and negative, from the

U.S. must expose al-Qaida brutality

popular media. We need to accept this fact and move on, rather than waste more millions on strategic communications "charm campaigns."

What we can do is to expose our Islamic extremist enemies for what they are. The people of Afghanistan and al-Anbar found this out the hard way and threw the rascals out. But when al-Qaida kills scores of innocents, we report it as a statistic without context. We may see weeping relatives and bloodstained bodies from a distance, on video or in photographs, but they are depersonalized, and people quickly become desensitized to anonymous images.

Ironically, Stalin was right: One death is a tragedy; millions are a statistic. We need to help Muslims understand how these people really treat other Muslims.

The original Islamic movement spread its doctrine by a combination of military action and compassion. Charity was a key tenet. This is largely why Hamas and Hezbollah gain a degree of popular support in the areas they control. That ingredient is missing in the al-Qaida/Taliban approach to the world.

To them, winning hearts and minds means, "Agree with us or else." That is largely the reason that the U.S. government dropped its early "for us or against us" approach. It has taken us some time, but we seem to be recovering from that approach.

If I were directing the U.S. strategic information campaign, I would spend my dollars on collecting photos of the Muslim innocents al-Qaida has killed and putting below them quotations from the Qu'ran decrying such practices. These advertisements would appear in every newspaper and TV station in the Muslim world where I could buy print space or air time.

We may not be losing the war on terrorism, but we are not doing all that we can to win it.

Gary Anderson, who led a study of al-Qaida from 2003 to 2005 for a U.S. Defence Department contractor, lectures on The Revolution in Military Affairs at George Washington University in Washington.

Graphic

Photo: ASSOCIATED PRESS , Hundreds of Jordanians take to the street as part in an anti-terrorism rally in 2005 after al-Qaida attacks on three Western hotels in Amman killed 56 people.

Load-Date: January 30, 2008

U.K. leader offers up his cabinet; New foreign minister criticized Iraq war

The International Herald Tribune

June 29, 2007 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 716 words

Dateline: LONDON

Body

Prime Minister Gordon Brown chose his senior ministers Thursday, tapping David Miliband to become the youngest foreign secretary in decades and Alistair Darling to be chancellor of the Exchequer.

Miliband, 41, the former environment minister, is a rising star in the Labour Party who voiced doubts over Tony Blair's decision to join the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

"The opportunities and challenges of the modern world require, in my view, a diplomacy that is patient as well as purposeful - which listens as well as leads - and those are the virtues that I will be trying to bring to bear in my leadership of the Foreign Office," Miliband said at a news conference.

Darling, 53, replaces Brown, who held the position since 1997 until Tony Blair retired from office Wednesday. Darling has been a cabinet minister since 1998 and served at the Treasury before then as a junior minister under Brown.

The new chancellor must reduce the budget deficit built up under Brown while paying for improvements to roads, schools and hospitals that voters expect before the next election.

Darling, a lawyer by training, previously worked at the Department for Work and Pensions and under Brown as chief secretary to the Treasury. He oversaw the government's recommendations on nuclear power and also helped put together legislation to change the welfare system.

Miliband was pressed by some Blair loyalists to run against Brown and force a vote among party members to pick Blair's successor, but he chose to back the new leader.

Miliband pushed Blair, along with Jack Straw - appointed Thursday as the new justice secretary and lord chancellor - to take a tougher line with Israel over its war last summer against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Appointing the young minister who spoke out against some of Blair's foreign policy moves may help Brown win back the trust of voters who bitterly opposed the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

Brown invited the families of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan into 10 Downing Street as he made his first speech as leader Wednesday. He said he also planned to reverse restrictions on protests around Parliament.

John Denham, who quit a post in Blair's government to protest the Iraq war, has returned as innovation, universities and skills secretary.

U.K. leader offers up his cabinet New foreign minister criticized Iraq war

Mark Malloch-Brown, the former United Nations deputy secretary general who has been a fierce critic of U.S. foreign policy, was named to a junior post as minister for Africa, Asia and the United Nations.

Miliband, who is the youngest in his role since a 38-year-old David Owen took the job in 1977 under Margaret Thatcher, replaced Margaret Beckett and must strike up a rapport with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Brown picked Jacqui Smith - a 44-year-old member of Amnesty International and a former chief parliamentary whip - as Britain's first **female** Home secretary, responsible for tackling law and order, terrorism and crime.

Des Browne will be the new defense secretary and Alan Johnson was made secretary of health.

Ed Balls, 40, a trusted ally, will be Brown's secretary for children, schools and families.

Miliband's younger brother Ed, a 37-year-old lawmaker, will oversee Britain's cabinet office - the department that enforces government policy.

Julian Astle, director of the Center Forum, a policy institute in London, said: "It's a radical reshuffle from Brown, and by promoting his party's bright young things he's demonstrating that this is a huge change from the days of Tony Blair."

Straw's new post overseeing justice will also include constitutional affairs, Downing Street said. Brown has spoken of the need for strong constitutional reforms. Britain does not have a written constitution.

Brown, who became prime minister Wednesday, also plans to offer junior roles to opposition legislators - much as President Nicolas Sarkozy of France has done - as part of sweeping changes to break with Blair's era.

Shaun Woodward, a defector to Labour from the opposition Conservative Party in 1999, was chosen to be secretary for Northern Ireland.

British news media reported that Chris Patten, an opposition Conservative who was the last British governor of Hong Kong, and Shirley Williams, a Liberal Democrat peer and war critic, would be offered junior posts.

Brown's spokesman Michael Ellam said junior posts would be announced Friday.

Load-Date: June 29, 2007

Bush contrasts Arab, Israeli paths

Christian Science Monitor

May 20, 2008, Tuesday

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Section: USA; Pg. 3

Length: 690 words

Byline: Peter Grier Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: Washington

Body

President Bush's just-completed trip to the Middle East might be summed up as a tale of two speeches.

On May 15, Mr. Bush talked about the historic ties between the US and Israel in a speech to the Israeli Knesset - and got warm applause in return.

On May 18, he talked about Arab political repression in an address to regional policymakers and business leaders at Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt - and received, at best, a cool reception.

Authoritarian Arab governments are not fond of being lectured to about democracy and *women's* rights, since it threatens their power, notes Gerald Hyman, president of the Hills Program on Governance at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. In their eyes, the US is in fact hesitant about full democracy in the region, since it might hand more power to Hamas and other groups hostile to the US and Israel.

Plus, every day they look at the example of their neighbor Iraq, where democracy does not seem to have brought political stability.

"There are just a whole bunch of things piled on top of one another that makes this subject from this president unpopular in the Arab world," says Mr. Hyman.

In some ways Bush's five-day trip to the region had the air of a valedictory appearance. The Middle East peace process is stuck in neutral, if not reverse, and both Israelis and Palestinians appear to be waiting to see what changes in US policy the next president might bring.

Israel has long considered Bush among the most pro-Israeli of recent US chief executives, so his enthusiastic reception there was not exactly a surprise. The biggest controversy to arise from his Israeli speech was not geostrategic, but domestic. Bush suggested that talking with dictators on its face was appeasement - a point that Sen. Barack Obama felt was a jab aimed at him, and with which he disagreed vigorously.

Bush's polite but unenthusiastic greeting from Arab nations was predictable, as well. Saudi Arabia, in general, rebuffed his pleas for help with soaring oil prices, though it did agree to a token increase in oil production. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas sounded disappointed with the tone of Bush's Knesset appearance.

Bush contrasts Arab, Israeli paths

"In principle, the Bush speech at the Knesset angered us, and we were not happy with it," Mr. Abbas said Monday. "This is our position.... I frankly, clearly, and transparently asked him that the American position should be balanced."

In his May 18 speech to the World Economic Forum on the Middle East, Bush mixed praise for the Arab world with a string of complaints about the public practices and admonishments to do better in the future.

"Too often in the Middle East, politics has consisted of one leader in power and the other in jail," said Bush.

That description might fit the situation of Egypt, the host of the conference. Ayman Nour, the main secular opposition candidate in Egypt's 2005 elections, was jailed on fraud charges after the vote. Bush said that he raised the case of Mr. Nour with President Hosni Mubarak in a private meeting on May 17.

"I call on all nations in this region to release their prisoners of conscience, open up their political debate, and trust their people to chart their future," said Bush in his May 18 speech.

Bush also urged Arab leaders to open up more opportunities for women and to stand together against Iran's attempts to become a regional superpower.

Arab governments see a lack of engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process as a sign that the US only wants democracy on its own terms.

In addition, many of the nations in the region have sizable Shiite minorities and fear that a wider voting franchise could fuel already considerable Sunni-Shiite tensions.

With such militant groups as Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon surging in power, much of the Middle East is now further from political and economic reform than it was in the early years of the George Bush presidency, note administration critics.

Over the last year the march of democracy has stalled in the Middle East, noted Freedom House in its recent annual report.

* Material from the Associated Press was used in this report.

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Load-Date: May 19, 2008

Ticking Time Bomb

New York Sun (Archive)

September 14, 2007 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 11

Length: 741 words

Byline: DIANA FURCHTGOTT-ROTH

Body

President Bush's speech last night and General Petraeus's testimony this week coincided with the publication of "The Iranian Time Bomb: The Mullah Zealots' Quest for Destruction," by American Enterprise Institute scholar Michael Ledeen.

The book could not have been better timed. Even as we are succeeding in Iraq, Iran is working against us, and we will not achieve peace in the region if we ignore its threat.

Since 1979 Iran has changed from a society where women could attend university and have careers, to one where they are second-class citizens and have been sold as slaves and punished by stoning. Iran's rulers routinely torture political dissidents, with numerous examples documented in the book.

Not only does Iran treat its own people with cruelty, but it is funding insurgents in neighboring Iraq, and it has openly called for the destruction of America and its allies.

The takeover of the American embassy in Teheran in November of 1979 was followed by Iranian-funded Hezbollah's bombing of the American embassy in Beirut in April 1983, its attack on the U.S. Marine barracks in October 1983, and numerous other acts of war, all ignored by America.

And Iran is one of the main funders of Hamas. Hudson Senior Fellow Meyrav Wurmser has estimated that with Hamas now in power, Iran has increased its annual contribution to \$250 million from \$20 million a year, exclusive of weapons and military training.

Why aren't we in America doing more to stop Iran terrorizing its citizens and waging war against us?

Mr. Ledeen suggests encouraging the highly educated Iranian opposition to defeat the current regime and set up a democratically elected government. He estimates that approximately 70% of Iranians would like a change of government, compared to a small percent of Russians in the heyday of the Soviet Union. If the Soviet Union could be defeated, why not President Ahmadinejad?

As a nation, we can do little to cripple the Iranian economy. Trade with Iran has been trivial. Since 2000, we have imported only \$150 million to \$200 million worth of Iranian goods. We import more from China in 8 hours than we import from Iran in an entire year.

Ticking Time Bomb

But there is much political pressure that could be generated against Iran by America and its allies. Specifically, protests could help reveal to the American public how morally corrupt the Iranian government has become. The Iranian leaders would be harmed politically, and the Iranian opposition would be strengthened and encouraged.

Unions could follow the example of the AFL-CIO, which is trying to free imprisoned Iranian union leaders, Mansour Osanloo and Mahmoud Salehi, and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, which is divesting its pension funds of

companies that do business with Iran.

According to the general president of Teamsters, James Hoffa, "I believe that divestiture of investments in companies that do business with Iran can help bring peaceful change to that nation ... I also believe that divestiture of investments in companies linked to Iran is the patriotic thing to do as well as a wise investment strategy."

University students in the 1960s and 1970s organized divestiture movements, boycotts, and other programs that effectively persuaded many businesses that doing business in South Africa could be unprofitable in other parts of the world, and apartheid eventually ended. The same might be done for Iran.

Feminists criticize American employers for allegedly paying women only 78% of men's wages, and for not promoting more women to the corner office. Yet when their Iranian sisters are forced to wear veils, sold into slavery, and stoned on mere suspicion of adultery, they say nothing.

Why weren't feminists up in arms about Iran's imprisonment of the American professor, Haleh Esfandiari, on trumpedup charges of spying? Mrs. Esfandiari returned to America last week - no thanks to the American Association of University Women or the National Organization for Women.

As we hear about developments in Iraq, we need to remember that Iran should be at the top of America's list of demon governments for constant attempts at destabilization. It funds insurgents that kill our troops in Iraq. It threatens to destroy America and America's friends around the world and develops nuclear weapons to back up its threats. After almost three decades of closing our eyes to Iranian horrors, it's time to change course.

Ms. Furchtgott-Roth is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.

Load-Date: September 14, 2007

Thinking Right; CRCT, menthol, a 'bloody fortune'

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

May 30, 2008 Friday

Online Edition

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**The Atlanta
Journal-Constitution**

Length: 695 words

Byline: JIM WOOTEN

Staff

Body

Friday, May 30, 2008, 07:31 AM

Barack Obama spoke to graduates of Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn., the day before Memorial Day. Topic was the usual commencement fare: the obligation to perform "service to one's country." He mentioned them all. An entire laundry list. Except one. Military service. This is as close as he came: "At a time of war, we need you to work for peace." It doesn't occur to our would-be commander-in-chief to invite the college-educated to consider a career in uniform.

Be thankful, though, that good people do choose military service. Case in point today is Fort Stewart's 3rd Infantry Division, which has brought a measure of peace and stability to the "Triangle of Death" region south of Baghdad and across central Iraq. The division is on its way home. All Georgia, indeed all of America, should cheer their service and success.

I read the comments, a number of them, of local school superintendents on the high failure rate on the statewide Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests on the new social studies and more rigorous math curricula. Observation: They had a chance to lead, to explain, and instead they whined and passed the buck, determined to make certain the locals knew it was not their fault.

A critical bit of information was missing from the story headlined "Teen accused of grabbing, biting women's buttocks." Now, how tall was he?

The left is determined to destroy the tobacco industry in America. First the high taxes and lawsuits to "recover" the medical costs associated with smoking. Now they're playing the race card, insisting that menthol be banned as a tobacco flavoring, along with chocolate, strawberry and other candy flavorings that are said to appeal to the young. Menthol is not included in the flavoring ban now working its way through Congress. But wait. About 75 percent of blacks who smoke prefer menthol. Not banning it "gives the appearance that the lives of black youngsters are valued less than white youngsters," said Dr. Louis Sullivan, former secretary of Health & Human Services.

Thinking Right CRCT, menthol, a 'bloody fortune'

Goodness gracious. Just plain goodness gracious. Is there no race card we won't play to win an election, legislation or policy debate?

The folly of the state's monopoly-creating and antiquated certificate of need regulation of hospital construction, expansion and equipment could not be more evident than in the effort to revive Southwest Atlanta Hospital. It's failed twice or more in the marketplace and relied most recently on nostalgia and guilt trips on young medical professionals and the black middle class to succeed. Now it's trying again. Its primary asset: a state license to operate a hospital. Georgia really should get rid of that CON law.

Headline: "New Lebanese president urges unity." Is the appeal from the winner ever otherwise? And here, "unity" may not be good. The election ended a stalemate, but Hezbollah gets veto power over all government decisions. Poor Lebanon.

Want to get rich ---- and therefore become somebody liberal Democrats hate? Follow the advice of John Bogle, founder of The Vanguard Group Inc., the nation's second-largest mutual fund company. Save a part of what you earn. Invest. Hold. He has "a bloody fortune" and "I didn't really do anything except save all the time," starting with 15 percent of his first monthly check of \$250 in 1951.

Big Brother, my foot. A proposal to require employers to submit Social Security numbers of proposed hires to the federal government to make certain they're legal would be costly ---- about \$10 billion over nine years ---- but it's not Big Brother, as critics assert. This would eliminate the argument that employers who hire illegals are the problem.

Be thankful for our blessings and for every day we have on this earth. A Tennessee woman, who died this week, spent almost 60 years of her life in an iron lung. "Everyone she encountered came to her because they cared about her," said the president of a foundation that helped support her medical needs, "so she grew up in her 61 years thinking every person is good."

http://www.ajc.com/opinion/content/shared-blogs/ajc/thinkingright/entries/2008/05/30/crct_menthol_a_bloody_fortune.html

Load-Date: November 5, 2008

Handicapped kept as slaves

The Star (South Africa)
August 14, 2007 Tuesday
e2 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 706 words

Body

Beijing - Hundreds of mentally handicapped people have been rescued from slavery in Chinese brickyards and other workplaces, officials said yesterday as they announced the latest findings of a labour abuse crackdown. At least 1 340 people, including 367 mentally handicapped, were taken from brick kilns, mines and other forced labour situations since a slavery scandal in June.

Abuja - An amateur video of a northern Nigerian film actress in a sex scene has caused a public outcry in the Muslim north, prompting a movie industry body to expel actors deemed "immoral". Leadership newspaper said the eight-minute video clip, recorded for private use on a cellphone by the actress's boyfriend and showing the two of them naked, circulated widely among cellphone users.

Oslo - Norway's 35-year-old Princess Martha Louise, fourth in line to the throne, has come under intense media scrutiny for her involvement in the "angel school", that aims to teach people how to get in touch with angels. Observers question whether her work can be combined with official duties. A leading newspaper has called on her to renounce her title.

London - Two 16-year-olds have been hired by a police force in Britain to patrol the streets as support for regular officers in tackling low-level crime. The two, who will be employed as civilian police community support officers, - sometimes nicknamed "plastic police" - will be able to detain suspects until officers arrive, issue fines and confiscate alcohol from people drinking in public.

Paris - If you haven't got a toy, you're uncool. It's a case of vibrators in the bathtub, dildos in the living-room and Geisha balls at the news-stand as sex toys come out of the closet in France, with glam 30-something women leading the trend. The latest store, which offers erotic games, boasts a love-coach, a sexologist, a specialist caterer for naughty soirees, and pole-dancing classes.

Athens - A middle-aged Greek shepherd, unable to walk long distances, now drives to work after training his flock of sheep to follow his car. George Zokos from Tynavos in central Greece devised the system after his health deteriorated, and has been "driving" his sheep to pasture for the past three years. Neighbours have dubbed him "the euro-shepherd" for his advanced sheep-herding method.

New Delhi - Ten people were electrocuted when an 11 000-volt power line touched the bus they were riding on in India's Uttar Pradesh state on Sunday. Sixteen others suffered burn injuries after the packed bus touched a low-hanging overhead wire, which set the bus's tyres on fire. A passenger tried to lift away the wire using a wooden flagpole, but the wire fell back and electrocuted him.

Handicapped kept as slaves

Berlin - Politicians and artists yesterday urged the authorities to let them rebuild the longest surviving section of the Berlin Wall before it decayed beyond recognition. A 1 300m section of the wall, known as the East Side Gallery, is a top tourist attraction. However, it is fast crumbling and many of the murals by artists from 24 countries who flocked to Berlin in 1990 are almost unrecognisable.

Tokyo - The world's oldest person, a Japanese woman who counted eating well and getting plenty of sleep as the secret of her longevity, died yesterday aged 114. Yone Minagawa blew out the candles on her own birthday cake earlier this year. Widowed at an early age, she raised her five children by selling flowers and vegetables in a mining town. Her reign as oldest person lasted just six months.

Luanda - Almost 420 people have died from cholera in Angola since the start of the year, according to figures released by the World Health Organisation in Luanda yesterday. A total of 16 320 cases were reported in 16 of the country's 18 provinces, with Luanda recording the highest figure of 6 692, followed by Benguela with 3 681 cases and Cabinda with 1 721.

London - Britain should begin talking directly with three of the Middle East's most prominent radical Islamic groups - Hamas, Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood - a committee of MPs reported yesterday. Diplomats should speak with moderate elements from such groups and continue engaging Iran and Syria, as their influence could no longer be ignored, parliament's foreign affairs committee said.

Load-Date: August 13, 2007

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Terror's Purse Strings

The New York Times

August 30, 2007 Thursday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Editorial Desk; Pg. 23; OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

Length: 758 words

Byline: By DANA THOMAS

Dana Thomas, a correspondent for Newsweek, is the author of "Deluxe: How Luxury Lost Its Luster."

Body

Paris

LUXURY fashion designers are busily putting final touches on the handbags they will present during the spring-summer 2008 **women's** wear shows, which begin next week in New York City's Bryant Park. To understand the importance of the handbag in fashion today consider this: According to consumer surveys conducted by Coach, the average American woman was buying two new handbags a year in 2000; by 2004, it was more than four. And the average luxury bag retails for 10 to 12 times its production cost.

"There is a kind of an obsession with bags," the designer Miuccia Prada told me. "It's so easy to make money."

Counterfeiters agree. As soon as a handbag hits big, counterfeiters around the globe churn out fake versions by the thousands. And they have no trouble selling them. Shoppers descend on Canal Street in New York, Santee Alley in Los Angeles and flea markets and purse parties around the country to pick up knockoffs for one-tenth the legitimate bag's retail cost, then pass them off as real.

"Judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys shop here," a private investigator told me as we toured the counterfeit section of Santee Alley. "Affluent people from Newport Beach." According to a study by the British law firm Davenport Lyons, two-thirds of British consumers are "proud to tell their family and friends" that they bought fake luxury fashion items.

At least 11 percent of the world's clothing is fake, according to 2000 figures from the Global Anti-Counterfeiting Group in Paris. Fashion is easy to copy: counterfeiters buy the real items, take them apart, scan the pieces to make patterns and produce almost-perfect fakes.

Most people think that buying an imitation handbag or wallet is harmless, a victimless crime. But the counterfeiting rackets are run by crime syndicates that also deal in narcotics, weapons, child prostitution, human trafficking and terrorism. Ronald K. Noble, the secretary general of Interpol, told the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations that profits from the sale of counterfeit goods have gone to groups associated with **Hezbollah**, the Shiite terrorist group, paramilitary organizations in Northern Ireland and FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

Terror's Purse Strings

Sales of counterfeit T-shirts may have helped finance the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, according to the International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition. "Profits from counterfeiting are one of the three main sources of income supporting international terrorism," said Magnus Ranstorp, a terrorism expert at the University of St. Andrews, in Scotland.

Most fakes today are produced in China, a good many of them by children. Children are sometimes sold or sent off by their families to work in clandestine factories that produce counterfeit luxury goods. Many in the West consider this an urban myth. But I have seen it myself.

On a warm winter afternoon in Guangzhou, I accompanied Chinese police officers on a factory raid in a decrepit tenement. Inside, we found two dozen children, ages 8 to 13, gluing and sewing together fake luxury-brand handbags. The police confiscated everything, arrested the owner and sent the children out. Some punched their timecards, hoping to still get paid. (The average Chinese factory worker earns about \$120 a month; the counterfeit factory worker earns half that or less.) As we made our way back to the police vans, the children threw bottles and cans at us. They were now jobless and, because the factory owner housed them, homeless. It was "Oliver Twist" in the 21st century.

What can we do to stop this? Much like the war on drugs, the effort to protect luxury brands must go after the source: the counterfeit manufacturers. The company that took me on the Chinese raid is one of the only luxury-goods makers that works directly with Chinese authorities to shut down factories, and it has one of the lowest rates of counterfeiting.

Luxury brands also need to teach consumers that the traffic in fake goods has many victims. But most companies refuse to speak publicly about counterfeiting -- some won't even authenticate questionable items for concerned customers -- believing, like Victorians, that acknowledging despicable actions tarnishes their sterling reputations.

So it comes down to us. If we stop knowingly buying fakes, the supply chain will dry up and counterfeiters will go out of business. The crime syndicates will have far less money to finance their illicit activities and their terrorist plots. And the children? They can go home.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTO (PHOTOGRAPH BY JENNIFER DANIEL)

Load-Date: August 30, 2007

International briefs

Telegraph Herald (Dubuque, IA)

November 25, 2007 Sunday

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Section: A; Pg. 11

Length: 771 words

Byline: The Associated Press

Body

Moscow court sentences Kasparov

MOSCOW - Former chess champion Garry Kasparov was convicted of leading an opposition protest and sentenced to five days in jail by a Moscow court Saturday.

Kasparov and dozens of other demonstrators were detained hours earlier after riot police clashed with Kremlin opponents following a protest rally that drew several thousand people.

The former chess champion was forced to the ground and beaten, his assistant Marina Litvinovich said in a telephone interview.

"What you've heard is all lies," Kasparov said after the sentence was read. "The testimony is contradictory. There was not a single word of truth."

Two riot police testified in court that they had been given direct orders before the rally to arrest Kasparov, one of President Vladimir Putin's harshest critics.

Dutch man back in Aruba after re-arrest

ORANJESTAD, Aruba - Authorities flew a Dutch man back to the Caribbean after he was re-arrested in the Netherlands as a suspect in the disappearance of American teen Natalee Holloway.

Joran van der Sloot arrived by plane in Aruba late Friday and authorities took him in a car with tinted windows straight from the runway to a jail in the Dutch Caribbean island.

Aruba prosecutor Hans Mos said van der Sloot, 20, will appear before a judge Monday in a closed hearing.

Musharraf faces

fresh challenges

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan - President Gen. Pervez Musharraf faces a potent challenge today with the return from exile of the religiously conservative elected leader he overthrew eight years ago.

International briefs

Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is expected to arrive in the eastern city of Lahore with the country still reeling from a set of brazen suicide attacks. Suicide bombers killed up to 35 people in the nearly simultaneous blasts early Saturday at the heart of Pakistan's security establishment.

Thousands are expected to greet the returning politician, a staunch critic of Musharraf who is seen as having broad political support.

Cruise ship crash survivors await airlift

SANTIAGO, Chile - Passengers on a small Canadian cruise ship that sank hours in icy waters off Antarctica are all safe.

The 154 passengers and crew were waiting out bad weather Saturday at a remote Chilean military base before they can be airlifted to the South American mainland.

The 91 passengers came from more than a dozen nations, including 24 Britons, 17 Dutch, 14 Americans, 12 Canadians and 10 Australians, said Susan Hayes of G.A.P. Adventures of Toronto, which runs environmentally oriented excursions and owns the stricken MS Explorer.

Brazilians decry teen girl jailed with men

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil - A teenage girl was locked up on theft charges in an Amazon jail for weeks with 21 men who she said would only let her eat in return for sex, according to authorities, setting off a national scandal over the treatment of women by Brazil's justice system.

"Throwing a 15-year-old girl into a cell with 20 men was a heinous and intolerable act," Brazilian Bar Association president Cezar Britto said in an interview. "It is a serious case of criminal negligence against women."

The newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo reported she was tortured with lit cigarettes on her fingers and bare feet to force her to have sex. Her cellmates cut her hair to make it difficult to recognize her, Estado said.

She said her only reprieve from obligatory sex was on Thursdays - when intimate visits were allowed - and things "calmed down," Estado reported.

The girl was arrested Oct. 21 on accusations of breaking and entering a house and jailed with male inmates in Abaetetuba, a city of 78,000 outside the Para state capital of Belem.

The victim's father insisted in a televised interview that she was 15, and that police threatened to arrest him unless he produced a certificate showing she was 20.

Lebanese republic awakes without a president

BEIRUT, Lebanon - Lebanon awoke a republic without a president Saturday amid mounting worries over a power vacuum that has intensified the nation's yearlong political turmoil.

The capital was calm and shops opened for business as usual the morning after a tumultuous day that saw President Emile Lahoud depart without a successor after announcing he was handing over security powers to the army.

The departure of Lahoud, a staunch ally of the Syrian regime during his nine years in office, was a long-sought goal of the government installed by parliament's anti-Syria majority, which has been trying to put one of its own in the presidency.

Hezbollah and other opposition groups have blocked legislators from electing a new president by boycotting ballot sessions, leaving parliament without the required quorum.

International briefs

Load-Date: November 25, 2007

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Comment - Philing the gaps in US foreign policy; Trinity's Philosophical Society would do better to keep the conspiracy theories to a minimum

Sunday Tribune (Ireland)

October 14, 2007

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Section: NEWS; Pg. N20

Length: 723 words

Byline: Richard Delevan

Body

What it lacks in decorum it's made up for in décolletage, but the world's oldest debating society ain't what it used to be. For a debate last Thursday, Trinity's Philosophical Society drafted in - from Washington, New York, London and Dublin - several serious and influential analysts of American foreign policy. And Carole Coleman, RTE's former Michael Moorette.

Formal attire for guests and officers leads to some comedy. In an oversized hall, young men whose voices have just about stopped changing swan in ill-fitting dinner jackets. Their satin-wrapped **female** colleagues sported Oscar-night-worthy cleavage, tittering as a pubescent chap read out minutes of the previous meeting with jokes on syphilis, Nymphomaniacs Anonymous and "Club Filth", as wine flowed and beer warmed. For those unimpressed with the awkward sexuality of today's Trinners, there was a racy flirtation with anti-Semitism.

Student Brian O'Beirne read a lengthy paper that was in essence a summary - a poor one - of a recent book by two American academics, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt. Mearsheimer-Walt argue, a priori, that the US's support of Israel may have made sense during the Cold War, but now lacks strategic or moral rationale and has made the US a target for Arab hatred and terrorist attack. Therefore, they leap, American support for Israel can only be explained by the power of "the lobby" (the missing adjective being either Jewish or pro-Israel). They conclude, in a tradition harking back to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, that 'the Jews' (under currently more acceptable label The Neocons) tricked the US into invading Iraq against its own best interests.

The format, as the American guests seemed surprised to learn, is for guests to respond to the paper and field constant interruptions - which in this case had little to do with the topic they were invited to address. The first speaker, Joshua Muravchik, of Washington's American Enterprise Institute and a leading Neocon, was quite overwhelmed by what he clearly felt was an ambush. As a former chairman of the Young People's Socialist League in the '60s, Muravchik should be used to fluid floor-debate, but he did himself few favours in spluttering rebuttals.

Next came once and future Dail candidate and Irish Anti-War Movement boss Richard Boyd Barrett - now one of Ireland's most articulate speakers after five years in the public eye - who started by distancing himself from the paper, declaring a "slight danger" of sliding into an anti-Semitic critique of US foreign policy.

Note to The Phil: when Boyd Barrett - who this weekend planned an event around a top propagandist for terrorist group **Hezbollah** (denied an entry visa by the Irish government) - says your views are unacceptable, you've got problems.

Comment - Philing the gaps in US foreign policy Trinity's Philosophical Society would do better to keep the conspiracy theories to a minimum

Some of Boyd Barrett's own critique of American foreign policy is spot on: that the US has propped up despotic Arab regimes to keep the oil flowing, a much bigger problem than the US-Israel relationship. He may not realise it's the same critique offered by some Neocons. Where he takes the argument from there - that it's all really about China - gets batty, but his views are at least arrived at honestly.

The evening really did threaten to be merely a depressing display of how shabby and shallow the scions of Ireland's elite can be, until James Risen from The New York Times spoke.

Risen politely dubbed the proceedings "entertaining" and expressed his thanks for the opportunity to visit Ireland and discover his Monaghan roots, delivered in a way that made clear he was unlikely to come back.

His own analysis of how things got this bad is both the most credible and the most informed of any you're likely to hear. For 18 months, US foreign policy was unmoored from its institutional base and was personally freelanced, day-to-day, by George Bush and Dick Cheney. Ignoring decades of built-up expertise, extraordinarily bad decisions were made. The utter failure to articulate a credible rationale for the war in Iraq - instead building a case on non-existent WMDs - left a vacuum filled by every kind of conspiracy theory, from 'the Jews' to 'the oil' to whatever you're having yourself.

Dumb is always a less satisfying explanation than Evil. And definitely less sexy. So unlikely to be recorded in the minutes of the world's oldest debating society.

rdelevan@tribune.ie

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End of Document

Hamas threatens more bombings in Israel

The Leader-Post (Regina, Saskatchewan)

May 18, 2007 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A5

Length: 759 words

Byline: Matthew Fisher, CanWest News Service

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM -- Fighting between Hamas and Fatah has eased slightly in Gaza, but Hamas threatened a new wave of suicide bombings inside Israel to avenge multiple air raids over the Palestinian territory by Israeli warplanes on Thursday that killed four Hamas fighters, including one described as a senior commander.

Three other Palestinians died in factional violence. Two of them were shot as they attended funerals in southern Gaza for some of the more than 40 other Palestinians who have been killed since Hamas and Fatah resumed their bloody conflict over the weekend after a three-month lull.

The punishing Israeli air strikes, that began with several that killed five Palestinians on Wednesday, did not stop Hamas from launching 17 more Qassam rockets into the Jewish state during the past 24 hours, including one missile that crashed through the roof of a high school and into a classroom while students took exams in the next room.

Under intense pressure from terrified and angry residents of communities in southern Israel that lie within range of Hamas's Qassams, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert also ordered several tanks and a small number of infantry to cross into northern Gaza for the first time in six months, to better observe areas often used to launch rockets. The Israeli Defence Forces positioned artillery units just outside the Palestinian enclave so as to be able to immediately counter-fire after any rocket launches.

Israel also electronically took control of radio stations in Gaza to warn residents there to flee places used to launch rockets, an Israeli television station reported.

"We have had enough," Olmert's spokeswoman Miri Eisin told Reuters shortly before the various military operations began. But Israeli officials emphasized these were "defensive operations" and that Israel has no intention of undertaking a major ground offensive in the territory.

Several thousand mostly Russian and Ethiopian Jews from the town of Sderot, which lies in the western Negev desert within what Israelis called 'the Gaza belt,' were evacuated by the government and by a Russian-Israeli businessman Thursday before the operation was stopped because not enough beds could be found for all those wanting to flee the area. Many residents have taken to living in bomb shelters.

Hamas threatens more bombings in Israel

The Israeli air strikes seriously damaged a multi-storey Hamas compound, a trailer used as a barracks and two vehicles with men inside. Palestinian hospitals reported dozens of wounded, including women and children who were injured in the bombing of the compound.

Khaled Meshal, Hamas's top leader, who lives in Syria, claimed on his group's Al-Aqsa television station Thursday that Israel's actions presented Palestinians with a "historic opportunity" to bring Hamas and Fatah together to fight their common enemy.

But there was little sign of that in Gaza. The fourth ceasefire in as many days held slightly better than the others, but gunmen still controlled all the major roads and there were several shootouts.

For the first time since fighting erupted again, some Gazans briefly surfaced to purchase food, but most remained in their homes, mindful of how ambushes and mortar, rocket and sniper attacks could happen at any time.

The security situation remained so unstable that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas postponed a visit to Gaza on Thursday. Abbas, who leads Fatah, was to have met with Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, the highest ranking Hamas leader not living in exile.

Hamas' latest threats to resume what it called 'martyrdom operations' against Israel's response to Hamas rocket attacks have complicated an already unpredictable, deeply troubling situation within Gaza. The Qassam attacks on Israel, and what many Israelis have regarded as their government's slow response to them, have once again called into question Olmert's leadership abilities. The current situation reminded Israelis of their military's failure to prevent Hezbollah from launching thousands of rockets from Lebanon last summer.

Former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is leading opinion polls to succeed Olmert, demanded that Israel cut off power and other public services to Gaza.

At a press conference in Ramallah in the West Bank, Mustafa Barghouti, the Palestinian information minister, warned the government might collapse if the factional fighting did not stop, leading to a total separation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. He called on Hamas and Fatah "to pull their gunmen off the streets of Gaza" and appealed for new security mechanisms that involved both factions.

Load-Date: May 18, 2007

A mixed message

Herald Sun (Australia)

June 13, 2007 Wednesday

FIRST Edition

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Length: 659 words

Byline: Andrew Bolt

Body

The new leader of Australia's Muslims is not there to get Muslims used to secular Australia, but Australia used to Muslims.

I WAS chatting to the charming Sheik Fehmi Naji el-Imam, now Australia's new Mufti, when we were interrupted by the Queen.

Her Majesty settled herself at her table, while we and the other few hundred guests at the Royal Exhibition Building lunch waited politely.

Two archbishops -- one Catholic and the other Anglican -- then said Grace and I whispered to the sheik, "Why aren't you up there, too?"

"One day I will be," he replied. I was joking, but I'm sure Fehmi was not.

And why shouldn't he hope to be up there, making the Christians shuffle up a bit to make room for his very different and demanding faith?

I mention this not to damn his cheek, but to point out Fehmi -- however moderate he is painted -- is not there to police our Muslims and assimilate them for you.

His job isn't to get Muslims used to secular Australia, but Australia used to Muslims.

That point may be lost by commentators who, with me, have long wanted him to replace the disastrous Sheik Taj el-Din al-Hilaly as Mufti, our senior Muslim cleric.

I wanted Hilaly sacked for preaching hatred, and thought it disturbing that Muslims chose to be led by a man who'd praised suicide bombers as heroes, called the September 11 terror attacks "God's work against oppressors", and insisted raped women be "jailed for life". And what a symbol of determined apartness he was, with so little English after 30 years here.

But how much better off are we with Fehmi chosen on Sunday by the new Australian National Imam's Council to take over as Mufti?

Not so much. But let me first count Fehmi's blessings.

A mixed message

He is a most courteous man, who has often preached against violent jihad at his Preston mosque, and publicly and often called for the Sydney-based Hilaly to go.

Lebanese-born, he speaks fine English after 55 years here, and has impressed leaders of other faiths, with the admired Rabbi John Levi praising him in a 2001 ABC profile as "extremely wise and compassionate".

Yet, last year, Levi said Fehmi had "shocked" him: "He is under great pressure from a radicalised community, but nothing can excuse his destruction of decades-long work on Jewish-Muslim understanding."

And here's the problem. In the end, Fehmi leads believers who demand he be far more radical than you'd expect from a "moderate".

What alarmed Levi, and the Howard Government, is that Fehmi backed the Hezbollah terrorists in their war with Israel, hailing them at a rally as "freedom fighters".

Worse, when asked at his first press conference as Mufti if he accepted Osama bin Laden was behind the September 11 attacks, he stalled: "What evidence?" Advisers then stopped him from speaking on Iraq.

Excuses will be made that Fehmi dares not be as moderate as he'd like, and he's often hinted that's so.

He urged that the Danish cartoons of Mohammed not be published here because they'd "disturb people who can do things that we don't want them to do."

He criticised police raids on suspected extremists in Perth because "we worry about some amongst our people who become so angry about this sort of thing, and might do some act, which we won't be happy about".

When Channel 9 asked him about Sheik Mohammed Omran, who has been linked to terrorists, Fehmi said only: "I know him and he has his own way of thinking, which I don't want to talk about."

And note this. At Monday's press conference, he refused to repeat his past criticisms of Hilaly, defending him instead.

What's more, the imams' council went out of its way to save Hilaly's face, saying it first voted to keep this notorious bigot as Mufti, only to have him turn it down. This was no repudiation of him.

And back at his Lakemba mosque, Australia's biggest, Hilaly reminded us: "Control will always be in Lakemba." Which is why I fear Fehmi is just a soothing distraction.

Join Andrew at blogs.

news.com.au/heraldsun/ andrewbolt

Load-Date: June 12, 2007

Thinking Right: CRCT, menthol, a 'bloody fortune'

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

May 30, 2008 Friday

Main Edition

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**The Atlanta
Journal-Constitution**

Section: @ISSUE; Pg. 10A

Length: 705 words

Byline: JIM WOOTEN

Staff

Body

Thinking Right's weekend free-for-all. Pick a topic:

* Barack Obama spoke to graduates of Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn., the day before Memorial Day. Topic was the usual commencement fare: the obligation to perform "service to one's country." He mentioned them all. An entire laundry list. Except one. Military service. This is as close as he came: "At a time of war, we need you to work for peace." It doesn't occur to our would-be commander-in-chief to invite the college-educated to consider a career in uniform.

* Be thankful, though, that good people do choose military service. Case in point today is Fort Stewart's 3rd Infantry Division, which has brought a measure of peace and stability to the "Triangle of Death" region south of Baghdad and across central Iraq. The division is on its way home. All Georgia, indeed all of America, should cheer their service and success.

* I read the comments, a number of them, of local school superintendents on the high failure rate on the statewide Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests on the new social studies and more rigorous math curricula. Observation: They had a chance to lead, to explain, and instead they whined and passed the buck, determined to make certain the locals knew it was not their fault.

* A critical bit of information was missing from the story headlined "Teen accused of grabbing, biting women's buttocks." Now, how tall was he?

* The left is determined to destroy the tobacco industry in America. First the high taxes and lawsuits to "recover" the medical costs associated with smoking. Now they're playing the race card, insisting that menthol be banned as a tobacco flavoring, along with chocolate, strawberry and other candy flavorings that are said to appeal to the young. Menthol is not included in the flavoring ban now working its way through Congress. But wait. About 75 percent of blacks who smoke prefer menthol. Not banning it "gives the appearance that the lives of black youngsters are

Thinking Right: CRCT, menthol, a 'bloody fortune'

valued less than white youngsters," said Dr. Louis Sullivan, former secretary of Health & Human Services. Goodness gracious. Just plain goodness gracious. Is there no race card we won't play to win an election, legislation or policy debate?

* The folly of the state's monopoly-creating and antiquated certificate of need regulation of hospital construction, expansion and equipment could not be more evident than in the effort to revive Southwest Atlanta Hospital. It's failed twice or more in the marketplace and relied most recently on nostalgia and guilt trips on young medical professionals and the black middle class to succeed. Now it's trying again. Its primary asset: a state license to operate a hospital. Georgia really should get rid of that CON law.

* Headline: "New Lebanese president urges unity." Is the appeal from the winner ever otherwise? And here, "unity" may not be good. The election ended a stalemate, but Hezbollah gets veto power over all government decisions. Poor Lebanon.

* Want to get rich --- and therefore become somebody liberal Democrats hate? Follow the advice of John Bogle, founder of The Vanguard Group Inc., the nation's second-largest mutual fund company. Save a part of what you earn. Invest. Hold. He has "a bloody fortune" and "I didn't really do anything except save all the time," starting with 15 percent of his first monthly check of \$250 in 1951.

* Big Brother, my foot. A proposal to require employers to submit Social Security numbers of proposed hires to the federal government to make certain they're legal would be costly --- about \$10 billion over nine years --- but it's not Big Brother, as critics assert. This would eliminate the argument that employers who hire illegals are the problem.

* Be thankful for our blessings and for every day we have on this earth. A Tennessee woman, who died this week, spent almost 60 years of her life in an iron lung. "Everyone she encountered came to her because they cared about her," said the president of a foundation that helped support her medical needs, "so she grew up in her 61 years thinking every person is good."

* Jim Wooten is associate editorial page editor. His column appears Friday, Sunday and Tuesday. His blog appears daily on ajc.com.

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Load-Date: May 30, 2008

Terror's purse strings; Counterfeit luxury

The International Herald Tribune

August 31, 2007 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 4

Length: 721 words

Byline: Dana Thomas - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: PARIS

Body

Luxury fashion designers are busily putting final touches on the handbags they will present during the spring-summer 2008 women's wear shows, which begin next week in New York City's Bryant Park.

To understand the importance of the handbag in fashion today consider this: According to consumer surveys conducted by Coach, the average American woman was buying two new handbags a year in 2000; by 2004, it was more than four. And the average luxury bag retails for 10 to 12 times its production cost.

"There is a kind of an obsession with bags," the designer Miuccia Prada told me. "It's so easy to make money."

Counterfeiters agree. As soon as a handbag hits big, counterfeiters around the globe churn out fake versions by the thousands. And they have no trouble selling them. Shoppers descend on Canal Street in New York, Santee Alley in Los Angeles and flea markets and purse parties around the world to pick up knockoffs for one-tenth the legitimate bag's retail cost, then pass them off as real.

"Judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys shop here," a private investigator told me as we toured the counterfeit section of Santee Alley. According to a study by the British law firm Davenport Lyons, two-thirds of British consumers are "proud to tell their family and friends" that they bought fake luxury fashion items.

Fashion is easy to copy: Counterfeiters buy the real items, take them apart, scan the pieces to make patterns and produce almost-perfect fakes.

Most people think that buying an imitation handbag or wallet is harmless, a victimless crime. But the counterfeiting rackets are run by crime syndicates that also deal in narcotics, weapons, child prostitution, human trafficking and terrorism.

