

Date and Time: Friday, May 3, 2024 4:31:00PM EEST

Job Number: 223447017

Documents (100)

1. War, human rights and democracy

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to

Jun 30, 2009

2._UN General Assembly may call for an international inquiry MIDEAST: U.N. General Assembly Calls Crisis

Meeting on Gaza
Client/Matter: -NoneSearch Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to

Jun 30, 2009

3. Israel 's disconnect

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to

Jun 30, 2009

4. Israel blasted over drone strikes on Gaza civilians

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to

Jun 30, 2009

5. ARISE, THE NEW QUEEN OF COMEDY

Client/Matter: -None-



Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

6. Obama appeals to Muslims

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to

Jun 30, 2009

7. 'This was a speech we are not used to hearing' The view from Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to

Jun 30, 2009

8. 'Self-restraint is the essence of a free society' The Chief Rabbi sees a new anti-Semitism on the rise in Britain

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

9. 'Self-restraint is the essence of a free society' The Chief Rabbi sees a new anti-Semitism on the rise in Britain

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

10. Into the Grove

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

11. McNeill's Gaza dash

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

12. Following clashes in Arish, Gaza convoys permitted entry via Rafah

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

13. <u>FICTION Rhyming Life and Death by Amos Oz CHATTO & WINDUS, pounds 12.99, 155 pp Gerald Jacobs</u> praises a novel teeming with characters and questions

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Jun 30, 2009

14. GENOCIDE TRIAL IN CAMBODIA

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

15. Voters in Israel headed to polls

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

16. STATE WORKERS PERFORM VITAL TASKS

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

17. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

18. Israel holds close election as clashes break out

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

19. Photo finish in Israeli elections; Livni, Netanyahu declare victory. Far-right party will be key to coalition

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Jun 30, 2009

20. Probe into Israel 's use of phosphorus

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

21. Few Protesters at Inauguration

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to

Jun 30, 2009

22. Is the BBC right not to show the Gaza appeal? DEBATE

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

23. Obama shuts Gitmo prison; Also closes secret CIA prisons abroad, ends torture

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Jun 30, 2009

24. Who can protect Tamil civilians caught in the conflict? Analysis

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

25. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

26. Survey misleading your say



Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

27. Clinton signals new Middle East policy initiative

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

28. Across the Mideast, Praise and Criticism for Obama

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

29. Pope's urging brings Gaza blockade to forefront With no clear guidelines for what Israel will allow in, aid groups have run into trouble with everything from 90 tons of pasta to nutritional bars mistranslated as steel bars.

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Jun 30, 2009

30. Faith in arms

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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31. Obama gives hope for a final peace

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

32. CLINTON PLEDGES TOUGH DIPLOMACY AND A FAST START

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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33. Puzzled by Dev's mystical powers

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to

Jun 30, 2009

34. <u>Comment & Debate: As British Jews come under attack, the liberal left must not remain silent: It should be</u> perfectly possible to condemn Israel 's brutal action in Gaza while taking a stand against antisemitism

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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35. Obama's challenge after tainted Iran election

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

36. Princeton professor calls for opening of Palestinian borders

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

37. WORLD - DIGEST

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

38. Seduced by conspiracy BOOKS

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

39. The saga of the worst little whorehouse in Australia Film tells story of farmer's ill-fated attempt to make ends

meet

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

40. YOUR VIEWS

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

41. INSIDE THE TIMES: January 21, 2009

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Jun 30, 2009

42. LETTERS & EMAILS

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

43. UN told Israel 's Gaza attack a `war crime'

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

44. G2: Arts: Comment: Anyone who thinks a play should be balanced is missing the point. Art isn't about being

<u>fair</u>

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

45. US President proposed 'a new chapter' with the Islamic world TURKEY: Obama Offers Islam a Handshake

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

46. Long shadows cast over Israeli army; Soldiers admit killing unarmed civilians in Gaza war; ex-president

charged with rape

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Jun 30, 2009

47. In Focus: Can Obama talk to the Brotherhood?

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

48. Late support raises Livni's chance in Israel Deadlock still most likely result

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

49. Clinton gets a warm welcome Secretary of State hits it off with residents during a visit to a US -funded

project in Jakarta
Client/Matter: -NoneSearch Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

50. International: Palestinian children's health in decline, says report: Stunted growth among young increasing:

Conditions in territories affecting pregnant women

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

51. Israeli rivals both claim victory in cliffhanger vote; Right-wing Russian immigrant new Czar-maker

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Jun 30, 2009

52. THE UNLIKELIEST TWINS

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

53. Horgan's views under the spotlight

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

54. ANGRY WORKERS STRIKE IN FRANCE

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

55. Spare me the pieties of 'good people' on Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

56. Rulers brought US war to Pakistan, says Qazi

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Jun 30, 2009

57. Turkish PM greeted by cheers after Israel debate clash

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

58. Peres: New president is great hope 'for the entire world'

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

59. <u>Election deal for a new town may be the death blow to hopes for peace The foundations have been laid but</u> critics fear that a planned Israeli settlement will end any hope of a Palestinian state, James Hider writes

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to

Jun 30, 2009

60. <u>Election deal for a new town may be the death blow to hopes for peace The foundations have been laid but</u> critics fear that a planned Israeli settlement will end any hope of a Palestinian state, James Hider writes

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Jun 30, 2009

61. Civil liberties

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

62. Military media machine

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

63. This 'victory' is a disaster for Iran and the world

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to

Jun 30, 2009

64. Obama appeals for fresh start between US and Muslims

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

65. National digest

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

66. Amid dust and death, a family's story speaks for the terror of war

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

67. AS OBAMA GIVES TOUGH SPEECH, AUDIENCE IS THINKING: YES, BUT

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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68. 'Smart sanctions' key to reining in mullahs

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to

Jun 30, 2009

69. Birds ground aircraft

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

70. Birds ground aircraft

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

71. Playing Ahmadinejad's games

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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72. Passing the Palestinian patriotism test



Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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73. Troop T-shirts joke about killing children Army threatens action after more claims of atrocities emerge Israel

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

74. Troop T-shirts joke about killing children Army threatens action after more claims of atrocities emerge Israel

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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75. The War Widow

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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76. We don't always know best in Afghanistan LETTERS

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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77. UN told Israel 's Gaza attack a `war crime'

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Jun 30, 2009

78. Netanyahu calls for unity

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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79. No Kenyan tribunal

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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80. Netanyahu calls for unity

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

81. No Kenyan tribunal

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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82. Shift to the right in Israel

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

83. Stop the Bomb activists, stockholders demand Siemens halt Iran dealings

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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84. Your Say

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

85. Karzai tells of gag bids

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

86. Passengers of freighter seized by Israel return home with tales of abuse

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

87. The Tuesday Column - BBC needs to rescind its dangerous decision

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

88. <u>Israeli government is stepping up efforts to suppress dissent in the streets MIDEAST: A 'Police State'</u> Celebrates

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

89. What the commentators say today ...

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

90. making |THEIR POINT

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

91. How can I speak out?

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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92. Letters

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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93. We won't be silenced say Iran 's opposition

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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94. MR. PRESIDENT, STAND WITH THE PEOPLE OF IRAN

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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95. Ripples from Iran crisis reach far and wide

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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96. Pray for the man who can lead us to peace

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

97. Inside The Times: January 25, 2009

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

98. Obama's uplifting overture to Muslim world

Client/Matter: -None-



Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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99. War in Middle East too general to be best method

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009

100. Obama's on-target message to Muslims

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jun 30, 2009



War, human rights and democracy

The Jerusalem Post January 23, 2009 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 10

Length: 1234 words

Byline: Gerald Steinberg

Highlight: Right of Reply. Gerald Steinberg is the chairman of the Political Science Department at Bar-llan

University and executive director of NGO Monitor.

Body

Dear Naomi Chazan, We have known each other for many years, as both academic colleagues and debating partners, but I was surprised at the virulence and deeply personal nature of your attack on me and on NGO Monitor's reports and analysis (UpFront, January 9). Instead of a factual defense of the powerful New Israel Fund (of which you are now the president - a point you neglected to mention in your article [though Chazan did point it out to the editors]), your diatribe included numerous inventions and blatantly false claims.

I can understand your intense desire to protect the NIF from an open analysis and debate that will show donors how the \$200 million it has provided over the years was actually spent. But this does not justify you putting thoughts into my head or words into my mouth which I have never said or written. Nor does this excuse the hysteria used to portray NGO Monitor's detailed and fully referenced research as part of a dangerous right-wing conspiracy. The language that you use ("Steinberg and others of his ilk") is a symptom of the attempt to prevent discussion through ad hominem attacks and senseless hatred which are inconsistent with the image NIF aspires to project.

On the substance, while some NIF funds go to nonpolitical organizations that provide important services, and other recipients have names and mission statements that sound perfectly reasonable, their actual activities often go in an entirely different direction. NIF provides millions of dollars to the leaders of anti-Israel campaigns in the media, the United Nations and other venues. As shown in detail by NGO Monitor, and summarized in the following paragraphs, these organizations frame the conflict through the Palestinian narrative of victimization - one of the main weapons in the "soft power war" which justifies terror and condemns Israeli self-defense.

During the war in Gaza, NIF-funded organizations listed under the category of "civil rights" were again at the forefront of these campaigns. For example, Adalah, which is listed in NIF's annual report under the entirely legitimate heading of a "legal center for Arab minority rights in Israel" (receiving \$105,396 in 2007), joined militant Palestinian NGOs such as Badil, Al-Haq, and Al- Mezan in referring to the Israeli military operation as "collective punishment," "war crimes" and "willful killing... not justified by military necessity and... carried out unlawfully and wantonly." In this statement, there is no call for *Hamas* to stop its deadly rocket fire. If this is NIF's concept of "Arab minority rights," which precludes the existence of the State of Israel, your organization has totally lost its moral compass.

Similarly, a group calling itself the "Coalition of <u>Women</u> for Peace" (awarded \$200,000 by NIF in the past two years), published an article asking: "How is it that our consolation is that we hurt, we demolished, we killed?... The

truth is that we really do like wars, that's our language, that's our culture... we will find all the explanations in the world to justify any war. Even this one, the spare one, in Gaza."

Like the other NGOs in this group, CWP refuses to recognize Israeli self-defense, preferring to demonize us as a bloodthirsty nation. Gilad Schalit and all of the victims of <u>Hamas</u> attacks are simply forgotten. I doubt that this is what most NIF donors expect - particularly those who give through their local Jewish federations.