Ronald K. Noble, the secretary general of Interpol, told the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations that profits from the sale of counterfeit goods have gone to groups associated with Hezbollah, the Shiite terrorist group; paramilitary organizations in Northern Ireland, and FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

Sales of counterfeit T-shirts may have helped finance the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, according to the International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition. "Profits from counterfeiting are one of the three main sources of income

Terror's purse strings Counterfeit luxury

supporting international terrorism," said Magnus Ranstorp, a terrorism expert at the University of St. Andrews, in Scotland.

Most fakes today are produced in China, a good many of them by children. Children are sometimes sold or sent off by their families to work in clandestine factories that produce counterfeit luxury goods.

Many in the West consider this an urban myth. But I have seen it myself.

On a warm winter afternoon in Guangzhou, I accompanied Chinese police officers on a raid in a decrepit tenement. We found two dozen children, ages 8 to 13, gluing and sewing together fake luxury-brand handbags. The police confiscated everything, arrested the owner and sent the children out. Some punched their timecards, hoping to still get paid. (The average Chinese factory worker earns about \$120 a month; the counterfeit factory worker earns half that or less.)

As we made our way back to the police vans, the children threw bottles and cans at us. They were now jobless and, because the factory owner housed them, homeless. It was "Oliver Twist" in the 21st century.

What can we do to stop this? Much like the war on drugs, the effort to protect luxury brands must go after the source: the counterfeit manufacturers. The company that took me on the Chinese raid is one of the only luxury-goods makers that works directly with Chinese authorities to shut down factories, and it has one of the lowest rates of counterfeiting.

Luxury brands also need to teach consumers that the traffic in fake goods has many victims. But most companies refuse to speak publicly about counterfeiting believing that acknowledging despicable actions tarnishes their sterling reputations.

So it comes down to us. If we stop knowingly buying fakes, the supply chain will dry up and counterfeiters will go out of business. The crime syndicates will have far less money to finance their illicit activities and their terrorist plots. And the children? They can go home.

Dana Thomas, a correspondent for Newsweek, is the author of "Deluxe: How Luxury Lost Its Luster."

Load-Date: September 6, 2007

Weekend: BROTHERS IN ARMS: As a boy in Baghdad, Ghaith Abdul-Ahad was taught that Iranians were the 'worms of the earth'. Now, 20 years after the Iran-Iraq war, he visits Tehran to seek out veterans, officers, dissidents and Islamists, to hear their stories. How does he feel today about his old enemy?

The Guardian - Final Edition

November 29, 2008 Saturday

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theguardian

Section: GUARDIAN WEEKEND PAGES; Pg. 66

Length: 3768 words

Byline: Ghaith Abdul-Ahad

Body

The Iranian army officer was short, chubby and had a thick moustache. Unlike his fellow officers of the Islamic Republic, he had a flash watch on his wrist, a clean-shaven chin and a glass of red wine in his hand. His wife had filled his plate with lamb stew, a chicken leg and saffron rice. The three of us were guests at a supper in a well-to-do district of Tehran.

In clipped, matter-of-fact sentences, the officer gave me his analysis of the Iran-Iraq conflict in the 80s, in which his country had been at war with mine. "From 1980 until 1982, Saddam had the upper hand, and he occupied bits of south-western Iran," he said. "Then, from 1982 until 1986, we had the upper hand, after taking back Khorramshahr (the Iranian border town that Iraq occupied in the first months of the war), but we wasted lots of men and energy trying to invade Basra and the marches. After 1986, Saddam, with help from the west, started pushing us back." With his fork he drew a line on his plate, moving from the chicken leg on one side to the stew on the other. "When the war ended, Saddam was very strong, but his stupidity led him to invade Kuwait and waste his power."

"And now?" I asked.

He handed the plate to his wife without even looking at her and sipped from his glass, sucking on his wine-dipped moustache with his lower lip. "Now we could capture Baghdad in three days. But we never wanted Baghdad - Basra is part of our sphere of influence." He turned to me: "Have you been there?"

"Yes, what about you?"

He ignored my question and said, "You see how much Iranian merchandise and food there is in the market (in Baghdad)?" I had indeed: almost everything - from milk and fizzy drinks to motorbikes and air coolers - comes from Iran.

Weekend: BROTHERS IN ARMS: As a boy in Baghdad, Ghaith Abdul-Ahad was taught that Iranians were the 'worms of the earth'. Now, 20 years after the Iran - Iraq wa....

"If you send food, you can send weapons," the officer said. "And you don't need arms to control a city. You let the others do it for you." By "others" I took him to mean Iraqi Shia militias in the Basra area.

His wife handed him his topped-up plate as he summed up. "In the 80s war, 27 nations supported Saddam - the whole world supported Saddam. Now they are trying to unite against us again, because we are a superpower."

"You shouldn't talk to him - he fought your country," his wife called from across the room.

My first encounter with Iran took place when I was five. I remember standing on my parents' bed, next to my father, looking out through the window. It must have been early in the morning - my mother was still sleeping. I didn't know what was going on. I then remember crouching for hours under a table in the stairwell, with a radio, tea, my grandmother and aunt. Later, my father, with me on his shoulders, stood on the roof with my uncle, pointing at frail white lines in the sky. "Phantoms," (Iranian F4 jet fighters) he said.

It was September 1980 and the first days of an eight-year war that began with air raids and an Iraqi invasion of south-west Iran. But the way I understood it for over a decade, it was we Iraqis who were "defending ourselves against an Iranian invasion". That's what they taught us at school, anyway.

More memories followed. One day I stood with my father in downtown Baghdad, watching a parade of Iraqi military trucks packed with Iranian prisoners of war pass by. I didn't feel sorry for the defeated men in tattered, khaki uniforms and shaved heads. I was just scared of them. A few years later, the TV broadcast similar images of broken, khaki-clad soldiers, squatting in the desert with their hands tied behind them - this time, however, they were the defeated Iraqi armies.

Our state propaganda machine portrayed the Iranians as cowards, evil creatures, "the worms of the earth". The Iraqis, we were told, were fighting another glorious battle against the Persians, just as the early Muslims had done in the seventh century.

It was this religious imagery, and those pictures of defeated men, that filled my head when I went to Tehran this autumn, some 20 years after that war, and I soon came to realise that the same religious symbols, sometimes even the same verses of the Qur'an, were used in the same way on the other side of the border.

We were walking in the big bazaar in Tehran. A young man, tall and whippy, stopped us: "Carpets, mister? You want carpets? I have tribal kelims."

I gave him a very dismissive no.

He was undeterred. "Where are you from?" he asked with a smile.

Still unsure how Iranians would treat an Iraqi, I hesitated, then said, "My companion is Italian" and, in a much lower voice, "And I am Iraqi."

The carpet seller's face changed. "Why?" he asked urgently. "Why did it happen? My mother's uncle was killed in the war, so many people died. Why did we fight?"

"It's stupid," I replied. "No one I knew wanted to fight." My father, two uncles, my aunt's husband and my cousin had all been conscripted in the war.

"But in Iraq people are educated. Why didn't they try to stop Saddam?" He was half-pleading now.

Because we were scared, I wanted to reply, because people were shot dead if they tried to dodge military service. Instead, I gave him my standard reply: "Saddam was very brutal."

"When the governments hate each other, the people pay the price," the carpet seller said. "Here in Iran, the mullahs said we must fight until we reach Karbala (a holy city) and then all the way until we liberate Jerusalem." He paused, then added sarcastically, "And what's next - New York?"

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"That was stupidity," he said, "and now Mr Bush is doing the same stupidity."

Tehran is a true megalopolis: it has a population of 17 million, 30km-long avenues that run from the nouveau riche north to the poor south, and hundreds of flyovers that sandwich thousands of ugly, concrete buildings. It's also a megalopolis where the revolutionary rhetoric of the Islamic Republic competes with the commercial banality of everyday life. Billboards and posters emblazoned with the leaders' sayings are juxtaposed with adverts for flatscreen TVs, laptops and mobile phones.

The martyrs and the living coexist here. Millions of people jostle, push, honk and drive suicidally in streets named after the dead. The grander martyrs, the founders of the republic, get the big highways; commanders and ayatollahs the avenues; low-level fighters small, potholed alleyways. From street corners and the sides of buildings, the fallen heroes stare down from huge murals, inviting a sense of guilt that you're alive down in the street and not up there, alongside them.

We took the new metro to the outskirts of the city, where the martyrs lie in peace in their own city, Behesht Zahra cemetery, where row upon row of men killed in the war are buried. The graves are decorated with little aluminium and glass altars that hold the martyrs' memorabilia: a copy of the Qur'an, plastic flowers, a bottle of rose water, a piece of blood-soaked cloth imprinted with a picture of the dead soldier. Names of battlefields - Ahwaz, Kurdistan, Ailam, Shalamgah; places in the marches of southern Iraq, Kurdish mountains and small Iranian border towns - are inscribed on the graves. They have become household names for Iraqis and Iranians alike.

After every offensive, our TV screen in Baghdad would flicker with images of the mangled dead. On the 8pm news, the anchor with the thick, Saddam-like moustache would tell us about the thousands of aggressors slaughtered by our heroes. Meanwhile, the alleyways of my city were curtained on both sides with thousands of black notices announcing the deaths of our young, "In the name of Allah, the most merciful, the most compassionate."

When I went last year to Amara province on the border with Iran, the scene of many battles, there was nothing left but coils of razor wire, rusty helmets half-buried in the sand and the odd turret of a sunken tank. I could feel the ghosts of the "martyrs"; their blood had long since dried, but their memories still haunted us on both sides of the border.

In the middle of the sea of pictures in Behesht Zahra, we came across a plot where the Qassim family is buried. The father was 40, the mother 27, the children, Sumaiya, three, Mariam, two, and Abbass, one, when they were killed by an Iraqi aerial attack, part of what was known as the "War of Cities". I remember this war very well. Or, rather, I remember the Iraqi version of it: the mustachioed TV anchor declaring that our brave pilots had inflicted the heaviest losses on the "wicked Persian enemy". I remember, too, our house shaking when an Iranian rocket fell less than a mile away in Karrada, killing a family.

With tears in our eyes, we left the cemetery and went back to jostle in the city of the living.

When I arrived in Tehran, my years of Iran-demonisation under the Ba'athist educational system had been supplemented by the Bush administration's anti-Iranian rhetoric and sabre rattling. "Shia revivalism spearheaded by Iran" has become the new mantra. Iran is perceived as a menacing and shadowy power, backing Shia militias in Iraq, supporting Hamas in Gaza and acting as patron of Hizbullah in Lebanon. Paranoia has swept through neighbouring Sunni Arab countries - also known by the US as the "moderate Arab countries". All of them are now in a de facto alliance with Israel, trying to find ways to counter "Iranian influence" in the region. "The first thing to look for after a car accident in Beirut is the Iranian agents behind it," a journalist friend told me, only half-joking. It is reminiscent of the post-second world war, post-colonial days, when people thought British agents were behind everything that happened in the Middle East.

Another journalist in Qatar had a different take on the dilemma for Arab countries. "Iran is a big problem either way. If the Americans hit Iran, it's a huge problem - the Iranians might retaliate by hitting their interests in the Gulf. But if they have peace with Iran, we have a bigger problem." That is, Iran would become even more dominant in the region.

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Iran's image as evildoer has also been enhanced by the alleged apocalyptic prophecies of its president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Under the threat of US and Israeli strikes, the atmosphere in Tehran and other Iranian cities has become similar to that in Baghdad in the 90s, during the long years of sanctions that preceded the toppling of Saddam: there are anxieties about a looming war, concerns about the next UN resolution and a question lodged permanently in the back of your mind - "Will they attack?"

The similarities and differences between Iraq and Iran are striking. Sometimes, Iran felt to me like my aunt's cooking - much like my mum's, but with more spices. An Iraqi friend, recently returned from Tehran, was amazed by how much the mullahs' theocracy in Iran resembled the Ba'athist regime in Iraq. "It's like Ba'athists in turbans: the same lies, the same oppression and the same corruption."

As in many other places in the Middle East, a particular kind of claustrophobic repression hangs over the city. Young people are arrested for having "unIslamic" haircuts, "bad hijab" or indecent clothes. Every writer, musician and film-maker has to navigate around taboos and dogma to create a "morally acceptable art". When I asked a prominent musician if the restrictions actually helped him "create", he said, "No, I wish I had all the freedom I want."

Freedom is a very relative idea in the Middle East. With its oppressiveness and religious police, Iran is still a safer and a more organised place than the new post-US invasion Iraq, let alone than the Iraq of Saddam Hussein.

Ali came to visit me at the flat where I was staying in Tehran. He was short, energetic and very fit. We drank tea and devoured the little pink and pistachio cakes he had brought with him. He talked softly and politely about Iran, Iraq and the Americans.

It was hard to imagine Ali as a prisoner, yet he had spent several weeks in Tehran's notorious Evin prison after he had taken part in a student demonstration. "In my last days in prison, I was hitting my head against the wall," he told me. "I was thinking of committing suicide. I was asking myself, 'Will I ever be out again?'"

Ali was beaten and insulted during three days of interrogation and, to intimidate him further, was put in a small cell with three prisoners on death row. Even after his release, Ali said, he was harassed and followed. But he remains level-headed. "We don't need another revolution. I mean, we need change, but the change should come through reform, not violence. It took us 30 years to kind of settle down. Another revolution will destroy society."

The need now, Ali said, was to educate the people about their rights. "It will take time," he said. "I know this regime will change, but unfortunately my youth will be taken with it. I have to leave; I have to spend some time abroad. When you are here, you are isolated. But maybe, when I see freedom, maybe I will love it so much I'll want to stay."

I later met another student who had been active in the students' political organisation and who, like Ali, spoke of hard times. "The authorities are much harder on organised student movements than before," he said. "Under (Ayatollah) Khatami, they were half tolerated; now they expel them from university or send them to jail." As in Iraq under sanctions, the more pressure that is put on the government, the more it can justify internal oppression as a means of "solidifying the internal front".

As we sat drinking tea, I asked the student if he was scared. With a big smile, he replied, "We are not scared - we have hope and I am still young. I have lots of time to spend in prison."

To many Iranians, the revolution has taken a very Orwellian turn. A revolution that began by overthrowing a corrupt, tyrant king has produced a regime whose chief interest is picking over the dress code while the drums of war sound louder and louder, and while inflation runs into double digits.

I went with Ali, who has a passion for history, to the palace of the old shah, where the 19th-century grandeur could not have been more different from the bare mosque where Ayatollah Khomeini lived, preached and conducted state affairs after the revolution. "In the beginning, they were puritanical," Ali said. "They said electricity will be free, fuel will be free. They were very simple - that's why people loved them. Now, if you say anything against this government, you're against Allah and the Qur'an."

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"When I look at old video clips of Farah (the shah's wife) visiting a village, people act the same now with Khamani, jumping and chanting. We should stop worshipping people in power."

In my time in Iran, I also met Kamal, Reza and Sultan, who had all been young men when the revolution started. Their fate, like that of most Iranians, was shaped by the events of that spring in 1978.

On a mountain overlooking the city of Shiraz, where the great Iranian poet Hafez is buried, is a small restaurant set inside a big Turkmen tent. It was here that I met Kamal. With his big white moustache, black trousers, black shirt and black, knee-length jacket, he looked like some Russian bureaucrat from a Pushkin novel. He was mourning the death of a cousin, he explained.

In the mid-70s, Kamal had been studying in Perugia, Italy. As a leftist, he was active in the Iranian opposition, demonstrating outside the Iranian embassy and heckling visiting government officials. "The shah was a killer," he said. "It was a bad, bad government."

So why did he come back? "Because my country needed me. There was a lot to be done, the revolution was starting. When the revolution happened, we Iranian students in Italy were starving, there was no money coming from Iran, we used to eat birds - we chased pigeons and ate them. But I knew I had to come back."

I asked how it was back then - there must have been real chaos with the upsurge of Islamists, leftists, communists, nationalists and democrats? Had he been a follower of Khomeini? "In the beginning there were no Islamists - they came later and took over the country. They started throwing us in jail and did to us what the shah had been doing."

Like other disillusioned idealists, Kamal watched the revolution drift away. After spending two years fighting in the Iran-Iraq war in the southern Iraqi marches, he left to take a job as a construction worker in Japan, fleeing a crackdown on leftists. "I like Allah, but I like beer, too," he told me cheerily. "If you want to pray standing, stand; if you want to pray sitting, then sit. You should have your freedom as long as you don't affect me. Here the revolution became all about religion. I saw people who were far less educated than me overtaking me because they were religious."

Reza, meanwhile, was dressed in the official Iranian revolutionary dress code - a cheap grey suit, a white shirt with no tie, short, cropped hair and a thin, trimmed beard. He had a charming smile, but suffered from a severe cough. I asked how life was in Tehran. "Khob neest (not good)," he said. "This government is not good."

This was unexpected - someone who clearly looked religious and pro-government criticising the government. Reza continued, "Look at the hijab in the streets - it's not good, it's too relaxed; women forgetting Islamic values and this government not doing anything. And the economy is not good - prices are too high and there are too many mustazafin (the Arabic word that means the weak, the oppressed, and which was appropriated by the revolution to signify the poor)."

Was it better under Khatami? "No, no, Khatami was not good - under him, hijab was very bad, the revolution was lost - but the economy was better. Now Ahmadinejad is trying to fix the situation. He is making laws that help the workers and will give more money to mustazafin ."

He tapped his chest and said, "Chemical, Halbjah." Reza had been gassed when the Iraqis used chemical weapons against Kurdish and Iranian forces in the town of Halbjah in 1988. He then tapped his right leg: there was a metallic ting - he had lost his limb in the same battle.

Reza's story is typical of the first generation of the Iranian revolution. He joined the Islamic militia in 1978; at the age of 17 he was roaming the streets and imposing order; two years later, he volunteered to go to the front line in the war against Iraq. "I spent 63 months in the war," he said. In Iran, men served for 24 months only, unless they volunteered for extra service, unlike in Iraq, where people were conscripted for the whole duration of the war.

"The most important thing is Twakul ala Allah ," he said. "To put your faith in God and the imams."

Weekend: BROTHERS IN ARMS: As a boy in Baghdad, Ghaith Abdul-Ahad was taught that Iranians were the 'worms of the earth'. Now, 20 years after the Iran - Iraq wa....

I told him this is exactly what Hizbullah fighters in Lebanon say. "I know," Reza said with a big smile. "I was there, in 1982. We volunteered to go to Lebanon and fight Israel. We trained Hizbullah and I stayed two years in the Beqaa. And then, when our brothers were strong, we left and came to Iran to continue the fight against Saddam."

He became more reflective. "You know, after the war I went to Iraq for a pilgrimage, visiting the shrines in Karbala and Najaf. Iraqis are like Iranians - there is no difference - but wars make a difference. The war was very bad, but life in Iran was better during the war. The religion was strong, everyone prayed and there was iethar (self-sacrifice)."

Sultan stopped to give us a lift in his beat-up old Renault when we were walking back from a park in northern Tehran. "You can't find taxis here," he explained. "I'll drop you at the main intersection." He was in his late 60s and had about him an Einstein look, with a bush of fussy white hair; he was as scruffy as his car. He clenched the steering wheel, his face close to the cracked windshield.

Had he lived in Tehran when Imam Khomeini lived here? The house and mosque where Khomeini spent his days after the revolution were just a couple of streets away. "Imam, pah, what Imam?" Sultan said scornfully as he pulled his car to the kerb.

I was stunned - I hadn't heard anyone saying anything bad about the revered Imam; not even Kamal, the leftist, had dared criticise him.

"The Imam killed my life, my family and my job." We had reached the main intersection, but Sultan kept talking. "I worked in the Iranian airlines office in the UK. Twice I lived there - in London and in Eastbourne."

Sultan's mother was a relative of the Queen, he told me, and his grandfather an old aristocrat. For a long time the family had lived a comfortable life, with several houses scattered around the north of the city, with good jobs and good connections. When the revolution happened, all that disappeared. "After the revolution, they took all our property and said that is for the mustazafin," Sultan said. "And now I am mustazafin, but they don't give me anything. They forced me to go to war. At the very end of the war, in Kurdistan - in Halbjah - a bomb fell and a piece of metal entered here," he pointed to his hip. His leg was horribly twisted. "I can't walk and I can't sleep."

I thought of Reza and how democratic wars can be in their choice of victim: the son of the revolution and the enemy of the revolution, both hit in the leg in the same battle. Had they known each other? Had they lain next to each other in the hospital? Had they talked about the revolution and the Imam?

"After the war, they fired me from my job," Sultan continued. "They said, 'You shah people, go.' And now Mr Ahmadinejad comes, and prices go up by 200%, 300%. What do I do? I am tired of this life."

Before the revolution, Sultan said, girls would walk "with skirts this long" and he pointed to the middle of his thigh. "They walked in the streets and no one said a thing. You'd walk a hundred metres and there would be a nightclub or a bar. Tehran was like Paris. Then the mullahs came, and life finished." He spoke as if it were only yesterday.

"You are from where?" he asked.

I hesitated, wishing for the first time in my life that I could say I was English, or anything. I mumbled the name of the country that had mangled his leg.

"Iraq?" He pushed himself to the back of his seat, a big smile on his face. "Really? Iraq? Oh my God, what's happening to your country is bad. I am sorry. Saddam went and now hundreds more Saddams come. Now Shia like me take over the government and make it like Iran. I am sorry. I am really sorry."

There is something to be said for how polite the Iranians are.

Weekend: BROTHERS IN ARMS: As a boy in Baghdad, Ghaith Abdul-Ahad was taught that Iranians were the 'worms of the earth'. Now, 20 years after the Iran - Iraq wa....

In the war cemetery of Behesht Zahra, I stood in front of one of the graves, writing in my notebook. When I lifted my head, I saw in the small, altar-like box a picture of the bearded martyr. He was looking straight at me. I moved, and he moved with me. I went back a few steps and my heart stopped - I was looking at my own reflection in a mirror. *

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian
January 15, 2009 Thursday
1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 11

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Body

An ETS tax can't regulate climate change away

MOST TALKED ABOUT

BARNABY JOYCE

FOR a change, I find myself agreeing with Barnaby Joyce in that we do not need or want an Emissions Trading Scheme ("Nationals climate mutiny looms for Malcolm Turnbull", 14/01).

The ETS has all the hallmarks of an easy way to expand regulation and taxation by exploiting populist alarm and concern.

That the global climate is changing is undeniable, but climate has always been changing and the cause this time round remains to be proven.

Even if it is shown that human activity is a factor, I find it laughable that we think we can somehow fix the climate by taxing and regulating carbon with a national scheme. Scheming bureaucrats must be overjoyed.

Unless we take drastic measures amounting to much more than inventing a new kind of tax, such as getting serious about replacing our dependence on fossil fuels with renewable, clean energy -- and we do so now, not in 50 years - - we're just sitting ducks.

In any case, nature will take its course. Once those first inflated ETS energy bills arrive, listen to the howls of protest when people see they suddenly have to pay an extra \$90 a quarter for their gas and electricity (based on a predicted \$7 a week rise). I wonder if fighting global warming will be as cool for very long after that?

Daniel du Prie

Sunshine, Vic

BARNABY Joyce opposes the ETS because it would threaten Australian jobs, claiming no one is being put out of their house by climate change.

But it is a mistake to suppose that the economy and the ecology have nothing to do with each other. How we run our economy affects our ecology; if we damage our ecology we will also compromise our economy.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Secondly, unusual climatic events are already being reported around the world with increasing regularity. In fact, in many parts of the world where people are poorer and have a lot less opportunity than those in Australia, people are not only losing their homes and livelihoods but their lives as well.

Brad Taylor

Kings Meadows, Tas

THE real reason the Nationals will not support the ETS in the Senate is that the process would expose farming to an environmental audit and be found wanting.

Couple this with farming's dubious place in the economic system through farm debts that are unlikely to be repaid and it is no wonder any attempt to examine the situation will be scuttled.

Then there has been the question of the use of "exceptional circumstances" monies to keep the wolves from the farm gate and the Telstra-sale-funded National Heritage Trust rural cash injections. The real question that is being avoided is: can Australia afford our current agricultural system? Without a major overhaul, the answer is no.

Rick Kemp

Baulkham Hills, NSW

The report "Environmentalism is like Nazism -- Joyce" (Online, 14/1) is not a fair characterisation of Senator Joyce's comments. The object of the comparison was clearly not environmentalism but a fanaticism that allows no dissent from a mythical consensus.

It is these fanatics, not Senator Joyce, who make the implied comparison between climate-change deniers and Holocaust deniers. Your editors should retract and clarify this unfair attribution.

Michael West

Tarneit, Vic

SPOT on Barnaby. It is instructive that despite questioning this eco-totalitarianism agenda, it is Barnaby Joyce who is labelled a firebrand by the media. I am amazed at how many timid souls there are among our so-called leaders. I had to chuckle when our previous leader, Mark Vaile, was asked whether he was a global-warming sceptic? No, no, no, said Vaile, I can goosetstep with the best of Lenin's useful idiots. Joseph Goebbels could never have imagined that mass indoctrination with disinformation (and outright lies) could reach such levels of compliance.

Barnaby, if the Nationals are to have any independent future, then standing up to Malcolm Turnbull on this ETS is essential. Keep up the good work and don't join the shadow cabinet, whatever you do.

Brian Handley

President, Moe branch

The Nationals

I WONDER if Senator Joyce has heard of Godwin's law? Godwin's law, also known as Reductio ad Hitlerum, is a fallacy in logic that applies to inappropriate or hyperbolic comparisons of other situations with Hitler or Nazis or their actions. Apparently there is a tradition in many newsgroups and internet forums that once such a comparison is made, the thread is finished and whoever mentioned the Nazis has automatically lost whatever debate was in progress.

It seems Senator Joyce has lost the argument.

Emma Bull

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Barton, ACT

TO no small extent, effective democratic government relies on there being a responsible and well-informed opposition.

For Barnaby Joyce to deny that a major component of climate change is human activity, let alone his claim that population explosion and widespread food shortages are not critically important issues in today's world, should immediately disqualify him from any leadership aspirations.

David Dyer

Ballarat, Vic

Israel's choice: popularity at the price of perishing

THE attitude of people like Neil Clark ("Israel's war queers pitch for peace", Opinion, 14/1) proves David Burchell's point ("Empathy for sale", 12/1). Clark argues that Israel's operation in Gaza inflames Muslim hatred and intensifies Western sympathy for Israel's enemies. No doubt he's right, but he doesn't say what Israel should do about the daily rocket attacks by Hamas. Presumably he thinks it should say "please don't do that".

While Israel sat passively and let Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas plan its destruction, kidnap its soldiers and attack its citizens, the hatred and sympathy was less inflamed. If Israel allows more attacks on its citizens, the hatred and sympathy will subside. If enough Israelis are killed, the sympathy may even turn in Israel's favour. If it is driven into the sea, the hatred will go away, there will be cheers from its Muslim enemies, and maybe even tears in its favour from its Western friends.

So Israel's choice is clear: popularity at the price of destruction, or survival at the price of unpopularity.

John Dawson

McKinnon, Vic

NEIL Clark's column is full of intellectual doublespeak. When was the last time he attended a public demonstration against Hamas or Hezbollah for firing rockets into Israel? When was the last time he had his deliberations disturbed by rockets fired into his Oxford College office? I would have expected a more balanced commentary from him, securely tucked away inside a historical British institution. If Clark's claim is correct, that images of wounded Palestinian women and children will remain foremost in the mind of the world, perhaps he should resurrect a few photos of the hundreds of Israelis slaughtered by Palestinian suicide bombers.

Allen Arthur

Middleton, SA

I know soldiers sometimes show off before going into battle, but the photograph of an Israeli reservist laughing and posing with his weapons ("Clear message to Hezbollah: provoke Israel at your peril", 14/1) is not a good look for an army claiming to be conducting a measured campaign aimed at minimising casualties.

Norm Neill

Darlinghurst, NSW

AS the Gaza attack, provoked by Hamas's continued firing of rockets into Israel, continues to claim the lives of innocent Palestinians, the words of Israel's former prime minister, Golda Meir, are particularly relevant: "We can forgive the Arabs for killing our children. We cannot forgive them for forcing us to kill their children. We will only have peace with the Arabs when they love their children more than they hate us."

Rachel Birati

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

North Balwyn, Vic

AT Funfields children's park near Whittlesea, north of Melbourne, on Tuesday I saw scores of Australian Jewish and Israeli children happily playing on the waterslide and toboggan run with scores of Australian Arab children. Australia is a long way from Gaza.

David Langsam

Flemington

Charter a line in the sand

JANET Albrechtsen ("Rights charter would transport us to 2009 BC", 14/1) is barking up the wrong tree with her concerns about the right to freedom of religion in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Australians have a provision for protection of religious freedom in the Australian Constitution. What we do not have are the basic entitlements of the citizens of every other common-law jurisdiction to legal protections against the caprice of politicians.

It seems to me, as a former elected representative, that the "small group of unskilled, unelected judges whose hubris is usually matched only by their ignorance" are a much more reliable safety net for human-rights protections than any group of politicians I know. The fact politicians are elected does not give them any particular ability to determine the competing rights and wrongs of people in conflict with the government. Politicians have a vested interest in opposing citizens' rights and freedoms claims.

A human-rights charter is a line in the sand between citizens and the government, and this is the real point of a charter. In the scramble for votes, politicians will say and do anything to hang on to the perks and privileges of office, and they are not averse to selling human rights down the river if it means a few more years on the red and green leather.

Peter Breen

Woolloomooloo, NSW

A helping hand in Kuwait?

WHILE it's important that Australians respect the laws of countries they visit, I find it surprising the Foreign Minister refuses to intervene in the case of an Australian woman arrested in Kuwait for insulting the emir ("Minister unmoved by plight of mother in Kuwaiti prison," 14/1). Imagine the furore and the government scrambling had this been a white woman of Anglo-Saxon descent.

Brad Ruting

Castle Hill, NSW

Look after yourself

CAN we please just assume that every time a whingeing Aussie gets stranded overseas somewhere, they will be bitterly critical that the government (read taxpayers) doesn't drop everything and come running ("Fiji flood tourists demand action", The Australian Online, 14/1)? Obviously the days of people taking responsibility for themselves have well and truly passed.

J. Burnham

Currimundi, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE Australian Government has seen fit to dole out \$5million of our money to the Palestinians, in addition to the millions handed over to them in the past few years. Yet we can afford only a paltry \$150,000 to help one of our nearest neighbours, Fiji, cope with the floods that have devastated its economy.

We have little in common with Palestinians half-way across the world. They are not our friends and their world view is diametrically opposed to ours. Fiji, on the other hand, is a close ally with whom we share strong historic and military ties going back many years. Its armed forces have served alongside ours in East Timor and Bougainville. They fought under the New Zealand Army on the same side as us in WWII. They have participated in peacekeeping missions all over the world.

They may have forsaken democracy for the time being, but at least Fiji's government is not committed to the destruction of its neighbours.

Our government should get its priorities right. Charity begins at home.

Arthur Hurwitz

Randwick, NSW

A disaster relief fund needs setting up to which I would happily contribute \$300, as opposed to the measly grants from the NZ and Australian governments to the Fiji Red Cross of \$100,000 and \$150,000.

Our governments should not tie this in to democratic elections because of Frank Bainimarama's coup trying to achieve law and order and the end of corruption in this ancient tribal society loved by so many of us.

Edward Black

Church Point, NSW

University backs researcher

CURTIN University rejects claims made in The Weekend Australian ("University misled about drug", 10/1) that Associate Professor Heather Jenkins misled its ethics committee in connection with a study into impacts of commonly prescribed ADHD medications.

The university believes Associate Professor Jenkins has behaved ethically at all times.

After considering all aspects of the proposed study, Curtin's Human Research Ethics Committee formed the view that there was considerable public benefit in knowing how these medications might affect a child's learning and developmental wellbeing.

The study was also approved by the Australian Research Council and conducted with the support of the schools, parents and children involved.

The parents were informed that Eli Lilly was a partner in the project.

The outcomes of the study are now being analysed and are the intellectual property of the university and the chief investigators. The outcomes will be published in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal and will not be influenced by any of the partners.

Professor Linda Kristjanson

Acting Vice-Chancellor

Curtin University of Technology

The sea seeks revenge

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why so many such large sharks? Simple: as mankind destroys the land, nature responds by increasing the virility of the sea, from whence we came, in order to make a new start after we destroy ourselves.

Sydney Mitchell

Erina, NSW

FIRST BYTE

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I wish the royals would stop using names like Paki and Sooty because it provides a bad example to their subjects. For many years I have been branded Chrome Dome, Four Eyes and worst of all Old Pommie Bastard, when all I really wanted was to be called Sir. One wonders what Prince Charles calls Camilla.

Mike Yalden

Kiama, NSW

The bestowal of a medal of peace from one warmonger to another seems somewhat of an oxymoron to me, but it may mean nothing more than ``together we swim or together we sink''. They've had their race, so they are not swimming, more like desperately clutching at some flotsam.

J. van Omnen

Taroona, Tas

Along with the US freedom medal, I hope Howard receives the key to the city of Baghdad.

Chris Davis

Box Hill North, Vic

Did John Howard get his new Man of Steel gong in Washington for Struth, Just us or the American way?

Glenn Wood

Bardon, Qld

Well done John, you've done us all proud.

John Dorman

Carnegie, Vic

If the Reserve Bank gets its way, from March we will no longer be looking behind at ATMs to check if we might get robbed. We will be staring straight ahead.

Tomas Ratoni

Tallebudgera Valley, Qld

In answer to Paul Hunt (Letters, 14/1), ``pitched out" would seem appropriate.

Jack Riley

Hervey Bay Qld

Be-bowled, de-bailed, bugged.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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The long wait for Ariel Two years ago Israeli leader Ariel Sharon fell into a coma. Family and supporters still cling to the hope that he will recover, RORY MCCARTHY reports

Canberra Times (Australia)

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Body

On the outskirts of Tel Aviv sits a sprawling mini-city, home to the largest medical centre in the Middle East. It has its own shopping mall, hotel and expansive fields. There are beds for 1700 patients in dozens of buildings across the 60-hectare site. Here, in a private room at the Sheba Medical Centre, lies Ariel Sharon, that maverick of Israel's generals and politicians, a man who did so much to shape his country's past and future and who today remains in a coma after a massive stroke two years ago.

His room is guarded by two plain-clothes agents from Shin Bet, Israel's internal security agency. He remains unconscious and is being fed artificially but although attached to a respirator, his friends say he is breathing on his own.

Two years ago this month, at the age of 77, Sharon suffered a minor stroke. He was treated in hospital and then went home. He seemed to recover and remained in office, but three weeks later, the night before he was to go in for a heart procedure, he collapsed after a much larger stroke.

"It was a total shock. He was nearly 78 but we never considered him an old man," said Dov Weissglas, a Tel Aviv lawyer who has been a close friend for many years.

Sharon had had a cerebral haemorrhage and never regained consciousness. He had several operations at a Jerusalem hospital before he was transferred in May 2006 to the Sheba Medical Centre. In the months that followed he was twice rushed to the intensive care unit, once with pneumonia, then with an infection affecting his heart. But each time he recovered and was allowed back to his room, where special nurses are on duty day and night. The bill, at 1600 shekels (\$A471) a day, is reportedly met by the state.

His doctors will not talk about his case but in a brief statement the hospital appeared to suggest there were signs of hope. It said that Sharon's medical condition had not changed dramatically since he was admitted but added: "He was not in a deep coma on his admission and throughout this period there have been some signs of response to several kinds of stimuli."

There is only a very small group who visit Sharon, partly to avoid the risk of infection. But nearly every day someone attends: his sons Omri and Gilad, Gilad's wife Inbal, or a select few. Sometimes they play music or read

The long wait for Ariel Two years ago Israeli leader Ariel Sharon fell into a coma. Family and supporters still cling to the hope that he will recover, RORY MCC....

to him. Among them is Reuven Adler, an advertising executive who has known Sharon for more than 30 years and who was instrumental in remoulding his public image before his 2001 election victory.

"His children and the doctors who are treating him see different signs that he knows what is going on," said Adler. "It's difficult to tell if he listens, if he sees. They tell me 'We saw an improvement today' or 'He reacted fantastically today'. Now, the two sons are very serious guys. They are not imagining these things."

Although connected to the machines around him, Sharon is not relying on them to stay alive and so, his friends say, there is no question of taking a decision to end his life. "He is breathing spontaneously, not on a respirator," said Weissglas. "If you disconnect him from the feeding machine it means he would die slowly of hunger and thirst no one on earth will do it. He is very much alive in terms of somebody who is in a coma."

Weissglas meets regularly with Sharon's sons. He too is struck by their conviction that Sharon might recover. "His family are so healthy in their attitudes. They deeply believe that a day will come and one of the zillion miracles that do happen in this region will happen with him."

However tough and controversial Sharon appeared in public, in private he commanded fierce loyalty, even from those who disagreed with him.

Marit Danon had been personal secretary to Israeli prime ministers going back more than a decade.

"When he was elected I was terrified because my political views are on the other side," Danon said. "He seemed a very tough person."

Yet Ehud Barak, Sharon's predecessor, convinced her to stay and she became one of Sharon's most loyal assistants, working long hours, talking to him as a friend but always referring to him as "Prime Minister".

For three months after Sharon's collapse, Danon and another colleague went to his ranch in the Negev and spent nine hours a day cataloguing his notes, letters and papers from the army stretching back more than 60 years.

Danon, who now heads the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, last saw Sharon when he left his office mid-afternoon on January 4, a few hours before his second stroke. "I don't want to see him in hospital because I don't want my last memory of him to be of a person on a bed," she said. "I want to remember him as strong, very confident and very funny he had a great sense of humour."

"The fact that he is in a long-term coma is for us and for me personally much more difficult," she said. "On one level he is absent and we miss him. He is not here with us. And on the other side he is still alive."

Little has been said or heard of the former prime minister for months and yet, because he clings to life, there have been no formal ceremonies to mark his passing. None except an unusual commemoration granted at a modest opening ceremony two months ago when a vast former landfill site on the edge of Tel Aviv was renamed Ariel Sharon Park.

Here, sandwiched between the commuter traffic on two of Israel's busiest highways, is a low, flat-topped hill of decaying garbage covered in soil and the occasional tree. An ambitious regeneration project, championed by Sharon, will one day reclaim the site into a natural wilderness and ecological study centre, a patch of green three times the size of Regent's Park in London.

It is a most unexpected memorial for the iconoclastic hardliner and comes at a time when his legacy is still fiercely debated by Israelis. The public knew Sharon as the self-styled "warrior" general, a hard man who had fought in all of Israel's wars: he was injured in 1948, fought again in 1967, emerged a hero from the near-disastrous 1973 Yom Kippur war and was then forced to resign as defence minister in 1982, after being found indirectly responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camp in Beirut.

The long wait for Ariel Two years ago Israeli leader Ariel Sharon fell into a coma. Family and supporters still cling to the hope that he will recover, RORY MCC....

But in the summer of 2005, Sharon surprised Left and Right when as prime minister he withdrew Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip. His collapse a few months later brought to an end what was a dramatic but only half-completed strategy for resolving this most intractable conflict.

"It's like a movie, and at the most dramatic moment suddenly you get a sign saying 'The End' and the music starts," said Adler. According to Sharon's vision, Israel would unilaterally impose its own borders with the Palestinians, giving up the settlements in Gaza to avoid compromising on the most sensitive issues for Israel: the desire to retain the whole of Jerusalem, to prevent Palestinian refugees ever returning to Israel and to hold on to the largest settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Yet much has changed while Sharon has been in hospital. First Israel launched another war in Lebanon, attacking Hezbollah after two Israeli soldiers were captured in a cross-border ambush. The war was widely regarded as a failure in Israel because Hezbollah seemed to have survived largely intact. At the same time there were continued rocket attacks from Palestinian militants in Gaza, which Israel tried to suppress with a series of military incursions that left hundreds of Palestinians dead but failed to stop the rockets. Not long after, Hamas, the Islamist group that had won Palestinian elections, seized full control of Gaza. The lesson appeared to discredit the idea of unilateral withdrawals and for months the Israeli Government, led by his former deputy, Ehud Olmert, seemed directionless. In the past few weeks, Israel and the Palestinians have returned to negotiations for the first time in seven years.

But few expect this rush of diplomacy will lead anywhere. Weissglas, who was involved in working out Sharon's strategy, argues the "disengagement" from Gaza was pragmatic.

The warrior general had realised the only way to hold on to most of the prized Jewish settlements in the West Bank was to give up the dream of settling all the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the river Jordan.

"He used to say to us sometimes that he believed he was the last Israeli politician who could turn back to his public and say 'Listen, we had a dream. What we managed to accomplish we did. What we did not, apparently we will not and that's it,'" said Weissglas.

What may be recognised as Sharon's most important achievement is a letter sent to him by President George Bush in April 2004, which in effect said Washington would let Israel keep its major West Bank settlements, home to more than 100,000, in any final agreement with the Palestinians.

"At the end the overriding consideration would be safeguarding the future of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel for generations to come," said Eyal Arad, another friend who worked with Sharon when he was prime minister.

"There was a realisation that the dream that we can hold on to the entire Land of Israel is an objective that cannot be realised in this generation."

Guardian

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Film & Music: Jazz, folk, world, etc: 'Governments can go to hell': Bringing together 12 musicians from across the Arab world was 'nuts', Music Matbaks Justin Adams tells Dorian Lynskey, but the result has been harmony, not conflict

The Guardian - Final Edition

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Body

It is a warm and noisy Saturday night in Casablanca. On the Boulevard d'Anfa, Moroccan football fans are celebrating their team's 2-0 defeat of Zimbabwe in an African Cup of Nations qualifier. On the forecourt of a nearby Italian restaurant, 20 musicians and crew from seven countries are having dinner.

The table slowly accrues a layer of pizza crusts, beer bottles and overflowing ashtrays, while the air fills with smoke, spontaneous outbursts of song, incomprehensible in-jokes, and the babble of conversation in English, French and Arabic. Even by the standards of musical director Justin Adams - whose long career includes fusions of western and Arabic music with Robert Plant and Jah Wobble, and producing the music of the Touareg band Tinariwen - it is a chaotically cosmopolitan scene. Not for the first or last time, he looks cheerfully overwhelmed by the whole Music Matbakh experience.

"It's completely nuts," he says, shaking his head. "It could have been a complete disaster."

The British Council approached Adams about Music Matbakh last Christmas. He was asked to choose two artists from each of six countries - Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon - from shortlists drawn up by the council's local staff. Including Adams and two other British members, Matbakh numbers 15 musicians. When the final lineup arrived in the UK, he had to work out a set from scratch, and then mount a short tour. He acknowledges that the concept might have been a recipe for either blandly exotic mulch, or blaring chaos. Even the name - matbakh means kitchen - seems to invite unflattering comments about too many cooks.

Adams recalls the speech he made the day they met. "I said: 'Look, we're all musicians and we know this situation is insane. It can take years to find chemistry. It can take years to work on a great set. We don't know each other, and we're going to try to write a set in four days. Let's accept we're in a crazy situation, try to enjoy ourselves, and see what happens.'"

In the event, a fairly cohesive set of songs was written, and the dates went smoothly. The next phase, to be filmed by a documentary crew, involves a show in each of the member countries, starting in Morocco at the Boulevard festival.

Film & Music: Jazz, folk, world, etc: 'Governments can go to hell': Bringing together 12 musicians from across the Arab world was 'nuts', Music Matbakhs Justin

Momo Merhari has been running the festival since 1999. The first event drew 300 people to a small theatre. This year's four-day international lineup, which includes Britain's Coldcut and US rapper Immortal Technique, attracts around 20,000 a day to a huge playing field beside a tennis club. "Moroccans can be very conservative but also very funky," Merhari says to explain the festival's success. "It's a paradox." He holds his beer bottle aloft. "It's forbidden for them to serve me a beer and it's forbidden for me to drink it, but everybody drinks. It's forbidden to smoke hashish but go to northern Morocco and there are kilometres of it."

Talking to members of Music Matbakh, it becomes clear that exploiting the contradictions and loopholes in Arabic society is a wiser strategy than outright defiance. Ousso, a 28-year-old Egyptian guitarist, learned this the hard way. In 1996, heavy metal was the fastest growing scene in Egypt when the government mounted a crackdown, charging musicians and fans with satanism. "I was very lucky," says Ousso. "But I would say 90% of the scene went to jail."