IN ADDITION to reconsidering these substantive issues, I suggest that you withdraw allegations of "innuendo and factual errors." For example, you confidently state that contrary to NGO Monitor's analysis, "the EC gives no money to NIF in the US and never has." But the NIF's Form 990 for 2006, filed with the US Internal Revenue Service, lists the transfer of \$716,316 from the European Commission office in Washington to the New Israel Fund.

This is only one example of a deeply intertwined relationship between the NIF and European governments that, to put it mildly, do not have Israel's best interests in mind. Many of the political organizations funded by the EC and its member governments also receive support from the NIF. Your organization's support is used to justify European grants to Adalah, B'Tselem, Coalition of <u>Women</u> for Peace, Mossawa, Machsom Watch, Physicians for Human Rights- Israel, Yesh Din and others. As a result, damage done by NIF funding is amplified and compounded. Were NIF donors told outright that they were supporting organizations which demonize Israel using terms such as "apartheid" and "racism," that campaign for and not against anti-Israel boycotts, they would surely demand an end to such funding, making it immeasurably more difficult for European officials to support the same NGOs.

ANOTHER PROBLEM that you sidestepped is the intense political role of NIF-funded NGOs outside Israel - which contradicts the claim to promote "self-critical democracy" and "democratic change within Israel." Many of these groups are active in UN processes which single out Israel for denunciation. For example, a few weeks ago, Yesh Din, Adalah and PHR-I submitted statements to the Universal Periodic Review of Israel held by the one-sided UN Human Rights Council. NGO Monitor examined their submissions in detail. Adalah presented its draft constitution which calls for the end of Israel as a democratic society with a Jewish character, and in which Jewish immigration would be prohibited except for "humanitarian reasons." Adalah also invited reporters to a press conference headlined "Israel's non-compliance with international human rights law" at the UN building in Geneva. And the same groups have announced plans to use legal mechanisms in different countries to bring Israeli officials to trial for alleged "war crimes," furthering the demonization process. Obsessive anti-Israel campaigning is protected by free speech, but do NIF's donors know they are paying for these attacks?

Similarly, B'Tselem has opened an office in Washington to lobby the US government and journalists, going far beyond the initial line of making Israel a more just society. To promote this agenda, they hired Mitchell Plitnick, who was active in the radical group known as Jewish Voice for Peace, which also promotes anti-Israel demonization, using terms such as "apartheid," adopting the narrative of Israel's enemies referring to the 1948 Arab invasion and the creation of Israel as the nakba (catastrophe). The NIF donors who think that they are changing and improving Israel surely do not want to destroy it.

These are some of the main differences between us, and they should be discussed openly and with tolerance, and not squelched by false claims and rancorous personal attacks. You might follow the example of Rabbi David Forman, from Rabbis for Human Rights, whose thoughts on the slogan of "collective punishment" in Gaza were published on January 2 in these pages. Forman is a liberal and a progressive, but he acknowledges the reality of the evil Israel faces. "We had no choice but to react. Are we engaged in collective punishment? Absolutely."

As president of the NIF, you surely recognize the power and influence of the organization. NGO Monitor has the responsibility of speaking truth to this power. In the democratic spirit of NIF, well-meaning donors in the Diaspora deserve the opportunity of hearing different viewpoints and deciding for themselves.

Graphic

War, human rights and democracy

Photo: Protester in Vienna. Do NIF-funded organizations adapt the Palestinian narrative of victimization, condemning Israeli self-defense? (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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<u>UN General Assembly may call for an international inquiry; MIDEAST: U.N.</u> General Assembly Calls Crisis Meeting on Gaza

IPS (Latin America)

January 23, 2009 Friday

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Length: 1248 words **Byline:** Thalif Deen

Body

'A number of countries are in favour of the idea that Israel must be held accountable for its war crimes in Gaza,' said an Asian diplomat who did not want to be named. 'Most of those countries are from Africa and Asia and Latin America.'

The source added, however, there is resistance to this move on the part of certain European and Arab countries. 'The Arab world has a divided opinion,' he said. 'Countries like Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt do not want such measures against Israel.'

In the past three weeks, thousands of people, mostly unarmed civilians, have been killed and wounded as a result of massive bombardment by the Israeli air force and an assault by ground troops.

Diplomats at U.N. headquarters in New York are currently having intense discussions with regard to the preparations of the text resolution for a vote before the General Assembly meeting convened by the Assembly president Miguel d'Escoto.

'The number of victims in Gaza is increasing by the day... The situation is untenable. It's genocide,' d'Escoto told Al-Jazeera television Tuesday. 'It's unbelievable that a country that owes its existence to a General Assembly resolution could be so disdainful of the resolutions that emanate from the U.N.'

In reaction, Israeli officials called him an 'Israel-hater'. On Tuesday, Israeli ambassador Gabriela Shalev wrote a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon blaming the Palestinians for their suffering, saying it is <u>Hamas</u> that 'bears sole responsibility for the result of the current campaign'.

D'Escoto's spokesman Enrique Yeves insisted that that, 'The president 'fully understands the rights of both [the Israelis as well as the Palestinians].'

According to Yeves, the General Assembly president decided to convene the emergency meeting only after a number of member states, who were disappointed with the Israeli defiance of the latest Security Council resolution, asked him to do so.

Calls are also growing among officials within the world body for a thorough investigation into the killing of innocent **women** and children in Gaza by the Israeli military.

UN General Assembly may call for an international inquiry MIDEAST: U.N. General Assembly Calls Crisis Meeting on Gaza

On Tuesday, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay said accountability 'must be ensured for violations of international law'. She suggested the Council should consider setting up a commission to assess violations by both sides in the conflict.

The former chief of U.N. relief operations in Palestine, Peter Hansen, held similar views, telling IPS: 'Yes, they [the Israelis] must be held accountable for what they are doing in Gaza.'

Diplomatic observers say had Israel demonstrated its willingness to comply with the Security Council resolution 1860, there would have been no need to convene the emergency session of the General Assembly.

Last weekend, the Security Council adopted a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire by both sides. But both Israel and the Palestinian militant group *Hamas*, which has maintained strong resistance to the Israeli assault, have refused to accept it.

Considering the grave situation in Gaza, the 118-member Non-aligned Movement (NAM) issued another statement Tuesday deploring 'the massive military aggression' being carried out by Israel against the civilian population in Gaza and its 'blatant disregard' of Council resolution.

NAM called for the 'immediate implementation' of the resolution, including in particular its call for an immediate ceasefire leading to the withdrawal of the Israeli occupying forces from Gaza as well as for measures to address the pressing humanitarian and economic needs of the Palestinian people.

The largest political bloc in the General Assembly described the Israeli military incursion into Gaza as 'a grave breach' of international humanitarian and human rights law. It demanded that Israel 'unconditionally comply' with its obligations as the occupying power under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of Aug. 12, 1949.

NAM said it fully supports all diplomatic and political efforts and initiatives being exerted at the international and regional levels to address this crisis, including by the U.N. system, stressing once again that there is no military solution to this crisis or to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a whole.

It also endorsed yesterday's Human Rights Council resolution on the grave violations of human rights committed by the Israeli military in Gaza and called for a 'speedy dispatch of the independent international fact-finding mission' to investigate violations of human rights and of international law by Israel.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday various U.N. agencies and aid organisations issued statements reflecting growing concern about the fast deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza.

'Pregnant <u>women</u> and their newborn babies are some of the unseen victims of the current crisis in Gaza,' said UNFPA executive director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid. 'Without attention to their special needs, including safe access to proper care and nutrition, many of them could suffer from silent deaths.'

A coalition of international aid agencies working in the occupied Palestinian territories said Wednesday that over 200 people have been killed since the U.N. called for a ceasefire on Jan. 8 and many more are still dying.

'Putting an end to violence and civilian casualties is not an option, it is an obligation,' said Charles Clayton of World Vision Jerusalem. 'We cannot stress enough that the current situation needs to be addressed without further delay. Too many people have died already.'

In a joint statement, the agencies -- Save the Children, Oxfam International, World Vision Jerusalem, Christian Aid and CARE International -- added that the three-hour 'lull' in the fighting for the delivery of aid, which is now restricted to Gaza City, detracts attention away from the immediate need for a ceasefire.

UN General Assembly may call for an international inquiry MIDEAST: U.N. General Assembly Calls Crisis Meeting on Gaza

'With shelters overflowing, food shortages, inadequate facilities and the general sense of panic and abandonment felt, we must be allowed to sufficiently assist the needy population of the Gaza Strip at once,' said David Bourns, country director for Save the Children.

Last week, CARE International staffers were forced to flee a food distribution site when heavy bombing hit the area. Distributions of food take at least five hours per delivery, and a daily delivery of medical supplies took 11 hours last week -- far longer than the three-hour lull.

Even with an increase in the number of workers packing and dispatching, the needs of clinics and hospitals can't be met in the short time frame, the group said.

Oxfam International said it is 'impossible' to circulate within Gaza Strip during the three-hour lull. Oxfam's seven staff members in Gaza, most whom have themselves been displaced due to the violence, are also struggling to deliver food to thousands of civilians in such a tight space of time.

'The lulls are barely long enough to distribute a minimum of aid to the people who need it. In most cases, it's simply not sufficient time to provide adequate assistance,' said Oxfam's John Prideaux-Brune.

'It's akin to putting a band-aid on a bullet wound when surgery and life support is what is needed,' he said.

Meanwhile, during his regular televised briefing from Gaza, the chief of the U.N. relief operation in Gaza, John Ging, said: 'Everywhere here there is death and destruction. Everyone I met in the [U.N.] shelter, everyone has a traumatic story to tell. It's horrifying.'</ © 2009 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

Load-Date: January 23, 2009

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Israel's disconnect

Guardian.com January 19, 2009

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theguardian

Length: 1217 words

Highlight: Julie Flint: Surgical strikes and careful warnings to civilians are what the IDF claims. As I learned in

Lebanon, the reality is far different

Body

The call came at 8pm, in unaccented Arabic, to a foreign resident of the seafront neighbourhood of Ain Mreisse, on the other side of the city from the Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs of Beirut. The voice was friendly, even though the words were not. "Beware of Hezbollah," it said. "Beware of <u>Hamas</u>. Think of yourselves. Don't give your support to these groups. You know what the results would be." And then it signed off, in case the listener had any doubt. "This is the State of Israel!"

We do indeed know what the results would be. In 2006, more than 1,000 people died in Lebanon, the vast majority of them civilians, when Israel launched air and artillery attacks against targets including Beirut airport, bridges and highways, and established an air, land and sea blockade following Hezbollah's capture of two Israeli soldiers from the Israeli side of the border. War crimes were committed and there has been no accountability, making the next war that much easier. In Gaza so far, more than 1,200 Palestinians have died (and 13 Israelis), the vast majority of whom were non-combatants. A quarter were children, straining even Israel's definition of "terrorist" as, according to its own experts, it expands the definition of "legitimate target" and, in so doing, narrows the definition of "collateral damage".

As jurist Amos Guiora, who served as a military lawyer in Israel for 19 years, has said: "Israel declared war on an organisation, and by extension on all those involved in that organization - active and passive alike. (The italics are mine.) This is how Operation Cast Lead is different from all previous Israeli operations."

Senior IDF officers have already warned that the "third Lebanon war" will be in the same vein: more "disproportionate" than the second was. A heavily rearmed Hezbollah will not be the main target. Maj Gen Giora Eiland, former head of the National Security Council, has gone as far as to say that Israel failed in 2006 because it fought the wrong enemy - Hezbollah rather than Lebanon itself. "The only good thing that happened in the last war was the relative damage caused to Lebanon's population," he said. "The destruction of thousands of homes of 'innocents' preserved some of Israel's deterrent power. The only way to prevent another war is to make it clear that should one break out, Lebanon may be razed to the ground."

In a "background paper" on "issues of proportionality" drawn up in December 2008, in the countdown to the Gaza offensive, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that "the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) makes strenuous efforts to give advance notice to the civilian population in the middle of military targets, including places used by terrorists for storing weapons and launching attacks, so that they have an opportunity to leave the area." How

Israel 's disconnect

hollow this rings as Gaza runs with blood, and how untrue. Operation Cast Lead was unleashed, without warning, at 11.30am, when urban areas of Gaza are at their most crowded and children compelled to attend school in shifts because of the scarcity of educational resources are on the move. Would anyone with even a scrap of humanity call hundreds of dead, not to mention thousands of wounded, maimed and traumatised, "effective" humanitarian planning?

The pain of those Israelis who oppose this horrific onslaught is as palpable as that of the Palestinians trapped in Gaza. "We are darkening the world of a million and a half human beings and destroying it," columnist Yossi Sarid wrote in Ha'aretz. "We are dropping featherweight notices and a ton of a bomb ... The begetter of all this will no longer boast of the-most-moral-army-in-the-world."

Lebanon grew used to featherweight notices and pre-recorded phone calls in 2006. The calls came at all hours of night and day, to all communities. Some said, "We mean you no harm." Others were threatening: "Keep away from areas where Hezbollah men live and work." "Terror by telephone," a friend called it.

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip were also telephoned in 2006, according to Ha'aretz, and told: "Welcome, you and your family are requested to leave home because the IDF intends to attack it. The house is used to hide warfare or terrorists." Welcome? How bizarre is that? But no one bothered to drop leaflets on the two pick-ups packed with people fleeing from the Lebanese village of Marwaheen near the Israeli border, on Israeli orders. Had they done so, 23 people might not have died in a single, heart-stopping moment - one of them a child who was found, lifeless, still clutching a half-eaten sandwich. No one bothered to telephone the ambulance driver whose vehicle was hit on a bridge outside Sidon, leaving a *female* passenger dead and three paramedics wounded, one of whom lost both feet.

The phone calls from south of the border tapered off after the war but did not stop completely. Lebanese were occasionally still woken in the night by unfamiliar voices requesting that they telephone a number in London if they "know where the fighters are". But in the last week, the pre-recorded message department of the Israeli military has been gearing up again, threatening people apparently selected at random after Katyusha rockets were fired across the Lebanon-Israel border on two consecutive days, killing no one.

Hezbollah has said it had nothing to do with either incident, and Tel Aviv initially blamed Palestinians. But within days Ha'aretz ran an article claiming that Hezbollah was trying "to alter the balance of power that has existed between the militant organization and Israel since the second Lebanon war". Even if the rockets weren't Hezbollah's, it said, "it is clear that little happens in southern Lebanon without being coordinated in advance with Hezbollah." When, it asked, "will Hezbollah have a better opportunity to change the regional rules of the game than it does now, during Israel's offensive against *Hamas* in Gaza, when cross-border fire receives greater legitimacy than during quiet times?"

Most Lebanese analysts disagree: the Lebanese are due to vote in general elections in June, and Hezbollah and its allies have a strong chance of forming a parliamentary majority. Bringing new destruction down on the country would not be conducive to that end.

In 2006, Israeli planes bombed a mosque in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Israeli intelligence sources claimed the mosque had seven basements and had been "built by Iranian engineers who specialised in the construction of protected subterranean building for their country's nuclear facilities". They said Hezbollah had sealed off the area and no one could approach it. Top Hezbollah leaders had died in the attack and the party wouldn't be able to deny it for ever. Wrong, on all counts.

I biked to the mosque within minutes of the bombardment without encountering one Hezbollah checkpoint and was able to examine it at leisure, without interruption. It had one basement - not seven - and that contained only copies of the Qur'an and prayer mats. Not a single member of Hezbollah had been killed there, far less any notable.

So, next time Ain Mreisse is targeted by telephone, I'd be very obliged if the call centre in Tel Aviv would listen to the message which gives that London number. There are no terrorists in my area, and I want it on record.

Load-Date: January 19, 2009

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Israel blasted over drone strikes on Gaza civilians

Times of Oman

June 30, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 581 words

Byline: AFP

Body

JERUSALEM âEUR" Israeli armed drones killed scores of Palestinian civilians during the Gaza war despite their cutting-edge targeting technology, the US-based Human Rights Watch said yesterday.

In a new report based on forensic analysis and eyewitness testimony, the group says that at least 87 Palestinian civilians were killed by Israeli drones during the 22-day offensive on the <u>Hamas</u>-ruled territory launched in December.

âEURoelt is absolutely unacceptable, clearly unlawful and not what we expect from the worldâEUR(TM)s most moral military,âEUR Marc Garlasco, the author of the report, told reporters in Jerusalem.

âEURoelt looks as if they had almost an itchy trigger finger,âEUR said Garlasco, who was previously a Pentagon intelligence official in charge of strikes on high-value targets during the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq.

He added that the unmanned drones, which can hover over an area for more than 24 hours at a time and are equipped with precision cameras, are âEURoethe most precise, the most distinguishing of all weapons that any military has in its arsenalâEUR.

âEURoeWe were quite surprised during our mission in Gaza to actually find so many civilians killed by these weapons,âEUR he added, saying the level of civilian deaths from drone strikes in Gaza was âEURoenowhere near the levelâEUR seen in southern Lebanon during the 2006 war with Hezbollah. The Israeli military slammed the report and insisted it made every effort to spare civilians during the fighting.

âEURoe(The military) made use of advanced technology, tactics and weapon systems which minimised the risk to non-combatants and civilian property, âEUR it said.

âEURoeThis was done while confronting terrorists, who intentionally operated from within the Gaza StripâEUR(TM)s densely populated areas and used civilians as human shields,âEUR it added in a written statement. The military faulted the group for relying on the testimony of Palestinian witnesses âEURoewhose knowledge of military issues is doubtfulâEUR.

But the rights group, which reports on dozens of conflict zones across the world, said Israeli authorities did not respond to a list of detailed questions on each incident sent to them in March and reprinted in the report. Israel prevented media or human rights monitors from entering Gaza during and immediately after the war and has declined to meet with Human Rights Watch.

Israel blasted over drone strikes on Gaza civilians

The group provided a detailed analysis of six strikes in which drones killed 29 civilians, including eight children, and said it chose the cases because it was clear there were no fighting or militants in the area of the attacks.

In the deadliest incident, on December 27, an Israeli drone fired a missile at a group of people waiting at a bus stop in central Gaza City, killing nine students, two of them **women**, and three other civilians.

The attack took place in broad daylight during the opening air assault on the territory, several days before any Israeli ground forces entered.

In another case, on January 5, a drone missile struck the UN-run Asma primary school in Gaza City, killing three young men from the same family while they were using the toilet, the group said.

Meddling

Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman yesterday issued a tough rebuke after French President Nicolas Sarkozy was quoted as suggesting the ultra-nationalist Israeli official be fired.

âEURoelf this report is correct then this is an unacceptable interference in internal Israeli affairs,âEUR LiebermanâEUR(TM)s office said.

Load-Date: June 30, 2009

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ARISE, THE NEW QUEEN OF COMEDY

The Evening Standard (London)
June 18, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 521 words

Body

FIRST REVIEW - BRUNO

NICK CURTIS

WELL, they did it. Sacha Baron Cohen and his wicked comic cohorts have produced a film that is funnier, more offensive and more outrageous than Borat and the collected output of Ali G put together. Brüno, which premiered in Leicester Square last night, leaves you gasping with its sheer, eye-watering effrontery. Gays, <u>women</u>, blacks, Jews, Muslims (this film is an equal-opportunities offender. It's not great satire and treads mighty similar ground to the Borat movie. But Gott in Himmel, it's funny.

Brüno is the third of Baron Cohen's great, grotesque characters, a flamboyantly gay Austrian fashion reporter and narcissist idiot. Sacked from his cable show Funkyzeit for destroying a Milan fashion show with his Velcro suit, Brüno sets out for the States, hungry for fame. Even if it means going straight.

Cue a series of vignettes that pastiche contemporary celebrity. Brüno tries to become a star interviewer, but offends La Toya Jackson by asking her to pretend to be her brother Michael. He tries to make a sex tape, much to the alarm of his chosen co-star, 73-year-old, Right-wing republican Ron Paul.

A black baby imported from Africa (as luggage) gets Brüno on a Springer-esque cable show. But charitable attempts to broker peace in the Middle East founder when he confuses "*Hamas*" with "Hummus".

As with Borat, part of the thrumming comic tension comes from not knowing who is, or isn't, in on the joke. Did Brüno really ask an officer of the al- Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade to kidnap him to boost his profile? Or tell the Alabama National Guard their uniforms were too "matchy-matchy"? A visit to a swingers' party feels staged. The denouement, where he snogs a man in front of the baying audience for a cage-fighting match, feels dangerously real. The satirical targets are fairly easy. It's no great coup to get a homophobic rise out of redneck hunters, priests who "convert" gays, or protesters waving banners < a giveaway, surely < saying "God hates fags". But it is, undoubtedly, hilariously bold to flirt with the first two groups, and accost the third while shackled to a male slave. Is Brüno a helpful tool for exposing homophobia or a harmful caricature? Both, probably. But above all, an appallingly funny creation.