With his band Nagham Masry, he now combines crunching riffs with Egyptian instruments and rhythms, and runs an underground music festival in Cairo with the authorities' blessing. His band's lyrics walk a similarly fine line. "We're not proselytising. We have a message, but I want to change things in a clever way and spend the longest time outside jail."

Within Matbakh, despite some concerns about how the Syrian and Lebanese musicians would get on, there were no major political disputes. "You learn that you should always make a big difference between the government and the people," says Ousso. "All musicians say the same thing: governments can go to hell."

Adams fully expected vocalists to write about Iraq or Palestine, but their concerns proved closer to home. The Lebanese MC RGB raps about social problems, including the excessive influence of Hizbullah, but not about last year's war. He thinks one of Lebanon's biggest problems is an obsession with past conflicts and grievances.

"Everyone talks politics," he says dismissively. "Politics is everywhere. I want to find another way." At this point, Matbakh is a model of international cooperation, partly thanks to the conciliatory skills Adams inherited from his father, who worked as a diplomat in north Africa. "There were challenging times when I felt there was sexism from certain group members, but now everything is cool," says Ruba Saqr, a singer whom Adams describes as "the Jordanian Joan Baez", and one of only two women in the group. She says: "If we were in a workshop centred around talking, it would have been completely different, but music brings people closer to each other. Now we are like a family. I know it sounds like a cliché but it's true."

However, like her bandmates, she is wary of seeing Matbakh's existence as a political statement. "We played a gig in Soho and a woman told us we are ambassadors for peace, and we're changing how people view Arabs." She pulls a face. "If this is the outcome that's cool, but it's not what the project is about."

The obstacles to Matbakh's harmony were more mundane than regional tensions: egos and cabin fever. "We were living in the same hotel and rehearsing every day, so we had to deal with everyone's bad days," says Skander Besbes, a softly spoken Autechre fan who in effect is the Tunisian electronica scene.

Another challenge was the tension between tradition and modernity. Adams was somewhat disappointed to discover that the contemporary band most members had in common was Metallica.

"I could be accused of making a fetish of primitivism, but I just can't help it. They were improvising on one of the classic Egyptian rhythms, and it sounded absolutely beautiful. And they were like, oh, it's so boring and started playing some complicated jazzy riff which to me was trying too hard. Some people look at their own folk music as we look at morris dancing."

In the past couple of years, hip-hop has overtaken rock as the sound of young Morocco and, for this show at least, Matbakh's most adored member is a rapper whose name, Bigg, equally well describes his girth, his personality and his reputation. During the morning's rehearsals, kids crowded onto the rooftops of nearby buildings to grab a glimpse. Fortunately there's a lot of him to glimpse.

Film & Music: Jazz, folk, world, etc: 'Governments can go to hell': Bringing together 12 musicians from across the Arab world was 'nuts', Music Matbakhs Justin

The show is a qualified success. Some songs show the strain of appeasing every member, but the best ones crackle with joyous invention. The taut, funky Struggle recalls the questing 70s soul of Rotary Connection, only with an oud , a ney (a Syrian flute) and three-part Arabic harmonies. A rowdy version of Bigg's hit record El Khouf incites roars of excitement.

In the backstage tent afterwards, Music Matbakh's members swap email addresses and lounge on couches while emptying the fridge of beer. Adams, whose other commitments mean he won't be joining the band on future dates, leans back on a cushion and takes stock. "It's been incredibly energetic and fizzy and full of life," he concludes. "But I'd still say it's nuts."

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End of Document

True blue mufti

The Australian (Australia)

June 13, 2007 Wednesday

All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 11

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Byline: Richard Kerbaj

Body

MATP

The football-loving new spiritual leader of Australia's Muslims is a gentler voice than his predecessor, but many challenges

await him, writes Richard Kerbaj

AUSTRALIAN football is almost a religion for Fehmi Naji el-Imam and his family, which is why the newly appointed mufti of Australia used to spend a lot of weekends with his four children barracking for their beloved football team after a morning of teaching them Islamic readings, Arabic scripture and prayer.

The 79-year-old cleric, who migrated to Australia in 1951, would load up his Holden Kingswood wagon with his three sons, his daughter, his wife and any of his children's friends who could fit, and head off to watch the Carlton Blues.

"He's been to many a Carlton match," says Ahmed Imam, one of the cleric's sons. "He'd go and he'd sit there. He was doing it because that's what his sons wanted to do. And he gets into it, he enjoys it."

Fehmi, who was born on Christmas Day in 1927 in Lebanon, came to Australia aged 24 as a part-time imam and made his living as a qualified electrician. The cleric, who has nine grandchildren, helped fit the electrical wiring at Melbourne Cricket Ground's Olympic stand for the 1956 Games.

After advertising his business in the local paper under FN Imam Electrical Contractor, he became known as Frank to one of his clients who refused to call him by his Arabic name, says Imam.

Prominent Sydney-based Muslim spiritual leader Khalil Shami says Fehmi brought up his children and students on Australian principles and is considered a unifying figure among community members who closely follow Australian values.

"He came to Australia at a young age and he adopted the Australian [way of life] without forgetting about his religion and religious duties," says the imam at Penshurst Mosque in Sydney's south.

But Fehmi's love of Australia -- he married an Anglo-Saxon Australian Muslim convert in 1955 -- won't necessarily sit well with the wider Muslim community made up of more than 65 ethnic backgrounds.

True blue mufti

In his new role as the nation's leading spiritual leader, Fehmi will face many challenges from a community divided by ethnicity, religious ideologies and different interpretations of the Koran. Such challenges are part of the package deal to become mufti, a position once described by Fehmi's predecessor Taj Din al-Hilali as a suicide mission.

Islamic community politics is a vicious game involving inflated egos, self-appointed bigwigs, the occasional spin doctor and vultures undermining each other to win a quick buck through government grants and other opportunities. Leaders who are considered soft targets are open to exploitation and back-stabbing by their rivals.

Even a veteran spiritual leader such as Fehmi, who has been an imam for 55 years, will not be spared the occasional knifing from clerics or community spokespeople desperate to advance their profiles.

Fehmi has successfully defended his mosque in Preston, in Melbourne's north, from being taken over by hardline Wahabi Muslims. And despite his old age and frail body, he has stood up to the Howard Government in the past.

Last year he sparked controversy when he pushed for the Government to reverse its decision on proscribing the Iranian-backed Hezbollah as a terrorist network and hailed Lebanese militants during last year's war in the Middle East as "freedom fighters".

Fehmi also supported the Australian residency of Adbul Nacer Benbrika, the Algerian-born self-proclaimed imam who is in jail awaiting trial on terror charges. Fehmi later expressed regret for helping him.

But just like the spiritual and secular Muslim leaders who worked behind closed doors to position Fehmi on the mufti throne for the next two years, so it is understood similar leaders are already working to groom their own candidate to take over, on or before election day.

The Australian revealed in April last year that Islamic political forces were planning to depose the outspoken and divisive Hilali and have him replaced by Fehmi. It took 14 months for that to happen and Hilali gave the plan a substantial boost when he likened scantily dressed women to uncovered meat and joked about the notorious Sydney gang rapes in a Ramadan sermon exposed by The Australian last October.

Muslim spiritual leaders set up the Australian National Imams Council last November to review the role of mufti and determine whether it would be a purely religious position that steered clear of politics following Hilali's controversy. After giving the 66-year-old cleric three months' grace in his position in March, it is believed they voted him out on Sunday, contrary to the official line that he was initially elected and then gracefully stepped aside.

Ahmed Imam says his father, one of five children who followed in his own father's footsteps and became a cleric, is a champion of youth and women's affairs.

With the younger generation struggling to wrest power from the old guard and the threat of young Muslims becoming radicalised of great concern to the community and security agencies, Fehmi's ability to lead young Muslims will come under scrutiny.

"He's always gotten along really well with the youth because he speaks English fluently," says Imam, 43, who is a presenter on Islamic community television show Salam Cafe.

"There's no barrier ... whoever meets him, straight away they can communicate with him." Asked why the Muslim and mainstream community should have more faith in Fehmi than his predecessor, Imam says: "I think it's maybe because [he's] a little bit more in tune with the heartbeat of Australia. He's dealt with a lot of Australians on a lot of different levels, be it just the guy around the corner who needed his electrical plug fixed, to the governor ... of Victoria and everybody in between. The way he is with the community, laughing and joking and being serious when required, that's how he is at home.

"He's not a different person. It's not like he puts on his game face. If you meet him in his lounge room and you meet him in his office, he's the same person."

True blue mufti

Muslims celebrating Fehmi's election as mufti aren't necessarily cheering because he has become their new spiritual leader but more because Hilali has finally stepped down in what is believed to be a deal struck by some of the nation's most powerful imams to save the Egyptian-born cleric the embarrassment of being sacked.

Muslim sources tell The Australian Hilali was devastated the imams "ganged up" on him during the close meeting in Melbourne at the weekend to toss him out for the benefit of the Islamic and wider communities.

Last year National Australia Bank chief executive Ahmed Fahour named a \$25,000 postgraduate scholarship in Islamic finance after Fehmi.

Fahour, who once attended Fehmi's Sunday school with Imam, says the scholarship will train Muslims to "create products and services that the community needs".

Shami, an imam at Penshurst Mosque who has known Fehmi for more than 40 years, says the cleric's preaching style is more moderate than Hilali's. "Fehmi is a very honest man and a very sincere person," he says of the cleric who endorsed his application to become a full-time imam in 1968.

Shami says Fehmi's refusal to answer questions about the Iraq war after he was appointed should not be seen as a ploy by his media advisers to prevent him from making controversial comments.

"He's not hiding and he's never frightened from answering questions," he says, but suggests Fehmi "must say many things about Iraq" once he has settled into his new role.

But while Fehmi -- who helped build Victoria's largest mosque in Preston -- enjoys the support of the city's Muslim community, his fan-base does not match Hilali's in his heyday. Islamic Council of Victoria spokesman Waleed Aly says Melbourne Muslims are more integrated into the mainstream than their fellow worshippers in Sydney. He says Sydney's Muslim community lives under "tougher conditions" due to the notorious gang rapes and the 2005 Cronulla riots.

"There's no doubt that anti-Muslim sentiment is higher in Sydney than in Melbourne," he says. "They've had problems we haven't had. Melbourne is socially a much cooler environment." Aly says Sydney has more "monocultural pockets" where certain communities stick to themselves instead of integrating with other ethnicities and religious denominations. "It's not just that all the Lebanese are living together. There's also a specific social class that lives in Manly, for example; a specific social class that lives in Mosman. And there's not a great deal of integration between them."

While Fehmi has two years to prove himself to his community and wider Australia, some of his closest followers and friends are already questioning his ability to cope physically after he suffered a stroke last year.

But they hope that his election will improve harmony and acceptance between Muslims and mainstream Australia and not turn out to have been just a move to dethrone Hilali.

Richard Kerbaj is a Melbourne-based writer at The Australian.

SHEIK FEHMI NAJI EL-IMAM

- * 1927: Born in Tripoli, Lebanon, on Christmas Day.
- * 1944: Graduates from Dar Al Tarbiya Wal Taaleem, Tripoli, with qualifications in Islamic theology.
- * 1951: Arrives in Australia in May and begins work as a full-time electrician and a part-time imam.
- * 1955: Marries Australian Muslim convert Marjorie.
- * 1958: First of his four children born.
- * 1960s: Sets up a Sunday school to teach young community members Islamic studies.

True blue mufti

- * 1975: Establishes the Islamic Society of Victoria.
- * 1976: Stops working as an electrician and becomes a full-time imam at Preston Mosque, which he helped build, in north Melbourne.
- * 1990s: Supports Abdul Nacer Benbrika's application for residency.
- * 2000: Carries the Olympic torch in Yea, northeast Victoria.
- * 2005: Chosen by John Howard to be a senior member of the Muslim Community Reference Group.
- * 2006: Calls on the Iranian-backed terrorist group **Hezbollah** to be removed from the Government's proscribed list. Calls Lebanese Islamic militants "freedom fighters". Suffers a stroke. Becomes a member of the Australian National Imams Council, which is formed to decide on the position of mufti following the controversy sparked by Taj Din al-Hilali.
- * June 10, 2007: Elected by the Australian National Imams Council to become the mufti of Australia.

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Comment & Debate: As it turns 60, the fear is Israel has decided it can get by without peace: This nation was forged in refuge, not imperialism. But its people have grown cynical about hopes for a deal with Palestinians

The Guardian - Final Edition

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Byline: Jonathan Freedland

Body

In the wee small hours on Israeli television, they show reruns of what was once a staple form of mass entertainment: kibbutz choirs - the men in pressed work shirts, the women in peasant skirts - singing Hebrew folk melodies exalting the Land of Israel, while a smiling audience joins in. The pictures were black and white, the sets cardboard, and the programmes interminable - a socialist-realist tableau of a simple farming nation engaged in wholesome, patriotic amusement.

Visiting Israel last month, I sat transfixed when I stumbled across the public service channel that replays those old shows. Tonight the national celebrations will be more up to date, as Israel marks its 60th anniversary with street parties this evening and beach barbecues tomorrow. Yet if the world is watching, trying to understand the place Israel was and what it has become, it could do worse than start with those cheesy TV specials.

For one thing, too many critics like to depict the establishment of Israel in May 1948 as little more than an act of western imperialism, inserting an alien, European enclave into the mainly Arab and Muslim Middle East. In this view, the Jewish Israelis of today, with their swimming pools and waterside restaurants, are no different from their counterparts in other settler societies - the whites of Australia or, more painfully, South Africa. A look at the faces of Jewish Israel is one easy rebuttal: the new nation that has formed by mixing Moroccan and Russian, Ethiopian and Kurd, is one of the most ethnically diverse in the world. But there is a more substantial counter-argument, one that can be picked up even on those old TV singalongs.

A favourite in the patriotic repertoire is Ein Li Eretz Acheret (I Have No Other Land). In a way, no other sentence conveys the tragedy of Israel and Palestine more concisely - because of course, and with good reason, the Palestinians feel exactly the same way. They too have nowhere else. Yet this Zionist anthem articulates something very deep in Israelis' sense of themselves: they are a nation formed by those who had no other place to live. The Holocaust, inevitably, looms large in this: the establishment of a Jewish state just three years after the liberation of Auschwitz was no coincidence. After 2,000 years, the world was finally persuaded that the Jews deserved what every other people regarded as a basic right: a place of their own.

Comment & Debate: As it turns 60, the fear is Israel has decided it can get by without peace: This nation was forged in refuge, not imperialism. But its people

A poignant reminder that Jews really had no other place - because the rest of the world did not want them - came with the death last month of Yossi Harel, captain of the Exodus, the leaking, rusting ship that carried 4,500 Holocaust survivors from Europe to Palestine in 1947, only to be sent back - by the British - first to France and then, incredibly, to Germany.

This, surely, gives the Israeli experience a different texture to the founding of, say, New Zealand, Argentina or the US. Those enterprises were fuelled chiefly by ambition and appetite for material resources. Even if those who landed on Plymouth Rock were fleeing religious intolerance, the circumstances of America's pioneers were not those of the Jews in the 1940s. The moral difference between the Jews and the white settlers of America, Africa and Australasia is the difference between a homeless man who needs a roof over his head and the landowner who fancies a second home. Those who lazily brand Zionism as imperialism should be able to tell the difference - and to remember that those who boarded those battered ships felt less like imperialists than refugees desperate for shelter.

The old TV shows provide another, related corrective. They are a reminder that in some ways early Israel was less Rhodesia than it was East Germany, a small country with socialism as the state religion. Back in the 1970s, all Israeli floors looked the same: the tiles were mass produced and there was only one style. Every toilet seat was made by a single kibbutz. Foreign investors were told they were welcome - so long as they were happy to sell a 51% stake in their company to the Histadrut, Israel's TUC.

That collectivism is all but gone. Most of the kibbutzim have privatised: individual members now own their own houses and earn different wages from each other. The kibbutz was never Israel, but it stands as a metaphor for what is happening in the wider society.

Israel itself is privatising, as its people withdraw from the collective sphere and retreat into their own, individual lives. Many speak of the bu'ah they construct for themselves, the bubble in which they can hide away from the fears and angst of Israel's "situation". Polling reveals the dichotomy: while nearly 40% believe the country faces a "serious threat of destruction" from its neighbours, around 83% are "satisfied or very satisfied" with their own lives.

All of which has a bearing on the other meaning of tomorrow's anniversary. The US administration has set the date as a deadline for Israelis and Palestinians to show some progress in the talks launched at Annapolis last November, ahead of President Bush's visit to the region next week.

Israel insists that it is straining every sinew seeking peace, just as it has insisted throughout the past 60 years. I heard the Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, explain with pride in London last week that she has kept talking to her Palestinian counterpart, even "on days of terror". Some of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's hawkish critics reckon the peace effort is, if anything, accelerating, in order to distract attention from the new, apparently serious, corruption inquiry just launched against him. And yet, there are few signs of a genuinely urgent Israeli desire for an accord with the Palestinians. The appearance of efforts for peace, in order to placate the legacy-hungry Bush, most certainly, but a fierce yearning for peace is harder to detect.

So when Jimmy Carter was in Jerusalem last month, carrying messages from Damascus and Hamas, no frontline Israeli minister would so much as meet him. Israel says it can't afford to legitimise Hamas, even indirectly, for fear of undermining the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas. Fine. In which case, surely, Israel would be doing all it could to bolster Abbas's credibility - by, say, removing West Bank outposts deemed illegal under Israeli law, or offering compensation to those Jewish settlers ready to leave occupied territory voluntarily and return to Israel-proper. Yet Olmert has done no such thing.

In this, the PM is doing no more than follow the national mood. Israelis have grown cynical about peacemaking. "We pulled out of Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005, and what did we get for our trouble? Katyushas from Hizbullah and Qassams from Hamas. No thanks." Besides, and few Israelis like to say this out loud, they believe they can get by without peace. Thanks, they whisper, to the separation barrier or wall, terror attacks have dwindled: Palestinian violence is contained. As for the so-called demographic factor - the notion that soon Jews and Arabs in the entire land ruled by Israel will reach numeric parity - that feels abstract and far away.

Comment & Debate: As it turns 60, the fear is Israel has decided it can get by without peace: This nation was forged in refuge, not imperialism. But its people

Israelis will party tonight, celebrating an economy that enjoyed 5.1% growth last year and which provides for many a good life. Only a few insomniacs will watch the old shows and remember the long-ago melodies, including the one that sounds more passe now than ever. It's called Shir L'shalom - and it is the song for peace.

You can hear Jonathan Freedland discussing Israel at 60 on the Sounds Jewish podcast at guardian.co.uk/podcasts

freedland@guardian.co.uk

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The once and future child murderer

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July 22, 2008 Tuesday

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Byline: FRIMET ROTH

Highlight: The writer and her husband founded the Malki Foundation (www.kerenmalki.org) in memory of their daughter, murdered in the Sbarro restaurant massacre in Jerusalem in 2001. The foundation provides concrete support for Israeli families of all faiths who care at home for a special-needs child.

Body

With the specter of another Ron Arad-type tragedy looming, the return of kidnapped soldier Gilad Schalit has taken center stage. Yet the impending prisoner release could spell a hero's welcome for my daughter's murderer, one even more chilling than that for Samir Kuntar.

Hamas has repeatedly said that one of its iron-clad conditions for Schalit's return is the release of all **female** and teenage Palestinian prisoners. And after **Hizbullah**'s emboldening success in freeing Kuntar, Hamas is certain to be more extortionist than ever. But the government must plumb the ramifications of this purportedly "humanitarian" demand.

WHO ARE those anonymous **female** terrorists? And for what crimes are they imprisoned?

Women have acquired enviable status in the world of terrorism. They enjoy the best of both genders. On the one hand, their organizations deem them strong enough and clever enough to mastermind, coordinate and execute terror attacks. Then, once convicted, they morph into delicate, fragile creatures deserving early release by dint of their femininity.

In October 2003, Ahlam Tamimi was sentenced to 16 consecutive life sentences for her role in the terror bombing of Jerusalem's Sbarro restaurant. Fifteen men, **women** and children perished in that explosion on a hot August afternoon in 2001.

Tamimi, a communications student and a television news reader for the Palestinian Authority, was the linchpin of that atrocity. She had the prior practical experience of planting a bomb in a trash bin at a Jerusalem supermarket, one that was detected before it detonated. Tamimi was not apprehended at the time.

Several months later, she tried again. This time, she carried 10 kg. of explosives concealed in a guitar case. Izzaddin al-Masri, the suicide bomber, sat beside her in a taxi until they neared the Israeli checkpoint. Exiting alone, he approached the Israeli soldiers empty-handed. He sailed through the security check.

Meanwhile Tamimi, 23, attractive, dressed in Western-style clothing and chatting in English, aroused no suspicion. She passed unhampered through the Kalandiya checkpoint on Jerusalem's edge.

The once and future child murderer

Once inside Israel, Masri got back into the taxi. He rode with Tamimi to the walls of Jerusalem's Old City, and from there they walked together into west Jerusalem. At the intersection of Jaffa Road and King George Avenue in the city's center stood Sbarro, a pizza restaurant. Why Tamimi selected it as the target is not hard to figure: On that vacation afternoon, it was filled with women and children.

In separating from her "weapon," Tamimi asked Masri to wait 15 minutes before detonating the bomb. She wanted to be far enough from the explosion to escape unscathed. He complied.

DURING THESE past five years, Tamimi has received all the perks that the Prisons Service offers: the right to dress in clothes of her choice, the right to visitors, the right to socialize with fellow prisoners, the right to decorate her cell as she sees fit, the right to study, the right to practice her religion and the right to wed (she recently married a male terrorist murderer, her cousin Nizar Tamimi). Tamimi has also been permitted two interviews. The first, in March 2006, was reported in the press. The second was videotaped and included in an award-winning documentary film, Hothouse. Some of the film's reviews, including one in The New York Times, featured a glamorous, smiling photograph of Tamimi.

I have tried to detect signs of suffering during Tamimi's five years of imprisonment - but in vain.

Nor has a hint of remorse surfaced. During her Hothouse interview, Tamimi learned that her act cost the lives of eight children, rather than the five she had believed died. She smiled upon hearing the updated tally.

In the first interview she had declared: "I'm not sorry for what I did. We'll become free from the occupation, and then I will be free from prison." Israel's past willingness to release convicted terrorists has made them confident of an early release.

TAMIMI IS no anomaly in the world of terrorism. At the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in 2006, Juliette Shedd of George Mason University delivered a study entitled "Understanding Female Terrorists: An Analysis of Motivation and Media Representation." She culled myriad reasons that terrorist organizations avidly recruit women

Terrorist organizations play upon the stereotypes of women to achieve their goals; popular opinion considers women as victims of violence... rather than perpetrators... The lore that arises around female terrorists can also provide an advantage... Because women are often not part of the terrorist 'profile,' they are able to get through security check points... and can provide cover for male terrorists by assuming mother or girlfriend roles...

Women... often display ruthlessness, dominance, and calm under pressure... In fact, 'shoot the women first' is reportedly an instruction given to counterterrorist recruits in West Germany and other Interpol squads...

A mystique also arises around female terrorists... There is a general sense that women are more likely to receive the media attention needed... In addition, women seem to inspire the question 'Why?'... journalists search for explanations for the violent activities of women [providing] a venue for the terrorist group to spread their message.

Writing in a 2006 academic study by the Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, Avi Issacharoff, Haaretz's special correspondent for Arab affairs, pointed out that "the lives of female suicide terrorists are no less tragic than those of male suicide bombers, yet the media accords women more sympathy and treats them with kid gloves."

WE ISRAELIS need to stop using lines like: "No price is too high to free our captive soldiers" or, as Minister-without-Portfolio Ami Ayalon put it last week: "Returning the abducted soldiers is above all else." Such assertions are hackneyed and patently false. Plainly there are demands with which no civilized government would comply.

If, for instance, Hamas instructed us to execute one Israeli child to gain Gilad Schalit's freedom, would we? Is releasing a mass child murderer, able and eager to kill more Jewish children, very different from that?

The once and future child murderer

On the morning that the returned hostages Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev were buried, Defense Minister Ehud Barak intimated that there is a red line when he said: "We will do everything that is possible and appropriate to bring Schalit home." But did he mean it?

Before the early release of an "ordinary" murderer, the judicial system ensures that the victims' voices are heard. Yet in the context of terrorist murders, the only concession to families of the victims is the publication - a mere 48 hours prior to the release - of the names of the prisoners being set free. Furthermore, the High Court has never once granted a terror victim's petition to block such a release.

Nevertheless, Smadar Haran, the wife and mother of Samir Kuntar's victims, revealed last week that her wishes had been factored into past government calculations. Even as she expressed her approval of Kuntar's release, she told the nation she had lobbied tirelessly to keep him behind bars for 27 years. She was motivated, she said, by a sense of duty to her murdered loved ones.

I also feel an obligation to my daughter Malki to do everything I can to keep her murderer behind bars. And the rest of Israel owes the same obligation to Tamimi's future targets - their own children.

Graphic

Photo: MALKI ROTH with her mother in 2001. (Credit: Courtesy)

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World Diary

Financial Times (London, England)

December 22, 2008 Monday

London Edition 1

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Section: WEEK AHEAD; Pg. 26

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Body

TODAY

Europe-Brazil summit

The second European Union-Brazil summit is due to take place in Rio de Janeiro. Nicolas Sarkozy, French president, will meet Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Brazil's president, to discuss responses to the global economic crisis, the recent G20 meeting in Washington, climate change and energy. The summit will review developments in the EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership, started in 2007.

Bush hospital visit

George W. Bush, US president, is due to visit the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington.

Lebanon security talks

Beirut is scheduled to host a dialogue between Michel Suleiman, the Lebanese president, representatives from the anti-Syrian parliamentary majority alliance and a Damascus-backed coalition led by *Hezbollah*. The focus of the talks is to forge a Lebanon defence strategy.

UN discusses Congo mission

The United Nations Security Council is set to adopt a resolution on the mandate of the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which expires on December 31.

Hanukkah celebrated

The Jewish Hanukkah festival, known as the Jewish festival of lights, is celebrated. The holiday is observed by the kindling of lights on each of the festival's eight nights.

Energy competition report

The European Commission is due to report on competition in the British energy market following EDF's takeover of British Energy. The review is likely to approve the deal, but stipulate that EDF auctions off a portion of its electricity assets.

Islamic tourism

Karachi is to host the third international Islamic, economic, cultural and tourism forum, set up by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. The 57 member states are expected to send representatives.

Cyprus reunification talks

Demetris Christofias, the president of Cyprus, and Mehmet Ali Talat, the leader of the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, are scheduled to meet in Nicosia, to continue their United Nations-sponsored talks on the reunification of the Mediterranean island. The ongoing talks are the most recent substantive efforts to end the country's 34-year division.

Abbas to visit Russia

Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian president, is due to visit Dmitriy Medvedev, Russian president, and Vladimir Putin, prime minister, for talks on the status of Middle East peace efforts.

TUESDAY 23

Economic figures

The UK Office for National Statistics is due to release quarterly statistics on economic growth. Figures for the fourth quarter are likely to confirm that Britain is in recession.

Gas exporters' forum

Ministers from the world's leading gas producers are due to meet in Moscow to finalise the founding charter of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum. Member countries include Egypt, Iran, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela, and control 73 per cent of the world's gas reserves and 42 per cent of its production.

Japan national day

Offices and businesses in Japan shut to celebrate Emperor Akihito's birthday, Japan's national day.

WEDNESDAY 24

Serbian media report

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe is scheduled to report on violations of media rights and freedom in Serbia.

Jammu and Kashmir vote

The final stage of elections in Jammu and Kashmir in India is due to take place after the state's legislative assembly was dissolved and put under direct federal government rule in July.

THURSDAY 25

Christmas addresses

Pope Benedict XVI is due to deliver his "Urbi et Orbi" Christmas message in Rome. Queen Elizabeth II is scheduled to make her annual speech to the UK.

Corruption ruling

Thailand's supreme court is due to announce a decision on former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra's assets, frozen in Thai banks when he was ousted in 2006. The seizure order, if successful, will turn over more than Bt77bn (\$2.2bn, EUR1.6bn, £1.5bn) to the public coffers.

FRIDAY 26

Australian yacht race

The annual Sydney to Hobart yacht race is scheduled to take place in Australia. In 2007, 82 boats started the 630 nautical mile race.

SATURDAY 27**Woolworths winds down**

Woolworths, the UK retail chain, is expected to start closing its stores. The 99-year-old business went into administration in November. All 807 branches will close, with 27,000 people losing their jobs. The process of closures is to finish on January 5.

Africa music celebrated

The first Africa Music Awards are due to take place in London. Categories include African Artist of the Year, Best Urban Artist of African Origin, African Male and **Female** Artists of the Year, and Best African Music Video.

SUNDAY 28**Ban Burma visit**

Ban Ki-Moon, United Nations secretary-general, is scheduled to visit Burma (to December 31).

Ghana election run-off

Ghana is due to hold a run-off vote in its presidential election after no candidate secured a majority in the first round on December 7.

Compiled by Sam Boland

Load-Date: December 21, 2008

ABORTION MUST REMAIN AVAILABLE

The Capital Times (Madison, Wisconsin)

January 27, 2009 Tuesday

ALL EDITION

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Section: OPINION; Pg. WEB

Length: 773 words

Body

Dear Editor: The decision by the Madison Surgery Center, UW Hospital and Clinics and the UW Medical Foundation regarding provision of second-trimester abortions should be applauded and supported. We cannot allow the minority opinion of a few religious and political groups to determine the parameters of reproductive health care for the rest of us.

Access to this legal procedure for women in our community must remain available in our community.

Julie Worzala Madison

Anti-Israel Jews part of propaganda machine

Dear Editor: Letter-writer Janice Oltman and the rest of the American anti-Israelis just don't seem to get it when they claim what the Israelis have done in Gaza is similar to what the "persecutors" did to the Jews of Europe before and during WWII.

The Jews of Europe were a prosperous, intelligent, high-achieving society which, like the Israelis, only wanted live in peace with their neighbors. The European Jews didn't go around bombing themselves to kill their neighbors. They didn't kidnap and torture their neighbors. They didn't hurl bombs relentlessly at the schools and homes of people who never provoked them other than having a religion different than their own. One of their original 10 commandments was and continues to be "love thy neighbor as thy self." They have no commandment that says to turn their cheeks when constantly struck. The European Jews of old and their offspring living in Israel have never sought the annihilation of their neighbors.

Why do the Jews of America who oppose Israel refuse to acknowledge these facts in their condemnation of Israel's attempt to control Hamas and Hezbollah so that a peaceful solution can be found? They have become part of the propaganda machine whose purpose is to destroy what their forebears took decades to develop.

Ernie Pellegrino Middleton

'Punk' album on cops an outrage

Dear Editor: Police Officer Erik David Hite died June 2, 2008, in Tucson, Ariz., sacrificing his life valiantly answering the "call to duty." He was honored and remembered for his selfless, supreme sacrifice.

ABORTION MUST REMAIN AVAILABLE

The recently released album "Kill a Cop for God," sung by a "punk" group called Awful Truth, disparagingly carries the image of Officer Hite on the album cover. Mentioned within the lyrics of one song are the names of two convicted cop-killers. One name mentioned is David Delich, the man responsible for the death of Officer Hite.

Suzie Sawyer, executive director of Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.), which represents over 15,000 families who have lost their officers in the line of duty, said it well when she said, "We feel certain the members of Awful Truth aren't aware of the awful truth about the devastation experienced by families that have lost a loved one to murder. Every victim's group nationwide should be up in arms over this, not just Concerns of Police Survivors and law enforcement groups. Unfortunately, there is nothing to stop anyone from inappropriately using any murder victim's photo. While we believe in freedom of speech, the awful truth is that this album impinges upon the rights of not only the Hite family, but each and every law enforcement family, and every family that has ever experienced victimization. In spite of this despicable action by Awful Truth, we certainly hope members of this 'punk' recording group never experience the loss of one of their loved ones to murder."

The lead singer of Awful Truth, David Stine, has stated he has no regrets regarding the use of Officer Hite's photo, the song, or using the names of convicted cop-killers in the album's music.

Carol Weinke Wis. chapter of Concerns of Police Survivors Reedsburg

Whites, blacks both show racism

Dear Editor: A recent letter said that racism abounds in Madison. The gist was that whites can expect second-rate service from black service people. That is a truism that I, as a working class person who frequents establishments which are not primarily concerned with catering to money, can attest to. And it hurts, but as with anything else in the public sphere, we have to reconcile our feelings with it; let's at least try to get some perspective.

I am disinclined to pose questions about reciprocity because they never seem to get us anywhere. I would, however, suggest that expecting more than that is expecting more from people of one color than people of another. Does this writer really expect anything more than they got was gotten by the next black person in a white checker's line?

I wish we could have an immediate answer to that but I dare say the answer would be no. Well, maybe not and maybe so, but all in all I don't believe so.

John Costello Madison - 1/27/2009 5:31 am

Load-Date: January 28, 2009

Gaza crisis: a crossroads for Obama

Christian Science Monitor

December 31, 2008, Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 9

Length: 831 words

Byline: Sandy Tolan

Dateline: Los Angeles

Body

The catastrophe unfolding in Gaza has the dark force of a recurring Middle Eastern nightmare: Scattered guerrilla-like attacks from the weak lead to massive retaliation by the strong. Excessive lethal force provokes enraged recriminations. Fresh bloodshed fuels the hard-liners on both sides.

We have seen this cycle many times before: throughout Lebanon (2006), across the occupied territories during the first intifada (1987-93), in east and west Beirut (1982), and even during the founding of modern Israel and the subsequent dispossession of the Palestinians in 1948.

When the smoke finally drifts from Gaza, and the human rights investigations begin - into the death of schoolchildren in midday rocket attacks or the demolition of a women's dormitory - sober voices will ask why Israel has still not learned a fundamental lesson: By trying to crush your enemy, you only make him stronger.

Two years ago, despite killing hundreds of Lebanese fighters and civilians, and driving some 800,000 from their homes, Israel could not defeat the radical Shiite militant group Hezbollah, which emerged stronger than ever. For Israel, again, the lesson was lost - ironically, on a nation whose tragic motto is "never again."

The difference now is that from the ashes of this war, new lands can be seeded - if President-elect Obama is bold enough to do what his predecessors would not. Like the financial meltdown in the US, Israel's grave and massive blunder in Gaza provides Mr. Obama with an opportunity for sweeping changes unimaginable on Election Day.

Obama could begin by making clear that the days of Israel's impunity are over. Israel's outsized response to Qassam rocket attacks has not only killed more than 350 Palestinians in the past three days; it has further radicalized Arab populations from the Gulf to Egypt and may lead to a third intifada.

This does not mean the US should condone the rocket attacks and mortar fire, but simply recognize that their limited power to kill - about two dozen deaths in the past six years - must be seen against the massive retaliatory force of Israel, a nuclear power with one of the strongest armies in the world.

"Special relationship" or not, Obama should make clear that Israel must be held accountable for its actions - and that there are limits to US support. Obama can also use this moment to send a message that America recognizes the fundamental worth of Palestinian lives and dreams. While this may sound basic, its absence, especially over the past eight years, has made clear to the Arabs that America's "special relationship" with Israel undermines its claims to be an honest broker.

Gaza crisis: a crossroads for Obama

In 60 years of failed negotiations, one-sidedness has simply not worked. In 2000, the Clinton team undermined the Camp David negotiations by repeatedly pressing Israel's agenda while dismissing Palestinian arguments. This past year, when President Bush helped Israel celebrate its 60th anniversary, he pointedly declined to attend any similar commemoration by the Palestinians of their Nakba, or Catastrophe, when 750,000 Arabs of Palestine fled or were expelled.

An Obama administration that recognizes the inherently equal value of Palestinian aspirations will promote a new ethic and a new pragmatism. For talks to succeed, the US must tell hard truths to old friends and make a clean break with the tired road maps of the past.

Obama's team should follow the advice of former Secretary of State Colin Powell and bring Hamas into future talks. Any agreement reached only with Mahmoud Abbas, the beleaguered leader of the West Bank Palestinians, would be backed by only a fraction of his people.

Future negotiations will also be fraught with thousands of new facts on the ground. In 1993, when Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin famously shook hands, the Jewish settler population in the West Bank was 109,000; now, after 15 years of the "peace process," it's up to 275,000. East Jerusalem, the supposed future Palestinian capital, is now ringed with Jewish settlements. The hard reality of any new negotiation is that because of Israel's Judaization of the West Bank, the two state solution, long considered the only path to peace, is on life support.

Early signs suggest the Obama team is inclined to continue the Middle East status quo. But Obama is nothing if not practical and shrewd. He surely recognizes that in the aftermath of the carnage in Gaza, he will have the opportunity to make visionary change in the long-term interest of all parties. And he knows that the bleak alternatives - a new Palestinian intifada, diplomatic rifts across the Arab world, more wars without end - would undermine his desperately needed efforts to remake the image of America in the world.

* Sandy Tolan is author of "The Lemon Tree: An Arab, A Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East" and a professor at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California.

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Load-Date: December 30, 2008

Al-Jazeera, Gaza and a message to Qatar

The Jerusalem Post

March 7, 2008 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 1249 words

Byline: CALEV BEN-DAVID

Highlight: Al-Jazeera has a very selective interpretation of press freedom: one that allows it to brazenly broadcast exaggerated and outright false reports about Israel, but not give proper critical coverage to either its own sponsors in the Qatari regime or the Muslim Brotherhood- linked Hamas rulers of Gaza. BETWEEN THE LINES

Body

"I thank God, the praised and the almighty, I thank the people of the media... specifically the Al-Aksa and Al-Jazeera stations, and all the stations that showed pictures of the pulse of the Palestinian majority. Thank you to all those who gave support in presenting the pulse of the Palestinian majority, which says we will resist until the Day of Judgment."

That was Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar this week, speaking on the movement's own Al-Aksa station and praising the Qatari-funded satellite news channel whose defamatory and inflammatory coverage of the Israeli military operations in Gaza raised tensions and sparked unrest across the region.

Al-Jazeera's coverage of Israel has been problematic since its inception a little more than a decade ago, including accusations by Israeli officials that it directly colluded with Hamas two months ago in exaggerating the fuel shortage situation in Gaza during a staged "black-out" there.

Despite this, Jerusalem has cooperated with Al-Jazeera and allowed it to operate freely here, because of the rare platform it has given to Israeli officials and personalities to speak directly to the Arab world.

But this week, the government had enough of the station's demagogic coverage of the Gaza situation, in particular the fact that it continued to refer to "Israeli officials threatening the people of Gaza with another Holocaust" even days after former Deputy Defense Minister Matan Vilna'i had clarified that Reuters had misquoted his use of the word "shoah" (disaster) in remarks he made on Army Radio last Friday.

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni blasted the station in a briefing to foreign ambassadors, and one Israeli communications official told The Jerusalem Post this week that the station's coverage was largely responsible for sparking the attack by an Arab crowd on two municipal workers in east Jerusalem on Monday.

As a result, the Foreign Ministry and Government Press Office said this week that for the time being they would maintain an unofficial ban on handling requests by the station's local bureau, although Aviv Shir-On, head of the ministry's Media and Public Affairs Department, said that earlier press reports according to which the government would "boycott" the station were exaggerated. No press credentials of Al-Jazeera personnel have been suspended, and several Israeli spokespeople said they would continue to appear on the station's English-language channel, while shunning the main Arabic station for the time being.

Al-Jazeera , Gaza and a message to Qatar

"There are some real professionals in the English side of the operation," said one hasbara official, "and we hope they can have an influence on their Arabic colleagues in helping them understand to what degree that pressure from the station's management in Doha [Qatar's capital] is making them distort their coverage here."

THERE'S A background to Al-Jazeera's coverage of Gaza - and specifically its relationship with Hamas - that should be noted, as well as recent developments in the regional media industry landscape that may well affect the station's future here and elsewhere.

The connection between Al-Jazeera and Hamas is the Muslim Brotherhood, the Egyptian fundamentalist Islamic movement with which Hamas is closely linked, both ideologically and organizationally. Over the decades, Qatar has taken in many senior Muslim Brotherhood figures who have been forced to flee Egypt, and have allowed them to set up their own network there.

Last year, MEMRI published a report citing links between Al-Jazeera and the Islamic movement, pointing to a piece by noted columnist Mamoun Fandy published in the London-based Arabic daily, Asharq al-Awsat, in which he complained that "the Muslim Brotherhood has at its disposal media that transcend borders, from newspapers to satellite channels, which have taken over the minds of million throughout the entire Arab world. If you watch a debate program presented on Al-Jazeera, you will be amazed at the supreme effort to defend the Muslim Brotherhood."

A typical example of that can be found in a laudatory puff piece posted last month on the Al-Jazeera Web site which stresses the Brotherhood's "rejection of all manner of violence," its commitment to "human rights," and notes that "on the women's rights issue they have shown a great deal of openness." (Gloria Steinem would no doubt approve.)

Yet funnily enough, in 1999, the ruling emirs of Qatar came to an agreement with the Muslim Brotherhood that it could no longer operate openly as political movement in that kingdom - perhaps because, in return, the organization was given a television platform to preach its brand of radical Islam to the rest of the Arab world.

The rest of the Arab world, though, isn't taking this situation lying down. To start with, in 2003, the Saudi- owned Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC) started its own international Arabic news channel, the Dubai-based Al-Arabiya, which in recent years has begun to overtake the popularity of Al-Jazeera. Part of the reason is that four years ago the Iraqi government, incensed by what it saw as Al-Jazeera's pro-insurgent coverage, indefinitely closed its Baghdad bureau, limiting its coverage from that country.

Though Al-Arabiya is no less critical of Israel, it is perceived as relatively more moderate and less sympathetic to radical Islamic groups and ideology than Al-Jazeera. Not surprisingly, this has caused it some problems in Gaza; last January a bomb exploded outside its bureau there, after it had run a report critical of some Hamas officials.

Al-Jazeera is also set to face more competition in the Middle East TV market, with the scheduled start next week of the BBC's new highly-touted Arabic news channel. Being caught in a ratings war with serious rivals is perhaps another reason the Qatari station has ramped up its attacks on Israeli policy in recent weeks.

The most serious challenge Al-Jazeera now faces, though, is not from another station, but a decision taken last month by Arab League states to create a new "satellite broadcasting charter" that would allow it to more easily censor programs that "negatively affect social peace, national unity, public order and public morals."

The charter was initiated by Saudi Arabia and Egypt - and supported by every country except Qatar and Lebanon, because it is seen as primarily directed against Al-Jazeera and the Hizbullah-operated Al-Manar station.

"Media institutions should be watching [the conduct of] governments, not the other way around," Al-Jazeera news editor Ahmad Shaikh told Reuters. "These are politicians who want to set the style in which we operate through a wide-ranging document that can have a million interpretations."

While censorship of this sort is yet another indication of the Arab regimes' resistance to democratic reforms, Al-Jazeera itself has a very selective interpretation of press freedom: one that allows it to brazenly broadcast

Al-Jazeera , Gaza and a message to Qatar

exaggerated and outright false reports about Israel, but not give proper critical coverage to either its own sponsors in the Qatari regime or the Muslim Brotherhood-linked Hamas rulers of Gaza.

Al-Jazeera is already banned in Algeria, Tunisia and Iraq, and that list may well grow thanks to the impact of the Arabic satellite broadcasting charter. Ironically, it is here in the Jewish state and the region's only genuine democracy that the station is probably given its greatest latitude to freely report - and, at the end of the day, this may be one of the few remaining places it can be seen.

calev@jpost.com

Graphic

Photo: FREE REIGN. Despite its problematic coverage of Israel, Jerusalem has cooperated with Al-Jazeera, because of the rare platform it has given to Israeli officials and personalities to speak directly to the Arab world.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Hypocrisy over Libertas funding

Irish Independent

August 5, 2008 Tuesday

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Independent.ie 

Section: LETTERS

Length: 1284 words

Body

Complaints by members of the Government about Libertas funding of the 'No' campaign in the recent Lisbon Treaty referendum leaves them open to a charge of hypocrisy.

The recently published Standards in Public Office report expressed dissatisfaction at the fact that of the EUR11.8m spent during the last general election campaign, less than EUR2m could be publicly traced.