ARISE, THE NEW QUEEN OF COMEDY

Three things really stand out in the film, directed by Larry Charles. First is the sheer conviction with which Baron Cohen invests his magnificently stupid character. Who else could convincingly ask a mother if her baby could lose 10 pounds for a photoshoot? Or simulate an extended gay sex act with a ghost? It's incarnation, not acting.

Second is the sheer volume of excellent, taboo-splintering jokes and audacious parodic situations. Third, though, is the coda, in which Bruno records a staggeringly insulting charity single with Bono, Sting, Elton John, Slash and Snoop Dogg. These are the sort of people Baron Cohen used to dream of duping as Ali G. Now they're mates called in for a favour by a fellow megastar.

Brüno, genuinely hilarious and transgressive, caps Baron Cohen's 10-year career as a comic provocateur. It'll be fascinating to see what he does next.

Load-Date: June 18, 2009

End of Document



Obama appeals to Muslims

Financial Times (London, England)

June 5, 2009 Friday

USA Edition 1

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Section: FRONT PAGE - FIRST SECTION; Pg. 1

Length: 528 words

Byline: Heba Saleh in Cairo

Highlight: President signals new era of engagement

'Unbreakable' US ties to Israel reaffirmed

Body

Barack Obama yesterday promised a "new beginning" in relations between the US and the Muslim world, vowing to fight negative stereotypes of Islam and personally pursue the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

In a historically charged speech in Cairo that bluntly acknowledged US failings in the Middle East, Mr Obama called on both sides to seek common ground and fight extremism.

But he also challenged the Muslim world to change some of their misinformed views of the US. "Just as Muslims do not fit a crude stereotype, America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire," he said.

Interrupted by frequent applause, and at least one shout of "We love you, Mr Obama", the US president seemed to have mesmerised his selected audience of 3,500.

Some Arab commentators compared the symbolic significance of the speech to Richard Nixon's opening to China in the 1970s.

Quoting the Koran, the Bible and the Talmud, Mr Obama urged his listeners to focus on what unites people. Telling the audience what they wanted to hear, he acknowledged Islam's contribution to civilisation and the suffering ofPalestinians, whose situation he described as "intolerable".

Yet he still affirmed many of the constants of US policy such as the country's "unbreakable" ties to Israel and the error of *Hamas* in resorting to violence.

And he defended US military involvement overseas. "We would gladly bring every single one of our troops home if we could be confident that there were not violent extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan determined to kill as many Americans as they possibly can. But that is not yet the case," he said.

Hassan Nafea, a political analyst, said: "It sent messages to all parties . . . Its tone of tolerance shows that America is changing and wants to change even more.

"It was an excellent speech - very well balanced."

Obama appeals to Muslims

The president received a standing ovation when he walked to the podium. But perhaps more significantly he also received one at the end.

The event was sponsored by the relatively modern Cairo university along with Al Azhar university, the oldest and most prestigious institution of religious learning in the Muslim world. The audience included Muslim scholars, local dignitaries, students and human rights activists.

Mr Obama courted his audience by speaking the occasional Arabic word - even if he did mispronounce hijab (the headscarf worn by Muslim **women**) as hajeeb - and by quoting from the Koran and emphasising his links to Islam.

The man whose political enemies tried to damage his reputation when he was running for office by suggesting he was a Muslim was now highlighting his connections to Islam and to a "Kenyan family that includes generations of Muslims".

Even hardened critics seemed to have succumbed a little to Mr Obama's charm. "He had two main objectives: to improve America's image and to isolate al-Qaeda," said Essam El Erian, a senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood, the banned opposition group. "I think he has succeeded by 70 to 80 per cent. But if he doesn't follow up with action it will be a disaster."

Obama reaches out, Page 2 Editorial Comment, Page 8 www.ft.com/ukview www.ft.com/rachmanblog

Load-Date: June 4, 2009

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'This was a speech we are not used to hearing'; The view from Gaza

The Independent (London)

June 5, 2009 Friday

First Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 24

Length: 542 words

Byline: Donald Macintyre

Body

AT THE very moment President Obama was denouncing Palestinian violence, the live al-Jazeera transmission in Gaza City's al Waha cafe was rendered briefly inaudible by heavy static - assumed by all present to be caused, as it usually is, by overhead Israeli surveillance drones.

This surreal moment apart, the speech was mostly well received. The cafe was less than half full and one or two patrons were not even watching. But most who were, to judge by their subsequent reactions, did so with increasing respect and some genuine surprise. "It was very good," said Mahmoud Jamal, 23, a recent engineering graduate from Gaza's Islamic University. "He spoke about democracy and religion with an excellent vision. This was a speech which we are not used to hearing from an American president. Most important is to implement what he said."

Mr Jamal was especially impressed by the President's belief in <u>women</u>'s "democratic rights" to wear the hijab if they chose and even more so by his emphasis on the need for oil-rich Arab states to educate and mobilise, as Mr Jamal put it "the youngsters in their societies who have the energy to do something." "He is trying to change the world track," he added. "What was good about the speech was that he talked about things, I am sorry to say this, that Arab leaders do not talk about."

Mohammed Ghaneim, 19, a student, was much less impressed. "This is not going to change anything," he said. "It was all words." But this was not the majority view in the cafe. "For me it was a very important speech," said Munir Dweik, 47, a taxi driver. "I hope this will lead the world to become serious about reconciliation in every place, including between Israelis and Palestinians."

Adeeb Zarouk, 47, a satellite dish repairman, said the President was trying, post-Bush, "to improve the image of America in the Arab world, in American interests". But he was encouraged overall by the passages on the Israel Palestinian conflict, saying: "It is a good start. The question is whether the Zionists in America will allow him to move on this or not." Indeed, Mr Zarouk was sufficiently impressed to worry aloud "that someone might attempt to kill him like they killed Kennedy".

'This was a speech we are not used to hearing' The view from Gaza

As the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority also described the speech as a "good start", Fawzi Barhoum, a <u>Hamas</u> spokesman said: "There is a change between the speech of President Obama and previous speeches made by George Bush. But today's remarks at Cairo University were based on soft diplomacy to brighten the image of the United States."

Jewish settlers' leaders reacted angrily to the speech which repeated strong US calls for a settlement freeze. The Yesha council, the settlers' umbrella body, said: "Hussein Obama gave priority to Arab lies which have always been told with determination and daring, at the expense of the Jewish truth, which has been said in a weak and unconfident voice."

But an official Israeli statement, omitting to mention differences with the US over settlement policy, said it shared President Obama's "hope that the American effort heralds the opening of a new era that will bring an end to the conflict and to general Arab recognition of Israel as the nation of the Jewish people that lives in security and peace in the Middle East."

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The Times (London)
June 20, 2009 Saturday
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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 104

Length: 1860 words

Byline: Alice Thomson; Rachel Sylvester

Body

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"I thought what is urgent about medieval history," he says. "But he had discovered that every millennium is preceded by a wave of philoSemitism and followed by a wave of anti-Semitism. He knew how the British Jewish community was respected and integrated; he wanted to tell me that was all about to change."

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Although anti-Semitism is common on Islamist websites, Dr Sacks doesn't want to blame only Muslims for the growing threat. "It's not just Muslims, it's an alliance of radical Islamists and radical anti-globalisation people, the people who in 2009 were marching under the banner in America, '*Hamas Hamas* Jews to the gas'. It tends to be as anti-American as it's anti-Israel. The Iraq War was an irrelevance."

The media have not always helped, he suggests. "I do think too little of the history has been set out and people don't really understand what's at stake so the Jewish community has felt quite vulnerable because of that."

He calls the most recent wave the "fourth mutation" of anti-Semitism. "Classic European medieval antiSemitism focused on Jews as a religion; in the 19th century the emphasis was on Jews as a race; the new antiSemitism focuses on Jews as a nation. It begins as anti-Zionism but it is never merely anti-Zionism when it attacks synagogues or Jewish schools."

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Is it as dangerous as Nazism? "In the early 20th century we were talking about the age of the nation state, so anti-Semitism was a phenomenon of national cultures," he replies. "The internet means that we no longer have national cultures, we have global cultures and the new anti-Semitism is very much a phenomenon of the glo-baculture. Is that as dangerous as the national politics of the 1930s? They are different things. But it's dangerous."

Britain's Human Rights Act has not in his view made the problem worse. But he says: "I am concerned about multiculturalism. It segregated, it didn't integrate."

Jews must not, he warns, retreat inwards. "When you are subjected to trauma you can find yourself undergoing a regression to an earlier trauma. Until 2001 the British Jewish community was really doing wonders at integration, it still is in many ways - we have Lord Justice Harry Woolf, Robert Winston, Alan Sugar, Maureen Lipman, Sasha

Baron Cohen, we are part of British culture. We thought for 60 years the Holocaust could never happen again, but when the anti-Semitism really began to hit home there was a regression."

The Government should, in his view, be tougher about throwing Islamic extremists out of the country. "Someone once defined a liberal as somebody who can't even take his own side in an argument and sometimes the defence of British values sounds like that," he says.

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Britain's Got Talent or The Proms?

The Proms W. B. Yeats or T. S. Eliot? I often quote Yeats

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'The new anti-Semitism is constructed in terms of human rights'

'Every religion learns that religion must be divorced from power'

Graphic

Sacks: "Until 2001 the British Jewish community was doing wonders at integration, and in many ways it still is"

BEN GURR

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 104

Length: 1860 words

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BEN GURR

Load-Date: June 20, 2009



Into the Grove

New York Observer April 14, 2009

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Length: 576 words

Body

Lemon Tree Running Time 106 minutes Written By Suha Arraf and Eran Riklis Directed by Eran Riklis Starring Hiam Abbass and Rona Lipaz-Michael

Eran Riklis' Lemon Tree, from a screenplay by Suha Arraf and Mr. Riklis, attempts to humanize the 60-year-old conflict between Israelis and Palestinians by making a Palestinian widow, Salma Zidane (Hiam Abbass), the main protagonist, in her quixotic attempt to preserve her lemon grove against the perceived security concerns of the Israeli military authorities. She takes her case all the way to the Israeli Supreme Court, which, I suppose, attests to the comparatively enlightened Israeli judiciary vis & agrave; vis the judiciary in most of the Muslim world.

Still, I am not sure that this audience-pleasing narrative strategy of pitting the individual against the state is entirely relevant to a situation and a region in which there is a seemingly intractable hatred of the Jewish state by its Muslim neighbors. At a time when <u>Hamas</u> rockets are being fired into Israel, the quasi-satirical treatment of Israeli security personnel and paranoia in Lemon Tree seems to pertain to a different and more idyllic world than the one in which the Israeli people currently find themselves.

This is not to say that Lemon Tree is without merit as dramatic entertainment. The acting, the writing, the direction and the cinematography are all beyond reproach. The film even has a timely environmental subtext in which a Palestinian woman's lemon tree becomes a metaphorical character.

Salma's lemon grove is located on the border between Israel and the West Bank. When Israel's defense minister, Israel Navon (Doran Tavory), moves with his wife, Mira (Rona Lipaz-Michael), right across from the dense lemon grove, the stage is set for a clash over priorities.

Mr. Riklis can argue with some justification that Lemon Tree "is really a film about solitude as it is reflected in the lives of two <u>women</u>—Salma on the Palestinian side and Mira, the defense minister's wife, on the Israeli one." Certainly, Salma and Mira are not treated as especially privileged creatures in either the Palestinian or the Israeli social order. In addition to her troubles with the Israeli security people, Salma is warned by a Palestinian elder in an especially ugly scene that it would be unseemly for a Palestinian widow to dishonor her late husband by becoming romantically involved with her young Palestinian defense attorney, Ziad Daud (Ali Suliman). For her part, Mira is left alone for large periods of time, and is completely intimidated by her pompous husband. Her tentative efforts to form a relationship with her next-door neighbor are ignored by the understandably suspicious Salma.

There is much footage devoted to the ongoing development and industrialization of the Israeli landscape as if to add to the pathos of Salma's solitary effort to save the lemon trees planted by her late father 50 years before. Ultimately, Mr Riklis' film projects a liberal and secular viewpoint in Israel toward the Palestinian people, many of whom have settled in Israel itself. One can only hope that the expression of such an attitude will hasten the

Into the Grove

rapprochement of the two entities. One can also be skeptical that such a desired event will occur anytime soon. Nonetheless, Lemon Tree is well worth seeing as a first-class artistic achievement bridging two civilizations.

asarris@observer.com

Load-Date: August 10, 2010



McNeill's Gaza dash

The Glaswegian

April 30, 2009

Edition 1, National Edition

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Section: Pg. 5

Length: 543 words **Byline:** Frank Hurley

Body

A GLASGOW MSP told of the utter devastation in Gaza as she helped deliver vital medical aid from Scotland to the sick and injured.

Pauline McNeill had just returned from a mercy mission to Gaza when she spoke of the victims' "sheer gratitude to Scotland" and the heart-rending scenes of **women** and children living in tents.

Hundreds of men, <u>women</u> and children in Gaza were killed during Israel's military onslaught in reponse to terrorist rockets fired from the *Hamas*-run country into Israel.

Pauline returned to Glasgow with her delegation having delivered the first trenche of medical aid to the Gaza Strip by truck.

Some of the £50,000 collected in Scotland was used to buy medical supplies in Cairo.

A large contribution was made by Glasgow Central Mosque, and three of its members, Sid Khan, Shalim Mohammed and Shamim Ahmed, who were part of Pauline's team.

A second aid consignment led by Denis Rutovitz, chair of Edinburgh Direct Aid (EDA), is expected to enter Gaza this week with the assistance of the Egyptian Red Crescent.

Pauline said: "The devastation in Gaza is absolutely shocking. The extent of the destruction of Gaza families and homes is unbelievable.

"The victims were tremendously heartened by the response of the people of Scotland to their needs.

"Every single person we met pleaded with us to do what we could to lift the Israeli seige on their country.

"After 12 days of negotiations in Cairo with the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I was delighted that we witnessed the delivery of medical aid to Gaza." With a helping hand from Egypt's Minister for Palestinian affairs, Mr. Yasr Osman, Pauline led the four-strong party from

McNeill's Gaza dash

Scotland which reached Gaza along with the medicines last Thursday.

Nearly three tons of medical aid purchased or donated by hospitals, pharmacies and individuals in Scotland has been packed up and waiting to go for some time in EDA's Granton warehouse.

As soon as the green light was given by Mr. Osman, EDA volunteers John Home Robertson and Jim Harkins loaded up the nine pallets of aid and drove it down to Heathrow overnight. It is expected to arrive in Cairo on a British Airways flight.

Mr Rutovitz and Scotland to Gaza Medical Aid volunteer, Dr. Colin Cooper, are in Cairo arranging with the help of the Red Crescent to clear the shipment through customs and truck it on through the Rafa Crossing and in to Gaza.

The total aid from Scotland amounts to some seven tonnes of medicines such as antibiotics, vitamins and food supplements for children and expectant mothers. Other items include sutures, syringes and needles, surgical gloves, dressings and many different types of medical and surgical consumables.

Almost all the supplies are intended for primary care centres rather than hospitals, and will be donated to the Palestine Medical Relief Society's clinics in the northern part of the Gaza strip.

The funds for buying and transporting this important tranche of medical aid were donated by the public, by churches and mosques and bolstered by a £21,000 grant from the Scottish Government's Department of International Affairs.

Scotland to Gaza Medical Aid is an alliance of Glasgow the Caring City, Glasgow Central Mosque, Edinburgh Direct Aid, and the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on Palestine..

Graphic

Getting it where it's needed..Glasgow Kelvin MSP, Pauline McNeil with Shamim Ahmed (left) and Shalim Mohammad who have delivered aid supplies to the Gaza Strip

Load-Date: April 10, 2013



Following clashes in Arish, Gaza convoys permitted entry via Rafah

Daily News Egypt
March 9, 2009 Monday

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Length: 522 words

Body

CAIRO: American and British convoys heading for the Gaza Strip were permitted entry via the Rafah border crossing on Sunday and Monday.

The British Viva Palestina convoy led by Respect MP George Galloway was permitted entry sans non-medical aid which Egyptian officials insisted be admitted via the Israeli controlled Al-Oja crossing.

The convoy spent the better part of Monday within the crossing as its members were being checked before being allowed into Gaza. However, clashes erupted between members of the convoy and Egyptian security forces in Al-Arish prior to entry, when at first they were not allowed to head to Rafah.

Two activists with the convoy were injured in the clashes. Additionally, some 85 additional members who did not travel with the convoy but arrived in Cairo airport on Saturday, were not permitted entry.

Galloway was with the contingent that came on Saturday and was received by officials from the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) when he arrived in Rafah. He had coordinated with them over the passage of the convoy into Gaza.

Daily News Egypt had reported earlier this month that local opposition groups had decided to boycott the convoy after learning of Galloway's cooperation with the NDP and as a result had decided against organizing a reception for him and the convoy at Rafah.

The Viva Palestina convoy was pelted with stones and vandalized on Sunday while at Al-Arish during a power cut. Anti-<u>Hamas</u> slogans were written on the convoy trucks. The convoy is carrying relief aid worth \$1.4 million as well as 12 ambulances and a fire engine.

The convoy has driven down from Britain, but four members of the convoy were sent back to Libya shortly after crossing into Egypt.

A 60-strong American delegation under the auspices of the Code Pink delegation and including novelist Alice Walker and the parents of Rachel Corrie entered Gaza on Sunday at the behest of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for International *Women*'s Day.

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In a press statement, Rachel Corrie's mother Cindy said, "œRachel chose to come to Gaza as a volunteer just as the US invasion of Iraq was beginning, because she believed that the war would worsen the plight of the Palestinian people €" and that this is the most forgotten part of the Occupied Territories.€

Rachel Corrie was killed by Israeli Defense Forces in the Palestinian territories six years ago when a bulldozer she was attempting to stop from destroying a house ran her over.

€œShe discovered, and shared with the world through her writing, that the people of Gaza are struggling to make a good life for their families, and are so in need and worthy of our support. The situation has only gotten worse since then,€ her mother Cindy said.

Code Pink cofounder and one of the leaders of the delegation Medea Benjamin said, "œWe hope our visit makes a lasting impression that neither the Egyptian government nor the people of Gaza will soon forget.€

The Rafah crossing was a conduit for humanitarian aid during the Israeli offensive on Gaza last December. However, Egypt announced the closure of the crossing shortly after it ended.

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Load-Date: March 9, 2009



<u>FICTION; Rhyming Life and Death by Amos Oz; CHATTO & WINDUS, pounds</u> <u>12.99, 155 pp; Gerald Jacobs praises; a novel teeming with; characters and guestions</u>

The Sunday Telegraph (London)
February 15, 2009

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The Sunday Telegraph

Section: SEVEN; Pg. 37

Length: 499 words

Byline: Gerald Jacobs

Body

Israel is a land where writers are inescapably caught up in politics. Amos Oz, the country's most famous writer, was widely quoted

at the end of December when he endorsed the attack on <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza, and when he called for an early ceasefire. Surprisingly, however, his recent novella, Rhyming Life and Death, was not so positively received in his homeland.

The book is an enthralling mixture of realism and imagination, in which Oz ruminates on the nature of fiction and the role of the person who writes it. The latter is impersonally manifested as 'the Author' whom we first meet in a café as he prepares to speak at a literary evening.

He orders an omelette from a weary waitress whom he studies with sexual approval before imagining her in a thwarted entanglement with a footballer - 'a reserve goalkeeper'.

He then invents mini-biographies

for other customers in the café and, later, for some of the people present at the literary event.

The stories of these 'real' characters are linked together by means of plots involving 'imaginary' characters. The latter include a dying lottery winner who has lavished his money on sensual and material pleasures and, more pertinently, a veteran poet who once wrote a book with the title that Oz uses for this book.

All this authorial limbering-up serves to ward off the stream of questions, both general ('Why do

you write?' 'Do you write with a

pen or a computer?') and personal ('What does your ex-wife think of the *female* characters in your books?'), that the Author anticipates from his audience.

FICTION Rhyming Life and Death by Amos Oz CHATTO & WINDUS, pounds 12.99, 155 pp Gerald Jacobs praises a novel teeming with characters and questions

As the literary evening winds down into its lonely, nocturnal aftermath, the stories in the Author's head multiply and intertwine, not only with one another, but also with his own 'reality'.

Perhaps Oz's most notable achievement in Rhyming Life and Death is to flesh out, within microcosmic situations, characters of transparent artifice. And it is fascinating to witness this assured

and experienced writer address such basic novelistic concerns as life and death, love and sex, language and silence, along a spectrum from cynicism, through humour, to candour.

Inevitably, the results are inconclusive. Two men the Author sees sitting together in the café of the opening scene are transformed into a hardened atheist and an impressionable believer. We later encounter the pair watching a thriller on television: an argument over who is the killer in the television drama extends into an exchange about the Bible, justice, and certainty.

'There's nothing in the whole world that doesn't have a reason...' says the follower of religion. But

he later capitulates: 'The truth is,

I don't understand either. In fact,

I understand, less and less...'