The fact that political parties spend multiples of what they declare as donations raises important issues about the functioning of our democracy.

The fact that political parties can get away with this and are not legally obliged to either publish annual accounts or declare the source of their funds is a scandal.

The fact that Libertas has taken the political parties on, and beaten them at their own game in the Lisbon Treaty referendum only adds a further dimension to the scandal.

It also highlights the hypocrisy of Government complaints about the lack of information on Libertas funding when exactly the same applies to all political parties.

Struggling on minimum wage

It is all very well for FAS's senior economist to preach what he most likely would not practise himself, namely that people must change their attitudes towards minimum wage jobs.

As FAS officials are well-paid people, they are immune to the struggle many face on a wage of EUR360 per week.

I know from speaking to many job-seekers that minimum-wage employers themselves are quite often the problem.

If they know that someone has qualifications, they won't employ them.

The qualified Irish person needs to earn money like everyone else. FAS should perhaps stop focusing on the speck in the eye of the minimum wage worker, and pay attention to the log in the eyes of the highly paid, such as themselves.

Hypocrisy over Libertas funding

Many people earn more than EUR40,000, but they are not worth the money. People like this should take a wage cut, and thereby create a job for someone else.

Ridding hospitals of infections

Congratulations to your writers for keeping the scandal of healthcare-acquired infections in the news.

It is indeed alarming to read of the rise to 95 per week of incidences of C difficile in Ireland (Irish Independent, August 1).

Of course we have no indication of the number of people who have died as a result.

I note that the European Centre for Disease Prevention has called for a review of standards of infection control and that a spokesperson from the HSE has said that we don't need such a review. On this occasion I have to agree with the HSE spokesperson. Indeed, we don't need any more reviews, reports, standards, recommendations --the offices in the Department of Health must be choc-a-bloc with these already, at enormous cost to the taxpayer.

What we do need is for the known standards to be enforced.

There is ample evidence that this is not happening in many of our hospitals, and no evidence at all that it is likely to happen on a wide scale in the near future.

GAA discipline

is simply a farce

In light of the Paul Galvin saga, it is clear just how convoluted and farcical GAA disciplinary procedures have become.

In what other sport can a player seemingly hop from one disciplinary body to another, making one appeal after the next, until he is eventually successful in having his sentence reduced?

What, can anyone tell me, is wrong with having one dedicated body to issue a sanction and one body thereafter to whom appeals can be made?

We do not see this sort of protracted saga developing in either rugby or soccer, the result being that players are willing to accept their punishment for any wrongdoing, if after one appeal they are not successful.

It is about time GAA authorities got a grip on their disciplinary procedures and put end to this sort of debacle which ultimately only makes them look amateurish and foolish.

Finally, in halving Paul Galvin's ban from six to three months the GAA have failed to take a stand on the issue of the manhandling of referees by players.

One can only wonder had the offending player been from one of the so called weaker counties would his case have been dealt with so favourably?

Now there's a question.

Iniquities of Celtic Tiger

Over the course of the Celtic Tiger we have seen the gradual destruction of values and the inherent qualities which distinctly made us Irish. We were once noted for our generosity of spirit and our genuine friendliness. But now we have become a society obsessed with money and totally centred on the self.

Our famed hospitality now only serves the big budget. Where tourists were once charmed, they're now alarmed at the extortionate prices we now charge.

Hypocrisy over Libertas funding

Business chiefs believe they're selling a product that is vitally based on the intrinsic nature of the Irish people.

But the influx of money in recent years has only served to distort people's perception of values and what really matters.

People only care about what they can achieve for themselves, while others are disregarded as useless commodities when they no longer serve a purpose in the economic grand plan.

The imminent recession can only act as a remedial force which can remedy what ills have befallen our society.

With the downturn in the economy, people should become more inward-looking and take a more enlightened approach to their needs and balance this with higher values so as to create a society which is not devoid of the spirit we once cherished.

Why Israel needs

to act over Iran

There has been much frenzied commentary and analysis in the international media, especially business and economics publications, about the possibility of an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear sites.

Economists warn of the direful consequences for the world economy, with oil prices soaring; increased instability in the Middle East and the Gulf region, and a major global recession that would diminish us all.

Many of these articles conjure up an impression of Israel as a paranoid nation that is eager to let loose against its enemies.

But surely you're not being paranoid when what you fear is real? The Iranian regime has repeatedly expressed the view that Israel should be wiped off the map --that it should cease to exist. The same regime has sponsored the activities of organisations in other countries that are pledged to the destruction of Israel, including Hizbullah and Hamas.

So when that regime is edging closer to enriching uranium, and therefore to the ability to produce nuclear weapons, is it not logical to expect that it will either launch a direct nuclear strike on Israel or arrange for a proxy terrorist attack involving a nuclear device?

The US administration in recent days is said to be seeking a rapprochement with Iran, and to be less keen than previously on military action to prevent it acquiring nuclear weapons.

Does that scenario sound familiar? During World War Two, pleas to the allied nations to bomb the death camps fell on deaf ears. Such action wasn't deemed a priority in terms of winning the war.

So innocent Jewish men, women, and children continued to perish.

I watched a documentary a few months ago on the Holocaust and a comment from a survivor who was interviewed really stuck in my mind.

He said: "If there had been a state of Israel in existence in World War Two, and if it had an air force consisting of only one plane, I believe that plane would have taken off to bomb Auschwitz."

Because there wasn't an Israel when the Nazis were committing genocide, the Jews were soft targets for them.

Just as Hitler could more easily have been stopped if the Western nations had tackled his regime at an earlier stage, such as his re-occupying of the Rhineland in 1936, Israel has the potential to stop the Persian tyrants in their tracks.

Sooner has to be better than later.

Hypocrisy over Libertas funding

Load-Date: August 5, 2008

End of Document

Column: Unconditional support of Israel must change

University Wire

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 Daily Bruin via U-Wire

Length: 815 words

Byline: By Kia Makarechi, Daily Bruin; **SOURCE:** UCLA

Dateline: LOS ANGELES

Body

To many of us Westerners, the Middle East seems to be a perpetually doomed, inevitably warring place.

The sad truth is there may never be peace in Israel. The Middle East is a region in the grips of terror. But why, then, does Israel presume that the best way to silence terrorism is to close checkpoints and rain bombs on a territory they have under lock and key?

There are two simple answers. The first is that Israel is a Jewish nation surrounded by a swarm of unfriendly Muslim neighbors and thus stands alone in the region. It feels as though it must demonstrate its strength lest bordering nations band together and attack it (except for the small fact that Israel has nuclear capability, essentially alone in this capacity).

The second is even simpler: Israel bombs Gaza into oblivion because it can.

It can and does, with the support of the United States. So while it is appropriate to criticize Israel's military policy, there is little American citizens have to say about their actions. Instead, it is our duty to appeal to our own leadership.

President George W. Bush's response to the increasingly disproportionate war was as such: "By spending its resources on rocket launchers instead of roads and schools, Hamas has demonstrated that it has no intention of serving the Palestinian people." Perhaps the president does not realize that building schools is not a viable option when one of the world's most skilled and aggressive armies is persistently casting an ominous shadow on a territory corralled by Israeli checkpoints.

A reevaluation of America's unequivocal support of Israel is long overdue. In a supposedly more enlightened age than the decades that bore witness to world wars, there is no room for blank-check diplomacy.

More specifically, it is time for America to consider the position of nearly every other government in the world: the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is a two-sided mess.

Consider the following from the Times in England: "Europeans and Arabs have simply not been able to believe at times the virtually unyielding pro-Israel line that the US has taken since 2001, whether over Jewish settlements, Ariel Sharon's security fence, the war with Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006 or the present fighting with Hamas, or on any number of lesser but pointed issues."

Column: Unconditional support of Israel must change

Unfortunately, America appears to have termed its "War on Terror" as what is really a "War on Pan-Arab/Muslim Terror." Had the bombs dropped on Gaza fallen from the planes of Islamic fundamentalists or Iranians instead of IDF ones, these acts would have been unequivocally condemned as terrorism.

This sort of two-faced diplomacy is not only careless, it is dangerous. Israel's flagrant, senseless bombardment and invasion of Gaza (an area slightly larger than twice the size of Washington, D.C.) has killed over 500 Palestinians, many of whom were women and children. It is impossible to think of an area riper with terrorist recruiting opportunities than the rubble of Gaza.

In the West, save for Sept. 11, we have little experience with having our loved ones murdered by foreigners and foreign regimes (though we commit the most heinous of crimes against fellow Americans regularly). The hate that is brewing in Gaza is the same hate that led Americans to kill Sikhs and commit hate crimes in the time immediately following the 2001 attacks. (Some might argue that it is the same hate that led to American support for wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.)

None of this is justification for the rockets Hamas senselessly fires into Israel. There is no room for condoning violence or aggression of any kind, but the Obama administration must consider understanding it. When the death of four Israelis is answered by the decimation of an entire region, when the kidnapping of two soldiers in Lebanon is countered by bombings in civilian areas, there arises the highest of tides of hate - and terrorism is nothing if not an outlet for hate.

By not engaging Hamas or the Palestinian people in any substantive discussion and instead demanding that they simply take the brutalization Israel has wrought on their kin, America is not only furthering the problem - it is making itself complicit in the deaths of nearly 600 civilians.

America must instead work with both sides to stop aggression and make both sides realize that violence only breeds violence.

We are learning this lesson in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Israeli people are as well: More than 40 rockets were launched into Israel on Monday. Bomb people, and they will bomb back. If they do not have bombs or an organized army, they will throw stones and fire rockets.

Sadly, many agree that it is doubtful that the president-elect will even reevaluate this undying allegiance, especially with such an outspoken supporter of Israel as his secretary of state. For the sake of the Israeli and Palestinian people, let's hope we're wrong.

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Load-Date: January 8, 2009

The war in Iran we might need

University Wire

October 17, 2007 Wednesday

Copyright 2007 The BG News via U-Wire

Section: COLUMN

Length: 794 words

Byline: By Jason Snead, The BG News; **SOURCE:** Bowling Green State U.

Dateline: BOWLING GREEN, Ohio

Body

Several weeks ago the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was invited to Columbia University to speak to a lucky few students and faculty given the unique opportunity to participate in one of the most controversial diplomatic events of our time. While at Columbia he was lambasted by their President, who referred to him as a petty dictator and harshly criticized Ahmadinejad's record on free speech and civil rights. Some praised the action, breathing a collective sigh of relief that at least somebody today has the courage and character to tell a dictator how despicable and horrendous their actions and policies are. Others were deeply shocked and dismayed that the leader of a nation could be talked down to in such a demeaning way.

This latter group is a principled one, to say the least, who advocate wholeheartedly avoiding the drumbeat of war that grows louder each day. They wish to take on face value what Ahmadinejad says, worrying that to question his sincerity would be only to add fuel to the fire. They listen to his speeches and his comments, hear the words of a peace-loving man, and sleep each night content that Iran is no threat so long as such an eloquent leader is in charge. They hold out hope that diplomacy will always succeed, and argue that an Iranian nuclear weapon is hardly worth going to war over. Principled they may be, but unwilling to accept the hard truths of our world is what they are.

President Ahmadinejad has been in office for two years, catapulted there by an uncommon charisma and an equally uncommon gift for oratory. Coupled with these things is a calculating political sense, an ability to manipulate events in Ahmadinejad's favor. No doubt when he accepted the invitation to Columbia he realized no matter what happened it would only benefit him. If he were to be lambasted it would be a public relations victory in Iran, and it would be an opportunity to speak to the American people and show everybody that he is just such a nice guy. The sad thing about his plan is both parts seem to have worked, at least on some. Oratory seems able to accomplish anything, including wiping away the heinous crimes Ahmadinejad and his government have committed. Crackdowns in Iran have reached a new high. Thousands are routinely arrested for "grave crimes" against society, crimes such as wearing Western clothing or listening to Western music. For women, too-tight clothing is an invitation for police beatings. Even dancing at weddings with non-family members runs the risk of police intervention. Peaceful protesting, what nearly all consider to be a natural right in this country, is met with harsh force and arrests. Recently, five Iranian Americans visiting the country were imprisoned for no reason, and before that 12 British sailors were captured at gunpoint in international waters and forced to make humiliating confessions. Perhaps most disturbing of all is the attitude many have towards the increasingly convincing evidence that Iran is complicit in attacks on American soldiers in Iraq. At one point, if a nation conspired to murder American soldiers and citizens it would have been considered an act of war, but today these facts are dismissed far too easily.

The war in Iran we might need

Ahmadinejad himself routinely refers to the Holocaust, one of the most gruesome events in human history, as a fable meant to elicit sympathy for the Jewish people. He refers to Israel as a nation to be "wiped off the map." Following his visit to Columbia University, Ahmadinejad met to strengthen his ties with the equally cruel, and rabidly anti-American, Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chavez. And upon his return to Iran, Ahmadinejad denounced the West once more and refused to negotiate any further on his nation's nuclear ambitions.

Ahmadinejad is no fool, and knows if he can divide the West and pretend to care for diplomacy long enough, he can buy the time he needs to build his nuclear arsenal. We must therefore enter into any diplomatic initiative armed with incredulity and supplied with finite patience. We must demand Iran do more than talk; they must cease their nuclear program until it can be verified that weapons will never be produced. They must end their assistance to **Hezbollah** and to the insurgents in Iraq, and withdraw their military and intelligence officers, there to conduct attacks on Americans, as well. Until these conditions are met -- conditions that are supported by our European allies -- preparations for war must continue. We cannot, must not, allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon and become the preeminent regional power. Negotiations should continue for now in the hopes of achieving a peaceful solution, but we must be realistic and accept that a war with Iran may well be inevitable.

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LEVERAGE; NEGOTIATE FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

June 3, 2008 Tuesday

SOONER EDITION

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. B-7

Length: 814 words

Byline: Thomas L. Friedman

Body

Barack Obama is getting painfully close to tying himself in knots with all his explanations of the conditions under which he would unconditionally talk with America's foes, like Iran. His latest clarification was that there is a difference between "preparations" and "preconditions" for negotiations with bad guys. Such hair-splitting does not inspire confidence, and it plays right into the arms of his critics. The last place he wants to look uncertain is on national security.

The fact is, Mr. Obama was right to say that he would talk with any foe, if it would advance U.S. interests. The Bush team negotiated with Libya to give up its nuclear program, even after Libya had accepted responsibility for blowing up Americans on Pan Am Flight 103. Those negotiations succeeded, though, not because President Bush was better "prepared," but because shortly after the invasion of Iraq, Mr. Bush had leverage. Iraq had yet to fall apart.

Mr. Obama would do himself a big favor by shifting his focus from the list of enemy leaders he would talk with to the list of things he would do as president to generate more leverage for America, so no matter who we have to talk with the advantage will be on our side of the table. That's what matters.

Mr. Bush was also right: Talking with Iran today would be tantamount to appeasement -- but that's because the Bush team has so squandered U.S. power and credibility in the Middle East, and has failed to put in place any effective energy policy, that negotiating with Iran could only end up with us on the short end. We don't have the leverage -- the allies, the alternative energy, the unity at home, the credible threat of force -- to advance our interests diplomatically today.

When you have leverage, talk. When you don't have leverage, get some. Then talk.

Right now Iran & Friends -- Hezbollah, Hamas and Syria -- have a strategy that has produced leverage for them, and the next U.S. president is going to have to think afresh how to counter it. The "Iran & Friends" strategy is built on five principles:

* Principle No. 1: Always seek "control without responsibility." In Lebanon, Gaza and Iraq, Iran & Friends have veto power over the politics, without being held fully responsible for the electricity. America's allies, by contrast, tend to have "responsibility without control."

* Principle No. 2: Always insist on being able to both run for political office and bear arms. In Lebanon, Gaza and Iraq, America's opponents are both in the government and have their own militias.

LEVERAGE NEGOTIATE FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH

- * Principle No. 3: Use suicide bombing and targeted assassinations against opponents who get in your way. In Lebanon, Syria is suspected to have been behind the spate of killings of anti-Syrian journalists and parliamentarians. One suicide attack on a major official in Iraq can neutralize superior U.S. power.
- * Principle No. 4: Use the Internet as a free command and control system for raising money, recruiting and operations.
- * Principle No. 5: Cast yourself as the "resistance" to Israel and America, so any opposition to you is equal to support for Israel and America and so no matter how badly you are defeated the mere fact that you "resisted" means you didn't really lose.

Do the pro-American Arab moderates have a counterstrategy with leverage? I just got the new book, "The Arab Center," by Marwan Muasher, the former foreign minister of Jordan. Retired Arab statesmen don't often write books about their time in office, but Mr. Muasher has, and his argument is a powerful one: Arab moderates have been on the defensive because they have been "one-dimensional moderates," focused only on moderate proposals for making peace with Israel, while ignoring other issues important to Arab citizens: good governance, political reform, economic well-being, women's rights and religious and cultural diversity.

"For the Arab moderates to have credibility, they have to assume more responsibility," says Mr. Muasher. America could help by delivering on the Arab moderates' main issue -- a Palestinian-Israeli peace deal. But, ultimately, he said, if the Arab center is to shape the future and rid "itself of the image its opponents paint of an apologist for the West or a compromiser of Arab rights," it will have to meet the challenge of building "a robust, diverse, tolerant, democratic and prosperous Arab society."

There has been some promising moderate push back against extremists in Iraq, Lebanon and the West Bank lately. It's definitely worth watching, but is still frail. America's leverage will be limited as long as our key allies do not have a strategy, with weight, to counter the hard-liners.

Here's hoping that once the primary silly season is over, the McCain and Obama camps will stop jousting over whether to talk with our enemies -- which we must -- and will start focusing instead about how we and our friends get more chips to bargain with -- which we lack.

Notes

Thomas L. Friedman is a syndicated columnist for The New York Times.

Load-Date: June 3, 2008

Police find dynamite hidden in Paris store; Warning demands Afghan withdrawal

The International Herald Tribune

December 17, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 794 words

Byline: Katrin Bennhold and Basil Katz - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: PARIS

Body

Meg Bortin and Caroline Brothers contributed reporting.

*

A package of dynamite planted in a major department store here at the height of the Christmas shopping season was found by the police Tuesday and removed after a search that threw the streets nearby into confusion.

A group calling itself the Afghan Revolutionary Front said it had planted the explosives in the Printemps men's store. In a call to the police, it demanded the withdrawal of French troops from Afghanistan and warned that it would strike again if President Nicolas Sarkozy did not bring the troops home by the end of February.

Although it turned out that there was no detonator with the dynamite, the incident rattled nerves and revived memories of a string of store bombings in Paris in the 1980s.

The three Printemps stores on Boulevard Haussmann in central Paris were hastily evacuated in midmorning after Agence France-Presse told the police that it had received a warning in the mail.

In the half hour that followed, police officers discovered five sticks of dynamite tied together in a restroom on the third floor of the men's store.

A sniffer dog found the dynamite inside a toilet, French news reports said.

Interior Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie and Mayor Bertrand Delanoë rushed to the scene, where bomb-squad vans on the normally traffic-packed thoroughfare looked eerily out of place against a backdrop of colorful Christmas displays.

"For the moment, we have found sticks of dynamite in just one location," Alliot-Marie said. She said that the dynamite was "relatively old" and had no detonator, adding: "From what we know so far, this was not a device that was intended to explode."

Sarkozy, speaking from Strasbourg in eastern France, said that security officials were analyzing the explosives. "Vigilance against terrorism is the only possible option," Sarkozy said in a live television statement.

Police find dynamite hidden in Paris store Warning demands Afghan withdrawal

As it is every year in the Christmas season, security has been tightened in various parts of the French capital. Gérard Gachet, a spokesman for Alliot-Marie, said the Interior Ministry had deployed an additional 1,500 police in the Haussmann district last week.

There was no sense of panic, in part because shoppers and sales staff were initially told that the evacuation was due to a "technical incident."

But as the police barriers were lifted and most parts of the store were reopened, a sense of unease spread as Parisians recalled a wave of explosions in department stores in 1985 and 1986 that killed seven people and wounded dozens.

Leonie Jean-Julien, 52, a seamstress in the Printemps women's store, was working there when Hezbollah bombs exploded on the ground floor and in the adjacent Galeries Lafayette department store on Dec. 7, 1985.

"Since 1985 I take this seriously," she said.

Jean-Julien and other Printemps employees said that the store had been on high alert for several days.

An editor at Agence France-Presse, André Birukoff, said the news agency had received an earlier warning that an attack on Printemps was imminent.

He said that one of AFP's journalists had received an anonymous telephone call on Dec. 10 saying that there would soon be an explosion at the department store. The caller hung up before identifying himself or giving any other information.

The warning statement to AFP on Tuesday said: "Send the message to your president that he needs to withdraw his troops from our country (Afghanistan) before the end of February 2009, or else we will act again in your capitalist department stores, and this time with no warning."

France has about 3,000 troops deployed with the NATO-led force in Afghanistan.

French terrorism officials and experts said they had no previous knowledge of the group, adding that some of the vocabulary it had used was atypical for Afghan and Islamic radical outfits.

But they warned that the incident Tuesday was especially worrying because it hinted that someone could attack an important target in the city with devastating consequences.

"These department stores are the ideal target, much like an airport, with a lot of people coming and going, and the psychological impact of it has already been felt," said Anne Giudicelli, director of Terrorisc, a terrorism consultancy.

Public concern here about the French military presence in Afghanistan grew after 10 soldiers were killed there in a Taliban ambush in August.

The ambush, in which 21 other soldiers were wounded, was the bloodiest attack against French forces since a 1983 bombing in Beirut killed 58 troops.

Sarkozy has strongly defended France's role in Afghanistan alongside its Western allies as part of the fight against global terrorism.

But his promise in April to commit additional French troops, which brought the commitment to nearly 3,000, was not popular.

Load-Date: December 19, 2008

Survey of Israelis' Attitudes Toward Politics Finds Disgust and a Growing Apathy

The New York Times

June 10, 2008 Tuesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 10

Length: 843 words

Byline: By ISABEL KERSHNER

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

A third of Israelis expressed feelings of nausea, revulsion, depression or despair when asked what they felt or thought about the word "politics," according to a new survey. Another third said they instinctively associated politics with corruption, betrayal or deceit.

The survey, the annual Democracy Index, being published on Tuesday by the Israel Democracy Institute, an independent research organization, also found that only about 60 percent of the public reported any interest in politics, a drop of 15 percentage points from the 2006 survey. Trust in public institutions has eroded significantly, with the army topping the list as the most trustworthy and the prime minister and political parties ranking last.

Early this year, 1,201 adults were queried in Hebrew, Arabic or Russian for the survey, which has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points. It was conducted before a new political scandal broke involving Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Morris Talansky, a 75-year-old Long Island fund-raiser and financier who testified in May that he had given an estimated \$150,000, mostly cash stuffed into envelopes, to Mr. Olmert over a period of 13 years.

The findings reflect what some experts call a general crisis of public trust in leadership that affects much of the developed world. But in Israel, a country that was intensely politicized and that still faces acute questions of war and peace each day, the trend is arousing special concern.

"The rise of antipolitical sentiment reaches the point of delegitimizing the political and decision-making processes," said Arye Carmon, the president of the institute. "It is not only about this person or that -- it is the entire system. The Israeli public is turning its back on politics."

Voter turnout has dropped to an average of 63 percent in 2006 from an average of 77 percent over the last five decades. Some researchers expect that turnout in the next election may not exceed 50 percent.

It is not that Israelis are turning against democracy. Despite the negative feelings revealed by the survey, other indicators show that the public's commitment to the principles of a democratic system remains strong.

Survey of Israelis' Attitudes Toward Politics Finds Disgust and a Growing Apathy

"The irony," said Ari Shavit, a columnist for the liberal newspaper Haaretz, "is that Israel as a society is the most democratic I know. It is open and free, yet politics went into such decay."

On the eve of the 2006 elections, about 15 lawmakers from the departing 120-seat Parliament had been indicted or convicted or were under investigation. Just in the governing Kadima Party, which was set up in late 2005, Haim Ramon, a former justice minister, was convicted of forcibly kissing a ***female*** soldier; Tzachi Hanegbi, a former public security minister, is standing trial over a political appointments case; and Abraham Hirschson, Mr. Olmert's ally and former finance minister, was recently indicted on embezzlement charges.

The latest law enforcement inquiry into Mr. Olmert, in which Mr. Talansky testified in advance of a possible indictment, is one of several involving the prime minister, who has denied any wrongdoing.

As in other developed countries, growing transparency and the scrutiny of politicians by the news media are factors in the antipolitical trend, said Yehuda Ben Meir, a former politician who runs a public opinion project at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv.

At the same time in Israel, traditional ideologies have been on the wane. Politics here used to be clearly divided between left and right. For decades, two-thirds of Parliament was composed of two main parties, the dovish Labor and the hawkish Likud.

The lines became blurred by the breakdown of the peace process with the Palestinians in 2000 and the subsequent outbreak of the anti-Israel uprising known as the intifada.

The previous prime minister, Ariel Sharon, who was also no stranger to police investigations, pulled Israeli troops and all Jewish settlers out of Gaza while he was still leader of Likud. Then he went on to found Kadima, a hybrid centrist party that gathered members from both sides of the divide.

Today the issues on the agenda are as pressing as ever. The government is engaged in new negotiations for a peace accord with the Palestinians and indirect talks with Syria, and there are pending decisions on how to deal with Hamas, the Islamic militant group that now rules Gaza; the Lebanese ***Hezbollah***; and a potentially nuclear Iran.

But now that politics and ideology have lost their fervor, the focus on corruption has gained. Integrity is seen as the main strength of Tzipi Livni, the foreign minister and vice prime minister, who is a front-runner to succeed Mr. Olmert as leader of Kadima, should he go.

"It is an unfortunate situation where being decent becomes such an important characteristic," said Dan Meridor, a former Likud justice and finance minister who left politics with his reputation for honesty intact. "That should be the most basic requirement of being a politician."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

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World Report

Windsor Star (Ontario)

June 19, 2008 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. B2; World Report

Length: 799 words

Byline: Compiled from Star News Services

Body

EXAMS REVEAL TORTURE OF U.S.-HELD DETAINEES

WASHINGTON - Medical examinations of 11 former terrorism suspects held by U.S. troops found proof of physical and psychological torture resulting in long-term damage, a human rights advocacy group said on Wednesday.

Mistreatment cited by the men included beatings and other physical and sexual abuse, isolation, forced nakedness and being forced into painful stress positions with hands and feet bound.

"The evaluations provide evidence of violation of criminal laws prohibiting torture and of the commission of war crimes by U.S. personnel," said the report by the Cambridge, Mass.-based Physicians for Human Rights.

BOTH SIDES LACK FAITH IN ISRAEL-HAMAS CEASEFIRE

GAZA CITY, Gaza - As the clock ticked down Wednesday to an Egyptian-brokered temporary ceasefire between Hamas and Israel that was set to begin at dawn today, more than 50 mortars and Qassam rockets screamed towards Israel from this Palestinian enclave on the Mediterranean.

"No peace today," was an Israeli border guard's terse comment moments after an Israeli air attack Wednesday on a rocket launching team.

Israel Prime Minister Ehud Olmert also cast doubt on the durability of the ceasefire shortly after his government publicly agreed Wednesday that it was prepared to stop military operations in Gaza and gradually lift a strict economic embargo of the Palestinian coastal strip in return for an end to attacks from the Palestinian territory by Hamas and other armed Islamist factions.

"We have no illusions," Olmert said. "The calm is temporary and may be very short. Hamas has not changed its skin. These are bloodthirsty and despicable terrorists who even today are doing all they can to harm Israeli civilians."

Hamas was equally skeptical of Israeli intentions on Wednesday.

"If the occupiers are committed to the calm there will be calm. If they are not, we will defend ourselves," Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said in an interview at his office near the centre of the tumbledown Gazan capital.

World Report

Israel's Olmert has also been on a multi-pronged peace offensive. The Israeli media said Wednesday that his coalition government was prepared to discuss several crucial issues with Lebanon including a prisoner swap with Hezbollah and the return to Lebanon of a small piece of farmland occupied by Israel.

U.S. BLAMES SHIITE GROUP FOR DEADLY BAGHDAD BOMB

BAGHDAD - U.S. forces on Wednesday blamed a rogue Shiite militia group seeking to stir up sectarian violence for a devastating truck bombing that killed 63 people in Baghdad.

The U.S. military said intelligence information showed Tuesday's attack in a predominantly Shiite district, the deadliest in the Iraqi capital in more than three months, was carried out by a "special groups cell."

That is military jargon for rogue elements of Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's Mehdi Army. The U.S. military says the special groups receive weapons, training and funding from neighbouring Iran, a charge Tehran denies.

Iraqi police said another 75 people were wounded in the bombing in a crowded market area of northwestern Baghdad. Four children and five women were among the dead.

The blast in the al-Hurriya neighbourhood set three buildings ablaze and destroyed a marketplace, police said.

The U.S. military said it believed the bombers used a truck packed with 90 to 135 kg of explosives.

MBEKI MEETS MUGABE IN BID TO QUELL VIOLENCE

HARARE - South African President Thabo Mbeki on Wednesday made fresh efforts to mediate in Zimbabwe's crisis ahead of next week's run-off, as global outrage grew over mounting violence in the country.

Mbeki met Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe late Wednesday after holding talks with opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai earlier in the day, while UN chief Ban Ki-moon expressed "profound alarm" over conditions before the June 27 presidential vote.

"The current violence, intimidation and arrest of opposition leaders are not conducive to credible elections," spokeswoman Michele Montas quoted Ban as saying.

MARK THATCHER PART OF COUP PLOT, COURT TOLD

MALABO - The son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was a leader of a 2004 coup plot in oil-rich Equatorial Guinea that was backed by Spain and South Africa, a British mercenary told a court on Wednesday.

Former special forces officer Simon Mann testified that Mark Thatcher was "not just an investor" in the plot to oust Equatorial Guinea President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, who has ruled the West African state since 1979.

Mann, one of the defendants in the coup trial, identified Thatcher as one of a five-man group headed by London-based Lebanese millionaire Eli Calil, whom he said masterminded and bankrolled the conspiracy.

"He (Thatcher) came on board completely and became part of the management team," Mann told the court in the island capital.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Getty Images; PIGGERIES ASSAILED: Environmental activists demonstrate at the entrance of a congress about piggeries on Wednesday in Arnhem, the Netherlands, to protest against plans for huge sties for thousands of pigs. ;

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End of Document

Picking up the pieces after the missiles stop falling; Seen up close, conflict in Middle East is much more complex than outsiders realize

The Toronto Star

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. AA06

Length: 783 words

Byline: Dow Marmur, Special to The Star

Body

Jerusalem - When the ceasefire will finally come, Israel won't be able to claim complete victory, despite its obvious desire to destroy Hamas. But it's equally clear that, notwithstanding the fiery rhetoric, Hamas cannot possibly defeat Israel. Hamas is, therefore, bound to continue to engage in activities the world has learnt to describe as terrorist, often linking them to Hezbollah in Lebanon and Al Qaeda elsewhere.

According to its own stated objectives, Hamas wants to kidnap Israeli soldiers. In view of the mileage it gets out of Gilad Shalit, the conscript now held in captivity for more than two years, it would like to get more Israelis into similar situations. In fact, almost immediately after the start of the present round of hostilities, Hamas announced that its men had taken two soldiers prisoner, though there's no evidence for it. Wishful thinking seems to have been used to boost morale and perhaps to ensure continued support by its Iranian paymasters.

The safety and welfare of soldiers is of paramount importance in Israel. Unlike in other countries where civilian casualties attract more attention, here it's the soldiers who are uppermost in the mind of the nation. As they're being sent to the front and some inevitably killed or maimed, the public's empathy with the dead and the bereaved in the military is particularly pronounced. One of the reasons is that virtually all Israelis have a young conscript or older reservist in their immediate or extended family.

There are those around the world, including some in Canada, who argue that Hamas's ambitions reflect the stance of a desperate people repeatedly defeated and humiliated. Therefore, we should have sympathy for them, even when we find their actions reprehensible. The majority, however, are more likely to conclude that this kind of desperation serves only the handlers and the newsmakers while causing irreparable damage to ordinary folk. In the presence of so much cruelty in the face of despair, even well-intentioned humanitarian responses may unwittingly end up condoning evil by playing into the hands of those some call terrorist thugs, others militants and others again freedom fighters.

It seems that misguided and self-serving conduct by Hamas brought about the present situation and thus it should primarily be held responsible for the misery in Gaza. Had it upheld the truce, such as it was, Israel would have had no reason to attack. Many countries in the region know it and Egypt says so openly.

Those further afield seem to prefer to make lofty, and in themselves worthy, pronouncements expressing justifiable horror at the senseless deaths of men, women and children while choosing to ignore underlying issues and potential remedies.

Picking up the pieces after the missiles stop falling Seen up close, conflict in Middle East is much more complex than outsiders realize

It's easier to have sympathy for terrorists when you're far away from them. But being within an hour's drive from Sderot, Ashkelon and the other places in southern Israel that have now been under Hamas fire for many years and being aware of how people there suffer, I see things very differently.

In fact, I'm rather incensed by slogans on both sides: those who don't believe that to protect innocent citizens is the duty of every government, especially not the government of Israel, even in the face of intolerable provocation; and those who make belligerent pronouncements about the war on terror expressing readiness to fight it to the last Israeli and Palestinian while they themselves live in safety and comfort a long way away.

Things are more complex than they seem and one's perception often depends on the vantage point from which one is looking at them. Real understanding requires an ability to also see the other's point of view. There's much to suggest that such understanding does exist in Israel today among public figures, including writers with international reputations.

Due to international mediation, currently working at full speed and in response to pressure from within Israel and its allies, hostilities are likely to come to an end soon. Missiles will stop falling, at least from the Israeli side. Israel is due to hold elections next month. This war will have a serious effect on the outcome. The current coalition partners are obviously anxious that the result should be in their favour. A prolonged war would work against them.

Whether a ceasefire will also bring about a government in Gaza that cares for the welfare of its population rather than a continuation of the present rule of the ideologues remains to be seen.

By all accounts, the overwhelming majority of ordinary folk on both sides yearn for peace, even if fragile, and are ready to make sacrifices to bring it about.

Dow Marmur is rabbi emeritus at Toronto's Holy Blossom Temple.

Graphic

John Overmyer Newsart

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End of Document

Brit puts war critics in Cabinet

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

June 29, 2007 Friday

Copyright 2007 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 800 words

Byline: David Stringer Associated Press

Body

LONDON -- New Prime Minister Gordon Brown appointed some critics of the Iraq war to his youthful circle of senior Cabinet ministers Thursday, underlining his ambition to heal rifts over the conflict and win back the support of disenchanted.

Brown has pledged to examine Britain's role in Iraq -- a subtle shift in language from his predecessor and perhaps his first diplomatic challenge in his relationship with the Bush administration, which considered Tony Blair its closest ally.

David Miliband, who at times criticized Blair's Middle East policy, was named foreign secretary -- an eye-catching appointment by the new prime minister.

"The opportunities and challenges of the modern world requires, in my view, a diplomacy that is patient as well as purposeful -- which listens as well as leads," said Miliband, a rising star in the Labour Party who at age 41 is the youngest British foreign secretary in three decades.

Both he and Jack Straw, who was appointed justice secretary and lord chancellor, criticized Blair for not insisting on an immediate cease-fire when Israel went to war last summer with the Islamic militants of Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Miliband, the son of leftist Jewish academics who is married to an American violinist, voted to support British participation in the Iraq war, but he has voiced concerns about the conflict.

Brown also gave posts to John Denham, a former minister who quit the government in 2003 to protest the Iraq invasion, and Mark Malloch-Brown, a former deputy U.N. secretary-general who clashed with American neo-conservatives.

Malloch-Brown, now a lord, had fierce spats at the United Nations with then U.S. Ambassador John Bolton, who accused the Briton of discrediting the world body with his criticisms of the White House.

As deputy to U.N. chief Kofi Annan, Malloch-Brown derided President Bush for what he called "megaphone diplomacy" on Darfur by trying to persuade Sudan's government to accept a U.N. peacekeeping in Darfur but refusing to defend the organization to Americans.

Malloch-Brown's appointment to a junior role as minister for Africa, Asia and the United Nations could be an attempt by Brown to distance Britain from the Bush administration, said analyst Alex Bingham at the Foreign Policy Center think tank.

Brit puts war critics in Cabinet

Denham, the war critic, also got a relatively minor post, secretary for innovation, universities and skills.

Brown wants to win back the trust of voters who bitterly opposed the Iraq war, and invited families of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan as he made his first leadership speech Wednesday. He also plans to reverse restrictions on Iraq war protests around Parliament.

Brown said in a statement that one of three British soldiers killed Thursday in a roadside bombing in Iraq was from the Scottish constituency he represents.

"My thoughts and prayers are with the families of all the fallen soldiers, who died bravely serving their country," he said.

Despite the addition of war critics, Miliband, the youngest foreign secretary since 38-year-old David Owen took the job in 1977, will be expected to maintain good relations with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, a key figure on the diplomatic stage and an intermediary with Bush.

Brown picked Jacqui Smith, a 44-year-old Amnesty International member, to be Britain's first **female** home secretary, one of the top Cabinet posts, with responsibility for policing and tackling crime and terrorism.

A former economics teacher, Smith is considered a party loyalist and will be unlikely to stray from Brown, who backed Blair's tough stance on pursuing suspected terrorists.

A trusted Brown ally, Ed Balls, 40, takes an education post as secretary for children, schools and families. The education portfolio was split into two parts, with the other looking at innovation and promoting new skills.

Miliband's younger brother, Ed, 37, will oversee Britain's Cabinet office, the department that enforces government policy.

"It's a radical reshuffle from Brown, and by promoting his party's bright young things he's demonstrating that this is a huge change from the days of Blair," said Julian Astle, director of the Center Forum, a liberal London think tank.

But some old hands did win senior posts. Alistair Darling, the current trade and industry secretary, was named Treasury chief, considered the No. 2 job on the Cabinet and the post Brown held for 10 years under Blair.

Shaun Woodward, a defector to Labour from the opposition Conservative Party in 1999, was picked as Northern Ireland secretary.

Dozens of junior posts would be announced Friday, Brown spokesman Michael Ellam said.

Brown, who became prime minister Wednesday, plans to offer some junior roles to opposition legislators -- much as new French President Nicolas Sarkozy did -- as part of sweeping changes to break with Blair's era.

Load-Date: June 29, 2007

Iranians seek reform in today's vote; 43 Million Voters

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

March 14, 2008 Friday

National Edition

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Length: 731 words

Byline: Ladane Nasser, Bloomberg News

Dateline: TEHRAN

Body

TEHRAN - Pharmacist Simin Rahimzadeh can't vote for her favourite candidates in today's Iranian parliamentary election. They were all disqualified for, among other offences, a lack of allegiance to Islam.

She will vote for whoever is left in the Reformists' Coalition, in hopes that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's opponents can gain enough seats to jostle his government's grip on power.

"It's still possible to find valuable candidates," said Ms. Rahimzadeh, 55, from northern Tehran, whose concerns include women's rights. "It's like a small glow still remaining on the ashes, and we should not let it die."

While Mr. Ahmadinejad will retain a strong base of support after the elections, he will probably face more opposition in the parliament, or Majlis, than before. The Reformists' Coalition, which boycotted 2004 elections over disqualifications, is participating this time around. And a group known as "pragmatic idealists," who generally share Mr. Ahmadinejad's views on Islam, will still push to alter his handling of the economy and foreign affairs.

"A large number of the conservatives do not believe in Ahmadinejad's economic policies," Mohammad Reza Khatami, a brother of the President's predecessor, Mohammad Khatami, said in an interview. "The parliament, especially in economic matters, will limit many of the hardline policies of the government" by a "non-written accord" between the conservatives and the reformers.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's spending, subsidies and price controls have helped give Iran, the world's fourth-largest oilproducer, nationwide fuel shortages, a 21% youth unemployment rate and the highest inflation in eight years. Iran's 43 million voters will choose among 4,476 candidates for the 290-seat parliament, the eighth since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Candidates have been vetted by the Guardian Council, a body of six clerics chosen by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and six jurists picked by the parliament.

In January, the council disqualified more than a third of the candidates, leaving the Reformists' Coalition with 133 out of its proposed 909. Grounds for disqualification included lack of allegiance to Islam, the Islamic Republic's constitution or the supreme leader's rule.

Iranians seek reform in today's vote; 43 Million Voters

Those barred included a former transportation minister, Ahmad Khoram, and Issa Kalantari, a former agriculture minister, according to the Coalition. Mohammad Khatami, who as president from 1997 to 2005 encouraged dialogue with the West and pursued economic diversification, called the disqualifications a "catastrophe."

Ayatollah Khamenei has been generally supportive of Mr. Ahmadinejad, who has stoked tensions with Western nations since his election three years ago. The President was praised by the Supreme Leader last month for his "personal role" in Iran's nuclear energy program.

The program, which the United States says is designed to produce a nuclear bomb, is in defiance of United Nations orders and this month prompted a third set of Security Council sanctions.

The United States says that Iran under Mr. Ahmadinejad's presidency has assisted insurgents in Iraq and sponsored the Shiite Muslim **Hezbollah** movement in Lebanon, which the U.S. and Israel consider a terrorist organization. Iran also denies Israel's right to exist.

In the run-up to the 2004 elections, most of Mr. Khatami's supporters, hit by disqualifications, boycotted the polls to try to discredit the outcome. They were marginalized in Iranian politics, a position that was entrenched by Mr. Ahmadinejad's victory in the 2005 presidential election. More than half the deputies in the outgoing parliament hew closely to the President's ideology, based on 2004 election results.

This time, Mr. Khatami's supporters will participate. Mohammad Reza Khatami, who probably would have been disqualified had he run, said the movement hopes to make its presence felt even if it gains only a handful of seats.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's allies "have a project to homogenize the regime," he said. "We have a project not to let it happen."

Still, there's no question that the disqualifications have skewed the campaign.

The election "would be more meaningful if the contest was seen to be a lot more open and competitive, but the eradication of the reformers has affected the integrity of the system," said Anoush Ehteshami, head of the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University in England.

Graphic

Color Photo: Atta Kenare, AFP, Getty Images; An Iranian woman walks past electoral posters taped to a car in northwest Tehran yesterday. Conservatives are expected to tighten their grip on Iran's parliament in an election seen by its leaders as the chance to send a defiant message to the West. ;

Color Photo: Spencer Platt, AFP, Getty Images; Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad faces opposition to his economic and foreign-policy programs. ;

Load-Date: March 14, 2008

New broom faces huge challenge as ruling party falls after 61 years

The Times (London)

April 22, 2008, Tuesday

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THE TIMES

Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; Pg. 33

Length: 770 words

Byline: Tom Hennigan in Asuncion

Body

Paraguayans celebrated the fall of the only ruling party most of the country's six million inhabitants have ever known amid wild scenes of euphoria in the capital, Asuncion.

Fernando Lugo, a softly spoken 56-year-old former Catholic bishop who comes across more as a priest than as a politician, became the first opposition leader to win power peacefully in Paraguay's history and brought to a close almost 62 years of Colorado party rule. He took more than 40 per cent of the vote, against 31 per cent for Blanca Ovelar, a former education minister bidding to become the country's first ***female*** president.

The central pledge for Mr Lugo, who was backed by his 20-party Patriotic Alliance for Change, was to bring change to a country where most of its inhabitants feel humiliated by the blatant corruption and cronyism of the Colorados. Many remain stuck in poverty or have been forced to emigrate in search of work.

"Things are going to change, and for the better," he told supporters in front of the country's Pantheon, which holds the tombs of national heroes. "We will build a Paraguay that will not be known for its corruption and poverty but for its honesty."

The challenges facing Mr Lugo are huge. His own sprawling coalition formed around his candidacy as the best means of ejecting the Colorados. The coalition has agreed a programme but the deep ideological differences within it will be tested by government.

One of the main pledges of the Alliance is to implement land reform. Paraguay has one of the world's most unequal distributions of land ownership and Mr Lugo has promised land for all of the country's landless peasants.

This is likely to be opposed by the agribusiness sector, one of the few sectors of the economy that is both legal and dynamic thanks to booming soy, beef and cotton exports. To add to the sensitivity of the issue many of the biggest farmers are Brazilian immigrants.

Another major challenge for Mr Lugo will be overcoming the inheritance of six decades of Colorado rule. He will inherit a state apparatus that is still dominated at every level by the Colorado party, which has long treated it as little more than a kitty for personal enrichment and illegal party financing.

New broom faces huge challenge as ruling party falls after 61 years

Alfredo Cantero, political editor of ABC Color, Paraguay's biggest-selling newspaper, said Mr Lugo faced "an army of astute and shameless corruptos in every public institution, so he will need an army of managers to occupy and control these entities.

"It is not enough to have good ministers. It is better to have good directors and managers throughout the state apparatus than to have a minister in his office giving orders no one obeys."

There is huge pressure in Paraguay not only for a purge of the state apparatus but also for investigations into the illegally amassed fortunes of many Colorado leaders. Asked by The Times if and when such investigations would start, one leading Lugo adviser replied: "Immediately". Any investigations will require a reform of the judicial system because the Supreme Court is also dominated by Colorado supporters.

The two men that many Paraguayans most want to see investigated are the outgoing president, Nicanor Duarte Frutos, and the Colorado leader in the senate, Juan Carlos Galaverna.

Mr Duarte Frutos violated the constitution in his failed efforts to extend his mandate and is accused of stealing tens of millions of dollars of state funds during his five years in power.

Opposition figures and foreign diplomats in Asuncion say he and Galaverna allowed the numerous drug traffickers and smugglers who are based in Paraguay to operate with near total immunity in return for a percentage of their profits. Years of official patronage has given rise to what one diplomat called a "marijuana aristocracy" in Paraguay that has grown rich and powerful on supplying the drug to Brazil. Much of Brazil's and Europe's cocaine passes through Paraguay on its way from Peru and Bolivia.

CRIME COUNTRY

* The country is in 138th place in Transparency International's benchmark Corruption Perception Index, below Iran and Libya, and 4th in its list of the most corrupt countries in the Americas

* A third of its six million people live in poverty

* Intellectual property fraud, trademark fraud, money laundering and smuggling in the city of Ciudad del Este generate an estimated £ 6 billion a year

* Millions of counterfeit products from Paraguay flood into Brazil and Argentina each day

* US officials claim that Middle East terror groups such as Islamic Jihad and **Hezbollah** are profiting from the region's illegal activities

Sources: Web.worldbank.org; Transparency International; Times archives

Load-Date: April 22, 2008

Another look at the Hebron Peace House

The Jerusalem Post

December 16, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 15

Length: 1204 words

Byline: SUNNY SASSOON

Highlight: Those struggling to live in Hebron exemplify Jacob's legacy to the Jewish people. The writer is chairman of Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf.

Body

I was saddened to hear that many used their pulpits to criticize the brave Jewish heroes whom the government forcefully expelled from The Peace House in Hebron and the hundreds of other Jews who stood with them in support of their right to stay there.

Peace House (Beit Hashalom) was bought for them by Morris Abraham, a Syrian Jew living in New York. Mr. Abraham spent close to a million dollars purchasing this building from a local Arab, and the deal was legally consummated some 24 months ago. It was his wish that these families live there, and this wish was legally carried out.

Those of us who have had the privilege to visit these folks at the now famous house in Hebron know that it is a stone's throw away from the Tomb of our forefathers and foremothers - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their wives Sarah, Rebecca and Leah. The Tomb of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs is Judaism's second holiest site after the Temple Mount itself.

Under King David, Hebron became the first capital of the Jewish people. There has been a Jewish community in the area for thousands of years. Today, about 8,000 Jews live in Kiryat Arba (City of Four), a ten-minute walk away from Hebron's old city, where 800 Jewish men, women and children live in an enclave protected by the Israel Defense Force. Hebron itself sits about a 30-minute drive from The King David Hotel in Jerusalem.

Three weeks from now, the Torah reading portion will be Vayehi.

One cannot read this beautiful narrative about Jacob imploring his son to bury him in the Land of Israel and not be moved. More importantly, this is probably the single act in the Bible responsible for planting the seed that has so stubbornly grown into the tree we refer to as the Jewish people. It is my belief that it is this act that has brought back the Jewish people to their homeland after 2,000 years of exile, pogroms and the Holocaust. Because of Jacob's insistence to be brought back to Israel, the Jewish generations after him always felt an inexplicable yearning to come back home; if for nothing else, just to pay their respects to him and their forefathers and mothers.

I CAME to learn this through my own personal story. My own father, on his deathbed, made me and my family promise that we would bury him in Israel. Throughout his horrific, 18-month battle with cancer, he would insist that we make him this promise, and it was the last few words he uttered as we were weeping by his bedside that early evening in February, 1988.

Another look at the Hebron Peace House

For years after we buried him in Israel, I kept coming back every year for his memorial, though I had no real prior connection to my Jewish roots or tradition, or for that matter, the state of Israel. There were times when frankly I had no idea what I was doing there, or why he made this request. I asked myself whether all the trouble was even necessary - getting there, arranging for a memorial lunch or dinner, finding people to say Kaddish by his gravesite. Was I being a little nutty? After all, I had never been there with him while he was alive. Nevertheless, I kept coming back year after year, first as a bachelor, and then later as a husband, and now as a father.

One Shabbat, many years after the very first trip, I was sitting in our little synagogue in Beverly Hills, and my rabbi gave a most beautiful lesson on the chapter Vayehi. He brought my attention to this beautiful narrative, and all of a sudden, everything became clear to me. Tears rolled down my cheeks. For the first time, I understood my late father's request. For the first time, I realized how much of an impact those trips to Israel had not only over my life, but over that of all my family.

I cannot tell you enough about all the profound experiences I had during these yearly trips. I cannot even begin to think of my life today without these visits. My whole family has found a purpose bigger than ourselves because of the experiences that we were blessed to have in Israel. We have grown to love the people and the land.

ON ONE such visit last year, an old friend took me and a few of my friends from Los Angeles to Beit Hashalom. We met the families who lived there and spoke to their leader, a lady who had moved to Israel from England. She had been living in Israel for many years and when the house was bought, decided to move in with her husband and many children. My friends and I asked her many questions to try and understand how she could be as brave as she was to live there. She was a sensible, well-educated, and articulate woman in her thirties. She explained that if it was not safe for her to live in her home in Hebron because of the dangers facing her, then it was just as unsafe for anyone to live in Israel because of the dangers facing it.

She made a compelling argument that Jews should have a moral and ethical right to live anywhere in Israel, and for that matter anywhere in the world without being persecuted.

The idea that Hebron or any other area must be devoid of Jews should be antithetical to modern-day Jewish thinking, she said. After all, this is what Hitler tried to achieve with his Judenrein concept - cleansing Europe and the world of all its Jews.

Two weeks ago, this woman and the other families living with her in The Peace House were dragged out of their homes by the Israeli government. Ironically, contrary to conventional knowledge, the courts did NOT order the evacuation of The Peace House. They left it in the hands of the government to decide what to do until the legalities of the case were fully determined. Sadly, the corrupt Olmert/Livni/Barrak government chose the most divisive and provocative option.

While these Jews were being expelled, Israel continues to have its southern cities bombed with rockets since the expulsion of the Jews of Gush Katif, Iran persists on its nuclear agenda, and Hizbullah and Hamas continue to arm themselves to the teeth. Episodes like The Peace House expulsion are a deliberate distraction from the real issues and threats which Israel faces.

IT IS true that some of the actions of a few hot-headed Jews have crossed the line, and while I might understand their frustrations and pain, I do not condone those actions. But the acts of a handful of hotheads should not poison attitudes towards the folks of Hebron Peace House and all of the 300,000 Jews living in Judea and Samaria, who stand on the frontlines with great sacrifice. Neither should their actions obscure this fact: Just like Arabs have the right to live in Israel among a Jewish majority, Jews should have the right to live in any area they please, even if those areas have an Arab majority.

It is not my intention to offend anyone who does not share this perspective. We all know how diverse Jewish opinion can be, and this diversity is one of our strengths. My intention here is to implore all of us to show a little sensitivity and balance before making loud and sweeping condemnations of our fellow Jews.

Another look at the Hebron Peace House

Ultimately, if we can succeed in being sensitive toward each other, we can find our commonalities on our own, rather than have them forced on us by other peoples with evil agendas. This was our fate for 2,000 years before the creation of the state of Israel. It must not be allowed to remain our fate moving forward.

Graphic

Photo: YOUNG SUPPORTERS of the Hebron Peace House settlers face riot police. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

It's all about leverage

The International Herald Tribune

June 2, 2008 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 7

Length: 794 words

Byline: Thomas L. Friedman - The New York Times Media Group

Body

Barack Obama is getting painfully close to tying himself in knots with all his explanations of the conditions under which he would unconditionally talk with America's foes, like Iran. His latest clarification was that there is a difference between "preparations" and "preconditions" for negotiations with bad guys. Such word games do not inspire confidence, and they play right into the arms of his critics. The last place he wants to look uncertain is on national security.

The fact is, Obama was right to say that he would talk with any foe, if it would advance U.S. interests. The Bush team negotiated with Libya to give up its nuclear program, even after Libya had accepted responsibility for blowing up Americans on Pan Am Flight 103. Those negotiations succeeded, though, not because Bush was better "prepared," but because, at the time, shortly after the invasion of Iraq, Bush had leverage. Iraq had yet to fall apart.

Obama would do himself a big favor by shifting his focus from the list of enemy leaders he would talk with to the list of things he would do as president to generate more leverage for America, so no matter who we have to talk with the advantage will be on our side of the table. That's what matters.

Bush was also right: Talking with Iran today would be tantamount to appeasement - but that's because the Bush team has so squandered U.S. power and credibility, and has failed to put in place any effective energy policy, that negotiating with Iran could only end up with us on the short end. We don't have the leverage - the allies, the alternative energy, the unity at home, the credible threat of force - to advance our interests diplomatically today.

As I have argued before: When you have leverage, talk. When you don't have leverage, get some. Then talk.

Right now Iran & Friends - ***Hezbollah***, Hamas and Syria - have a strategy that has produced leverage for them, and the next U.S. president is going to have to think afresh how to counter it. The "Iran & Friends" strategy is built on five principles:

Principle No. 1: Always seek "control without responsibility." In Lebanon, Gaza and Iraq, Iran & Friends have veto power over the politics, without being held fully responsible for the electricity.

America's allies, by contrast, tend to have "responsibility without control."

Principle No. 2: Always insist on being able to both run for political office and bear arms. In Lebanon, Gaza and Iraq, America's opponents are both in the government and have their own militias.

It's all about leverage

Principle No. 3: Use suicide bombing and targeted assassinations against any opponents who get in your way. One suicide attack on a major official in Iraq can neutralize superior U.S. power.

Principle No. 4: Use the Internet as a free command and control system for raising money, recruiting and operations.

Principle No. 5: Cast yourself as the "resistance" to Israel and America, so any opposition to you is equal to support for Israel and America and so no matter how badly you are defeated the mere fact that you "resisted" means you didn't really lose.

Do the pro-American Arab moderates have a counterstrategy with leverage? I just got the new book, "The Arab Center," by Marwan Muasher, the former foreign minister of Jordan. Retired Arab statesmen don't often write books about their time in office, but Muasher has, and his argument is a powerful one: Arab moderates have been on the defensive because they have been "one-dimensional moderates," focused only on moderate proposals for making peace with Israel, while ignoring other issues important to Arab citizens: good governance, political reform, economic well-being, women's rights and religious and cultural diversity.

"For the Arab moderates to have credibility, they have to assume more responsibility," says Muasher. America could help by delivering on the Arab moderates' main issue - a Palestinian-Israeli peace deal.

But, ultimately, he said, if the Arab center is to shape the future and rid "itself of the image its opponents paint of an apologist for the West or a compromiser of Arab rights," it will have to meet the challenge of building "a robust, diverse, tolerant, democratic and prosperous Arab society."

There has been some promising moderate push back against extremists in Iraq, Lebanon and the West Bank lately. It's definitely worth watching, but is still very frail. America's leverage will be limited as long as our key allies do not have a strategy, with weight, to counter the hard-liners. Here's hoping that once the primary silly season is over, the McCain and Obama camps will stop jousting over whether to talk with our enemies - which we must - and will start focusing instead about how we and our friends get more chips to bargain with - which we lack.

Load-Date: June 4, 2008

No deputy for Brown after he decides to fly solo as PM

The Scotsman
June 29, 2007, Friday
1 Edition

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Section: Pg. 16

Length: 783 words

Byline: James Kirkup political editor

Body

GORDON Brown yesterday stamped his personal authority on the government, appointing close allies to key Cabinet roles and signalling he will rule without a deputy prime minister.

All but two of the senior posts changed hands, with Alistair Darling replacing Mr Brown as Chancellor.

Margaret Beckett was sacked to make way for David Miliband 41, who became Britain's youngest Foreign Secretary for three decades.

Jack Straw was appointed Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor, with responsibility for Mr Brown's constitutional reform programme. But despite speculation, Mr Straw did not get the title of deputy prime minister, left vacant by John Prescott.

"The Prime Minister will give a strong lead to the government and he has decided not to have a deputy," Mr Brown's spokesman said as he announced yesterday's new line-up.

The biggest surprise in the reshuffle was the appointment of Jacqui Smith as Britain's first **female** Home Secretary, a big step up from her previous job as Labour's chief whip in the House of Commons.

Despite that appointment, Mr Brown came under fire from equality groups as the number of **women** with full Cabinet seats fell from eight to five.

Katherine Rake, director of the Fawcett Society, said she was "disappointed that the number of **women** in Cabinet has almost halved".

Sensitive to such criticism, Mr Brown announced that a number of **female** ministers will have the right to attend Cabinet meetings even if they are not full members: Tessa Jowell, demoted from Culture Secretary to become Olympics minister, Yvette Cooper, the housing minister, and Baroness Scotland, the new Attorney General.

Mr Brown also retained some key supporters of Mr Blair, including John Hutton, who is to run a new business and innovation department. Young Blairites including James Purnell (Culture Secretary) and Andy Burnham (Treasury Secretary) also step up.

No deputy for Brown after he decides to fly solo as PM

Fuelling Westminster speculation about defections to Mr Brown's government, the Prime Minister yesterday appointed Shaun Woodward as Northern Ireland Secretary. Mr Woodward was a Conservative until he crossed the floor in 1999.

Significantly, Mr Brown appointed John Denham to the Cabinet, running a new ministry of innovation, universities and skills. Mr Denham, once a fast-rising member of Tony Blair's government, quit in 2003 in protest at the invasion of Iraq.

Also joining the government is Mark Malloch-Brown, the former United Nations deputy secretary-general, who has been made a peer and given a Foreign Office role focussing on Africa and Asia. At the UN, Lord Malloch-Brown said Mr Blair and George W Bush, the US president, had forfeited their claim to leadership in the Middle East through the conduct of the Iraq war.

The new Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, has also been critical of some aspects of foreign policy under Mr Blair. Last year, he openly questioned the decision to support Israel in its attacks on Hezbollah in south Lebanon. And friends say he is privately doubtful about the conduct of the Iraq war.

With many Labour MPs expecting Mr Brown to move quickly to withdraw British troops from Iraq, there was inevitable speculation that the new Cabinet line-up presages a shift in foreign policy.

But Downing Street last night insisted that Mr Brown remains committed to close relations with the US and the Bush administration.

"He believes very strongly in the importance of the relationship with the US and the importance of the relationship with the president of the US," a spokesman said.

Perhaps reflecting Mr Brown's political sensitivities about nationality issues, there are fewer Scots in his Cabinet than in Mr Blair's. John Reid, who quit as Home Secretary, and Lord Falconer, sacked as Justice Secretary, were both replaced by English MPs.

But several prized jobs went to the remaining Scots.

Mr Darling, an Edinburgh lawyer, inherits Mr Brown's old department, although he is unlikely to be as high-profile a Chancellor as his predecessor. Underlining Mr Brown's continued influence on his old stronghold, the Downing Street Delivery Unit - an elite group of officials whose job is to ensure the Prime Minister's will is imposed on Whitehall - will move to the Treasury, reporting to both Mr Brown and Mr Darling.

Douglas Alexander, one of Mr Brown's most trusted lieutenants, is promoted to take on the Department for International Development, with new power over trade policy.

Des Browne remains as Defence Secretary, but takes over the part-time Scottish Secretary's job from Mr Alexander.

Within hours of his appointment, Mr Browne telephoned Alex Salmond, the First Minister, to discuss relations between Westminster and Holyrood.

See <http://epages.the.loop/2007/06/29/TS.pdf> for Faces at Cabinet table

Load-Date: June 29, 2007

Reviews

Herald Sun (Australia)

July 21, 2007 Saturday

FIRST Edition

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Section: WEEKEND; Pg. W26

Length: 754 words

Byline: Loretta Hall, Dave Bullard, Paul Johnson, John Hamilton, Rebecca Green, Kit Galer

Body

THE GYPSY TEAROOM

by Nicky Pellegrino

Hachette Livre, rrp. \$32.95

ISBN 9780752873626

READERS are transported to a south Italian seaside village, then are distracted from the meandering plot by the book's many food references. Peppered with morsels about meals, recipes and market produce, The Gypsy Tearoom will appeal to foodie romantics who are looking for an easy read with a little intrigue. The atmospheric novel is about a young, naive widow who searches for happiness in a village full of narrow-minded, superstitious residents. L.H.

In a word: appetising

WIZARD OF THE CROW

by Ngugi wa Thiong'o

Random House, rrp. \$27.95

ISBN 9780099502685

THE despotic second Ruler of the Free Republic of Aburiria wishes to build a modern Tower of Babel stretching to the very gates of Heaven. But standing in its way are fawning ministers, rubber-snake-wielding revolutionaries and never-ending queues. The great, boiling, three-legged cooking pot that is African politics is supremely difficult to get a grip on, but former Kenyan political prisoner Ngugi wa Thiong'o does so by creating a fable that leaves you unsure whether to laugh or cry. D.B.

In a word: brilliant

STRIKE BACK

Reviews

by Chris Ryan

Random House, rrp. \$32.95

ISBN 9781844135479

ANOTHER fast-paced thriller from Chris Ryan, who writes some of the best beach-holiday books around. This time the plot concerns a TV news reporter who's kidnapped by Hezbollah. Our hero, John Porter, thinks he can get to the man behind it . . . but the former SAS trooper is living the life of a bum on the streets of London and his credibility is zero. Ryan can still write a gripping novel -- this is his 23rd -- but he is in danger of losing the realism that has been one of his strengths. D.B.

In a word: enjoyable

BLACK MAN

by Richard Morgan

Hachette Livre, rrp. \$32.95

ISBN 9780575077676

GENE manipulation is the cornerstone of this thriller set 200 years from now. Males were enhanced to fight wars but what happens to these soldiers, called 13s, when the wars are over? They go to Mars, are penned in reserves on Earth, or, in Carl Marsalis's case, become hunters of rogues of their own kind. When a 13 returns from Mars and goes on a killing spree, Marsalis is called in to find the man. The prejudice, violence and love he finds make his world no different from today's. P.J.

In a word: thrilling

HMAS TOBRUK: WARSHIP

FOR EVERY CRISIS

by Ken Doolan

Grinkle Press, rrp. \$33 (available through www.grinklepress.com)

ISBN 0980282101

HMAS Tobruk is undoubtedly the most durable warship in the Royal Australian Navy, and perhaps its best known. It is our first and only amphibious heavy-lift ship. For 25 years now it has been the large grey shadow that cruises into every major defence crisis -- Fiji, Bougainville, East Timor, Iraq . . . a long and continuing roll call of honourable service. Author Ken Doolan was Tobruk's first commanding officer. J.H.

In a word: salty

PRETTY LITTLE LIARS

by Sara Shepard

Hachette Livre, rrp. \$19.95

ISBN 9780751538359

IF I had a teenage daughter I'd buy her this book. It has strong, interesting female characters and a great plot. Alison, 13, disappears and her friends fall out among themselves. Fast forward three years and Ali is still missing, but someone is sending her strange texts from her old friends that hint at a dark secret they share. There is a

Reviews

confusing number of characters and an incomplete ending (obviously, there's going to be a sequel) but Pretty Little Liars is sexy, sassy, modern and very readable. R.G.

In a word: spirited

JUST ONE MORE THING

by Peter Falk

Random House, rrp. \$35

ISBN 9780091796365

JUST one more thing . . . why now? "Just one more thing" was a catchphrase of the rumpled Lieutenant Columbo, who wandered the crime spots of Los Angeles wearing an old mackintosh and an air of perpetual confusion. The Emmy-winning Columbo series turned in its badge in the late 1970s. You do wonder why it has taken until the actor's 80th year to tell these anecdotes about Brando, Sinatra, Jason Robards and the like. Fairly standard Hollywood stuff. K.G.

In a word: predictable

DALEK I LOVED YOU

by Nick Griffiths

Hachette Livre, rrp.\$29.95

ISBN 9780575079403

UNLIKE even the earliest series of Star Trek, the BBC's ever-changing Dr Who has always been from a backward planet. Yet there are those who remember Saturday evenings as kids being scared to death by the Daleks. One of these is Nick Griffiths, who uses the Time Lord's comings and goings as a backdrop to tell what it was like growing up in the south of England in the 1970s. K.G.

In a word: exterminate

Load-Date: July 20, 2007

Hamas and Israel are fighting under same old Gaza rules

The Salt Lake Tribune

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Columnists

Length: 823 words

Byline: The Salt Lake Tribune

Body

The Israelis just struck back hard at Hamas in Gaza. In response, the United Nations, the European Union and the Arab world (at least publicly) expressed their anger at the killing of over 300 Palestinians, most of whom were terrorists and Hamas officials.

For several prior weeks, Hamas terrorists had been daily launching rockets into Israeli towns that border Gaza. The recent volleys of missiles had insidiously become more frequent -- up to 80 a day -- and the payloads larger. Iranian-backed Hezbollah terrorists were reportedly supplying their own training and expertise.

These terrorists point to the Lebanon war of 2006 as the proper template for provoking an Israeli counter-response that will bog down the Israeli Defense Forces in the streets of urban Gaza and ensure that Palestinian civilians are harmed on global television.

Watching both this week's war and the world's predictable reaction to it, we can recall the Gaza rules. Most are reflections of our postmodern age, and completely at odds with the past protocols of war.

First is the now-familiar Middle East doctrine of proportionality. Legitimate military action is strangely defined by the relative strength of the combatants. World opinion more vehemently condemns Israel's countermeasures, apparently because its rockets are far more accurate and deadly than previous Hamas barrages that are poorly targeted and thus not so lethal.

If America had accepted such rules in, say, World War II, then by late 1944 we, not the Axis, would have been the culpable party, since by then once-aggressive German, Italian and Japanese forces were increasingly on the defensive and far less lethal than the Allies.

Second, intent in this war no longer matters. Every Hamas unguided rocket is launched in hopes of hitting an Israeli home and killing men, women and children. Every guided Israeli air-launched missile is targeted at Hamas operatives, who deliberately work in the closest vicinity to women and children.

Killing Palestinian civilians is incidental to Israeli military operations and proves counterproductive to its objectives. Blowing up Israeli non-combatants is the aim of Hamas' barrages: the more children, aged and women who die, the more it expects political concessions from Tel Aviv.

By this logic, the 1999 American bombing of Belgrade -- aimed at stopping the genocide of Slobodan Milosevic -- was, because of collateral damage, the moral equivalent of the carefully planned Serbian massacres of Muslim civilians at Srebrenica in 1995.

Hamas and Israel are fighting under same old Gaza rules

Third, culpability is irrelevant. The "truce" between Israel and Hamas was broken once Hamas got its hands on new stockpiles of longer-range mobile rockets -- weapons that are intended to go over Israel's border walls.

Yet, according to the Gaza rules, both sides always deserve equal blame. Indeed, this weird war mimics the politically correct, zero-tolerance policies of our public schools, where both the bully and his victim are suspended once physical violence occurs.

According to such morally equivalent reasoning, World War II was only a tragedy, not a result of German aggression. Once the dead mounted up, it mattered little what were the catalysts of the outbreak of fighting.

Fourth, with instantaneous streaming video from the impact sites in Gaza, context becomes meaningless. Our attention is glued to the violence of the last hour, not that of the last month that incited the war.

Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 to great expectations that the Palestinians there would combine their new autonomy, some existing infrastructure left behind by the Israelis, Middle East oil money and American pressure for free and open elections to craft a peaceful, prosperous democracy.

The world hoped that Gaza might thrive first, and then later adjudicate its ongoing disputes with Israel through diplomacy. Instead, the withdrawal was seen not as a welcome Israeli concession, but as a sign of newfound Jewish weakness -- and that the intifada tactics that had liberated Gaza could be amplified into a new war to end the Zionist entity itself.

Fifth and finally, victimization is crucial. Hamas daily sends barrages into Israel, as its hooded thugs thump their chests and brag of their radical Islamic militancy. But when the payback comes, suddenly warriors are transmogrified into weeping victims, posing teary-eyed for the news camera as they deplore "genocide" and "the Palestinian Holocaust." At least the Japanese militarists did not cry out to the League of Nations for help once mean Marines landed on Iwo Jima.

By now, these Gaza asymmetrical rules are old hat. We know why they persist -- worldwide fear of Islamic terrorism, easy anti-Westernism, the old anti-semitism, and global strategic calculations about Middle East oil -- but it still doesn't make them right.

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Graphic

Victor Davis Hanson, photographed for Tribune Media Services, on 09.10.04. Photo by Glenn Kaupert.

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

His father's house

The Jerusalem Post

February 29, 2008 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 8

Length: 1232 words

Byline: BARBARA SOFER

Highlight: The Human Spirit

Body

In 1516, when the Jews of Venice had to move into the old foundry district - ghetto in Venetian - their brethren in Fez, Morocco, had already been living in the cramped old salt market for more than 250 years. Just as the name "ghetto" stuck for Jewish quarters in Europe, so mellah, from the word for salt, became the generic name for Jewish quarters in Moroccan cities.

Mellah sounds better than ghetto, but shared many of the features: crowding, distinctive hats, restrictions on building and heavy taxes. There were times when Moroccan Jews had to go barefoot outside the mellah or were obliged to wear uncomfortable footwear. Trouble alternated with periods of relatively tranquil relationships in which the People of the Book enjoyed a protected status in Islam and were allowed to practice Judaism as long as they paid the steep tax, known as jizya.

I've come on a maiden trip to Morocco with 41 American teenagers, 18-year old graduates of city high schools, participants in the Young Judeaea Year Course. As part of this new Gap Year program in Israel, they are visiting five Diaspora countries that were significant in the history of Zionism. Frankly, I'm expecting them to be more rambunctious. But five months of studying and volunteering in tough neighborhoods in Israel have matured them. The trips to England, France and the death camps of Poland have sobered them. They're sensitive to the paradoxes in the history and present.

On one hand, there's a campaign to name the late Moroccan King Muhammad V as a righteous gentile. On the other, there are clear signs of persecution. The locals say life is wonderful for the Jews in this Muslim country, but wherever these American Jewish youngsters go, security is heavy (stepped up even more because of the killing of **Hizbullah** leader Imad Mughniyeh and threats against Israelis and Americans).

Observant Jews they meet are reluctant to wear kippot. Over the last half year, the frame of reference of these American kids has changed. They compare Jewish life in Morocco to Israel, not to Seattle or Highland Park. "The community members managed to live here for generations, to survive and some even to prosper," says Shayna Moliver, from Connecticut, when visiting the Fez cemetery, where famous Jews are buried among common folk. "Fortunately, when things got tough, they had Israel to go to."

AMONG THOSE shepherding the youngsters is Moshik Toledano. A sabra, Moshik can trace his family history back 500 years, since his ancestors left Toledo, Spain, to escape the Inquisition and remain Jewish. His branch of this illustrious family moved first to Salonika, then to Fez, and finally in the 17th century, when Sultan Moulay Ismail built a new imperial capital, to Meknes. The trade city of Meknes drew Jews, and became a yeshiva town.

His father's house

In the 1940s a match was made between Moshik's paternal grandmother Zohara Calfon, then 17, with his grandfather Eliahu Toledano, then 28. The spoiled youngest daughter of a more affluent if less distinguished family, Zohara insisted that her parents send donkey-loads of treats after she moved in with the Toledanos.

Moshik's father Ya'acov, the oldest of six children, became an activist in the underground Zionist movement and pressed his parents to make aliya. After a week-long celebration of Ya'acov's bar mitzva in 1955, the family indeed moved to Israel.

At a youth movement gathering Ya'acov met his China-born Ashkenazi future wife. He went on to become the mayor of Migdal Ha'emek.

Moshik inherited his father's dark-eyed Moroccan looks and his rebellious streak. Only under duress did he agree to his parents' demands that he have a bar mitzva. Moshik hasn't been called up to the Torah since.

EARLY FRIDAY morning we arrive in Meknes. In front of a no longer functioning Jewish school we meet a slim Moroccan man named Faoud Dekkaki and follow him through the labyrinth of alleys into the heart of the mellah. A matron, her hair modestly covered with a scarf, carries unbaked bread to the old communal oven along the winding alleys of the cinnamon, rosewater and cumin-scented market, sidestepping donkeys carrying heavy loads. It is as if nothing has changed, except that the Jews are gone.

Faoud Dekkaki is a manufacturer of decorative fireplace bellows. He welcomes us across the threshold of his home, and voila we are inside Moshik's grandparents' home. The large living room is the now-closed-in patio where relatives and friends feted the bar mitzva of Ya'acov Toledano for six nights before the family left Morocco.

Moshik tells the students his story. Then he phones his dad in Israel to find his father's room. Up some stairs, the reddish floor and wall tiles are still in place. Moshik's usual unflappable manner changes; he purses his lips, his face lines with emotion. This is where his father's Zionist dreams were born deep inside the mellah of Meknes.

On the phone, Ya'acov Toledano is thrilled at having his sabra son in the house that sheltered Toledanos for 200 years. We see the rest of the house, where the Toledanos kept their livestock, the well right in the kitchen from which water is still drawn. Faoud's wife and sister serve sweet mint tea and homemade bread.

Moshik and Fouad exchange gifts. Fouad gets a Koran encased in a mother-of-pearl box from Jerusalem. Moshik receives a giant fireplace bellows.

THE TEENS know Moshik and are spellbound by the Toledano story. Later, family stories pour out of them. A blue-eyed girl named Alexandra explains how she came to be born in Chile, the grandchild of someone escaping Hitler in Italy who found refuge and an Argentina-born wife in the Jewish community there. Now she lives in Hawaii.

Several live in Puerto Rico, their families refugees first from Europe and then Cuba, leaving that safe haven after Castro came to power. A girl from Florida says her father first lived in Iran.

Afterward, Moshik brushes off my question about the visit impacting him. "It was very emotional, but nothing changed for me," he says. "I was in a good place before visiting my father's home and I'm in a good place now."

Our group arrives in Casablanca, the last active Jewish community in Morocco, for Shabbat. At services in the Neveh Shalom synagogue, each of the young men in our group is offered a chance to be called up to the Torah. Moshik, too. Someone has told the men his story.

From the women's section above, I wonder what he will do. He rises and chants the blessings: You have chosen us from all the people of the earth and granted us the Torah. The gabbai who has heard his pedigree showers him with good wishes.

I whisper to the Moroccan woman sitting next to me in the upstairs balcony that Moshik is a genuine Toledano from Meknes.

His father's house

Her eyes open wide. "I, too, am a Toledano from Meknes." She knew Eliahu and Zohara. Her name is also Zohara. After services she hurries to meet her cousin from Jerusalem.

FORTY COMELY Moroccan Jewish 12th graders join the 41 Young Judaeans for lunch. In a jumble of French, Spanish, Hebrew and English the teenagers manage to make themselves understood. There's a lot of non-verbal communication, and soon it's hard to tell who is who. The perky conversation is mainly about the future - what they want to study, where they want to live, when they're spending time in Israel. I'm feeling good, thinking how much better it is to plan where you are going when you know from whence you have come.

Graphic

Photo: View of the Grand Rue du Mellah circa 1900 (Credit: Colette Apelian)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

In the dorms, an odd pairing leads to hopes for peace

University Wire

September 5, 2007 Wednesday

Copyright 2007 Washington Square News via U-Wire

Section: COLUMN

Length: 757 words

Byline: By Josh Martin, Washington Square News; **SOURCE:** NYU

Dateline: NEW YORK

Body

It's rare to find a cause worth fighting for, but rarer still when you find yourself living with such a cause in a dorm room. It took me some time to realize that it was fate -- not a conniving New York University housing employee -- that had placed such an opportunity in my lap last summer, as I read my new roommate's name.

Shaking my head in disbelief, I tried to imagine how I, a Jewish man recently returned from combat service in the Israel Defense Forces, could coexist with the personality behind the name "Mohammad Rustom," an Arab Muslim from Lebanon, as it turned out -- the same country that my former comrades were busy invading in the war between Israel and Hezbollah. It was hard to miss the Lebanese flag that adorned his Facebook profile.

Imagine this comic premise: It's July of 2006, and an Israeli soldier and a Lebanese Muslim discover that they will be roommates for the coming year in New York City as a war rages around them.

This being the Facebook age, I assumed that Mohammad had already found out about my army service. I resolved to call him to break the ice. Not knowing what to say about the mounting civilian death toll in Lebanon, I managed a delicate, "I think in the end we'll find out that we're both a lot closer to this situation than most people." And I left it at that.

That the fighting had ceased by the time we both arrived at NYU in August hardly relieved the tension in the room. The first few weeks were awkward to an extreme, with each of us vigilantly avoiding the pink elephant that dominated our tiny space.

It took several months for relations to normalize, but I think we both were grateful when they did. Mohammad turned out to be a model citizen -- a tireless worker, brilliant student and spirited entrepreneur.

But most striking to me was his piety. I have known observant individuals of many religions, but rarely have I encountered someone of such unwavering commitment to his faith. Having studied all night for an accounting midterm, pausing only to attend an IRHC board meeting, Mohammad would finally allow himself to rest at 5 a.m. -- only to spring out of bed an hour later for the Fajr (dawn) prayer. As accustomed to the Adhan (Muslim call to prayer) as I had become during my military service in Jenin and Hebron, it is Mohammad's laptop's rendition of it that will remain in my mind forever.

In the dorms, an odd pairing leads to hopes for peace

The differences between us were immense, perhaps prohibitively so. He is a social conservative, an observant Muslim and morally opposed to drinking or debauchery of any kind. I, on the other hand, am a liberal, secular Jew who enjoys a stiff drink every once in a while.

When I thought about our situation, I envisioned a dogfight -- each animal thrust into the ring by forces it can't control -- or at least a politically charged episode of "Survivor." And yet, as time went on, we learned how to cope with the weight of our differences.

First, we found one important similarity. We both love Italian food, in large quantities. I'm talking about the 11 servings of pasta that we gorged together one night in the fall, and then repeatedly afterward. In fact, during our first couple of weeks, we bonded strictly over Pizza Mercato's lunchtime two-slice special. But it was more than the taste that enticed us. Licking pizza grease off of our fingers was a way to ignore everything and share a laugh. It was a cholesterol-ridden escape from the titanic problems that dogged the world around us.

The unseen key to coexistence is a sense of humor. I would not have made it through this year without the jokes that Mohammad and I exchanged regularly on everything from women to politics. Laughter suggests comfort, a necessary factor in being able to deal with difficult issues that are larger than oneself. Barbs like Mohammad's accusations of "Israeli colonialist objectives" when my dirty laundry began to encroach upon the territory of his bed only enhanced our friendship.

The most important lesson from my year with Mohammad has little to do with either of us or how we came to appreciate and embrace each other as friends. Rather, as a microcosm, our perseverance illuminates the wider possibilities of coexistence between opposing groups around the world. If we can do it -- against all odds -- so can Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East, Sunnis and Shi'as in Baghdad, Indians and Pakistanis in Kashmir, and Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda. It may not be easy -- early morning prayers never are -- but in the end the experience is well worth it.

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Load-Date: September 5, 2007

Force and compromise put country back on even keel

The Times (London)

September 21, 2007, Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Saudi Arabia; Pg. 2

Length: 806 words

Byline: Richard Beeston, Diplomatic Editor

Body

Richard Beeston, Diplomatic Editor, examines how the kingdom is coping in turbulent times

WHEN King Abdullah ascended to the Saudi throne two years ago he inherited a country blessed by natural riches but cursed by its geographical location in the heart of the Middle East.

While the kingdom is witnessing an extraordinary oil boom, the country's leadership is acutely aware that it is passing through one of the most turbulent periods in the region's volatile history. Depending on who you ask, the future either promises economic growth, political reform and prosperity for all, or it heralds a widening sectarian conflict and the threat of a nuclear arms race.

Visiting Riyadh or Jedda, it is hard to imagine the pessimists will be proved right. Giant shopping malls and expensive new residential communities are mushrooming, luxury cars vie for space on the motorways and the country seems to be expanding at a phenomenal rate.

For a deeply conservative society there are also important social changes. **Women** may still be barred from driving or voting, but they are playing an increasingly important part in the economy. There are modest democratic experiments under way in local government. The media, once heavily restricted, is today far more open and scores of satellite television channels are available, including sev-eral 24-hour Arab news stations.

Arguably the country's greatest achievement of the past four years has been in neutralising the threat posed by home-grown terrorists, inspired by Osama bin Laden.

Four years ago terrorists allied to al-Qaeda launched a wave of suicide bombing attacks and assassinations, killing scores of Saudi and foreign civilians. The campaign became so fierce that at one point thousands of Western workers fled Saudi Arabia and companies such as British Airways severed their ties with the kingdom.

Normal life has resumed. The success is partly due to the efforts of the security services but also to an initiative to re-educate young men lured into militant Islam to help them to return to society.

But with the removal of one threat has come another. King Abdullah has correctly calculated that the real challenge today lies beyond the kingdom's borders in Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran. Discarding Saudi Arabia's traditionally cautious approach to foreign policy, which for years consisted of paying off potential enemies, the 84-year-old monarch has taken centre stage in the region's attempts to resolve its differences.

Force and compromise put country back on even keel

He hosted an Arab League Summit meeting where a Saudi peace plan, offering Israeli recognition in return for the creation of a Palestinian state on the territories captured during the 1967 Six-Day War, was agreed by all 22 member states.

America is pressing Saudi Arabia to attend a Middle East peace conference in November, where for the first time there are prospects that Saudi and Israeli representatives will face one another across the negotiating table. While efforts to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will certainly ease tensions in the region, another crisis threatens even more disruption.

As a key player in the Arab world, Saudi Arabia and its allies in the Gulf, Egypt and Jordan, have become increasingly concerned about what they see as the growing influence of Iran.

The challenge comes not only from Tehran's nuclear ambitions, which many suspect are a cover for building an atomic weapon, but also from its growing influence over fellow Shia Muslims in the Arab world. There are very well-founded fears that Iran will emerge as the big winner from the removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

In the chaotic aftermath of the invasion Iranian-backed Shia political groups and militias have established themselves as the de facto power from Baghdad in the north down to Basra in the south. The Iranians have also been active in Lebanon, where they fund, train and arm Hezbollah, the Shia militia that has become the most powerful military force in the country and sits in opposition to the Sunni Muslim parties allied to Riyadh.

For Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states these moves are more than simply foreign policy problems. They affect the kingdom's interests directly. Shia Muslims make up a sizeable minority in Saudi Arabia's oil-rich eastern provinces, a majority in Bahrain and a large community in Kuwait.

Saudi Arabia has responded to the challenge with force and compromise. Earlier this year it hosted a high-level meeting with Iran's leadership in the hopes of heading off sectarian strife between Shia and Sunni.

Meanwhile Saudi Arabia is updating its defence forces and has embarked with other Gulf nations on a plan to acquire nuclear technology of its own. Riyadh also openly discussed supporting Sunni groups in Iraq to balance the Shia threat.

In a tough neighbourhood, Saudi Arabians have calculated it is better to be safe than sorry.

Load-Date: September 21, 2007

Antisemitic Incidents Rise in France as Worry Increases About Ethnic Divisions

The Forward

January 30, 2009

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Section: News; Pg. 3

Length: 778 words

Body

For two weekends in a row, as Israel's operation in Gaza raged, the flags of Hezbollah and Hamas flew in street demonstrations in Paris and other French cities.

During the recent violence, antisemitic incidents rose to levels that have not been seen in France since the second Intifadah in 2000 and again when Israel moved into the West Bank in 2002.

Yet, while Jews fretted over the increase in attacks several of them aimed at the Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic group many of the French saw something else: The marchers at pro-Palestinian rallies were mostly Muslims, and those at pro-Israel demonstrations were mostly Jews.

France is a deeply secular country, where the overarching national identity is supposed to subdue ethnic and religious affiliations. The French Republican model is egalitarian, and it embraces a strict separation of church and state. But with the Gaza war, the specter of communitarianism the term the French use to describe strong ethnic or religious identification is seen by many as a bigger threat to the national fabric than the rise in antisemitic attacks.

What the average Frenchmen sees is that a faraway conflict is creating communitarianism here, said Madani Cheurfa, an expert with the center for research in political science in Paris. And while the authorities are careful to tamp down its violent expressions, they don't know how to deal with it on a broader level. They celebrate diversity, but they don't know how to handle it.

France has the largest Jewish and Muslim communities in Europe. Moreover, its Muslims are mostly Arab, in contrast to Britain, where most hail from the Indian subcontinent.

While the previous wave of antisemitic incidents at the beginning of the second Intifada sparked criticism among Jews over the lack of reaction by French authorities, Jewish community leaders this time hailed the prompt and firm reaction by the government of French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

But the current incidents have prompted soul-searching about the future of a Republican model that is already under assault by a lagging social and economic integration of the latest wave of mostly African immigrants.

At the same time, the demonstrations revived concerns about the willingness of French Jews to support Israel, even during an operation that the French public largely sees as excessively brutal.

Antisemitic Incidents Rise in France as Worry Increases About Ethnic Divisions

Between the beginning of Israel's military action against Hamas on December 27, 2008, and the cease-fire on January 19, the number of antisemitic incidents reached 66, a tally that was recorded by the Jewish community and validated by the Interior Ministry. In all of 2007, 261 such attacks were recorded.

Several attacks around Paris were launched against Chabad targets. In addition to the firebombing of a synagogue in the Saint-Denis suburb of Paris, the car of a rabbi in the neighboring area of Aubervilliers was torched on the first day of the Israeli assault. The rabbi of a Chabad center in Vincennes, an eastern suburb of Paris, received a threatening letter January 12.

You have killed Palestinian children and women, we will do it here with your kids, the letter read in poor French, according to a copy provided to the Forward.

The rabbi, Joseph Taïeb, filed a complaint with the police, mostly because he wanted to show the letter's author that There is a response.

We need to make sure there is no crescendo and that there is a response, Taïeb said in an interview in his small office.

What's strange about this is this is a quiet area where there are few Muslims, and we don't have problems with anyone, he said.

Although most of the recent incidents involved attacks on Jews, there was one case in which young militants of the Jewish Defense League roughed up two teenagers of North African descent in Paris.

More broadly, while most mainstream commentators have little sympathy for Hamas, some have questioned the alignment of French Jewry on Israel. For instance, they have criticized the claim by Richard Prasquier, head of the Jewish umbrella organization CRIF, that 95% of French Jews supported Israel's actions.

Observers expect the number of antisemitic incidents to decline if the situation in the Middle East improves. But the lingering effects of the ethno-religious identification are expected to stay. They have already prompted a flurry of news articles about the dangers of France importing the conflict, the fear of communautarism, and the need to find ways not only to build bridges between Jews and Muslims, but also to consolidate the country's egalitarian Republican model.

Graphic

IMAGE: jac ques demarthonProtesters in Paris: Demonstrators gather outside the Opera Garnier on January 17 to protest Israel's military action against Hamas in Gaza.; /afp/gety images

Load-Date: February 2, 2009

The war in Iran we might need

University Wire

October 17, 2007 Wednesday

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Section: COLUMN

Length: 794 words

Byline: By Jason Snead, The BG News; **SOURCE:** Bowling Green State U.