The insistence of this theme could be the reason why Rhyming Life and Death had a tepid reception in Oz's homeland. It may offer a brilliant literary meditation but, in the cauldron that is Israel, people want answers not questions, certainty not uncertainty, even from novelists. Especially from novelists.

Load-Date: February 15, 2009



GENOCIDE TRIAL IN CAMBODIA

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)
February 18, 2009 Wednesday
SOONER EDITION

Copyright 2009 P.G. Publishing Co.

Section: WORLD; WORLD BRIEFS; Pg. A-4

Length: 546 words

Body

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia -- The former head of a prison where thousands of Cambodians were tortured then killed for opposing the Khmer Rouge expressed remorse for his deeds as a genocide tribunal got under way yesterday.

Kaing Guek Eav -- better known as Duch -- is charged with crimes against humanity. He is the first of five defendants who belonged to a close-knit, ultra-communist regime that turned Cambodia into a vast slave labor camp and charnel house in which 1.7 million or more people died of starvation, disease and execution.

Duch oversaw the S-21 prison in the capital Phnom Penh through whose gates some 16,000 men, **women** and children passed. Only a handful survived.

Solving an ancient riddle

BANGKOK -- The collapse of Cambodia's great ancient city of Angkor may have been due to a massive drought nearly 600 years ago -- not just rival Siamese forces and widespread deforestation as previously suspected, a researcher said.

Brendan M. Buckley, a Columbia University researcher, said yesterday that bands from tree rings that he and his colleagues examined show that Southeast Asia was hit by a severe and prolonged drought from 1415 until 1439, coinciding with the period during which many archeologists believe Angkor collapsed.

From the city of famed temples, Angkorian kings ruled over most of Southeast Asia between the 9th and 14th centuries.

Investors eye Iraq

BAGHDAD -- Germany's foreign minister met yesterday with Iraqi leaders in the latest high-level visit by a major Western nation that refused to take part in the 2003 U.S.-led invasion but is now looking for ties and lucrative contracts.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the first German foreign minister to come to Iraq in more than 20 years, arrived one week after Nicolas Sarkozy visited Baghdad, the French president calling on other European countries to follow his lead "to support the peace."

GENOCIDE TRIAL IN CAMBODIA

Iraqi leaders seem eager to cement their relations with Germany and France partly to avoid the appearance of being puppets of the United States -- which at any rate is preparing to withdraw its troops, many of whom worked on infrastructure projects such as rebuilding bridges and roads.

Prisoner exchange?

JERUSALEM -- Israel's Security Cabinet will consider a possible prisoner exchange with <u>Hamas</u>, freeing hundreds of Palestinian prisoners for a soldier captured in June 2007, an Israeli official said yesterday.

The top-level meeting is set for today, said government spokesman Mark Regev. He said a decision also was expected on terms of a long-term truce in Gaza after Israel's bruising offensive there last month.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has said that the soldier, Sgt. Gilad Schalit, must be freed as part of any truce.

Berlusconi bribery case

LONDON -- An Italian court convicted a British lawyer yesterday of accepting a \$600,000 bribe in exchange for false testimony in corruption trials involving Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

The conviction is a political embarrassment for Mr. Berlusconi, a billionaire businessman, whose government last year passed a law that gives him immunity from prosecution. The case has also generated publicity in Britain, where David Mills is well known as the estranged husband of Tessa Jowell, a member of Parliament and the minister in charge of the 2012 Olympics.

Load-Date: February 18, 2009



Voters in Israel headed to polls

Prince Rupert Daily News (British Columbia)

February 10, 2009 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 10

Length: 525 words

Byline: Steve Weizman, Associated Press

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM - The two front-runners in the race to rule Israel made last-minute appeals to voters as polls opened Tuesday in a close general election whose outcome could determine the course of Mideast peace negotiations.

Opinion polls for months have predicted a decisive victory by former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hardline Likud Party, but new polls released over the weekend showed Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's ruling Kadima Party closing the gap.

Netanyahu opposes ceding land to the Palestinians and favors allowing Israeli settlements in the West Bank to expand, two points that are likely to clash with Washington policy. Livni is a centrist who hopes to become the country's first *female* leader in nearly 40 years.

Neither is expected to get more than 30 seats in the 120-seat parliament, however, meaning the winner will likely have to form a coalition with smaller parties.

A fractious coalition could complicate efforts to create a Palestinian state and pose big challenges for U.S. President Barack Obama, who has made achieving Middle East peace a top priority.

Livni told the Maariv daily newspaper in a story published Tuesday that she offers Israelis "a leadership that has vision and a backbone of values and morals."

"It is so close, and it depends only on us," she said.

Livni was one of the architects of Israel's offensive against <u>Hamas</u> in the Gaza Strip last month and has been striving to present an image of herself as tough but sensible.

Netanyahu told the newspaper that the next prime Minister must be from a party that has widespread public confidence.

"Israel cannot afford superfluous domestic crises and a leadership that is like a wagon with different horses pulling it in different directions," he said.

Voters in Israel headed to polls

Pouring rain and strong winds Tuesday were expected to keep turnout low. Voter turnout in the last election in 2006 was 63.2 per cent, the lowest in Israel's history.

The Israeli military announced a closure of the West Bank from midnight Monday until midnight Tuesday, barring Palestinians from entering Israel except for urgent medical treatment. Such closures are routine during elections and religious festivals, when Israelis gather in public places and present a potential target for militant attacks.

Security officials are particularly wary of the possibility of an attack by Palestinians who may be seeking to avenge Israel's harsh 22-day Gaza campaign, in which about 1,300 Palestinians were killed, according to Gaza health officials. Thirteen Israelis also died in the campaign meant to halt militant rocket fire aimed at southern Israel.

Polls were to be open in all but the smallest communities until 10 p.m. Exit polls were expected to release projections soon after the polls close, and the first official results were expected before dawn Wed.

If the hawkish Netanyahu garners the most votes, as polls predict, the big question will be whether he tries to put together a right-wing or centrist coalition government.

An alliance that relies on ultranationalists and hawkish religious parties would likely doom Mideast peace efforts and put Netanyahu on a collision course with the new U.S. administration.

Load-Date: February 11, 2009



STATE WORKERS PERFORM VITAL TASKS

The Capital Times (Madison, Wisconsin)

March 6, 2009 Friday

ALL EDITION

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Section: OPINION; Pg. WEB

Length: 510 words

Body

Dear Editor: I am a recently retired state worker with 35 years of service. I am tired of people bashing state workers. If the governor's budget can prevent state workers from being furloughed, taking reduced hours or pay, that's great.

People forget what state workers do for our citizens. With the federal stimulus money coming for infrastructure improvement, there will be no federal money for state workers. So if we lay off or reduce hours for workers, who will be available to inspect the new road/bridge work, or the replaced/repaired water supply systems? If workers have reduced hours, who will be available to process unemployment compensation claims for the unfortunate folks who are unemployed? State workers inspect child care facilities, monitor the safety of our drinking water, monitor the quality of the air we breathe, and inspect our food supply, as well as other important services.

The work in these areas has been cut back extensively over the last 15 years as cuts were made in the state work force. Do we want to cut back these efforts even more?

State workers work just as hard as workers in the private sector. Reducing their hours and pay will have economic consequences not just for the state worker, but also for the economy of the city/village/town they live in and contribute to. As workers, we all need to support each other so that we can come out of this recession better for what we are going through.

Mary Jo Kopecky Madison

Palestinian success linked to Israel's trust

Dear Editor: John Costello's advice to the Palestinians to "take what they can get and begin that building project Peres so glibly suggested: turning Gaza into the Singapore of the Middle East" has great merit.

The main hang up of course is that all Palestinians, which would include those belonging to <u>Hamas</u>, would really have to recognize Israel's right to exist in a demonstrable way in order to garner the trust of the Israelis which would in turn allow for a more free flow of goods and supplies into and out of Gaza. This could potentially result in a mutual trust that could pave the way to a two state settlement in the forever ongoing Middle East conflict. Unfortunately those in Gaza and the West Bank have refused to do this on several occasions.

John Anderson Merrimac

Zweifel's right on part-time City Council

STATE WORKERS PERFORM VITAL TASKS

Dear Editor: Is hell starting to freeze? Last week I was in total agreement with John Nichols' article on state government reform. Now Dave Zweifel pens an article pointing out the disadvantages of the Madison City Council aldermen/women becoming full-time positions, an idea I also think is totally without merit.

Full timers are just that because they spend so much of their time and effort in getting re-elected. Although the subject was not mentioned, term limits would also put a stop to the special interest fundraising and end much of the corruption on both sides of the political fence.

This make two Wednesdays in a row that I didn't start the morning cussing out the CT staff. What's up with that?

Norman Sannes Madison

3/05/2009 2:13 pm

Load-Date: March 7, 2009



The Australian

January 15, 2009 Thursday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 11

Length: 2526 words

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.

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 goosestep 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

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 <u>Hamas</u> 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 <u>Hamas</u> 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 <u>women</u> 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 <u>Hamas</u>'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

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

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

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

letters@theaustralian.com.au

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, buggered.

Keith Russell

Mayfield West, NSW

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Load-Date: January 14, 2009



Israel holds close election as clashes break out

AlArabiya.net

February 9, 2009 Monday

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Length: 554 words

Body

Clashes between Arab citizens and police broke out as Israel went to the polls Tuesday to decide the tight race between hawkish former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and centrist Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, with the farright expected to make major gains.

Police barred an election monitor from the radical rightist National Jewish Front from entering the predominantly Arab town of Umm El-Fahm in the north following clashes between Arab Israelis and the police, according to press reports.

Dozens of Arab youth who opposed the Central Elections Committee's decision to allow far-right activist Baruch Marzel to serve as a poll monitor attempted to prevent him from entering, according the the Jerusalem Post. "We have come to condemn the racism and this fascist," one of the demonstrators told the paper. "We want to live in peace, but we won't let any racist into Umm el-Fahm. He won't enter our home."

In advance of the election, Israel sealed off the occupied West Bank, denying Palestinians entry for the duration of the election, the army said. Police deployed thousands of officers nationwide for extra security.

Dead heat

The race could be determined by how many votes the smaller parties garner or the ballots of the 10 to 15 percent of undecided voters, pollsters said.

"The trend we've seen the last few days indicates a very close battle," said pollster Rafi Smith of the Smith Research Center. "No one has jumped ahead and it's tough to call."

Likud party leader Netanyahu, once a clear frontrunner in opinion polls, has lost ground to Livni since the 22-day offensive that was aimed at wiping out <u>Hamas</u> tunnels and stopping rocket attacks, both of which continue following the Jan. 18 unilateral ceasefire.