Dateline: BOWLING GREEN, Ohio

Body

Several weeks ago the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was invited to Columbia University to speak to a lucky few students and faculty given the unique opportunity to participate in one of the most controversial diplomatic events of our time. While at Columbia he was lambasted by their President, who referred to him as a petty dictator and harshly criticized Ahmadinejad's record on free speech and civil rights. Some praised the action, breathing a collective sigh of relief that at least somebody today has the courage and character to tell a dictator how despicable and horrendous their actions and policies are. Others were deeply shocked and dismayed that the leader of a nation could be talked down to in such a demeaning way.

This latter group is a principled one, to say the least, who advocate wholeheartedly avoiding the drumbeat of war that grows louder each day. They wish to take on face value what Ahmadinejad says, worrying that to question his sincerity would be only to add fuel to the fire. They listen to his speeches and his comments, hear the words of a peace-loving man, and sleep each night content that Iran is no threat so long as such an eloquent leader is in charge. They hold out hope that diplomacy will always succeed, and argue that an Iranian nuclear weapon is hardly worth going to war over. Principled they may be, but unwilling to accept the hard truths of our world is what they are.

President Ahmadinejad has been in office for two years, catapulted there by an uncommon charisma and an equally uncommon gift for oratory. Coupled with these things is a calculating political sense, an ability to manipulate events in Ahmadinejad's favor. No doubt when he accepted the invitation to Columbia he realized no matter what happened it would only benefit him. If he were to be lambasted it would be a public relations victory in Iran, and it would be an opportunity to speak to the American people and show everybody that he is just such a nice guy. The sad thing about his plan is both parts seem to have worked, at least on some. Oratory seems able to accomplish anything, including wiping away the heinous crimes Ahmadinejad and his government have committed. Crackdowns in Iran have reached a new high. Thousands are routinely arrested for "grave crimes" against society, crimes such as wearing Western clothing or listening to Western music. For women, too-tight clothing is an invitation for police beatings. Even dancing at weddings with non-family members runs the risk of police intervention. Peaceful protesting, what nearly all consider to be a natural right in this country, is met with harsh force and arrests. Recently, five Iranian Americans visiting the country were imprisoned for no reason, and before that 12 British sailors were captured at gunpoint in international waters and forced to make humiliating confessions. Perhaps most disturbing of all is the attitude many have towards the increasingly convincing evidence that Iran is complicit in attacks on American soldiers in Iraq. At one point, if a nation conspired to murder American soldiers and citizens it would have been considered an act of war, but today these facts are dismissed far too easily.

The war in Iran we might need

Ahmadinejad himself routinely refers to the Holocaust, one of the most gruesome events in human history, as a fable meant to elicit sympathy for the Jewish people. He refers to Israel as a nation to be "wiped off the map." Following his visit to Columbia University, Ahmadinejad met to strengthen his ties with the equally cruel, and rabidly anti-American, Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chavez. And upon his return to Iran, Ahmadinejad denounced the West once more and refused to negotiate any further on his nation's nuclear ambitions.

Ahmadinejad is no fool, and knows if he can divide the West and pretend to care for diplomacy long enough, he can buy the time he needs to build his nuclear arsenal. We must therefore enter into any diplomatic initiative armed with incredulity and supplied with finite patience. We must demand Iran do more than talk; they must cease their nuclear program until it can be verified that weapons will never be produced. They must end their assistance to **Hezbollah** and to the insurgents in Iraq, and withdraw their military and intelligence officers, there to conduct attacks on Americans, as well. Until these conditions are met -- conditions that are supported by our European allies -- preparations for war must continue. We cannot, must not, allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon and become the preeminent regional power. Negotiations should continue for now in the hopes of achieving a peaceful solution, but we must be realistic and accept that a war with Iran may well be inevitable.

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Load-Date: October 17, 2007

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Auntie, how could you?

Guardian.com

July 19, 2007

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theguardian

Length: 1393 words

Highlight: Welcome to the Wrap.

Body

SECRETS, LIES AND BBC PHONE-INS

Publicly-funded Auntie has been deceiving viewers. How can the papers possibly resist?

"Whatever happened to honesty and accuracy?" laments the Times. "What possibly could have been in the minds of the producers of Liz Kershaw's show on the BBC's 6 Music station in 2005? "They announced a competition in which listeners were invited to phone in to try to win a prize. What made this programme idea unique in the history of broadcasting was that there was no way that listeners could win a prize, because all of the callers were members of the production team and their friends, pretending to take part in a competition."

Liz Kershaw's show was not the only one to have deceived listeners and viewers. Comic Relief, Sport Relief, the White Label programme on the World Service, TMI and Children in Need all faked the results of phone-in competitions, generally because production glitches or a lack of entrants made it impossible to choose a genuine winner in the time allowed. Injured Pudsey the Bear, the Children in Need mascot, appears on the front pages of the Mail, Mirror, Times and Sun, the very picture of innocent trust betrayed.

"Whose head should roll at the BBC? Have your say online," says the Telegraph, which is enjoying this. "Mark Thompson, director general? Mark Byford [deputy]? Peter Fincham, BBC1 controller? Jenny Abramsky, director of audio and music? Nigel Chapman, director of the World Service? Richard Deverell, controller of children's TV? Nobody?"

The journalism professor Tim Luckhurst, writing in the Mail, is unequivocal about the reason for the deceit: the BBC's "insatiable hunger for bigger audiences ... Desperate to secure the future of the universal licence fee, the BBC has gone downmarket in a bid to beat commercial competitors at their own game."

The Guardian agrees that the BBC is trying too hard to be "racy". "Almost from its inception, television has had an impulse to prettify. Cutaway shots, sequences of mundane events mocked up to fill space: so much is formulaic ... It is no longer enough for Alan Sugar to be shown in his Essex headquarters - he must star in a chrome and glass boardroom. Such storytelling is acceptable in gameshows, but what yesterday's reports from the BBC indicate is that it has spread further into other parts of output where the audience expects a degree of honesty rather than a spoonful of sugar." The ethics course that the BBC has promised to put 16,500 staff through will not address that, the paper says.

Auntie, how could you?

"It is one thing to hear hard-luck stories of individual researchers scrambling to find a winner for a phone-in competition - and resorting to making up the result. However shoddy, these are cock-ups, not conspiracies. Taken together, however, the handful of failures, including six blunders revealed yesterday, illustrate an attitude that the show must go on - even, in extremis, if that means lying."

The scandal plays into the Sun's hands: the paper has been grumbling about the unfairness of the licence fee for years, and the leader column lets rip. "The Beeb has long been living on borrowed time as the smug repository of leftie opinion, peddled with contempt for the very people who pay its way. It admits it is 'institutionally biased', sneering at those whose views fail to coincide with its liberal consensus - especially on Europe and immigration. It is time to clean out the stables, sack the complacent jobsworths and restore this bureaucratic juggernaut as a responsible national broadcaster. But it may already be too late."

The Independent, meanwhile, is more interested in the Sun's own institutional bias. Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show Tony Blair had three phone conversations with Rupert Murdoch, the head of News International, during the nine days preceding the Iraq invasion. "The day after two of the calls, the Sun launched vitriolic attacks on the French president Jacques Chirac. The government quoted him as saying he would 'never' support military action against Saddam Hussein, a claim hotly disputed by France."

* Believing what you see

* Times: Something is deeply wrong

* Mail: The shaming of the BBC

* Sun: They're bear faced cheats

* Independent: How Murdoch had a hotline to the PM

IRAQI INSURGENTS JOIN FORCES AGAINST US

Timothy Garton-Ash, quoting Fred Halliday, imagines the worst-case scenario in Iraq in the Guardian. "The revitalising of militant Islamism and enhancement of the international appeal of the al-Qaida brand; the eruption for the first time in modern history of internecine war between Sunni and Shia ... the alienation of most sectors of Turkish politics from the west, and the stimulation of authoritarian nationalism there; the strengthening of a nuclear-hungry Iran; and a new regional rivalry, pitting the Islamic Republic of Iran and its allies, including Syria, Hizbullah and Hamas, against Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan." Splitting Iraq into Kurdish, Sunni and Shia regions policed by America would be a "lesser evil", he says. But there is every sign that the US will begin a pullout next year. "Osama bin Laden's plan was to get the US to overreact and over-reach itself. With the invasion of Iraq, President Bush fell slap-bang into that trap."

Two reports appear to support Halliday's prediction of a Sunni-Shia war. One is the Guardian's interview with three leaders of Sunni insurgent groups who have agreed to form an alliance to drive the US out of Iraq. They want to distance themselves from both al-Qaida's suicide bombings aimed at civilians - which are themselves an attempt to divide Iraqis and foment civil war - and the Shia militia who have cooperated with the Iraqi government. The other is a Herald Tribune report that says the Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr "has re-emerged" with his own strategy. He has been wooing the Shia grassroots by providing services the government can no longer afford, including protection. "At the same time, the Mahdi army is not entirely under Sadr's control, and he publicly denounces the most notorious killers fighting in his name."

Meanwhile, the prospects of a change of strategy in the White House seem increasingly remote. "The President is in a very, very commanding position so long as he can maintain his veto-proof majority," Lee Hamilton, the Democratic co-chairman of the Iraq Study Group, tells the Times. "He is not going to pay any attention to the Democrats. He doesn't have to. The president still believes he can win this war. He said so last week. It is inconceivable that General Petraeus will say the surge has failed. So I think we're going to have a military stay-the-course strategy well into next year."

Auntie, how could you?

- * Timothy Garton Ash
- * Insurgents form political front
- * IHT: Iraqi cleric re-emerges, bolder than ever
- * Times: Stubborn president still has the power to stand firm over Iraq

JAIL FOR MOHAMMED CARTOON PROTESTERS

"British police go to hell," reads a placard held by three burka-clad women as a policewoman guards the Old Bailey. "OUTRAGEOUS," splashes the Express. "How these Muslims are repaying our hospitality." The scene was the sentencing of four men for inciting racial hatred during a 2005 demonstration against the Danish cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed.

GOLFERS 'TEED UP ON DRUGS'

Championship golfers are dabbling with steroids and creatine, according to the golfing veteran Gary Player. "I would say there's ten guys taking something," he said yesterday. "It's definitely not lower, but it might be a hell of a lot more." Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson and Nick Faldo all tell the paper the game is clean. "We've proven there's nothing out there we can take to enhance our performance," Faldo said.

- * Times: Carnoustie is rocked by doping allegations

SECOND-HAND AUSTEN FOR SALE

What happened when a frustrated author made minor changes to three Jane Austen novels and sent them to 18 publishers under the name Alison Laydee? As the papers gleefully report, only one, an editor at Jonathan Cape, identified the deception - and Penguin, Austen's publishers, described the chapters as "a really original and interesting read" in the rejection letter.

"Her writing was not universally acknowledged," says the Times drily.

- * The author and the Austen plot

SINCE THE PAPERS WENT TO PRESS

The home secretary, Jacqui Smith, admitted today that she smoked cannabis when she was at university.

Load-Date: July 19, 2007

Darkness falls on Gaza as Israel takes revenge for rocket attacks

The Times (London)

January 21, 2008, Monday

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; Pg. 31

Length: 827 words

Byline: James Hider, Ramallah and Azmi Keshawi in Gaza City

Body

* Fuel blockage forces only power plant to shut

* Mobile phones fall silent as reception fails

The lights went out on the Gaza Strip last night when the only electricity plant in the seaside territory closed down after Israel severed fuel supplies.

As the power failed 1,000 men, women and children held a candlelit procession in Gaza City to protest at the breakdown of their basic services. Some carried posters calling on the international community to come to their aid, others condemned the state of siege that they are living under.

"I appeal to Egypt to break the siege because our children and sick people are dying," Umm Raed, a 52-year-old housewife, said. Egypt has a border with Gaza but has mainly shown solidarity with Israel in enforcing an embargo on the Hamas-run territory.

As mobile phone repeaters ran out of power, mobile phones started to lose reception, plunging many areas into silence as well as blackness.

Unable to end the ceaseless volleys of rockets fired by Gaza hardliners into its southern towns and farms, Israel cut off diesel supplies to the strip, where 1.5 million Palestinians live, in an attempt to force its Islamist rulers to end the attacks.

The moderate Palestinian Prime Minister of the West Bank administration cautioned that Israel was doing nothing to fulfil its pledges to freeze Jewish settlement expansion and ease restrictions that have strangled the economy there too.

Officials in Hamas-run Gaza said that the cut in power threatened basic services and posed a health threat because councils were unlikely to be able to pump water, treat sewage, dispose of rubbish or cater for hospital laundry services. The hospitals in Gaza have emergency generators, but would have to curb other services.

Israel said that the Hamas rulers of Gaza - who are hostile to the existence of the Jewish state, and fought a bitter, brief war with the more moderate Fatah movement last year - should concentrate on ending the rocket fire and providing services.

Darkness falls on Gaza as Israel takes revenge for rocket attacks

As darkness fell last night, reports broke of the latest Israeli airstrike against militants firing rockets into Israel. Hamas officials said that at least one person was killed and one critically injured in the attack.

Aid groups denounced the blockade, which they said punishes civilians for the actions of militant groups. "The logic of this defies basic humanitarian standards," Christopher Gunness, a spokesman for the UN Relief and Works Agency, said.

Avi Dichter, the Israeli Public Security Minister, said that the town of Sderot, which is close to the Gaza border and has been hit by hundreds of rockets in recent weeks, was close to collapse.

"The Government must instruct the (Israeli army) to eliminate the rocket fire from Gaza entirely. These attacks need not be minimised or managed, but stopped completely, irrespective of the cost to the Palestinians," he told the Cabinet yesterday.

With the prospects in Gaza looking bleaker than ever, Salaam Fayyad, the moderate Prime Minister of the West Bank administration, said that Israel was failing in its pledge to freeze settlement expansion in the West Bank.

"The one thing that really matters the most to us is settlement expansion," he said. Mr Fayyad added that Israel had also failed to do anything to relax its system of security checkpoints and road closures in the West Bank and that it was threatening the recovery prospects offered by international donors who pledged more than \$7 billion (£ 3.6 billion) in aid.

Mr Fayyad, who leaves for London tonight to meet Gordon Brown, also admitted that he had feared the West Bank administration was about to fall to Hamas hardliners last summer, just as Gaza had. He said that the Palestinian Authority had made significant progress in rebuilding its security forces since the Gaza debacle, but more needed to be done.

In Jerusalem, Israeli ministers called for the assassination of Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the head of the Lebanese Shia militia **Hezbollah**, after he boasted yesterday that his forces possessed the body parts of Israeli soldiers left on the battlefield in the 2006 war, which he planned to exchange for prisoners. Yitzhak Cohen, of the Shas party, said: "Nasrallah is a madman and I don't understand why he's still breathing."

PRESSURE POINTS

- * Gaza uses 200 megawatts of electricity
- * The local power plant produces 65 megawatts
- * Israel supplies 60 per cent of this, and Egypt 8 per cent
- * Israel supplies the fuel oil for the Gaza power station
- * 2,300 people were allowed to leave Gaza into Egypt to attend the haj in 2007
- * Last November 1,813 truckloads of commercial and humanitarian supplies entered the Strip
- * Ninety-one out of 416 essential drugs have run out in Gaza, as well as a third of essential medical supplies and most children's antibiotics
- * There are 99 checkpoints monitoring and restricting Palestinian movement to, from and within the West Bank
- * Sixty-three control movements

within the territory

Sources: WHO; B'Tselem; Ochaopt.org; agencies

Darkness falls on Gaza as Israel takes revenge for rocket attacks

Load-Date: January 21, 2008

End of Document

Brown turns to youth for top cabinet roles

The Australian (Australia)

June 29, 2007 Friday

All-round Metro Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 10

Length: 771 words

Byline: Peter Wilson, Europe correspondent

Body

GORDON Brown has made the most radical cabinet overhaul of any British government, appointing David Miliband as one of the youngest foreign secretaries in history and little-known Jacqui Smith as the nation's first ***female*** home secretary.

Miliband, 41, and Smith, 44, led a new generation of cabinet ministers who included Mr Miliband's 37-year-old brother Ed, and Ed Balls, 40, whose wife Yvette Cooper, 38, became housing minister.

Brown reached beyond his party to appoint a former UN official, Mark Malloch Brown, to the new post of minister for Africa, Asia and the UN.

Mr Malloch Brown, a one-time deputy secretary-general of the UN who will be appointed to the House of Lords, is a sharp critic of the Bush administration's neoconservative foreign policies, especially in the Middle East.

The exit of most of the senior faces of the Blair cabinet left Mr Brown, 56, a veteran surrounded by a young team, in contrast to the 40-year-old Opposition Leader, David Cameron, whose shadow cabinet members are almost all older than their leader.

The only member of the 22-strong cabinet who kept his old job was Defence Secretary Des Browne, but even he gained new responsibilities by picking up the portfolio of Scottish affairs.

Mr Brown steered away from the factionally driven purge that had been feared by some supporters of his longtime rival Tony Blair.

Foreign secretary Margaret Beckett was dumped, despite pleading with Mr Brown to keep the job, while the "Blairite" home secretary John Reid resigned and Australian-born health secretary Patricia Hewitt quit just before she was going to be sacked.

Ms Hewitt announced she was stepping down for personal reasons including wanting to spend time with her elderly father, Australia's former top public servant Lennox Hewitt. But other Blair loyalists prospered, including Mr Miliband, Ms Smith, the new health secretary Alan Johnson, and James Purnell, a 37-year-old who takes over as secretary for culture.

Brown turns to youth for top cabinet roles

Mr Brown vowed a "new government with new priorities" after he was sworn in on Wednesday, and his reshuffle showed his determination to rejuvenate a decade-old government.

He did not appoint any cabinet ministers from other parties but did include Shaun Woodward, a 48-year-old former Tory MP who defected to Labour in 1999.

Shirley Williams, a 76-year-old Liberal Democrat who left the Labour Party in 1981 to help form the Social Democratic Party, said Mr Brown had asked her to become an adviser on nuclear disarmament.

Mr Miliband, a former policy adviser to Mr Blair who only entered cabinet two years ago, said he was "absolutely delighted" to become foreign secretary, vowing to bring a style of diplomacy that was "patient as well as purposeful, that listens as well as leads".

The first pair of brothers to sit in cabinet for decades, the Milibands are the sons of Marxist academic Ralph Miliband.

David, the youngest foreign secretary for 30 years, was sceptical about the Blair government's conduct of the Iraq war and policy in the Middle East.

During Israel's assault on Hezbollah forces in Lebanon last year, Mr Miliband, the then environment secretary, took the rare step of expressing misgivings at the cabinet table about Mr Blair's decision to firmly back the Israeli attacks rather than calling for a ceasefire to protect civilians.

Mr Miliband, whose father was Jewish, supported Israel but was worried that even though the attack into Lebanon was strongly backed by Washington, London and other allies including Australia, it may have been a strategic blunder.

In another signal of a new approach to the Iraq war, Mr Brown brought into the cabinet John Denham, an MP who resigned from the Blair ministry in protest at the war.

The departure of Mr Blair, deputy prime minister John Prescott and Ms Beckett meant Mr Brown's only surviving colleagues from the first Blair cabinet appointed in 1997 were his close supporters Alistair Darling and Jack Straw.

Mr Darling replaced Mr Brown as chancellor, while Mr Straw became justice minister responsible for Mr Brown's promised constitutional revamp.

Mr Brown's first official action as Prime Minister was to issue an executive order removing the power of political appointees such as Mr Blair's former spin doctor Alastair Campbell to give directions to civil servants.

Meanwhile, it was revealed that Mr Blair had been quizzed by police for a third time over party political corruption claims.

The "cash for honours" inquiry was launched last year amid claims that political parties had illegally offered seats in the unelected House of Lords to financial supporters.

Editorial -- Page 13

Cut & Paste -- Page 13

Load-Date: June 29, 2007

Lebanon rebels to fight to the death

The Australian (Australia)

May 24, 2007 Thursday

Vic First Edition

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Section: LOCAL; Pg. 1

Length: 798 words

Byline: Martin Chulov, Tripoli

Body

MATP

ABOUT 50 al-Qa'ida-linked insurgents were holed up last night in a battered shantytown deep inside a besieged Palestinian refugee camp, vowing to die fighting the surrounding Lebanese army.

Close to half of the camp's 34,000 inhabitants had by last night fled the fighting that erupted on Sunday as a fragile truce held between Fatah al-Islam and the soldiers ordered to crush them.

Most of the remaining residents were expected to join the exodus before sunset yesterday ahead of a widely anticipated last stand.

Black smoke hung above the Nahr al-Barad camp, near the northern city of Tripoli, and thousands of bullet casings and shattered glass lay strewn across perimeter roads. Three days of fierce fighting has killed more than 60 militants and soldiers

as well as at least 27 civilians.

The Lebanese Red Cross was still trying to negotiate access to the scenes of the most intensive fighting to rescue many civilians, who fleeing refugees say remain trapped under dozens of ruined buildings.

"There are many people dead and dying inside," said Fatima al-Qassimi, a Palestinian who fled the camp with her family late on Tuesday night.

"The bombs fell like rain and it is only by God's will that we survived."

Maimed children filled the wards of the Beddawi Hospital, north of Tripoli, many recounting stories of brushes with death.

"I was hiding under a table with my uncle and my cousins when a huge explosion hit the house next to us," said 10-year-old Ratfat Shaabib. "My arm was broken and my uncle is still unconscious."

A UN aid convoy attempting to bring in food and medical supplies was caught in crossfire late on Tuesday in an exchange that wounded several volunteers.

Lebanon rebels to fight to the death

The PLO last night suspended a four-decade ban on the Lebanese army entering Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps, clearing the way for the army to carry out Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's order to annihilate the remaining rebels.

"We have declared that the country is for Lebanon and sovereignty is for Lebanon, and whatever Lebanon decides or considers its higher interests, we support it," said Abbas Ziki, the PLO representative in Lebanon.

Army officers said the militants were vowing to defy them from within four heavily damaged three-storey buildings near the centre of the camp, a 25sqkm corner of land on the Mediterranean, 15km north of Tripoli.

Nahr al-Barad, meaning the Cold River, is one of 12 impoverished Palestinian camps in Lebanon that are home to more than 215,000 out of a total of 400,000 refugees in the country.

Fears of large numbers of dead or wounded civilians have threatened to ignite an uprising in other camps, where leaders claim the army has been reckless in its pursuit of the militants.

The camp has been shattered by 30-year-old Russian-made tanks, firing non-precision shells. Many of its white concrete buildings appear to be either damaged or destroyed.

Continued -- Page 7

From Page 1

Lebanese armoured personnel carriers were backed into car workshops and alleyways, with exhausted soldiers resting on top of them after the heavy combat.

"The shelling is heavy, not only on our positions, but also on children and women. Destruction is all over," Fatah al-Islam spokesman Abu Salim Tahar said yesterday.

Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Fatah, have distanced themselves from Fatah al-Islam, which touts itself as a Palestinian liberation movement.

Many see it intrinsically linked to the al-Qa'ida worldview with a key goal of toppling the Lebanese Government, which it views as un-Islamic.

The group has been accused of acting on the orders of Syrian military intelligence chiefs, who have been widely blamed with destabilising the Government as a means to derail the establishment of a UN tribunal to try the assassins of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri.

Lebanon last night asked the US for \$280 million in aid to suppress the uprising and alleged al-Qa'ida-linked attempts to penetrate other Palestinian areas in the country.

Western and Lebanese security forces had been monitoring Fatah al-Islam since last November, but had not established the size of the group, or whether it intended to act on its militant Salafi Islamic ideology.

In March, fears were raised of an imminent Fatah al-Islam attack against members of the 15,000-strong UNIFIL intervention force in south Lebanon, which was established to prevent renewed fighting between Hezbollah and Israel, who fought a bloody 34-day war last July-August.

Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps have been off-limits to the army for decades under a 1969 agreement which was annulled by parliament in 1987.

But in line with a tacit agreement since then, the camps have remained under the control of armed Palestinian factions, with the Lebanese army enforcing security around the shantytowns.

Lebanon rebels to fight to the death

[More reports -- Page 7](#)

Load-Date: May 23, 2007

End of Document

The war in Iran we might need

University Wire

October 17, 2007 Wednesday

Copyright 2007 The BG News via U-Wire

Section: COLUMN

Length: 794 words

Byline: By Jason Snead, The BG News; **SOURCE:** Bowling Green State U.

Dateline: BOWLING GREEN, Ohio

Body

Several weeks ago the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was invited to Columbia University to speak to a lucky few students and faculty given the unique opportunity to participate in one of the most controversial diplomatic events of our time. While at Columbia he was lambasted by their President, who referred to him as a petty dictator and harshly criticized Ahmadinejad's record on free speech and civil rights. Some praised the action, breathing a collective sigh of relief that at least somebody today has the courage and character to tell a dictator how despicable and horrendous their actions and policies are. Others were deeply shocked and dismayed that the leader of a nation could be talked down to in such a demeaning way.

This latter group is a principled one, to say the least, who advocate wholeheartedly avoiding the drumbeat of war that grows louder each day. They wish to take on face value what Ahmadinejad says, worrying that to question his sincerity would be only to add fuel to the fire. They listen to his speeches and his comments, hear the words of a peace-loving man, and sleep each night content that Iran is no threat so long as such an eloquent leader is in charge. They hold out hope that diplomacy will always succeed, and argue that an Iranian nuclear weapon is hardly worth going to war over. Principled they may be, but unwilling to accept the hard truths of our world is what they are.

President Ahmadinejad has been in office for two years, catapulted there by an uncommon charisma and an equally uncommon gift for oratory. Coupled with these things is a calculating political sense, an ability to manipulate events in Ahmadinejad's favor. No doubt when he accepted the invitation to Columbia he realized no matter what happened it would only benefit him. If he were to be lambasted it would be a public relations victory in Iran, and it would be an opportunity to speak to the American people and show everybody that he is just such a nice guy. The sad thing about his plan is both parts seem to have worked, at least on some. Oratory seems able to accomplish anything, including wiping away the heinous crimes Ahmadinejad and his government have committed. Crackdowns in Iran have reached a new high. Thousands are routinely arrested for "grave crimes" against society, crimes such as wearing Western clothing or listening to Western music. For women, too-tight clothing is an invitation for police beatings. Even dancing at weddings with non-family members runs the risk of police intervention. Peaceful protesting, what nearly all consider to be a natural right in this country, is met with harsh force and arrests. Recently, five Iranian Americans visiting the country were imprisoned for no reason, and before that 12 British sailors were captured at gunpoint in international waters and forced to make humiliating confessions. Perhaps most disturbing of all is the attitude many have towards the increasingly convincing evidence that Iran is complicit in attacks on American soldiers in Iraq. At one point, if a nation conspired to murder American soldiers and citizens it would have been considered an act of war, but today these facts are dismissed far too easily.

The war in Iran we might need

Ahmadinejad himself routinely refers to the Holocaust, one of the most gruesome events in human history, as a fable meant to elicit sympathy for the Jewish people. He refers to Israel as a nation to be "wiped off the map." Following his visit to Columbia University, Ahmadinejad met to strengthen his ties with the equally cruel, and rabidly anti-American, Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chavez. And upon his return to Iran, Ahmadinejad denounced the West once more and refused to negotiate any further on his nation's nuclear ambitions.

Ahmadinejad is no fool, and knows if he can divide the West and pretend to care for diplomacy long enough, he can buy the time he needs to build his nuclear arsenal. We must therefore enter into any diplomatic initiative armed with incredulity and supplied with finite patience. We must demand Iran do more than talk; they must cease their nuclear program until it can be verified that weapons will never be produced. They must end their assistance to Hezbollah and to the insurgents in Iraq, and withdraw their military and intelligence officers, there to conduct attacks on Americans, as well. Until these conditions are met -- conditions that are supported by our European allies -- preparations for war must continue. We cannot, must not, allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon and become the preeminent regional power. Negotiations should continue for now in the hopes of achieving a peaceful solution, but we must be realistic and accept that a war with Iran may well be inevitable.

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Load-Date: October 17, 2007

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BEIRUT, LEBANON

Sunday Telegraph Magazine (Australia)

May 13, 2007 Sunday

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Section: MAGAZINE; Gen X-Pat; Pg. 42

Length: 692 words

Byline: EDITED BY KLAUDYNA MORAWSKI

Body

MATP

Sophie McNeill, 22, deferred university after being head-hunted by SBS. Now she's enjoying the political action - and night-life - of Beirut

How did you end up working on SBS's Dateline?

When I was 15, I saw a documentary about the deaths that occurred in East Timor during the Indonesian invasion. It inspired me to make my own documentary. So I borrowed my high school's video camera and managed to con my parents into letting me go to East Timor. I made a short film about an American doctor working in a clinic with no running water, medicine or electricity. After high school, I received a scholarship to Curtin University in Western Australia, to study politics. During my second year, I received a call from my university, telling me Mike Carey, the executive producer of Dateline, wanted to get in touch with me. He was looking for video journalists and had read an article in the university magazine about my documentary. He offered me a job with SBS so, at 20, I left university and went to Port Hedland in Western Australia to cover my first story: the death of Mohammad Saleh, the first asylum seeker to die under Australian mandatory detention.

How did you get to Lebanon?

I'd always wanted to come here, but Mike thought I was too young. So I said, "I'm going to New York, instead," and in January last year I went and lived there for about a year. As soon as I had a few weeks holiday, I visited Lebanon. While I was there, Pierre Gemayel, a Lebanese Christian politician, was assassinated. It turned into a huge news story, so I began filming the days following for Dateline. I've been here ever since.

What's a video journalist?

I'm basically a one-woman television crew. I research, write, interview and film all my stories with just a small camera.

How do you find working on your own?

It's great. People relate to you as a human being rather than a member of a television crew. I was at a Hezbollah funeral for a young supporter in the Bekaa Valley recently. While I was filming, a 17-year-old boy was standing nearby holding the Lebanese flag. He turned to my camera and said, "We are not terrorists. Please tell the world." That's a moment you can only capture working on your own.

BEIRUT, LEBANON

How do your parents feel about your living there?

My mum worries about me, so she tries not to watch the news. My dad, on the other hand, gets really excited when he sees me on TV.

How do you let your hair down?

During the day I can film a million people marching through the streets, protesting against the government and, that same evening, I'll have a drink at a bar and dance until 3am. People tend to forget - or don't know - that Beirut has a fantastic night-life.

What's the Lebanese equivalent of a late-night kebab?

Jebneh manousha. It's a cheese pizza, with yummy goat's cheese on top. I buy it from a 24-hour take-out place called Barbar's - it only costs 80 cents.

Have you been impressed with the local boys?

They're pretty smooth. I've had several marriage proposals since I've been here. I often get male attention because I'm a young, white, Western girl, even though I dress like a dag. The attention is a little ridiculous, considering the women here are so gorgeous. Whenever I return to Australia, I'm disappointed because no one looks at me.

What's been your most memorable moment so far?

In the last days of the recent war with Israel, thousands of cluster bombs were dropped by the Israeli army into southern Lebanon. I met a family whose only son stepped on a cluster bomb and was instantly killed. The boy's parents couldn't understand why people had dropped bombs. They weren't angry or bitter. They were just tired of their lives being full of destruction, sadness, fighting and war. They just wanted to live in peace.

Do you ever worry about your safety?

Every now and then, the situation here does get quite serious, but it's not as scary or as war-riddled as the nightly news would have you think. My friends and family back home think I'm tough, but if they knew how much fun I was having here, they wouldn't think I was very tough at all.

Watch Sophie McNeill's latest report from Lebanon on Wednesday, May 23 at 8.30pm on SBS TV's Dateline.

Load-Date: May 13, 2007

Hamas set to renew bombings

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

May 18, 2007 Friday

National Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A13

Length: 785 words

Byline: Matthew Fisher, CanWest News Service

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM - Fighting between Hamas and Fatah eased slightly in Gaza yesterday, but Hamas threatened a new wave of suicide bombings inside Israel to avenge multiple air raids over the Palestinian territory by Israeli warplanes, including the latest strike that killed four Hamas fighters.

Three other Palestinians died in factional violence. Two of them were shot as they attended funerals in southern Gaza for some of the more than 40 Palestinians who have been killed since Hamas and Fatah resumed their bloody conflict over the weekend after a three-month lull.

The punishing Israeli air strikes -- which began with several that killed five Palestinians -- did not stop Hamas from launching 17 more Qassam rockets into Israel during a 24-hour period. One missile crashed through the roof of a high school and into a classroom while students took exams in the next room.

Under intense pressure from terrified and angry residents of southern Israeli communities within range of the rockets, Ehud Olmert, the Israeli Prime Minister, also ordered several tanks and infantry to cross into northern Gaza for the first time in six months to better observe areas often used to launch rockets.

The Israel Defence Forces positioned artillery units just outside the Palestinian enclave so as to be able to immediately counter-fire after any rocket launches.

Israel also electronically took control of radio stations in Gaza to warn residents to flee places used to launch rockets, an Israeli television station reported.

"We have had enough," Miri Eisin, Mr. Olmert's spokeswoman said.

Officials in Jerusalem emphasized these were "defensive operations" and Israel has no intention of undertaking a major ground offensive in the territory.

The government and a Russian Israeli businessman attempted to evacuate people from Sderot, southern Israel, but the operation had to be halted because not enough beds could be found for all those wanting to flee. Many residents are living in bomb shelters.

Hamas set to renew bombings

The Israeli air strikes seriously damaged a multi-storey Hamas compound, a trailer used as a barracks and two vehicles with men inside. Palestinian hospitals reported dozens of wounded, including women and children who were injured in the bombing of the compound.

Khaled Meshal, Hamas's top leader, who lives in Syria, claimed on his group's al-Aqsa television station that Israel's actions presented Palestinians with a "historic opportunity" to bring Hamas and Fatah together to fight their common enemy.

But there was little sign of that in Gaza. The fourth ceasefire in as many days held slightly better than the others, but gunmen still controlled all the major roads and there were several shootouts.

For the first time since fighting erupted again, some residents left their homes briefly to buy food, but most remained inside, mindful of how ambushes and mortar, rocket and sniper attacks could happen at any time.

The security situation remained so unstable that Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian President and Fatah leader, postponed a visit to Gaza. He was due to meet Ismail Haniyeh, the Prime Minister and the highest ranking Hamas leader not living in exile.

An alleged Hamas plot to assassinate Mr. Abbas was disclosed yesterday, Agence France-Presse reported.

"Abu Mazen's [Abbas's] visit to Gaza was cancelled after the discovery of a tunnel under Salaheddine Road full of explosives placed by the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades to blow up [his] convoy," said a senior security official, referring to Hamas's military wing.

"The explosives were found on the route that Abu Mazen takes to travel to Gaza."

Hamas' latest threats to resume what it called "martyrdom operations" complicate the already unpredictable and troubling situation in Gaza.

The Qassam attacks on Israel, and what many Israelis regard as their government's slow response to them, have once again called into question Mr. Olmert's leadership abilities.

The situation reminds Israelis of their military's failure to prevent Hezbollah from launching thousands of rockets from Lebanon last summer.

Benjamin Netanyahu, the former prime minister who is leading opinion polls to succeed Mr. Olmert, demanded that Israel cut off power and other public services to Gaza.

At a press conference in Ramallah in the West Bank, Mustafa Barghouti, the Palestinian Information Minister, warned the Palestinian government might collapse if the factional fighting did not stop, leading to a total separation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

He called on Hamas and Fatah "to pull their gunmen off the streets of Gaza" and appealed for new security mechanisms that involved both factions. Toward this end, Mr. Barghouti said that a joint command centre was being established.

Graphic

Black & White

Photo: Suhaib Salem, Reuters; Palestinians evacuate a wounded woman from her destroyed house after an Israeli air strike in Gaza yesterday. The Israeli military said it carried out an air strike in Gaza City yesterday and local residents said the target was a building housing Hamas' Executive Force. ;

Hamas set to renew bombings

Load-Date: May 18, 2007

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For Israel's shrillest critics, a boycott too far

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

April 20, 2007 Friday

National Edition

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Section: ISSUES & IDEAS; Pg. A19

Length: 784 words

Byline: Miriam Shaviv, National Post

Body

Last Friday, Britain's National Union of Journalists (NUJ) voted to boycott all Israeli goods and to urge the British government and the United Nations to impose sanctions on the Jewish state. In a separate motion, the delegates also condemned the "savage, pre-planned attack on Lebanon by Israel" last year, and the "slaughter of civilians by Israeli troops in Gaza." The boycott is reprehensible on several levels.

First, and most obviously: Journalists are meant to be objective. They cannot do their job properly if they are politically active on behalf of one side.

Second, Israel is again being blamed for the 2006 Lebanon War, while in reality it was forced into the conflict by the shelling of its citizens in northern Israel by Hezbollah and by the kidnapping of two of its soldiers.

But the most stunning element is that the NUJ has admitted in a statement that "the call for the boycott [was] in part related to the kidnap of Alan Johnston" -- the BBC journalist snatched in the Gaza Strip on March 12 by a previously unknown Palestinian group, The Brigades of Tawhid and Jihad, which claimed last week it had killed him.

In other words, the Palestinians kidnapped a British journalist -- and the British union's reaction was to punish Israel as a sweetener to the Palestinians who are trying to get him released.

But here's the good news: The NUJ's move has earned it open contempt from senior British journalists across the political spectrum. Perhaps this should not be surprising: The British press is much more nuanced when it comes to Israel than many North American observers abroad may believe.

The NUJ boycott was unrepresentative right from the beginning. It passed at the union's annual delegate meeting by 66 votes to 54. Out of a total NUJ membership of some 40,000, there were just 120 voters in the room.

The missing members spoke up quickly and forcefully. Michael Gove, a respected journalist who was elected to Parliament for the Conservatives in 2005, announced in The Times that he was resigning from the NUJ. Toby Harnden, the United States editor of The Daily Telegraph, London's most popular broadsheet, asked on his blog why his membership dues should "be spent on anti-Israel posturing of which I and many other members want no part" and said the motions condemning Israel were "tendentious and politically loaded propaganda that would be rightly edited out of any news story written in a newspaper that had any pretensions of fairness."

For Israel 's shrillest critics, a boycott too far

The news director of Yahoo! Europe said he looked forward to "similar boycotts of Saudi oil (abuse of women and human rights), Turkish desserts (limits to freedom of speech) and, of course, the immediate replacement of all stationery in the NUJ's offices which has been made or assembled in China."

The fact is that the British media does not deserve its reputation for being reflexively anti-Israel. Yes, there is the predictably biased BBC, the left-wing daily The Guardian and The Independent's notorious Robert Fisk. Because of the BBC's global radio service and The Guardian's lively Web site, they get most of the attention overseas. But it goes almost unnoticed in North America that the just-right-of-centre Times, with a circulation of around 640,000 copies a day, the rightwing Telegraph, with 900,000, and the best-selling Sun tabloid, with some 3,000,000, are largely either fair to Israel or outright supportive.

Yet even those who are usually regarded as anti-Israel thought the NUJ went too far. Donald Macintyre of the left-wing Independent, who is based in Israel, told The Jerusalem Post that "The job of the NUJ is to protect journalists and not adopt political postures, right or left. It certainly won't affect my job or my professional outlook." And Alan Rusbridger, editor of The Guardian condemned the resolution as "misguided" and said the boycott did not "serve a useful purpose."

The radical language of the motions shows exactly who was behind them--members so far to the left that they make even the moderately anti-Israel crowd feel queasy. They strategically take advantage of poor attendance at union conferences to hijack their agendas.

A similar episode took place in April, 2005, when the UK's Association of University Teachers took a vote to boycott two Israeli universities late on a Friday afternoon before Passover, with almost no discussion. The enormous outcry both in Britain and overseas ensured that the motion was overturned a few weeks later, and that its virulently anti-Israel sponsors were exposed as the extremists they were. Judging by the reaction so far, a similar outcome is likely for the NUJ.

- Miriam Shaviv is the comment editor of the Jewish Chronicle in the U.K.

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Graphic

Black & White

Photo: Reuters, Nir Elias; A soldier inspects two Palestinian women at a crossing point in Israel's security fence. ;

Load-Date: April 20, 2007

My Say: The struggle for Palestine

The Edge Malaysia

January 26, 2009

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Length: 1855 words

Byline: Ahamed Kameel Mydin Meera

Body

The picture of a little girl, buried in the rubble of a collapsed building with only her head visible, touched the hearts of many. But that was only one of the thousands of Palestinians whom the Israelis have killed in years. Ruthless and heartless are probably how one can describe such atrocities. Some Western media organisations have even shamelessly attempted to justify the killing of children by portraying them as future suicide bombers.

Israel's ostensible purpose in launching its brutal attack on Gaza was to stop Hamas from shooting rockets into Israeli territory. Many, ignorant of history, blame Hamas for the Israeli aggression. Perhaps some history and current geopolitical situations might shed some light.

Palestine has been the home of the Arab Palestinians for centuries. But within the land is a place sacred to three Abrahamic faiths - Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The site is none other than the city of Jerusalem. About four thousand years ago, Abraham, the patriarch of these three faiths, travelled from his birthplace of Ur, located near Basra in contemporary Iraq, to Palestine, known as Canaan in ancient times, and thereafter to Mecca where he left his wife Hagar and Ishmael, his son.

Ishmael became the father of the Arabs of today. Through Abraham's younger son Isaac, the Jewish Israelite lineage appeared. The Israelites emerged from Mesopotamia (now Iraq), and dwelled in Canaan for a short period before migrating to Egypt due to a famine. Shortly, the Jews in Egypt became enslaved by the Pharaoh. This was when Moses appeared and led them to freedom from their misery. Remember the story of the miraculous opening of the sea that allowed Moses and his people cross but engulfed the Pharaoh and his army?

The Israelites proceeded to Canaan, the "Promised Land" in their beliefs. By this time, the land had already been inhabited by the Arabs - the Philistines. Under the leadership of Joshua, the Israelites took Canaan by the sword, through terrible massacres. "He left not a man alive" (Joshua, 10:40 - Bible. See also A History of Jerusalem by Karen Armstrong). Later, King David and Solomon ruled Jerusalem, hence the often-heard term "Israel of David and Solomon". Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem; only the western wall was left after the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD. It forms the Wailing Wall which the Jews use for prayers till today.

As for the Christians, Jerusalem and its vicinity are the places of Jesus Christ's birth and ministry. For the Muslims, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is the place from which Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven in the famous incident called Mi'raj. The nearby Al-Aqsa mosque is also one of the three sacred mosques in Islam, besides the al-Haram mosque in Mecca and the Prophet's mosque in Medina.

Hence Jerusalem is, as Armstrong describes, "One City, Three Faiths". But unfortunately, it has become a place of constant conflict and struggle. Judaism does not recognise the ministry of Jesus or Muhammad. Christianity recognises Judaism and its main figures but does not recognise Muhammad. Islam, nevertheless, recognises both

My Say: The struggle for Palestine

Judaism and Christianity and the Quran refers the adherents of these two faiths with a honorary title of "The People of the Book" - recognising that Judaism and Christianity come from the same God as that of Islam.

Since the conquest of Canaan by Joshua, Palestine passed into the hands of many other conquerors a number of times - initially to the Assyrians and Babylonians, and later to the Persians and Greeks. In 167 BC, the Jews established an independent Judaea that lasted for only about a century before the Romans asserted control over it, naming it Syria Palaestina. Embracing Christianity, the Emperor Constantine, sometime in 325 AD, made his new faith dominant in the region.

In the early seventh century, Islam was brought by Prophet Muhammad, God's messenger, in Arabia and within a century, the new faith spread from Morocco to India, including Palestine of course, rendering it now Muslim dominant. In 1099 AD, the first Crusaders managed to wrest back Jerusalem and reassert Christian rule, but just to lose it back to Saladin the Great in 1187 AD. Palestine remained practically in the hands of Muslims until the end of World War I when the Ottoman Caliphate fell.

Historian Paul E Walker contrasts the conquest of Jerusalem by the Crusaders and Saladin as follows: "In stark contrast to the city's conquest by the Christians, when blood flowed freely during the barbaric slaughter of its inhabitants, the Muslim reconquest was marked by the civilised and courteous behaviour of Saladin and his troops."

The display of extreme mercy by Saladin can be attributed to none other than the teachings of Islam itself. Similarly, when the Jews were persecuted by the Christian Europe, including during the Holocaust, they were always welcomed in the Muslim empire. After all, they are the "People of the Book" and indeed many prophets of Islam were of Jewish lineage - Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon and Jesus, to name a few. The Jews, therefore, flourished in Muslim nations particularly during the Muslim rule of Spain.

But a desire for a Jewish nation - a national homeland for the Jews - became embodied in the political movement of Zionism. In its early days, it even considered central Asia and Uganda as possible candidates for the homeland but the idea turned out to be not workable. Being aligned to the British Empire, the Zionists looked towards Palestine. Initial offers by Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, to buy Palestine from Abdul Hamid II, the sultan of the Ottoman Empire, was turned down. Thereafter, Herzl made threats against the empire, being fully aware that Europe and other allies would love to see it collapse and disintegrate.

The Ottoman Empire did crumble in the wake of World War I. And through the Sykes-Picot agreement, the Arab peninsula was divided into five states, with Britain and France acting as their protectorates - Syria and Lebanon came under France and Palestine, Jordan and Iraq under Britain. Nonetheless, through the Balfour Declaration, Britain declared Palestine as a national homeland for the Jews. Thereafter, the immigration of the Jews, confiscation of land and continuous conflicts between the Jews and Palestinians became ongoing history till today. In 1936, the Peel Commission recommended the partition of Palestine between the Arabs and Jews but this is yet to materialise.

In 1948, after the expiry of the British mandate over Palestine, Israel declared itself an independent nation and by the following year, was controlling 77% of Palestine. The miserable condition of the Palestinians gave birth to organisations dedicated to the liberation of Palestine - the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in 1964, **Hezbollah** in 1982 and Hamas in 1987.

In the eyes of the Palestinians, the Israelis are like "hermit crabs". They terrorise the Palestinians, bulldoze their homes and establish Jewish settlements on lands stolen by force. This is what the world has been witnessing again and again, without a concrete solution to the problem. The latest is its incursion and massacre in Gaza.

On Jan 18, Israel unilaterally declared a ceasefire after killing more than 1,000 innocent Palestinians, many of whom were children, and severely wounding many thousands more. But any sane mind with a knowledge of history would know that this ceasefire is not the end. Hamas and **Hezbollah** would not be bothered if, through the West's propaganda, they are regarded as terrorist organisations. The conflict and battle between both sides are, therefore, likely to continue until an amicable solution is found - at least a two-state solution.

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But from Israel's actions, it is clear that it does not desire a two-state solution. Indeed, it seems to harbour a much bigger ambition. Some assert that it longs for an Israel that stretches from the Euphrates in Iraq to the Nile in Egypt.

In the last days of George W Bush's presidency, Israel took the opportunity to launch an offensive on Gaza. After killing and wounding thousands and destroying most of the infrastructure in Gaza, the Israelis feigned compassion by unilaterally declaring a ceasefire.

Israel seems to have multiple objectives in its war on the Palestinians. One of them is to annihilate its foes before Barack Obama is sworn in as the new US president. The other is to implicate Iran in the crisis and provide Obama with his maiden assignment.

By initiating a regime change in Iran, as has happened in Iraq, Israel is attempting to become a major oil player in the world. If it succeeds, the Jewish state hopes it can become a new superpower. Considering its ruthless behaviour, I hope the world will deny Israel's ambitious plan.

One way the international community, starting with the Islamic nations, can effectively contribute to the "defeat" of the Israelis is by rejecting any fiat currency being used as an international currency. In the current context, they should just deny the dollar its international currency status, which it has enjoyed for the last few decades. This would prevent the US and the financial elites from creating the dollar out of nothing and using it to purchase real things from the rest of the world. I have little doubt that significant amounts of the US Treasury's \$700US billion (RM2.5 trillion) and the Federal Reserves' few trillion dollars created as "bailout" money will go into the funding of new wars.

One of the most disheartening things is to know that the Israeli aggression and the killings of children and women, whose pictures "adorn" the pages of newspapers and magazines worldwide, are indeed significantly paid for through global inflation. That is we, the international community, are the ones footing the bill. Even Hamas does not seem to understand this monetary factor when it itself accepts the Israeli shekel as the main currency for Gaza.

The world should, accordingly, assist and give a Hamas a chance to prove that it can bring about true and everlasting peace to the region; after all, they are the first truly democratically elected government in the whole Arab peninsula.

As Armstrong puts it: "There are still many Israelis and Palestinians, many Arabs and Jews who long for peace and are prepared to make the sacrifices that it requires. It still remains true, when we look back on the long history of Jerusalem, that the societies that have lasted the longest there have, generally, been the ones that were prepared to accept some kind of tolerance and coexistence in the holy city. That, rather than a sterile and deadly struggle for sovereignty and absolute victory, must be the way to celebrate Jerusalem's sanctity today."

I am confident that a victorious Hamas, like Saladin, would show mercy and compassion towards the Jews and Christians in Palestine, and their adorable children will never have to go through the hellish terror that the Palestinian children have been made to endure or succumb to.

Dr Ahamed Kameel Mydin Meera is dean, Institute of Islamic Banking and Finance, International Islamic University Malaysia

Load-Date: February 5, 2009

The hostage industry; ANALYSIS; Terrorist groups with few resources are increasingly using a weapon with big impact: kidnap. Why? And how can captives be freed?

The Sunday Herald

June 3, 2007

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Byline: By Diplomatic Editor Trevor Royle

Highlight: PICTURED ABOVE Top row, from left: Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl was beheaded in Karachi by an Islamic militant group in 2002. Two of four peace activists kidnapped by The Swords of Righteousness Brigade in Iraq 2005. Aid worker Margaret Hassan was murdered in Iraq in November 2004, though who was responsible remains unclear. Algerian diplomat Ali Belaroussi, along with colleague Azzedine Belkadi, was killed in 2005 by al-Qaeda in Iraq headed by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Second row, from left: Briton Norman Kember was kidnapped in 2005 along with three other peace activists including American colleague Tom Fox, who was killed before Kember and the other hostages were freed by British special forces. Faye Turney was the only woman among the 15 British navy personnel seized by Iranian forces in March 2007 and accused of violating Iranian territorial waters.

All were later released. Ken Bigley, from Liverpool, was abducted in Iraq in September 2004. The Tawhid and Jihad Islamist group led by al-Zarqawi released a video of Bigley and two Americans kidnapped at the same time before beheading them. BBC reporter Alan Johnston, kidnapped in March this year by Palestinian gunmen, remains captive somewhere in the Gaza Strip.

Body

IVE Westerners are taken hostage in Baghdad in a daring and outrageous operation involving suspected Shi'ite militia disguised as police. In Gaza the BBC journalist Alan Johnston is still languishing in captivity, a victim of the wider war between the Israelis and Palestinian insurgency groups. In the same part of the world, the Israeli army went to war in south Lebanon last summer in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to liberate one of their men who had been taken hostage by Hezbollah guerrillas. There is still no sign of any of the victims being freed.

Earlier this year, the Iranian Republican Guards tweaked the nose of the Royal Navy by snatching 15 sailors and marines in the Persian Gulf and keeping them at their government's leisure for an embarrassing week before disdainfully letting them go. In Russia, rebels loyal to Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev had a much more sinister purpose when they moved into a school at Beslan in north Ossetia in September 2004 to take schoolchildren prisoner and threaten the authorities with their death unless their demands were met. Almost 400 people were killed, the majority of them civilians and children, when the security forces mounted a botched rescue bid.

The hostage industry ANALYSIS Terrorist groups with few resources are increasingly using a weapon with big impact: kidnap. Why? And how can captives be freed?

Further casualties had been caused in a Moscow cinema two years earlier when the same security forces moved against Chechen terrorists who were holding around 700 people hostage. In the counter-attack, 41 Chechens and 129 hostages were killed after the security forces attempted to contain the situation by pouring nerve gas into the cinema building. Every week in Nigeria, oil workers are taken hostage, and the numbers are so high that the incidents are rarely reported.

Welcome to the shadowy world of global terrorism, where innocent people become pawns in an increasingly deadly game in which lightly armed terrorists can take on the might of world powers by holding them to ransom. Not only does it give them a powerful bargaining counter but, as the cases of the Baghdad hostages and Alan Johnston have shown, it keeps the hostage-takers' grievances in the public eye. In the modern world of terrorist warfare, where there is no discernible front line and causes often remain bewilderingly unclear, the taking of hostages has become the new battlefield multiplier.

"If you're in command of a terrorist cell containing people who are little more than lightly trained and fanatical desperados, it's difficult to make a lasting impression on the security forces," says a British military source. "You will have access to arms and explosives and you will be able to use them, but unless you come up with a spectacular you're not going to make much impression on the politicians. But you might just strike it lucky if you manage to get hold of high-value hostages."

In the counter-insurgency war in Iraq, hostage-taking has become such a routine gambit that most incidents involving local people are not even reported. Most of them are staged by criminal gangs who take the opportunity to abduct wealthy or influential Iraqis and demand ransoms for their release.

They might claim to be operating for a political purpose, but the reality is that they are simply operating a terrorist franchise in a failed society where law and order has broken down and the police forces are powerless to intervene.

In Iraq, those same police forces often aid and abet the hostage-takers and may even be hostage-takers themselves.

All that changes when the victim is a Westerner, because they are usually the type of high-value target described by the British military source. The official line is that Western governments will not give in to hostage-takers, far less negotiate with them. As soon as anyone is seized by the terrorists the word goes out that there will be no talks, no deals and no compromise. The reality is rather different. As the fates of the British hostage Ken Bigley and the US journalist Daniel Pearl showed, the end game for some of those caught by extremists is the terrible fate of decapitation and the release of television pictures showing in grisly detail the victim's last moment.

For the governments concerned this is an outcome which is painful and humiliating as it makes a nonsense, in Iraq at least, of the claim that their security forces are in control of the situation.

In both cases, strenuous attempts were made to discover where the men might be hidden, and in Bigley's case he came within a whisker of being sprung by the SAS. Operations of that kind do not happen by magic or good luck. To have any chance of getting close to the perpetrators of the crime, the potential rescuers need to get out and about to talk to people who might know the identities of the terrorists. In so doing they have to discover what sort of demands are being made and what is on the table as bargaining chips. Great patience is required, as it takes time and a good deal of hard-nosed bargaining to find any common ground. Neither side will trust the other, and it goes without saying that the security or intelligence services will always have a plan B - the use of overwhelming force once they know the whereabouts of the place where the hostage is being held.

There are exceptions. In Iraq and Afghanistan there were strong suspicions in the diplomatic community that the Italian government had cut deals with terrorist organisations to allow civilian hostages to be freed.

In March 2005, the journalist Giuliana Sgrena was released from captivity in Iraq following negotiations, but the operation ended in tragedy when US forces opened fire on the convoy taking her to the airport. Her bodyguard, Nicola Calipari, was killed in the incident. Last March a similar deal was struck in Afghanistan allowing Daniele

The hostage industry ANALYSIS Terrorist groups with few resources are increasingly using a weapon with big impact: kidnap. Why? And how can captives be freed?

Mastrogiamco of La Repubblica newspaper to be released in return for the freedom of five Taliban gunmen. The negotiations were carried out by the Afghan administration on behalf of the Italian government.

"Regarding hostage demands, the negotiator attempts to avoid giving anything without getting some concessions in return, avoids suggesting possible demands, avoids offering anything unless it is requested, avoids giving more than is requested and avoids dismissing any demand as trivial." All negotiators agree that basic essentials such as food, water and medicine are negotiable and that transportation and media coverage are "situational" - that is, a commodity which can be given in return for important concessions - but the granting of weapons or the exchange of hostages are completely non-negotiable. The trick to a safe outcome is to keep the hostage-takers talking and at all costs to avoid confrontation. If armed police or snipers are present, they have to be kept well out of sight. Above all, terrorist groups crave publicity, and the careful use of media manipulation can often bring results at crucial stages in the negotiations.

"Kidnapping can bypass this dynamic by drawing out media attention and by allowing reporters to personalise the victim and humanise their story, " argue Michael Rubin and Suzanne Gershowitz in a recent paper on hostage-taking for the Middle East Forum. "For journalists, an assassination or bombing is anticlimactic; the press only begins its coverage after the operation has ended.

But uncertainty about whether a hostage remains alive creates the suspense necessary for a good news story." Most armies have specialist psy-ops personnel such as Colonel Jones who are trained in hostage negotiation, but hostage-taking is not a recent phenomenon; it has a long history. As soon as Western European countries started opening up and establishing trade routes in the late middle ages, an opportunity opened to take advantage of the presence of wealthy passers-by who could themselves be a source of income. In the Mediterranean and Atlantic, Barbary pirates caused havoc as corsairs from the north African coast captured Western ships, put their crews into slavery and held anyone of any importance, especially women, to ransom. It was a lucrative business, as most ransoms were eventually paid, and those passed into slavery provided a handy income.

THE Barbary pirates were mainly Muslim and their usage of hostage-taking continues today in Afghanistan and the main centres of the Middle East which are caught up in violence. It has been a fact of life in the armed struggle between Palestinian insurgents and the Israeli defence forces, who have made it a matter of honour to track down and find any soldier in the hands of Hamas or Hezbollah.

Perversely, the taking of hostages is a tactic which is forbidden by Islam, but in the main points of conflict in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Iraq and Israel it has turned into a highly effective weapon for Muslim terrorists.

"Hostage-taking has become a particularly effective tactic. Terrorists crave an audience. With the spread of terrorism in the late 20th century, audiences became inured to violence, " argue Rubin and Gershowitz. "Suicide bombings which might once have garnered headlines and commentary for a week now pass with bare mention. For a bombing or slaughter to win significant public attention, it must either target children - the Palestine Liberation Organisation's slaughter of school children in Ma'alot in 1974, or Chechen jihadists' seizure of a Beslan school 30 years later - or result in several hundred or thousands of casualties, such as occurred in the East Africa embassy bombings in 1998 and on 9/11." None of this will be of any comfort to Alan Johnston, who has been a hostage in Gaza for three months, or to the five taken hostage in Baghdad last week, but according to the terrorism specialist Profesor Paul Wilkinson of St Andrews University, as long as there are insurgency wars of the kind being waged in Iraq there will be terrorists who are willing and able to take hostages.

"It is extremely cheap and requires only small numbers of hostage takers armed with standard, widely available weaponry, " argues Wilkinson in his study Terrorism v Democracy.

"Above all, it is one of the very few terrorist tactics with a track record of success in forcing governments to major concessions."

The hostage industry ANALYSIS Terrorist groups with few resources are increasingly using a weapon with big impact: kidnap. Why? And how can captives be freed?

End of Document

International: Gaza: Voices from the frontline: 'It's a living hell and my children are petrified'

The Guardian - Final Edition

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the**guardian**

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Body

Faysal Shawal, businessman in Gaza City

We haven't been outside in a week. We have no electricity, we have no water. There is shelling and air raids and they

don't stop, especially last night. There were raids everywhere +Ai from the sea, air and ground. They destroyed the school that my kids go to, the American school. What did this school do to the Israeli army? They are bombing everything. It's a living hell. My children are petriOAed. I feel responsible for them, they are innocent but I can't help them. The OAVE of us sleep together but we don't sleep. The noise is terrifying. I feel like a 100-year-old man. My

business has been shut down now for 20 months because of the siege. We don't know where we are going. There's no justice in this world.

Narnin Serraj, works for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and lives in Gaza city with her three children and husband

For eight days we've lived in fear. No place in Gaza is safe. My kids are scared. I have three children. Adam, who is nine, has asthma. We don't have electricity so whenever he has an asthma attack we have to put the generator on so he can use the ventilator. Then we turn the generator oOA

again because there's very little fuel. We sleep in the hallway where it's a bit safer because when the bombs drop, the whole building shakes. If anything happens, I hope it happens to me. I feel guilty for having children here.

Gaza has never been safe or healthy, and now I have three children whom I cannot protect. My youngest son is three and all the time he's telling stories about bombing. It's hard for my children to see me falling to pieces. I have lost all attachment to this place. What you see on the television is the physical devastation but you don't see what it's doing to our emotions. The only thing I think about is where they

are going to bomb again.

International: Gaza: Voices from the frontline: 'It's a living hell and my children are petrified'

Ahmed Al Dabba, 26, lives in eastern Gaza

Last night about 9pm we heard the tanks starting to cross into Gaza. I jumped up on to the roof, I saw them entering through Karni crossing. They started firing artillery shells, it was very heavy, hundreds of shells. Eight landed on my uncle's house nearby. A neighbour's house was burnt. They

called the OAre service but no one came because the trucks were destroyed in raids. I spent most of the night counting the shells. In one hour I counted 200 shells. There

was shooting but I don't know where. Now there are two

tanks stationed at the end my street. From 9pm till 5am I was unable to sleep. I'm tired and exhausted.

Majeda Al Saqqa, community worker at the Culture and Free Thought Association, in Khan Yunis

Every single night we hear explosions everywhere then all of a sudden the town goes quiet and you don't know what's happening. We don't have electricity most of the time and the phones often don't work.

My brother lives in Gaza City in front of the port where there's a lot of action. It's very hard to call him. I manage to call him every 12 hours, sometimes every 24 hours. We watch the television to see what's going on. (The children) don't sleep at all and they are scared all the time. They ask us questions and we really don't know what to say. The smallest boy keeps asking why the birds keep flying

away and why the planes are targeting them. They ask why the planes bomb our neighbours and why they bomb the mosque. They've never seen Israelis, they don't know who they are.

We don't want them to grow up with hatred. It's very, very difficult and we are really tired of this.

Asma Al Ghouli, a journalist, working for the Palestinian paper Al Ayyam which Hamas banned from Gaza

The planes attack everything that moves in the streets, nothing is safe in Gaza. When I see the children in the hospitals I start crying. The children lie there without arms, without legs, without speaking, they don't even cry.

In my work as a journalist everything is happening too quickly, we don't have time to write about it. It's all crazy. Hamas keeps spreading rumours, that it has kidnapped soldiers, to lift the people's spirits like Hezbollah did during the Lebanon war.

The victim here isn't Hamas or Israel. Hamas has become more popular. The victims here are the civilians, the ordinary men, women and children.

At night I try to sing to my son and to create new stories for him to distract him from the bombs. Yesterday he told me

that he didn't want to hear the stories any more. He's just four years old.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

ISRAEL, HAMAS BOTH WRONG; IN COMPETING PATHOLOGIES

The Santa Fe New Mexican (New Mexico)

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Byline: WILLIAM M. STEWART

Body

Once again the fat is in the fire. Hamas called off a shaky, 6-month-old cease-fire with Israel, and Israel responded with a massive air attack on Gaza that is still under way at week's end. Israel claimed the right of self-defense, saying it could no longer tolerate constant rocket attacks along its southern frontier. Hamas claimed Israel had virtually imprisoned 1.5 million Palestinians in the narrow Gaza Strip since the Israeli withdrawal in 2005, leaving Hamas little choice in defending its people.

Once again, each side has engaged in a pathological defense of its position: Hamas, that only violence would end Israeli occupation of Palestinian land; Israel, that only violence could put an end to Hamas' terrorist activities.

Both are wrong.

Hamas cannot destroy Israel, but then neither can Israel destroy Hamas. Israel will continue to win all the battles but will never win the war. It cannot win because military victory is impossible. Only a political settlement can bring a solution.

The world cannot -- and does not -- deny Israel the right of self-defense. But there is the vital question of proportionality. There is no doubt that the homemade rockets Hamas fires into southern Israel have made life miserable for the people of that area, especially in the city of Sderot. The rockets cannot be guided, and while they are generally ineffective, they are deadly if one happens to fall on you. Since the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, about three Israelis have been killed from rocket fire. That is three too many.

But in just a few days of Israeli air attacks, some 400 Palestinians were killed, many of them **women** and children. That is unacceptable and amounts to collective punishment. The Israelis, of all people, should find collective punishment not only deeply offensive, but a crime.

If the Hamas rockets have made life miserable for the people of Sderot, the Israeli blockade of the past three years has made life intolerable for the Palestinians. The economy has collapsed. Everything, including vital medical supplies, is in short supply. Israel's opening of the border posts for a few hours to allow in supplies will not change the situation. It is grim and getting grimmer.

In military terms, Israel is one of the most powerful countries in the world. Hamas has its armed wing, and that wing indulges in terrorist activities. But in military terms, the Palestinian territories and the Palestinian people are defenseless. What's wrong with this picture? Something has to change.

ISRAEL, HAMAS BOTH WRONG IN COMPETING PATHOLOGIES

One of the complicating factors is the political division among the Palestinians. Hamas is not just a semimilitary organization that resorts to acts of terror, it is also a civilian organization that in 2007 seized control of Gaza from Fatah, the dominant political faction headed by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Hamas had already won an open election in Gaza, astounding the Bush administration. Hamas won largely because it was perceived by Gazans to be more honest and competent than Fatah. It was -- that's why they won.

The Palestinian Authority and Israel enjoy mutual recognition, though Israel has done little to bolster Abbas' position. Hamas is bent on the destruction of Israel -- a futile cause -- and the world in general regards Hamas as a terrorist organization, regardless of its civilian activities. The Arab world as a whole does not trust Hamas, which is why Egypt and Jordan have done little to help in the current crisis.

While Abbas, as well as the Egyptian, Jordanian and Saudi leaders, condemn the Israeli attacks -- what else can they do? -- they also hope that Hamas is severely damaged by the Israelis. Abbas hopes to gain with the military destruction of Hamas, perhaps even restoring Gaza to the control of the Palestinian Authority.

But that is the midterm prospect. The immediate prospect is the further destruction of the Gaza Strip by the overwhelming might of the Israeli Self Defense Force. Israel itself is scheduled for elections early this year, and Defense Minister Ehud Barak, the former prime minister, will enhance his chances for an even more prominent role if the attack on Gaza is successful.

Israel invaded Lebanon a few years ago in what is widely regarded not only as a disastrous political mistake but also a bungled military operation. **Hezbollah**, which the Israelis sought to destroy, emerged stronger than ever in Lebanon. The Israeli military would like to avoid making that same mistake in Gaza, and so a successful operation would restore not only the military's reputation but enhance that of Barak and the ruling Kadima Party.

A great deal is at stake here, and not just for Gaza and the people of Gaza. The world is rapidly changing before our eyes and those of Barack Obama, soon to be our president.

William M. Stewart, a former U.S. Foreign Service officer and Time magazine correspondent, lives in Santa Fe. He writes weekly on foreign affairs and politics.

Graphic

See pdf's for exact rendition, caption, graphics and photographer info.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

Crude oil lust behind the lies

Canberra Times (Australia)

July 9, 2008 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. 13

Length: 792 words

Byline: JOHANN HARI

Body

Sometimes you hear a stray sentence on the news that makes you realise you have been lied to. Deliberately lied to; systematically lied to; lied to for a purpose. If you listened closely over the past few days, you could have heard one such sentence. As Ingrid Betancourt emerged after 612 years, one of the first people she thanked was Hugo Chavez. What? If you follow the news coverage, you have been told that the Venezuelan President supports the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) thugs who have been holding her hostage. He paid them \$300million to keep killing and to buy uranium for a dirty bomb, in a rare break from dismantling democracy at home and dealing drugs. So how can this moment of dissonance be explained?

Yes, you have been lied to about one of the most exciting and original experiments in economic redistribution and direct democracy anywhere on earth.

And the reason is crude: crude oil.

Venezuela sits on one of the biggest pools of oil left anywhere.

If you find yourself in this position, the rich governments of the world ask one thing of you: pump the petrol and the profits our way, using our corporations. The "King" of Saudi Arabia oversees a torturing tyranny where half the population women are placed under house arrest, and jihadis are pumped out by the dozen to attack us. It doesn't matter. He gives us the oil, so we hold his hand and whisper sweet crude-nothings in his ear. It has always been the same with Venezuela until now.

Back in 1908, the US Government set up its ideal Venezuelan regime: a dictator who handed the oil over fast and so freely that he didn't even bother to keep receipts, never mind ask for a cut. But in 1998 the Venezuelan people finally said "enough". They elected Chavez. The President followed their democratic demands: he increased the share of oil profits taken by the state from a pitiful 1per cent to 33per cent. He used the money to build hospitals and schools and subsidised supermarkets in the tin-and-mud shanty towns where he grew up, and where most people still live. If you go to one, you will meet women like Francisca Moreno. "I went blind 15 years ago," she said. "I am poor, so that was that."

But she voted for Chavez. A free clinic appeared two years later in her barrio, and she was taken soon after for an operation that restored her sight. According to a 2003 Wall Street study, the poorest half of the country have seen their incomes soar by 130 per cent after inflation.

Crude oil lust behind the lies

Today, there are 10 times as many primary care doctors. The last time I saw Chavez, he told me he would like to sell oil differently in the future: while poor countries should get it for \$10 a barrel, rich countries should pay much more perhaps towards \$200. But Western governments cannot simply say, "We want the oil, our corporations need the profits, so let's smash the elected leaders standing in our way." They know ordinary Americans and Europeans would gag.

So they had to invent lies. First they announced Chavez was a dictator. This ignored that he came to power in a totally free and open election, the Venezuelan press remains uncensored and in total opposition to him, and he has just accepted losing a referendum to extend his term and will stand down in 2013. When that tactic failed, they announced that Chavez supported terrorism. . But where is the evidence for this?

On March 1, the Colombian Government invaded Ecuador and blew up a FARC training camp. A few hours later, it announced it had found a pristine laptop in the rubble, and had already rummaged through the 39.5 million pages of Microsoft Word documents it contained to find cast-iron "proof" that Chavez was backing the FARC. Ingrid's sister, Astrid Betancourt, says it is plainly fake. The camp had been totally burned to pieces and the computers had clearly, she says, been "in the hands of the Colombian Government for a very long time". Far from fuelling the guerrillas, Chavez has repeatedly pleaded with the FARC to disarm.

He managed to negotiate the release of two high-profile hostages hence Betancourt's swift thanks. So what now? Now they claim he is a drug dealer, he funds Hezbollah, he is insane.

Sometimes they even stumble on some of the real non-fiction reasons to criticise Chavez and use them as propaganda tools. As the world's oil supplies dry up, the desire to control Venezuela's pools will only increase. The US Government is already funding separatist movements where Venezuela's largest oilfields lie. Until we break our addiction to oil, our governments will always try to snatch petro-profits away from women like Francisca Moreno. And we oil addicts all will be tempted to ignore the dissonant sentences we sometimes hear on the news and lie, blissed-out, in the lies.

Independent

Load-Date: July 8, 2008

It's All About Leverage

The New York Times

June 1, 2008 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section WK; Column 0; Editorial Desk; Pg. 12; OP-ED COLUMNIST

Length: 834 words

Byline: By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

Body

Barack Obama is getting painfully close to tying himself in knots with all his explanations of the conditions under which he would unconditionally talk with America's foes, like Iran. His latest clarification was that there is a difference between "preparations" and "preconditions" for negotiations with bad guys. Such hair-splitting word games do not inspire confidence, and they play right into the arms of his critics. The last place he wants to look uncertain is on national security.

The fact is, Mr. Obama was right to say that he would talk with any foe, if it would advance U.S. interests. The Bush team negotiated with Libya to give up its nuclear program, even after Libya had accepted responsibility for blowing up Americans on Pan Am Flight 103. Those negotiations succeeded, though, not because Mr. Bush was better "prepared," but because, at the time, shortly after the invasion of Iraq, Mr. Bush had leverage. Iraq had yet to fall apart.

Mr. Obama would do himself a big favor by shifting his focus from the list of enemy leaders he would talk with to the list of things he would do as president to generate more leverage for America, so no matter who we have to talk with the advantage will be on our side of the table. That's what matters.

Mr. Bush was also right: talking with Iran today would be tantamount to appeasement -- but that's because the Bush team has so squandered U.S. power and credibility in the Middle East, and has failed to put in place any effective energy policy, that negotiating with Iran could only end up with us on the short end. We don't have the leverage -- the allies, the alternative energy, the unity at home, the credible threat of force -- to advance our interests diplomatically today.

As I have argued before: When you have leverage, talk. When you don't have leverage, get some. Then talk.

Right now Iran & Friends -- Hezbollah, Hamas and Syria -- have a strategy that has produced leverage for them, and the next U.S. president is going to have to think afresh how to counter it. The "Iran & Friends" strategy is built on five principles:

Principle No. 1: Always seek "control without responsibility." In Lebanon, Gaza and Iraq, Iran & Friends have veto power over the politics, without being held fully responsible for the electricity. America's allies, by contrast, tend to have "responsibility without control."

It's All About Leverage

Principle No. 2: Always insist on being able to both run for political office and bear arms. In Lebanon, Gaza and Iraq, America's opponents are both in the government and have their own militias.

Principle No. 3: Use suicide bombing and targeted assassinations against any opponents who get in your way. In Lebanon, Syria is widely suspected to have been behind the spate of killings of anti-Syrian journalists and parliamentarians. One suicide attack on a major official in Iraq can neutralize superior U.S. power.

Principle No. 4: Use the Internet as a free command and control system for raising money, recruiting and operations.

Principle No. 5: Cast yourself as the "resistance" to Israel and America, so any opposition to you is equal to support for Israel and America and so no matter how badly you are defeated the mere fact that you "resisted" means you didn't really lose.

Do the pro-American Arab moderates have a counterstrategy with leverage? I just got the new book, "The Arab Center," by Marwan Muasher, the former foreign minister of Jordan. Retired Arab statesmen don't often write books about their time in office, but Mr. Muasher has, and his argument is a powerful one: Arab moderates have been on the defensive because they have been "one-dimensional moderates," focused only on moderate proposals for making peace with Israel, while ignoring other issues important to Arab citizens: good governance, political reform, economic well-being, women's rights and religious and cultural diversity.

"For the Arab moderates to have credibility, they have to assume more responsibility," says Muasher. America could help by delivering on the Arab moderates' main issue -- a Palestinian-Israeli peace deal. But, ultimately, he said, if the Arab center is to shape the future and rid "itself of the image its opponents paint of an apologist for the West or a compromiser of Arab rights," it will have to meet the challenge of building "a robust, diverse, tolerant, democratic, and prosperous Arab society."

There has been some promising moderate push back against extremists in Iraq, Lebanon and the West Bank lately. It's definitely worth watching, but is still very frail. America's leverage will be limited as long as our key allies do not have a strategy, with weight, to counter the hard-liners. Here's hoping that once the primary silly season is over, the McCain and Obama camps will stop jousting over whether to talk with our enemies -- which we must -- and will start focusing instead about how we and our friends get more chips to bargain with -- which we lack.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Load-Date: June 1, 2008

End of Document

Stress, trauma take toll on embattled Israelis

The Toronto Star

September 9, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: WORLD AND COMMENT; Pg. AA01

Length: 859 words

Byline: Oakland Ross, Toronto Star

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

A pair of huge inflatable babies gasp, sigh and twist in apparent distress as gallery-goers here furrow their brows and ponder the spectacle, part of a disturbing exhibition currently on display at an Israeli museum.

The heaving, ceiling-tall babies are the brainchildren of Toronto artist Max Streicher, and they are perhaps the most arresting of the 40 or so works on display in a show called HeartQuake that takes as its subject a thoroughly international but also quintessentially Israeli theme.

Anxiety. Heartquake.

Those words might apply to any part of the globe, but they are especially apt in Israel, where stress and trauma are to the local emotional atmosphere what potassium and magnesium are to the briny, dissipating waters of the Dead Sea.

Anxiety is everywhere in this land - from Eilat in the far south, where three people died in a suicide bombing in January 2007, to Keryat Shmona in the north, hit by more than 1,000 Katyusha rockets during Israel's 2006 war with Hezbollah militants in neighbouring Lebanon. In between these two extremes frets the western Negev town of Sderot, which since 2000 has provided a civilian target for thousands of Qassam rockets fired from the nearby Gaza Strip

Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, 11 people have been killed so far this year in attacks carried out by Palestinians.

You might expect such harrowing circumstances to translate into a greater than average reliance on professional counselling services by legions of frazzled Israelis, but it isn't so.

An international survey by the World Health Organization in 2004 found Israelis in general were more likely to seek professional help for mental distress than, say, Mexicans or Ukrainians but considerably less likely than Dutch, Belgians, French, Americans or - according to a separate study - Canadians.

"I was surprised we don't have more stress and depression than European countries," said Itzhak Levav, a mental health adviser in the Israeli ministry of health.

"It's a pretty resilient society."

Stress, trauma take toll on embattled Israelis

So it is. But resilience is not the same as immunity. Although Israelis may soldier on despite their worries, they worry all the same. They just tend to express their anxiety differently compared to people in some other countries.

"A lot of people are looking for help," said Roni Berger, director of community services at Israel's Natal trauma centre. "But it impacts socially, not psychologically."

Berger believes the pressures of dwelling in an embattled state have opened all sorts of fissures among Israelis.

"The cohesiveness of the society is compromised to some degree," he said.

"I do think the level of stress expresses itself in terms of violence in the country - domestic violence, car accidents."

Israel is notorious for the carnage on its roads. Roughly 450 people die each year in motor accidents in this country, far more than are killed in political violence. And yet there may be a connection.

According to Danny Brom, director of the Centre for the Treatment of Psycho-trauma at Jerusalem's Herzog Hospital, researchers at Jerusalem's Hebrew University not long ago detected an apparent link between major hate crimes here and a subsequent spike in fatal car accidents, an increase that typically occurs three days later.

Most Israeli families share an abiding anxiety that relates directly to their country's security challenges - the awareness that at age 18 their sons will begin compulsory military service lasting three years and possibly involving dangerous or violent duty.

As a result, Israelis tend to be doting and permissive parents, at least with their sons.

Following their military service, young Israelis - both male and female - are famous for their tendency to abscond on year-long treks to exotic destinations that serve as far-away decompression chambers for stressed-out, 20-something Jewish youths.

Among Israeli civilians, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) seems to be no more a bugbear for most people than it is in Western Europe or North America.

About 5 per cent of Israelis suffer from the affliction in normal times, says Berger, although this figure tends to rise with increases in the frequency of violent attacks.

Take Sderot - the southern Israeli town just a few kilometres from the Gaza Strip.

Until a ceasefire went into effect in late June, the community suffered almost daily rocket attacks from Palestinian militants, strikes that were rarely fatal but always frightening and had haunted the town for years.

"There, we see a lot of problems," said Berger. "There is an enormous amount of stress."

He said PTSD afflicts more than 28 per cent of Sderot's 20,000 residents - nearly six times the Israeli norm.

However bad that may be, the situation is even worse for Palestinians, who have suffered vastly greater losses in this intractable dispute than have Israelis.

By some measures, the incidence of PTSD in parts of Gaza reaches 60 per cent of the population - more than double the rate in Sderot. The West Bank is also deeply affected.

"It's clear the level of post-traumatic stress symptoms among Palestinians is much higher," said Brom. "The level of demoralization is much higher."

And still the conflict goes on.

Stress, trauma take toll on embattled Israelis

End of Document

Sport: Tennis: Australian Open: Keothavong makes use of circuit break to put women back on map

The Guardian - Final Edition

January 17, 2009 Saturday

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the **guardian**

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Byline: Steve Bierley, Melbourne

Body

Anne Keothavong is feeling relaxed, confident and thoroughly positive about herself. And so she should. She is about to become the first British woman since Jo Durie in 1993 to be ranked in the world top 50 and, over the past year, in a determined and largely undemonstrative way, she has finally taken just a small segment of the spotlight away from Andy Murray, thereby reminding the public that women's tennis does still exist in Britain.

"Andy is a really good guy and very friendly. What he is doing is unbelievable, and he is potentially one of the best players of all time," she said yesterday. Keothavong knows she will never be in the Murray league, though she now has realistic hopes of pushing on into the top 30 - which would be a remarkable achievement for the 25-year-old Hackney-born player who learned her tennis on park courts. "I need to focus on what I am doing, because over the last two weeks I have played some good matches, and I'm feeling good."

Last year she made the breakthrough into the top 100 and this enabled her to spend a good chunk of November and December concentrating on getting stronger. Previously she had been so wrapped up with trying to win points on the ITF circuit that her season had extended well into the late autumn.

"I definitely came into this year with a lot of confidence after breaking through last year. I did a lot of work trying to build up my strength, and it's obviously paid off. It was the first time I've had six or seven weeks to work on my fitness, and various areas of my game. Now I don't think the top 30 is out of my reach. It's obviously going to be tough." But beating Hungary's Agnes Szavay last week, ranked No25 in the world, on her way to a semi-final in Auckland, has lifted Keothavong's self-belief another significant notch.

Now, in the first round of the Australian Open, she must have a real chance of upsetting Anna Chakvetadze, the 17th-seeded Russian. Chakvetadze reached a career high No5 two years ago, but has been struggling badly of late and is low on confidence - the antithesis of Keothavong. "I played her quite a few years ago before she became a top-10 player. It's a match I am looking forward to. I've got nothing to lose, I've enjoyed the experience of playing on bigger courts, and it's not just Wimbledon now. Hopefully it will help me in this next match, no matter whether it is an outside court or not."

Sport: Tennis: Australian Open: Keothavong makes use of circuit break to put women back on map

Keothavong had her best slam yet at the US Open last year, reaching the last 32 and defeating Italy's Francesca Schiavone, who was seeded No25. "I am very excited. I was a disappointed to lose the semi-final in Auckland, but you learn from it and try not to repeat the same kind of mistakes. The more I get myself in those situations the better I will handle it. Playing at this level is still new to me, although I'm 25, but I'm confident I will learn."

A tournament victory in May last year took Keothavong into the top 100 for the first time, though it was in Lebanon and may not be on her schedule this time around. While she was playing, Hezbollah and Sunni fighters were engaged in fierce combat just 10 miles away in Beirut, resulting in more than 40 deaths.

"Although it was perfectly safe where we were, it was scary to think of what was happening nearby," Keothavong said. "I think my parents (who are in Melbourne to watch her) were very worried. They got in touch and wanted me to get home as soon as possible."

British women's tennis has been so steadfastly in the doldrums, that to have both Keothavong and Mel South in the main singles draw has caused considerable amusement, with the British men limited to just Murray. Today Elena Baltacha and Katie O'Brien have a chance to join them, while all of the British men trying to negotiate the qualifiers have been knocked out.

Serena Williams, who captured this title two years ago when she was ranked outside the top 80, has been making it clear to all who care to listen that she still considers herself the best player in the world, and intends to prove it. But there can be no all-Williams final, with Venus in the same half of the draw.

Serbia's Jelena Jankovic, who lost in last year's excellent US Open final against Serena, is the top seed and world No1, but has yet to win a slam, something Serena, with nine majors to her name, has not been backwards in pointing out here. Given the current uncertain state of women's tennis a Williams win would seem likely, and, in all probability, it will be Serena.

Load-Date: January 17, 2009

Geez Louise

Ottawa Citizen

June 28, 2008 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. B6; Leonard Stern

Length: 868 words

Byline: Leonard Stern, The Ottawa Citizen

Body

Politicians are usually accused of being too political and not saying what they really think. Last week in Parliament, Conservative MP Vic Toews said what he really thought when he called Louise Arbour a "disgrace." Ms. Arbour is wrapping up her four-year term as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A former Supreme Court of Canada justice, Ms. Arbour belongs to the highest class of international elites. Her profile is global. Surely Mr. Toews ought to be celebrating, not insulting, such a distinguished Canadian.

Not so sure. He's hardly the first to feel that the word disgrace, or variations thereof, is an accurate way to describe the UN "human rights" bureaucracy. By politicizing human rights to levels of absurdity, the UN has discredited the whole enterprise. Only in the upside-down world of the UN do tyrants who represent illiberal governments dictate human rights policy to democrats who represent liberal governments.

The point was dramatically made in 2001, in Durban, South Africa, when a UN conference against racism became a front for a celebration of racism, with participants advocating genocide against Jews. The world was horrified, but UN insiders knew the score from the get go, having allowed countries like Iran to shape the agenda.

The Durban spectacle happened before Ms. Arbour became human rights chief, so she can't be blamed for it. But the UN's Jew-baiting tendencies, embodied in the double-standard to which it has long held Israel, is well-documented. Ms. Arbour knew what she was inheriting.

Flash forward to last fall. A report prepared by the organization UN Watch concluded that Ms. Arbour had "failed to take any public action" on the UN's endemic anti-Semitism. "Ms. Arbour holds one of the world's leading moral pulpits and her potential influence is significant," said the report. "The High Commissioner has an obligation to speak out." There's no evidence that Ms. Arbour personally has what is euphemistically called a Jewish problem. Yes, Jewish leaders remember it was she who, as an Ontario appeals court judge in 1992, wrote the decision that freed Imre Finta, a Hungarian immigrant accused of shipping thousands of Jews to concentration camps. The controversial acquittal crippled the government's effort to try suspected Nazis in Canadian courts. But Ms. Arbour wasn't the only judge to side with Finta, and needless to say, the decision was based on technical legal points rather than Nazi sympathies.

No, the problem with Louise Arbour is that in exchange for the prestige of an exalted international office, she became a willing hostage. She became hostage to the dozens of undemocratic countries for whom the UN is an instrument of their power. These countries normally despise one another, and indeed make war against one

Geez Louise

another, but at the UN they get to unite around the one single issue where there is easy consensus, the perfidy of Israel. This allows them to distract from the horrors inside their own borders. This is the UN system, and Ms. Arbour signed on.

And so it was earlier this year that Ms. Arbour's office praised a pan-Arab "human rights charter" that in barely coded language called for the elimination of Israel. It wasn't only Jews who felt this Arab charter gave strange meaning to the notion of human rights. Women too were alarmed by what the document said about their rights, or more precisely the lack of such.

Ms. Arbour eventually qualified her support, but her initial enthusiasm showed that in the dysfunctional world of the UN, even under her tenure, illiberal governments continue to get a free pass.

Ms. Arbour abetted the UN's moral relativism. When Hezbollah launched a cross-border raid from Lebanon into Israel, kidnapping Israeli soldiers, Ms. Arbour refused to say who the aggressor was. She seemed, like other UN elites, to attach greater value to neutrality than to justice, oblivious to Elie Wiesel's observation that neutrality means siding with the victimizer, not the victim.

In her previous career as a jurist she displayed a super-sharp legal mind, capable of making subtle distinctions. At the UN she swallowed the company line and pretended not to understand the difference between non-state combatants who celebrate civilian deaths and seek to maximize them, and democratic governments that grieve civilian deaths and seek to minimize them.

Among those who came to Ms. Arbour's defence after Mr. Toews called her a disgrace was Claire L'Heureux-Dubé, the retired Supreme Court of Canada justice. Ms. L'Heureux-Dubé acknowledged, as though it were something to be proud of, that her friend placed high value in "neutrality." Why, even in Zimbabwe, observed Ms. L'Heureux-Dubé, "Ms. Arbour called upon the political leadership on both sides to restrain their supporters..." The conflict in Zimbabwe is between president-for-life Robert Mugabe, one of the worst dictators in African history, and bloodied Zimbabweans who are resisting his predations -- and Ms. Arbour adopted a position of neutrality? This from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

You start to wonder if Mr. Toews was on to something.

Leonard Stern is the Citizen's editorial pages editor.

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Load-Date: June 28, 2008

Quebec's Muslim Moderates Fight Back; A new Web site--Point de Bascule, or 'Tipping Point' --provides a rallying point for French-speaking Islamic thinkers who reject extremism

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

April 16, 2008 Wednesday

National Edition

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Section: ISSUES & IDEAS; Pg. A23

Length: 874 words

Byline: Barbara Kay, National Post

Body

If nothing else, the publicity generated by the human-rights-commission show trials of journalists Ezra Levant and Mark Steyn proves that a new word is needed to define good-faith critics of ideological Islam -- something other than the incorrect and chilling, but increasingly reflexive, "Islamophobic."

By coincidence I just discovered one on a Quebec-based Web site -- www.pointdebasculecanada.ca -- a nicely inclusive word: "Islamolucide." A clear-headed Islamolucide can be a liberal Muslim, such as Canada's outspoken university professor and pundit Salim Mansur; an ex-Muslim, such as Ibn Warriq, author of *Why I am Not a Muslim*; or anyone else who accepts Muslims as citizens equal to all others, but who condemns bids for Islamic entitlements that conflict with western values.