Defense Minister Ehud Barak, a third prominent candidate, trailed both Netanyahu and Livni, though his poll numbers had more than doubled since the Gaza war, which killed 1,300 Palestinians and 13 Israelis, ended.

Livni, 50, a former Mossad agent, would become the first <u>female</u> prime minister since Golda Meir in the 1970s. Netanyahu, 59, a former finance minister, and Barak, 66, a former general, have also previously served in the top position.

Israel holds close election as clashes break out

The big surprise of the campaign has been the meteoric rise of Avigdor Lieberman, a tough-talking Soviet immigrant whose support swelled in the wake of the Gaza war as he vowed to hit Israel's enemies with an iron fist. With opinion polls showing Lieberman's Yisrael Beitenu party displacing Labour in third position, the dark horse looks likely to play kingmaker in a government whose makeup will be crucial in determining the fate of Middle East peacemaking.

Dull contest

Some 5.3 million eligible voters casting ballots in more than 9,000 schools and community centers nationwide stand to decide an election analysts dubbed as duller than past contests, with some blaming this on the fighting in Gaza and continuing rocket fire into Israel that put campaign rallies on hold for several weeks and dampened public enthusiasm.

Israeli President Shimon Peres accused the candidates of failing to address "the country's burning issues" in the campaign, during which candidates did not hold a single debate.

Yitzhak Galnoor, a political scientist, said Israelis were largely bored by the campaign because it was "filled with slogans bereft of any content."

Load-Date: May 5, 2009



Photo finish in Israeli elections; Livni, Netanyahu declare victory. Far-right party will be key to coalition

The Gazette (Montreal)
February 11, 2009 Wednesday
Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A14

Length: 451 words

Byline: MATTHEW FISHER, Canwest News Service

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Both Tzipi Livni's ruling Kadima party and Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud challenger declared victory as Israel's general election came to a tight finish early today, setting the stage for a power struggle.

According to a final ballot count, Kadima won a razor-thin victory, gaining one more seat than right-wing rival Likud. Israel's central election commission said Kadima won 28 seats in the 120-member Knesset, followed by Likud with 27.

Avigdor Lieberman's ultra-nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party came in third with 15 seats - its best-ever showing - and the centre-left Labour party fell to 13, its worst performance in any election. The ultra-Orthodox Shas party came in fifth with 11 seats.

However, the party with the most seats does not necessarily lead the next government.

"Today the people have chosen Kadima," Livni told party supporters in Tel Aviv as she vowed to become Israel's second *female* prime minister.

"Israel does not belong to the right in the same way that peace does not belong to the left," the 50-year-old Livni said.

But it was Netanyahu who claimed victory and told a cheering crowd of supporters that "the people want to be led in a different way."

"The national camp led by the Likud has won an unambiguous majority," Netanya-hu, 59, said in Tel Aviv. "I am certain that I will be able to form the next government," he said. "I can unite all forces of this nation and lead Israel."

The former prime minister's confidence that he had been returned to the office he held from 1996 to 1999 stemmed from a surge in support for other right-wing parties as well as Likud. This made it more likely that he, rather than Livni, would be able to form Israel's next coalition government.

Photo finish in Israeli elections; Livni, Netanyahu declare victory. Far-right party will be key to coalition

The real kingmaker is likely to be Lieberman, the blunt, extreme right-wing leader of Israel Beiteinu. The Russian-speaking immigrant from Moldova and his party were arguably the biggest winners, improving their standing from 11 to 15 seats.

Lieberman's main campaign theme was that the country's substantial Arab minority must take an oath of loyalty to the Jewish state. In a speech to campaign workers after the polls closed, he also promised to crush <u>Hamas</u>, which continued yesterday to fire rockets sporadically into Israel.

Labour, which was Israel's founding party and its biggest entity for decades, was the night's big loser, slipping for the first time ever to fourth place behind Yisrael Beiteinu as it dropped to 12 seats.

The close results and the fact 12 parties have apparently won seats in the next Knesset were the latest of many indications that it will be very difficult for either Netanyahu or Livni, who is foreign minister in the current Kadima government, to stitch together a coalition.

Graphic

Colour Photo: DAVID SILVERMAN, GETTY IMAGES; "Today the people have chosen Kadima," Tzipi Livni said as her party held a razor-thin lead.;

Colour Photo: URIEL SINAI, GETTY IMAGES; The Likud "has won an unambiguous majority," Benjamin Netanyahu said last night.;

Load-Date: March 28, 2009



Probe into Israel's use of phosphorus

The Courier Mail (Australia)

January 23, 2009 Friday

1 - First with the news Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 33

Length: 548 words

Byline: Shashank Bengali

Body

GAZA CITY: The Israeli military is investigating whether its soldiers fighting in the densely populated Gaza Strip improperly fired shells packed with white phosphorus -- a powerful chemical munition that can cause serious and sometimes fatal burns, officials said yesterday.

It's the first time that Israel has acknowledged using the controversial weapon during the 22-day war in Gaza, although doctors, United Nations officials and independent human-rights groups have accused Israeli forces of firing phosphorus in civilian areas, a possible violation of UN conventions on warfare.

White phosphorus is legal under international law if it is used as a smoke screen to obscure troop movements or other military operations, but it is highly dangerous if it is deployed in heavily populated areas, because it can set skin on fire and burn all the way to the bone.

Israel has said repeatedly it used weapons consistent with international laws during its war against the militant Islamic group *Hamas*.

But doctors interviewed yesterday in Gaza said that so many patients had sustained burns consistent with white phosphorus that it appeared that Israeli forces used the chemical in highly populated areas.

At Shifa, the main hospital in Gaza City, doctors said that scores of patients had arrived with unusual burns, dark, foul-smelling splotches that grew deeper and blacker despite being washed with water and saline solution. The burns were so toxic in some patients that even those with relatively minor wounds, which ought to have been treatable, grew ill and died.

"We have never seen this type of injury or the number of such injuries," said Dr Nafez Abu Shaaban, the head of the burns unit at Shifa. "These were not usual burns."

Patients told medics that they had come into contact with smoking, spongelike wafers of phosphorus, and in some cases, doctors said, victims reached hospitals with wounds still smoking. White phosphorus burns as long as it is exposed to oxygen, and it can reach temperatures well over 1000C.

The injuries baffled Gaza's medical staff, adding to the enormous strain that the war placed on the health system. Gaza health officials say that more than 1300 Palestinians were killed in the fighting, two-fifths of them children and **women**. Thirteen Israelis died, 10 of them soldiers.

Probe into Israel 's use of phosphorus

In a spartan room in the reconstructive-surgery wing of Shifa, 41-year-old Sabha Abu Halimah -- her left hand still covered with thick black lesions -- described how a shell had struck a house in which 16 members of her family had taken shelter in the northern town of Beit Lahiya.

Her 10-year-old son, Zayed, perished in the flames, along with her husband and three other children, including a 15-month-old girl. Her clothes ablaze, Sabha Abu Halimah rolled on the ground for several minutes until most of the flames were extinguished, but when relatives brought her to the hospital several hours later, her burns were still smoking, doctors said.

Captain Elie Isaacson, an Israeli military spokesman, said an investigative team would probe the force's use of phosphorus "due to the number of claims from the press and from other sources".

The Israeli troop withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was completed before dawn, in time for US President Barack Obama's first full day on the job.

Load-Date: January 26, 2009



Few Protesters at Inauguration

The New York Times
January 21, 2009 Wednesday
The New York Times on the Web

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Section: Section; Column 0; National Desk; Pg.

Length: 560 words

Byline: By JOHN M. BRODER

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

Protesters, a fixture of every inauguration since President Nixon's in 1973, were few and scattered on Tuesday as Barack Obama assumed the presidency. It appeared there were far more vendors looking to make a buck selling Inaugural Chocolate Bars and Obama Incense than protesters seeking to make a statement.

Those who raised their voices were more likely to be expressing gratitude that former President George W. Bush was leaving office than displeasure that Mr. Obama was replacing him.

Some boos could be heard in the crowd gathered on the mall when Vice President Dick Cheney and Mr. Bush were introduced for Mr. Obama's swearing-in.

And when it was over, a chant of "na na na na, hey hey, goodbye" arose from some among the throng on the Mall as Mr. Bush's helicopter flew by carrying him to Andrews Air Force Base and on to his retirement in Texas.

In the streets surrounding the parade route, an occasional anti-Bush sign could be seen, protesting his treatment of the Kurds in Iraq or just urging him to get out of town. Some along the parade route held signs demanding that Mr. Bush be indicted.

In Lafayette Park, protesters from the Coalition for Peace hung signs along a fence demanding an end to Islamic radicalism and Middle East oil imports. The group also expressed its support for Israel's invasion of Gaza. One of the group's leaders said the message was not so much a protest but a plea.

"It is directed toward Barack Obama in that we want him to make a clear statement to stop Iran's march to nuclear weapons and Pakistan's threat against India," Marion Dreyfus of the coalition said through a police fence separating the park from the street. "We are also supporting Israel against the aggression of <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza." There were a number of groups and individuals who came to the inaugural festivities to have their causes heard.

Code Pink, the liberal **women**'s group, passed out hundreds of pink ribbons asking the new president to "stand up for peace."

Amnesty International staged a small demonstration outside a subway station to protest the seventh anniversary of the opening of the prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Few Protesters at Inauguration

On Connecticut Avenue, one of the city's major thoroughfares, someone parked a truck towing a large sign demanding a single-payer health care system.

Outside the Swiss Embassy near the National Cathedral, a small cluster of anti-homosexual activists from the Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas held up signs protesting gay marriage and gay rights.

Some advocates of gay rights booed when the Rev. Rick Warren of California's Saddleback Church delivered the invocation. Mr. Warren, one of the nation's best-known evangelical preachers, opposes gay marriage. He spoke at Mr. Obama's invitation. About 100 people rallied outside his church in Lake Forest, Calif., on Monday to protest his inclusion in the inaugural ceremonies.

Also on Monday, a number of groups seeking to "Give Bush the boot" set up a 15-foot-tall inflatable doll of Mr. Bush in a flight suit in Dupont Circle and threw shoes at him.

"This action is of course a catharsis for folks who have watched in dismay as Bush and Cheney leave office with no impeachment proceedings, no criminal investigations, no accountability whatsoever for their actions at home and abroad," saidJamilla El-Shafei, who helped organize the event.

http://www.nytimes.com

Load-Date: January 21, 2009



Is the BBC right not to show the Gaza appeal?; DEBATE

Daily Mail (London)

January 28, 2009 Wednesday

1ST Edition

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Section: Pg. 69

Length: 560 words

Body

AS A former Press officer who has worked for the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), I urge the BBC to reverse its decision not to air the DEC Gaza Appeal. There are no grounds for asserting there is any political motivation or partiality in this appeal.