Islamolucides defend and more importantly promote the separation of church and state, individual rights, respect for all religious (or non-religious) choices, and a common legal system as beneficial for everyone, including Muslims.

Canada's only well-known institutional example of Islamolucide is the Muslim Canadian Council, which last week lambasted the Ontario Human Rights Commission and chief commissioner Barbara Hall, characterizing their moral support for the Canadian Islamic Congress' vendetta against Maclean's magazine as "coming out to bat for Canada's Islamists," as well as "sending a very dangerous message to moderate Muslims."

The Quebec Web site's name -- "Point de bascule" (PdB)--means "tipping point." PdB defends Western values -- particularly the right to freedom of speech -- and provides a rallying point for Islamolucide as a francophone bookend to the anglophone Muslim Canadian Council.

On Monday, PdB's director, Marc Leblais, filed a complaint of "hate propaganda" with the Canadian Human Rights Commission against Montreal Salafist Imam Hammaad Abu Sulaiman Al-Dameus Hayiti, who officiates at the Association Musulmane de Montreal Est mosque.

The complaint relates to the imam's book, downloadable in pdf format on the Internet, *L'Islam ou L'Intégrisme: A la Lumière du Qor'an et de la Sounnah*, as well as his Web-based extremist preachings. In both, the imam's supremacist, misogynistic and West-loathing epithets often target Quebecois, whom he characterizes as "khofars" (infidels, impious), "stupid and ignorant" and --Quebec's women-- "perverse."

Quebec 's Muslim Moderates Fight Back; A new Web site--Point de Bascule, or 'Tipping Point' --provides a rallying point for French -speaking Islamic thinkers wh....

As a classic liberal, Lebuis believes this repugnant segregationist (who has also urged the destruction of such "idols" as secularism, democracy, human rights, freedom and modernity) should be perfectly free to spew his phobic bile. Short of the usual strictures against direct incitement to violence, Lebuis deplores any opinion censorship.

But Lebuis has become alarmed by the Orwellian thought-control creep we've seen lately in the name of human rights. His complaint, he explained in an interview, plays the minority politics game as a means to "test the CHRC's standard in tracking hate and propaganda."

Lebuis adds, with candid scorn for the near-complete journalistic silence on the especially virulent strain of Salafist Islamism in Quebec: "I would not be doing this if the [francophone] mainstream media were doing their job."

The Algerian-Canadian Islamolucides who frequent PdB are especially bitter about the francophone media's willed blindness to the jihadism in their midst. In Algeria, these Islamolucides were the victims of the very Islamism that parades so

freely here, not only without media censure, but with the complicity of useful idiots like Barbara Hall and other Islam-besotted enablers.

A frequent PdB site visitor called "Jugurten" writes (my translation): "The Algerian Muslim Islamolucides that I know and who have succeeded in surviving [the Algerian conflicts] are full of resentment ... Many [of us who survived Algeria's civil war in the 1990s] travelled [to Canada] in the same airplane as those who threatened them with death, who burned their children and raped their wives."

Via a diversity of media, anglophone Canadians have access to a

slew of Islamist specialists: To name but a familiar few: the Post's international terrorism expert Stewart Bell, radical-Islam observer Daniel Pipes, and the Middle East Media Research Institute.

No such dedicated Islamist critics grace the francophone media. In particular, while hostile francophone Islamists such as Imam Al-Hayiti exploit the Internet to the hilt, there is a dearth of francophone Web-based sites that expose Islamist agitprop. So PdB fills a significant gap in francophone Canadians' knowledge of the multiple threats Islamism poses to Quebec.

PdB attracts 50,000 hits a month (and rising), a mere bagatelle by the standards of popular English-language Websites, but a tsunami by francophone standards. Half PdB's visitors are Quebecois, half European and North African. Relevant borrowings of their material by Le Monde's blog confers additional credibility.

If the CHRC approves Lebuis' complaint, it won't mean human rights commissions are a good thing, but at least it will help level a contaminated playing field. If they don't, it will confirm what Islamolucides have been saying all along: In Canada, all cultures are equal, but one is more equal than others.

bkay@videotron.ca

Graphic

Black & White Photo: David Boily, AFP, Getty Images; A protester in Montreal waves a **Hezbollah** flag on Aug. 6, 2006. ;

Load-Date: April 16, 2008

Quebec 's Muslim Moderates Fight Back; A new Web site--Point de Bascule, or 'Tipping Point' --provides a rallying point for French -speaking Islamic thinkers wh....

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A Ten-Point Plan for Fostering Arab Democracy; The strategic Interest

The Forward

July 13, 2007

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Section: News; Pg. A9

Length: 862 words

Byline:

Yossi Alpher, a former senior adviser to Prime Minister Ehud Barak and former director of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, is co-editor of the bitterlemons family of online publications.

Body

Of all the Bush administration's failings in Iraq, the one neither officially acknowledged by the United States nor properly assessed by the international community is the fiasco of democratization. True, the administration appears to have abandoned its drive to democratize the Arab Middle East; Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice no longer lectures

Egyptian audiences about the lessons of integration in the American South. But few in Washington are talking about the failure of the democratization program, whether in Iraq or elsewhere in the Arab world.

The only lesson the administration appears to have learned from this fiasco is to attempt to undo its democratizing mistakes by force.

In recent weeks we have witnessed Hamas's violent reaction in Gaza to an attempt by Fatah units trained and backed by the United States to remove the Islamists from power after they won an American sponsored and certified parliamentary election in January 2006. In Lebanon and Iraq, too, Washington is arming and training friendly forces to oppose unfriendly extremists that it helped get elected. In Lebanon, it's the army versus Hezbollah; in Iraq, it's the anti-Sadrist Shi'ites.

American efforts to foster democracy in the Arab world have backfired horribly. Unlike the occupation of Iraq, however, this was at least in principle a worthy cause albeit one abused out of ignorance and hubris.

For all the failing of Arab democratization to date, Arab democrats are courageous people who deserve support. There is nothing in the Arab DNA that contradicts the notion that if done right, genuine democratization can eventually succeed in Ramallah, Cairo and Damascus.

The next American president to try a hand at fostering Arab democracy would do well to heed the lessons of the Bush administration's many mistakes. Here are 10 preliminary thoughts on the lessons to be learned.

First, democracy is not a prerequisite to Israeli-Arab peace. Natan Sharansky, Benjamin Netanyahu and their neoconservative friends in America got it wrong. Israel has stable peace agreements with non-democratic Egypt and Jordan, and terrorism and mistrust with democratic Palestine and Lebanon. Next time, leave the Israeli angle out of the list of rationales for democratization.

A Ten-Point Plan for Fostering Arab Democracy The strategic Interest

Second, don't conquer a country in order to democratize it. Iraq is most decidedly not post-World War II Germany or Japan. The United States was right to give Kuwait back to its ruling family in 1991 without pressing its democratization demands too heavily. Yes, it took 15 years before the regime allowed women to vote, but the alternatives were simply worse.

Third, beware of expatriates with agendas. The Ahmed Chalabis of the Middle East are its scoundrels, not its saviors.

Fourth, don't expose true Arab or Iranian democrats to government abuse by too openly embracing and funding them. The Bush administration's appropriation of a relatively small amount of dollars to support dissidents in Iran has sparked a brutal crackdown there that has set back democracy and incarcerated good people.

Fifth, give priority to building civil society institutions rather than holding hasty elections. This would have been the preferred path in Iraq, where elections have merely enfranchised militias and entrenched religious and ethnic divides. This means a much more measured approach than that employed by the United States in Iraq perhaps something like European Union programs for building civil society in North Africa, however slow and cumbersome they seem.

Sixth, ban armed groups from elections. Of some 145 parties running in Iraq's last elections, all but one were associated with militias, and in Palestine both Fatah and Hamas have armed wings. This may mean keeping out of elections some friendly groups, such as the two main Kurdish parties in Iraq, but unless all participating groups forego arms, the elections could end up being counterproductive.

Seventh, have strong and loyal national security forces in place before democratizing. Iraq, again, is a negative case in point: The army was disbanded even as the American occupiers set about democratizing the country.

Eighth, build on locally accepted traditions and practices even if they are less than democratic rather than importing unfamiliar models. A historic monarchy might conceivably be a better way to start than turning an entire country into a single constituency, such as was done in Iraq. A Lebanese-style confessional system leaves a great deal to be desired, but it could be the most workable model in a multi-ethnic, multireligious polity.

Ninth, allow Islamists unarmed, with a proven commitment to democracy into the process. In the highly constrained parliaments of Morocco, Kuwait and Jordan, this appears to work. In Egypt it is more problematic, not the least because the Mubarak regime energetically suppresses secular as well as Islamist opponents.

Tenth, and most importantly, once Washington has really applied the lessons learned from the current democratization fiasco in the Middle East, it must respect the outcome.

Graphic

IMAGE

IMAGE; Getty Images

Load-Date: July 12, 2007

From drab to decadent: the evolution of Islamic TV

Daily News Egypt

October 26, 2008 Sunday

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Length: 902 words

Body

CAIRO: Less than a decade ago, the term "Islamic Television" was not yet used in the Middle East. State-run channels featured early morning segments of bearded men reciting the Quran. And on Fridays they aired extended sermons from local mosques. But these somber, lackluster broadcasts only attracted the most die-hard devotees and had little social impact. Today Islamic television is a multi-million dollar industry with a smorgasbord of different channels that boast high production values and sleek fast-paced direction.

Many are only designed to provide entertainment while others are devoted exclusively to political provocation. In 1998 Saudi Arabia's ART launched the region's first Islamic satellite channel Iqraa. Their flagship program was "Talk from the Heart" hosted by now renowned Islamic televangelist Amr Khaled. The show's guests included actresses and reformed drug users who openly discussed their path from debauchery to enlightenment. Khaled encouraged uninhibited displays of emotion and more often than not the program ended with someone in tears. "Talk from the Heart's" earnest format instantly struck a cord with millions of ordinary Muslims and revolutionized Islamic television forever. It also revealed a feverish need for informal shows that spoke to Muslims about their everyday problems. Amr Khaled became an overnight sensation, creating a cult following of millions of fans around the world. His show also paved the way for an entirely new kind of Islamic celebrity, enjoying the same mania and glamor associated with movie stars and pop singers. Quick to seize the opportunity, television producers soon launched new Islamic channels such as Al Resalah and Al Nas that in turn produced their own stars. Today an Arab viewer is spoilt for choice with preachers that suit every pallet: from the ultra-conservative to the liberal English speaker. The selection is also no longer limited to men. Women such as Abla Al Kahlawy, Heba Kotb, and Souad Saleh all host highly successful programs. Saleh's weekly show called "Women's Fatwas" on the Egyptian satellite channel sees women asking for guidance about their personal life. "We have dedicated callers from Europe, the US and Canada who call time and time again. The secret of this show's success is that it reaches out to Muslim women on an intimate personal level," the program's director Nahed Salah El Din told Daily News Egypt. Egypt has launched a bigger variety of Islamic programming than any other country. But none of these openly represent political Islam or attempt to impose an explicit word view. It's a different story for Lebanon's Al Manar, however, that began broadcasting their satellite channel in 2000. Funded by Lebanese Shia party Hezbollah, Al Manar set a unique precedent with its unabashedly partisan approach and bombastic style. The channel often uses women wearing the niqab as broadcasters and features propaganda music videos that regularly attack America and Israel. In recent years the US has described Al Manar as a terrorist organization on par with Hamas and Al-Qaeda. But the channel remains as defiant as ever continuing to produce programs that some believe encourage suicide

From drab to decadent: the evolution of Islamic TV

bombings and acts of terrorism. And while Al Manar seems hell-bent on increasing animosity between the West and the Muslim world, other Islamic channels are trying to do exactly the opposite. In the UK the Islam Channel has dedicated itself to building bridges with the West, as well as providing English-speaking Muslims with their own voice. "We wanted to counteract growing hatred against Muslims after 9/11 and the London bombings. We knew we had to do something," Arsan Ali, program director at Islam Channel in London, told Daily News Egypt. Seen all over world the Islam Channel has achieved unprecedented success, attracting millions of loyal viewers. Its itinerary includes everything from specialized talk shows to children's programs. But it is their new game show "Faith Off" that has generated media frenzy in recent months. "Faith Off" is the world's first ever inter-faith game show, where Sheikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jews, and Muslims are made to compete against each other. Contestants are tested on their knowledge of other religions. The inevitable errors made by these contestants provide ample comedic material but also reflect greater misunderstandings amongst different communities. Ali explains his channel's motivation for creating the show. "We wanted to launch a program that put people of different faiths face to face. Ultimately the idea is that it forces individuals to look past religious differences to see how similar we all are." The show has proven to be a big hit and the Islam Channel has now launched a new program entitled "Modern Mosque" that scouts the UK for the 'best mosque' in the country. "The idea is to look throughout England for the ideal mosque that caters to the local community and includes the best facilities. After the July bombings here in the UK mosques were presented in the media as centers of violence. We hope to show a different side to these places." Whether it's about sheer entertainment, building bridges with the West, or even anti-American propaganda, Islamic TV is having a worldwide impact. Over the last decade Islamic television has transformed itself from its austere beginnings to a flexible medium that can be adapted to fit a variety of TV genres.

Load-Date: October 28, 2008

End of Document

TRUTH TO EVIL

The Daily Telegraph (Australia)
September 26, 2007 Wednesday
State Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 35

Length: 885 words

Byline: LEE BOLLINGER

Body

Columbia University president LEE BOLLINGER (right) lands some punches on Iranian leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

IN UNIVERSITIES we have a deep and almost single-minded commitment to pursue the truth. We do not have access to the levers of power, we cannot make war or peace, we can only make minds, and to do this, we must have the most fulsome freedom of inquiry.

Let me now turn to Mr Ahmadinejad. According to Amnesty International, 210 people have been executed in Iran so far this year, 21 of them on the morning of September 5 alone. This annual total includes at least two children, further proof, as Human Rights Watch puts it, that Iran leads the world in executing minors.

There is more. Iran hanged up 30 people this past July and August during a widely reported suppression of efforts to establish a more democratic society. Many of these executions were carried out in public view.

Let's then be clear at the beginning. Mr President, you exhibit all the signs of a petty and cruel dictator. And so I ask you, why have women, members of the Baha'i faith, homosexuals and so many of our academic colleagues become targets of persecution in your country?

Why, in a letter last week to the Secretary-General of the UN, did Akbar Ganji, Iran's leading political dissident, and over 300 public intellectuals, writers and Nobel Laureates express such grave concern that your inflamed dispute with the West is distracting the world's attention from the intolerable conditions in your regime within Iran, in particular the use of the press law to ban writers for criticising the ruling system? Why are you so afraid of Iranian citizens expressing their opinions for change?

In a December 2005 state television broadcast, you described the Holocaust as "a fabricated legend".

One year later you held a two-day conference of Holocaust deniers. For the illiterate and ignorant, this is dangerous propaganda.

This makes you, quite simply, ridiculous. You are either brazenly provocative or astonishingly uneducated.

TRUTH TO EVIL

The truth is the Holocaust is the most documented event in human history. Because of this, and for many other reasons, your absurd comments about the debate over the Holocaust both defy historical truth and make all of us who continue to fear humanity's capacity for evil shudder at this closure of memory.

Will you cease this outrage?

Twelve days ago you said that the state of Israel cannot continue its life.

This echoed a number of inflammatory statements you have delivered in the past two years, including in October 2005, when you said that Israel "should be wiped off the map".

Columbia has over 800 alumni currently living in Israel. My question then is, do you plan on wiping us off the map too?

Funding terrorism: According to reports of the Council on Foreign Relations, it's well-documented that Iran is a state sponsor of terror that funds such violent groups as Lebanese Hezbollah, which Iran helped organise in the 1980s, Palestinian Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

While your predecessor government was instrumental in providing the US with intelligence and base support in the 2001 campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan, your Government is now undermining American troops in Iraq by funding, arming and providing safe transit to insurgent leaders like Muqtada al-Sadr and his forces.

My question is this: Why do you support well-documented terrorist

organisations that continue to strike at peace and democracy in the Middle East, destroying lives and the civil society of the region?

A number of Columbia graduates and current students are among the brave members of our military who are serving or have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. They, like other Americans with sons, daughters, fathers, husbands and wives serving in combat, rightly see your Government as the enemy.

Can you tell them and us why Iran is fighting a proxy war in Iraq by arming Shi'a militia targeting and killing US troops?

Why does your country continue to refuse to adhere to international standards for nuclear weapons verification, in defiance of agreements that you have made with the UN nuclear agency? And why have you chosen to make the people of your country vulnerable to the effects of international economic sanctions, and threaten to engulf the world in

nuclear annihilation?

Mr President I doubt that you will have the intellectual courage to answer these questions. But your avoiding them will in itself be meaningful to us.

I do expect you to exhibit the fanatical mindset that characterises so much of what you say and do.

Fortunately I am told by experts on your country that this only further undermines your position in Iran, with all the many good-hearted, intelligent citizens there.

A year ago, I am reliably told, your preposterous and belligerent statements in this country, at one of the meetings at the Council on Foreign Relations, so embarrassed sensible Iranian citizens that this led to your party's defeat in the December mayoral elections.

May this do that and more.

I am only a professor, who is also a university president. And today I feel all the weight of the modern civilised world yearning to express the revulsion at what you stand for.

TRUTH TO EVIL

I only wish I could do better.

This is an edited transcript of a speech this week by Lee Bollinger during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit to Columbia

Load-Date: September 25, 2007

End of Document

Iraqi Troops Begin Operation in South, While a Cleric's Movement Reorganizes

The New York Times

June 15, 2008 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 12

Length: 858 words

Byline: By ANDREW E. KRAMER; Alissa J. Rubin contributed reporting from Baghdad, and an Iraqi employee of The New York Times from Amara.

Dateline: BAGHDAD

Body

Aiming at a power base of a rival Shiite leader, Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki sent troops into the southern city of Amara on Saturday.

The operation in Amara, a city that is dominated politically by the radical Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr, was the fourth initiative this year in which Mr. Maliki has sent troops into a city dominated by Shiite or Sunni militias.

The launch of the operation came a day after Mr. Sadr announced that he was reorganizing his Shiite movement.

In a statement read by aides during Friday Prayers, Mr. Sadr said the movement would be divided into two branches. One group will remain armed and operate as an underground force, continuing to oppose the presence of American troops. The other branch would concentrate on politics and providing social services to Iraqis.

The armed wing, he said, will be drawn from experienced Mahdi Army fighters and be limited in size. Mr. Sadr said that fighters would have to have his written permission to carry weapons.

Mr. Sadr is a mercurial figure who leads a movement that is at once a guerrilla group fighting Americans and an important political force in the parliamentary democracy that the United States hopes to help create as a lasting government in Iraq.

The decision to divide the Mahdi Army into political and armed wings recalled similar evolutions in movements like Hamas in the Palestinian territories and **Hezbollah** in Lebanon.

In Amara, residents awoke Saturday to helicopters thudding overhead, dropping leaflets that told them to stay indoors and to cooperate with Iraqi soldiers who would be arriving shortly.

Amara is the capital of Maysan Province, the only province in Iraq where the local government is run by politicians aligned with Mr. Sadr, whose movement competes with other Shiite parties.

Several experts speculated that Mr. Sadr was acting to formally separate his political movement from the militias in anticipation of electoral laws likely to ban parties from having armed wings.

Iraqi Troops Begin Operation in South, While a Cleric's Movement Reorganizes

The military operation, planned for weeks, did not appear related to Mr. Sadr's decision to remake his organization. But both actions reflected less tolerance in Iraq for the mixture of politics and guns outside a better trained military.

For months, Mr. Maliki has been cracking down on what he calls "criminal elements," many of which have ties to Mr. Sadr, but it is not clear if he is working against Mr. Sadr himself.

An Iraqi general said the operation in Amara would unfold along the lines of an initiative this year against Shiite militias in the nearby city of Basra. There, Iraqi soldiers entered but relied on air support from the American military and small teams of American advisers.

Then, as now, commanders took pains to clarify they were targeting rogue elements of the Mahdi Army rather than Mr. Sadr's supporters in the general population.

With a population of about 350,000 people, Amara is smaller than Basra and the sites of other operations initiated by Mr. Maliki: the predominantly Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City, in Baghdad, and Mosul. But Amara is tactically important as a suspected conduit for weapons smuggled across marsh lands along the border with Iran.

The Iraqi soldiers assembled at an airport six miles to the northeast of Amara, and at a local stadium, a local police official said.

By early evening, the troops had fanned out in the city center. The district police chief said security forces raided 68 homes in the province and found ammunition and explosives.

In the early months after the United States invaded Iraq, rival militant groups engaged in frequent gun battles in Amara, sometime overrunning government buildings. The militias seized control of the city, over which the central government in Baghdad had limited control.

Gen. Hameed Nabeel, the commander of the Iraqi Army First Brigade, which is garrisoned in Maysan Province, said in an interview that the purpose of the operation was to serve court-issued arrest warrants.

He said soldiers would try to detain militants who had fled north to Amara from the earlier fighting in Basra.

"This operation will be just like the operations in Basra and Mosul," General Nabeel said.

But a senior Sadr official, Luaa Smaiem, the head of the movement's political commission, said he believed the operation would go beyond targeting militia fighters. He said it would be used to weaken the Sadrists politically before provincial elections in the fall.

"Unfortunately, the executive system is used by political parties to strike the Sadr movement," he said.

In violence on Saturday, a **female** suicide bomber blew herself up in a village market in Diyala Province, where people had gathered to watch the Iraqi national soccer team defeat China 2-1 in a World Cup qualifying match.

At least 25 people were wounded, 12 of them critically, a police official said.

Because police officers and soldiers are reluctant to search **women**, **female** suicide bombers have succeeded in slipping into gatherings where male bombers might have been stopped.

Insurgents have been turning increasingly to the use of **female** suicide bombers.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Iraqi Troops Begin Operation in South, While a Cleric's Movement Reorganizes

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U.S.-Iranian talks long overdue

Charleston Gazette (West Virginia)

May 11, 2007, Friday

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. P4A

Length: 875 words

Byline: Trudy Rubin

Body

HE WAS supposed to sit across from her at the dinner table. Everyone was waiting to see if they would start a conversation.

But Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki left the diplomatic dinner in Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt, before Condoleezza Rice got there. "I'm not given to chasing anyone," said the U.S. secretary of state when asked if she felt stood up.

Thus ended the latest chapter of the ongoing saga of whether Iran and the United States will talk.

This isn't the end of the story. Iran and top Bush officials have openly signaled their interest in dialogue. The European Union's top foreign-policy official, Javier Solana - point man for multilateral talks on Iran's nuclear program - says "the United States must engage" directly with Iran. Top Iraqi leaders say the same.

Yet, disputes within the administration still block serious talks. Vice President Dick Cheney and his circle want Iran regime change, not engagement. Rice understands the need for talks, but wants to keep them narrowly focused - on issues like Iranian arms for Iraqi militias.

"They are taking very limited baby steps," says Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council. Without some broader strategy for U.S.-Iran dialogue, Parsi doesn't think such talks can go anywhere.

I agree. So here are four reasons the White House should start a strategic dialogue with Iran.

First, neither talks nor diplomacy mean capitulation. I get e-mail equating dialogue with Iran to Neville Chamberlain's pact at Munich. Nonsense. Reagan talked to the Kremlin, and Nixon went to China. Talks mean both sides put their interests on the table and discuss them directly. They may or may not reach agreement. Talks don't mean America endorses the nature of Iran's regime or its human rights violations against students, women or workers.

Iran has rebuffed U.S. efforts in the past for direct contacts, and we have done likewise. But the issues at hand - Iran's nuclear program, its role in the region, and Iraq's future - require us to try again.

Second, if America wants to prevent Iran from getting the capacity for nuclear weapons, the best option is smart, tough diplomacy. Various formulas offer some hope of limiting Iran's program. They can't be fully explored unless we talk directly to Iran, alongside multilateral negotiations.

U.S. - Iranian talks long overdue

The alternative - bombing Iran's nuclear energy sites - would strengthen Tehran's hard-liners and Islamists worldwide; it would ensure that Iran pursued a bomb.

Third, Washington's interests in Iraq coincide more with Tehran's than with those of any other Middle Eastern country. Iran's Shiites back the elected Shiite-led Iraqi government; Sunni Arab states in the region yearn for the return to power of Iraq's Sunni minority.

Iran is making trouble for U.S. soldiers in Iraq because the United States has called for regime change in Tehran. We and the Iranians are playing tit for tat. We're still holding five Iranians we arrested in Erbil (which may be why Iran's foreign minister snubbed Rice). If the Tehran regime believed Washington no longer sought its ouster, we could work together to stabilize Iraq.

Fourth, despite the flaming rhetoric of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, there is reason to think the time is ripe for talks. In 2001, Iran provided U.S. forces with crucial cooperation in stabilizing Afghanistan.

In 2003, Iran transmitted a proposal for a "grand bargain" to the State Department. The proposal agreed to consider ending aid to Palestinian opposition groups, and acting to limit Hezbollah to politics. Iran was also willing to discuss accepting the Saudi/Arab League proposal that called for recognition of Israel alongside a Palestinian state. In return, Iran wanted to discuss its desire for "full access to peaceful nuclear technology" and wanted to be dropped from the "axis of evil."

That proposal got short shrift from the Bush team. We will never know whether it had the full backing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

In 2003, the United States had a much stronger hand in the Middle East. The ouster of Iran's archenemy, Saddam, and the mess in Iraq, have made Iran far more powerful. No one can be certain a "grand bargain" is possible today.

But there is an open struggle going on inside Iran between pragmatists who want to bargain and hard-line radicals led by Ahmadinejad. "There is a new discourse between those who want normalization (with the West and the United States) and those who want to retain tension and revolutionary fervor," says Hooshang Amirahmadi. He is an Iranian-American professor at Rutgers who played a key role in back-channel discussions that laid the groundwork for the Iranian proposals of 2003.

In the Iranian system, Ahmadinejad is not the key foreign policy-maker - that is Ayatollah Khamenei. This is a moment when America needs to explore Iran's intentions, to see whether Iran is finally ready to play by accepted international rules. That would require the White House to stop dreaming of regime change and put all issues on the table. It would require a whole new U.S. strategic approach to the region.

The venue for talks - Sharm el-Sheik, whatever - doesn't matter. What matters is the political will.

Rubin is a columnist for the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Load-Date: May 11, 2007

No regrets from a man famed for terror attacks; Letter from Algeria

The International Herald Tribune

June 20, 2007 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 893 words

Byline: Daniel Williams - Bloomberg News

Dateline: ALGIERS

Body

Fifty years ago, when Saadi Yacef was blowing up French men, women and children in the name of Algerian independence, he never imagined Algerians would do the same to each other some day.

Yacef's ultimately successful fight against colonial France was immortalized in the 1965 film "The Battle of Algiers." He played a character based on himself in the movie, which has become a celluloid primer for revolutionaries.

The mystique attached to terrorism across the Middle East and the difficulty of combating its broader appeal have their roots in Algeria, whose war for independence is a model for other Arab movements, from the Palestine Liberation Organization to the Hezbollah militia in Lebanon.

Since 1992, Algerian Islamist insurgents have killed tens of thousands of their fellow citizens. Yacef says he is unrepentant about his role in popularizing the tactic of deliberately targeting civilians, even though the insurgents are using it in his own country for aims he doesn't endorse.

"Our methods and theirs are both cruel, but you must distinguish between an objective - ours - which was liberation, and theirs, which is just destruction," Yacef said in an interview at his home near Algiers.

In Algeria, terror tactics are part of the national mythology. Their use by Islamist rebels does little to diminish the luster of the resistance triumph.

"It's a shame that the same methods used for liberation are used against ourselves, but this is simply not talked about," said Arslan Chikhaoui, chairman of Nord-Sud Ventures, a security consultancy in Algiers.

"People rarely relate the two eras."

The Algerian war, Yacef and "The Battle of Algiers" film are all bundled into the myth. The late Italian filmmaker Gillo Pontecorvo shot the movie in grainy black-and-white and used mostly amateur actors.

The award-winning film has been praised for its powerful realism. On the eve of the U.S.-led 2003 invasion of Iraq, Pentagon officials screened it for military personnel. The written invitation called it a tale about "how to win a battle against terrorism and lose the war of ideas."

Yacef played the role of El-Hadi Jaffar, a resistance leader captured by the French. The character was autobiographical; Yacef commanded rebel forces in the casbah, a warren of whitewashed tenements overlooking

No regrets from a man famed for terror attacks Letter from Algeria

Algiers. He was imprisoned in 1958, though Charles de Gaulle, the French leader who ceded Algeria to the rebels in 1962, spared him from execution.

Yacef provided details of real-life scenes for the film. One authentic recreation involved three Algerian women who hand-carried bombs into public places, including an ice-cream parlor where children were killed.

Estimates of the death toll in the war vary wildly. Originally, the rebels said 350,000 Algerian civilians and fighters had died. The number later escalated to one million or more.

French military officials have said that 18,000 soldiers were killed. The British historian Alistair Horne estimated in his 1977 book "A Savage War of Peace" that 2,788 French civilians died in terrorist attacks and another 500 disappeared.

Yacef, 79, is now a senator for the National Liberation Front, the dominant political party in Algeria and the direct successor to the independence movement. He lives in a big house in the hills above Algiers, far from the labyrinthine casbah.

Yacef's education was cut short by World War II, when U.S. troops used his high school as barracks. He thinks that just about everybody who has tried to replicate the experience of the Algerian resistance era has missed the point.

"This was not just a tactic. It was part of a whole strategy that included mass participation. It was specifically targeted at occupiers, not just anybody," he said, his small, almost boyish body devoured by a large armchair.

"We killed women, yes, and took fetuses out of their wombs. But ours was for liberation. This was our only means against a cruel enemy."

He also noted, much like a rebel character in the film predicted, that the National Liberation Front botched its rule of Algeria after it took power. The government triggered a post-1992 round of violence when it canceled elections that an Islamic party was favored to win.

"Through mismanagement we created the monster," Yacef said.

More than 100,000 people died from 1992 to 1998, many of them civilians killed in massacres. Eventually, the government reduced the ranks of Islamic rebels through a combination of military force and an amnesty. Nonetheless, insurgent remnants, in a group estimated to contain no more than 500 members, continue the fight.

In January, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat formally allied itself with the global Al Qaeda terrorist network. On April 11, three of the group's suicide bombers blew themselves up in Algiers, killing 30 bystanders.

"These people want to establish some kind of religious order on the world," Yacef said. "The people I killed when I was in the resistance, the people whose bodies I left to rot on the streets, would rise up to haunt me if we let it happen. So we must take the necessary steps."

Yacef expressed disdain for suicide bombers, exponents of a tactic his generation of Algerians never practiced.

"The fight gave meaning to our lives," he said. "We weren't in it to die."

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Tomorrow: Samuel Abt on a visit to Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum.

Load-Date: June 21, 2007

No regrets from a man famed for terror attacks Letter from Algeria

End of Document

Dracula and Mary Poppins fight it out on screen for the last votes

The Times (London)

May 2, 2007, Wednesday

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; Pg. 37

Length: 814 words

Byline: Charles Bremner in Paris

Body

About 20 million viewers will tune in to a French television duel tonight between Dracula and Mary Poppins.

The images are the caricatures of each other that Segolene Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy hope to imprint in viewers' minds as the finalists for the French presidency vie for millions of undecided votes ahead of Sunday's run-off.

Ms Royal, 53, the Socialist challenger, and Mr Sarkozy, 52, the conservative favourite, have been rehearsing with sparring partners of the opposite sex to devise the killer lines that could swing the vote.

The first French candidates' debate since 1995 is the last chance for Ms Royal to capture the centrist vote that she needs to break the momentum of the reforming conservative who is running more than four points ahead of her in polls. She aims to needle the tightly strung Mr Sarkozy into revealing the dark and "brutal" side of his nature that she and the Left have turned into their chief weapon.

Adapting his usual aggressive tactics for combat with a woman, Mr Sarkozy will seek to highlight Ms Royal's shifting opinions and shaky grasp of matters of state.

They will face each other 6ft apart at a square table while they answer questions from two interviewers.

Mr Sarkozy has been training with ***female*** sparring partners to find a tone that establishes superiority without condescension. The pugnacious Sarko insists that he will not treat a woman differently from a male opponent, but he could not resist a touch of Gallic gallantry on Sunday, saying: "You should not reduce Mme Royal to her femininity -as great as hers is. She is a politician."

To gain the upper hand, Ms Royal must exude a presidential authority that has been lacking from a shaky campaign in which even supporters have compared her nurturing, brisk, style to that of Mary Poppins. She will probe in Mr Sarkozy's steely self-assurance by needling him over the supposedly heartless reforms that he is planning for France.

The last Royal-Sarkozy debate on television has been traced to 1993. Mr Sarkozy was a junior minister after a general election in which Ms Royal lost her junior ministerial post. She accused him of bullying and called him a steamroller. "Don't speak to me like that!" she snapped. "All the viewers can see that what you are saying is off the wall."

Dracula and Mary Poppins fight it out on screen for the last votes

With his promises of radical change, Mr Sarkozy maintains a four to six-point lead, but one in five voters is undecided. The indecision reaches 40 per cent among the 18 per cent of voters who backed Francois Bayrou in the first round.

Ms Royal has spent the past week courting these key voters by casting herself as a safe choice for peaceful change and predicting upheaval if Mr Sarkozy wins.

Ms Royal's strategy springs from figures that show that the deciding factor in the election will be the strength of feeling against Mr Sarkozy. A Sofres poll yesterday found that 56 per cent of those who intend to vote for Ms Royal will do so because they want to block Mr Sarkozy. Only 42 per cent believed in the candidate.

President Chirac's former interior minister has been campaigning in the past week to soften the harsh image that has fuelled the "anyone but Sarkozy" campaign. "I want to protect France from the outsourcing of jobs," he told France television yesterday. "I want to control immigration, I want to give them the security to which they are entitled."

Mr Sarkozy may have been helped with centrist voters when Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Front, called on his supporters to abstain from voting in Sunday's election.

France has had no presidential debate since 1995 because President Chirac refused to engage with Mr Le Pen after he broke through into the run-off in 2002. Killer lines in three of the four previous debates were credited with helping to swing the vote in the final days of campaign. In 1974, in the first debate, Valery Giscard d'Estaing, Finance Minister from the centre-right, scored a hit against Francois Mitterrand, the veteran Socialist opposition leader, by saying: "You do not have a monopoly over the heart, Mr Mitterrand."

THE KILLER QUESTIONS

He should say

What is the difference between Hezbollah and Hamas?

What is the difference between an aircraft carrier and a submarine?

Which capitalists do you plan to start punishing first?

Who will defend the country if the Army is supervising juvenile delinquents?

Why do you admire Tony Blair?

She should say

Which brand of tranquiliser works for you ?

When will you publish your wealth-tax return ?

How will you protect French industry while promoting free trade?

Why has your wife Cecilia been absent for most of the campaign and what will she do if you are elected ?

Why do you admire Tony Blair?

ON SCREEN

Debate begins at 8pm BST and can be seen on:

FRANCE 24 (Sky channel 517) and TV5MONDE (Sky channel 805 and Virgin Media channel 825) The debate will also be streamed live on France 24's website www.france24.com

Dracula and Mary Poppins fight it out on screen for the last votes

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End of Document

World datelines

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

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Body

Kenya: Lawmaker killed

ELDORET -- A policeman shot and killed an opposition lawmaker Thursday in what authorities say was a crime of passion over a woman. But machete-wielding protesters, convinced it was an assassination, clashed with police, leaving at least three dead.

The fighting interrupted talks aimed at calming a nation gripped by violence since a disputed election a month ago.

At least one person died and 21 people were injured in this western city after the lawmaker's death. In Eldoret's main hospital, bloody trails led to overcrowded wards where bandaged victims shared dirty mattresses on the floor because there weren't enough beds.

Afghanistan: Official killed

KANDAHAR -- A suicide bomber blew himself up Thursday in a mosque in southern Afghanistan, killing a deputy provincial governor and five other people in another blow to President Hamid Karzai's U.S.-backed government.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, which came as U.S. officials were warning that the six-year mission to stabilize Afghanistan faces a crisis due to Taliban resilience and weakening international resolve.

Pir Mohammad, deputy governor of Helmand province, was attending noon prayers at the mosque in the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah when the bomber struck, according to police chief Mohammad Hussein Andiwal.

Algeria: Terror group demise

Algerian security services have dismantled the terror group behind a pair of suicide bombings that killed 37 people, including 17 U.N. workers, Algeria's interior minister said Thursday in Tunisia.

The Dec. 11 bombings struck U.N. offices and a government building in the Algerian capital, Algiers. They were the most serious of a recent wave of attacks signaling that Islamic fighters are regrouping in the North African country.

Interior Minister Nouredine Yazid Zerhouni told The Associated Press that two suspects in the suicide attacks were killed and another two arrested. He did not give details.

Brazil: Holocaust float denied

World datelines

RIO DE JANEIRO -- There will be no simulated pile of naked, emaciated corpses -- and no dancing Hitler -- at the world's biggest street party.

A judge on Thursday blocked a carnival float meant to show that the Holocaust "gives you goose bumps."

Viradouro, the top Rio samba group responsible for the float, said it was designed to remind carnival-goers of past horrors to prevent them from happening again.

But Jewish leaders were outraged. The Jewish Federation of Rio de Janeiro sued under federal laws prohibiting Nazi propaganda and racism in Brazil, said Lara Voges, a court spokeswoman.

Iraq: Violence returns

BAGHDAD -- Violence returned Thursday to the southern city of Basra, where militants pummeled Britain's airport base with 20 rockets and British gunners answered with volleys of artillery. Civilians were killed and wounded in the crossfire.

In Baghdad, a bomb-rigged car blew apart at a bus stop, killing at least five people in a Shiite enclave that had not seen major violence in months.

The two attacks -- in areas considered relatively stable -- were troubling reminders that recent improvements in Iraqi security were fragile and far from deeply rooted.

Israel: Olmert won't resign

JERUSALEM -- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert signaled Thursday that he has no intention of stepping down after an inquiry held his government and the military responsible for the failures of Israel's war against Hezbollah.

Polls show most Israelis want Olmert to resign, and a hard-line opposition leader demanded that he leave office.

But Olmert showed no signs of backing down Thursday at a meeting of his Kadima party. His hold on power appears firm, with his main coalition partner unlikely to pull out of the government for fear of losing the majority to the hawkish Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud in the elections that would likely result.

Mexico: Exploitation targeted

MEXICO CITY -- Mexico has created a new federal position to prosecute violence against women and human exploitation, as rights groups urge the government to do more to investigate the killings of women, especially along the U.S. border.

Announced Thursday, the position will replace a similar post created in 2006 and will add migrant smuggling, child labor and other human exploitation to its caseload.

The new prosecutor, who has yet to be named, will report to Attorney General Eduardo Medina, who told Radio Formula that he welcomes the expanded role for his office.

Pakistan: Al-Qaida boss killed

ISLAMABAD -- A missile from a U.S. Predator drone struck a suspected terrorist safehouse in Pakistan and killed a top al-Qaida commander believed responsible for a brazen bomb attack during a visit last year by Vice President Dick Cheney to Afghanistan, a U.S. official said Thursday.

The strike that killed Abu Laith al-Libi was conducted Monday night or early Tuesday, said the official, who would neither confirm nor deny that the U.S. carried it out. The attack was against a facility in Pakistan's north Waziristan region, the lawless tribal area bordering Afghanistan. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to discuss the strike publicly.

World datelines

The killing of such a major al-Qaida figure is likely to embarrass Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, who has repeatedly said he would not sanction U.S. military action against al-Qaida members believed to be regrouping in the wild borderlands near Afghanistan.

An estimated 12 people were killed in the strike, according to an intelligence official in the area who spoke on condition of anonymity.

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Acknowledge Militant Islam's Threat, Then We Can Counter It

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Body

Recent reports that al-Qaida has regrouped and is planning terrorist attacks against the U.S. remind us that we are in a real war with dangerous enemies who want to kill as many of us as they can. They want us gone, and they want our way of life extinguished. To better understand the threat of Islamic terrorism to democracies, I traveled to

Israel with 45 other American university professors as an academic fellow of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (FDD).

FDD provided us with unparalleled access to almost every level of the Israeli security system, from its National Security Council to various units of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) and National Police. One field trip took us to a maximum-security prison housing convicted terrorists where we spoke with representatives of Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The message I received from these representatives was not one of hate, but of the desire for peaceful coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims. Their comments, however pleasing to the ear, did not jibe with the proclaimed agenda of militant Islam and of its terrorist groups such as al-Qaida, *Hezbollah*, Hamas, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, Abu Sayyaf, and others.

Islamic fundamentalism, from which militant Islam springs, is a political ideology that inspires the recovery of previously held Muslim lands, conversion to Islam, and strict observance of Islamic law as interpreted by the fundamentalists. The agenda is to create a universal community of the faithful (umma) united under Islamic fundamentalism. The quest is global. Some terrorist groups argue that their struggle - jihad - is against Israel's occupation of Palestinian land, and they would end their attacks if Israel would only return all of the occupied territories.

Let us say for the sake of argument that Israel returns those lands. Some Islamic groups might be satisfied and stop their attacks. The Hamas representative that I interviewed claimed the desire for Muslims and Jews to co-exist. However, Hamas' and the al-Aqsa Brigade's *raison d'être* is to take possession of the entire territory from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea (the current state of Israel) and to drive the Jews into the sea.

As with al-Qaida, Hamas sees a conspiracy between the Zionists (Jews) and the West dedicated to destroying Islam. For example, the Hamas Covenant sees Zionism as a force driving the French Revolution, World War I, the fall of the Ottoman Islamic Caliphate, WWII, and seeking world domination through the League of Nations and later the U.N. Since none of these events took place in Palestinian territories currently occupied by Israel, one must

Acknowledge Militant Islam's Threat, Then We Can Counter It

conclude that Hamas' agenda is not confined to the Palestinian territories, but one that seeks to attack Jews and their Christian supporters (commonly referred to by Islamists as Crusaders) for their values and actions. Osama bin Laden believes that all Americans are Crusaders and Zionists who are in an alliance to destroy Islam.

To better understand their agenda, I consulted Islamic terrorist Web sites. The Internet enables Islamist organizations to reach, influence, and indoctrinate large audiences mostly free of government censorship or media filters, while protecting their anonymity. These Web sites make clear the Islamists' intentions. A blog called "Supporters of Jihad in Iraq" contains the caption, "Kill the Americans everywhere." One site that offers a course on manufacturing explosives claims that their stance is no agreement with non-Muslims. Another calls for the overthrow of the "drinking" and "womanizing" House of Saud and establishment of a fundamentalist Wahabi (Islamist) regime in Saudi Arabia. The photos on Web sites also inform us of a group's agenda. Many Islamist Web sites portray photos of Osama bin Laden; the rose symbolizes **female** martyrdom; the smiling martyr (shaheed) indicates that the martyred one is enjoying the pleasure of paradise.

There are even Islamist Web sites for children. www.al-fateh.net teaches children jihad "from cradle to grave."

The Islamist agenda raises the question of the possibility of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims in Israel or in Muslim countries. Although the Hamas representative in the Israeli prison told me that peaceful coexistence was possible, he failed to inform me of the Islamist interpretation of coexistence. In Muslim countries, non-Muslims can be exempted from jihad for as long as the Muslim rulers permit - which is usually as long as the non-Muslims pay a poll or head tax (jizya). In addition to its economic function of revenue raising, the tax also impresses on non-Muslims the superiority of Islam.

Islamic law codifies other restrictions on non-Muslims, such as prohibiting the building of churches, proselytizing, and bearing arms. In Malaysia, one of the world's more moderate Muslim countries, Chinese or Indians who want to marry a Malay must convert to Islam before marrying in a Malaysian court.

There is an order to the madness. First, Islamists will eliminate the "Saturday people" (Jews) and then the "Sunday people" (Christians). In the final stage, all Muslims must live under strict fundamentalist Islam. In dealing with Islamic militant terrorism, we need to first acknowledge and understand the threat before we can devise a plan to counter it.

Elizabeth Larus is associate professor of Political Science and International Affairs at the University of Mary Washington.

Graphic

PHOTO

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