It is an objective fact that there is a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Showing TV pictures of this crisis could never be seen as taking a political stance on its wider causes.

I've seen at first hand how vital DEC appeals are to saving lives in humanitarian crises. This unique cooperation between respected British broadcasters and aid organisations has mobilised the public response to crises in faraway places for more than 45 years.

PETER HULME, Ashbourne, Derbys.

AS A licence payer, I'm disgusted that the BBC has refused to show an emergency appeal on behalf of the people of Gaza, fearing it might compromise its impartiality. In fact, it shows it's putting politics before people's lives and that it values its reputation more than the lives of the people in Gaza.

The BBC was very quick to defend a foul-mouthed presenter who is prepared to abuse pensioners, but refuses to screen an appeal to save the lives of many men, <u>women</u> and children. Why doesn't it sack Jonathan Ross and send his salary to the people of Gaza, where it might do some good? MAIRE McGUINNESS, Belfast.

I FIND the appeal for yet more aid to the Palestinians in Gaza very difficult to swallow. These same Palestinians voted into power those who seek to eradicate the Jewish state of Israel, who support the indiscriminate missile attacks on Jewish civilians and who indoctrinate their children in the merits of martyrdom through funding already received from the West and the Arab world.

Countless billions in financial and humanitarian aid have been provided to the Palestinians by the West for many years.

In 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza and completely turned its administration over to the Palestinian Authority. All of the Jewish settlements were disbanded and their residents forcibly removed. The Israeli agricultural, commercial and residential assets — which were considerable — were left for the Palestinians. The assets were looted or destroyed and what the Jews had made flourish was trodden underfoot.

Is the BBC right not to show the Gaza appeal? DEBATE

Arab governments could have helped the Palestinian Arabs settle down to a decent life at any point since the Israeli withdrawal — indeed, at any point since the rebirth of Israel in 1948.

When Israel ceded Gaza to the Palestinians, many warned that withdrawing from Gaza would not satisfy the Palestinian Arabs' goals and that it would only allow the territory to become a springboard for terrorism aimed at annihilating the Jewish State. Now, not having learned from history, everyone is expected to pick up the pieces and give aid to those who would again turn their hatred and weapons against Israeli civilians as soon as they are back on their feet.

DOUGLAS ROBERTS, Tredegar, Gwent.

THE Gaza appeal row has got far more publicity than DEC could ever have achieved with its appeal film. Its authors should be delighted.

ROBIN PETHERBRIDGE, Bath.

I WOULD not support the Gaza Strip appeal because <u>Hamas</u> brought the problem on themselves by ceaselessly firing rockets into Israel — and because the oil-rich Arab countries could pay to repair any damage out of their petty cash.

NEIL DACOMB, Wallington, Surrey.

Load-Date: January 28, 2009



Obama shuts Gitmo prison; Also closes secret CIA prisons abroad, ends torture

The Vancouver Province (British Columbia)

January 23, 2009 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A11

Length: 533 words

Byline: News Services

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

U.S. President Barack Obama yesterday ordered the closing of Guantanamo prison and named veteran troubleshooters for the Middle East and Afghanistan as he moved swiftly to repair America's tarnished image abroad.

In a flurry of activity focused squarely on rolling back some of predecessor George W. Bush's policies, Obama set a one-year deadline for shutting Guantanamo, also known as Gitmo, barred harsh treatment of terrorism suspects held there and closed secret CIA jails overseas.

The prison at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba -- where prisoners have been detained for years without charge, some subjected to interrogation that human-rights groups say amounted to torture -- had damaged America's moral standing in the world.

"The world needs to understand that America will be unyielding in its defence of its security and relentless in its pursuit of those who would carry out terrorism or threaten the United States," Obama said after signing a series of orders.

But he said his new administration wanted to send "an unmistakable signal that our actions in defence of liberty will be [as] just as our cause."

Obama also ordered that those remaining in the Gitmo prison, opened in January 2002, will from now on be treated under the terms of the Geneva Conventions.

He also commanded that all U.S. agencies were to provide access to detainees by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Former Sen. George Mitchell, a seasoned diplomat, was named to help revive stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts.

Obama pledged to "actively and aggressively seek a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as Israel and its Arab neighbours" and work to ensure a durable ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

Obama shuts Gitmo prison; Also closes secret CIA prisons abroad, ends torture

He made a point of backing Israel's "right to defend itself" against cross-border <u>Hamas</u> rocket fire, but also said it was "intolerable" for Palestinians, who want a state of their own, to face a "future without hope."

Former United Nations ambassador Richard Holbrooke was appointed the first U.S. envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, a region Obama called "the central front" in the battle against terrorism.

In other developments:

- Obama held his second daily meeting with top economic advisers to try to chart a course out of the worst financial crisis in decades. His pick to head the Treasury, Timothy Geithner, won Senate finance committee backing, putting him a step closer to the job of directing efforts to battle the recession.
- Obama won his battle with the Secret Service to continue using the hand-held BlackBerry e-mail device, with enhanced security, a White House spokesman said.
- Obama backed a woman's "right to choose" on the 36th anniversary of a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision that gave **women** a constitutional right to abortion.

"On the 36th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, we are reminded that this decision not only protects <u>women</u>'s health and reproductive freedom, but stands for a broader principle: that government should not intrude on our most private family matters," Obama said in a written statement.

"I remain committed to protecting a woman's right to choose."

More on the web

For more U.S. politics and world news, plus videos and photos, go to www.theprovince.com

Graphic

Photo: Reuters; U.S. President Barack Obama is introduced to speak by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the State Department in Washington yesterday. Obama named two special envoys for the Middle East and Afghanistan-Pakistan.;

Load-Date: January 23, 2009



Who can protect Tamil civilians caught in the conflict?; Analysis

The Independent (London)
February 14, 2009 Saturday
First Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 28

Length: 561 words

Byline: Robert Evans MEP

Body

THE NEWS that the Sri Lankan government has rejected Gordon Brown's appointment of the former defence secretary Des Browne as special envoy comes as little surprise to anyone who has been following the situation there. The Sri Lankan government has become increasingly paranoid and defensive about all matters relating to the vicious civil war being waged in the north of the island.

For years this conflict continued with very little outside involvement and the LTTE (Tamil Tigers) were able to establish a de facto independent state-within-a-state, with their capital at Kilinochchi. A year ago, the Sri Lankan government unilaterally withdrew from the Norwegian-brokered ceasefire, and under the leadership of its hawkish President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, embarked on this current campaign which seems to be reaching its climax.

Whilst the Sri Lankans claim that they are merely trying to eliminate terrorism, the real victims are, as ever, the civilians trapped by the fighting. All the evidence suggests that unless the international community acts very soon, about a quarter of a million people could be caught in a ghastly bloodbath. The Sri Lankan government has urged Tamil civilians to come over to their side for protection, but there is a strong reticence and fear of such a move.

The Tamil people have seen so much death and destruction. They are terrified of Sri Lankan troops and their "holding camps", withall the stories of assaults and rape, not to mention the different language and religion which divides the Hindu Tamils from the Buddhist Sinhalese troops.

Equally, on the other side there are stories suggesting that the LTTE has, or might, shoot anyone who tries to escape from the areas that remain under their control.

But none of this is verifiable. The Sri Lankan government restricts all journalists and independent observers from entering the conflict zone. The reports from the few remaining aid or humanitarian agencies still allowed in the area are dismissed by the Sri Lankan authorities as propaganda.

Can Amnesty International and United Nations workers all be lying? Are all the horrific pictures of bombed-out hospitals and lines of dead men, **women** and children false or fabricated?

Who can protect Tamil civilians caught in the conflict? Analysis

So the situation in Sri Lanka is now critical. It is difficult to know what could happen next, hence the Prime Minister's insistence on sending Des Browne as a special envoy. But if not him, then who will protect the Tamil civilians from being massacred? Could President Rajapaksa refuse the UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon if he too demanded that a UN peacekeeping mission be allowed in to supervise an evacuation of civilians?

With the Gaza war it was possible to be appalled at what the Israeli government was doing without being labelled as a supporter of *Hamas*, but anyone who doesn't wholly back the murderous tactics of the Colombo government is automatically dismissed by the Sri Lankan authorities not just as an apologist for terrorism but as a supporter of the LTTE.

And for how much longer should we allow British holidaymakers and cricket teams to go to an island waging a vicious civil war against its own people? Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe was ostracised by the international community. Unless things change very quickly, the same fate must await Sri Lanka.

The author is chairman of the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with South Asia

Load-Date: February 13, 2009



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Santa Fe New Mexican (New Mexico)
February 1, 2009 Sunday

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Section: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR; Pg. B-3

Length: 548 words

Body

LETTERS: PEACE IN GAZA WILL TAKE COURAGE, SUPPORT FOR BOTH SIDES

Palestine deserves the same protection that the U.S. gives to Israel. Both have the right to defend themselves and the right to exist. I am disappointed that the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a resolution "recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza," but did not include a similar statement for Palestine.

In Gaza, 700,000 Palestinians were without medical care, food, water or electricity for 20 days while Israeli forces attacked. The Red Cross reported that Israeli forces shelled a house where the Israeli's had ordered about 100 Palestinian civilians to take shelter, killing about 30 people and wounding more. The U.N. Relief and Works Agency suspended food delivery operations to Gaza after Israeli strikes killed one of its drivers and wounded a second, "although they had received Israeli clearance." Please tell our government to also support Palestinian existence.

David Stupin

Santa Fe

The moral responsibility for the deaths of the Gaza innocents lies with <u>Hamas</u> and its decision to use them as human shields while they fire rockets at Israelis. Israel has the moral right to use as much force as necessary to not only end the threat, but to permanently break the will of the enemy to fight, as the U.S. did by deliberately targeting civilians at Nagasaki and Hiroshima in World War II. Japan was made to understand that if they continued hostilities, they would be utterly destroyed. Presidents Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry Truman had the courage to demand the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan, and those threats were ended permanently.

Unfortunately, neither the Americans nor the Israelis will take this morally courageous stand, so the wars of both nations will continue indefinitely.

John Stevenson

Santa Fe

Long-standing Israeli policy seems to have been based on the assumption that the Palestinians can be persuaded by force to yield to Israeli power, out of self-interest. This ignores the compulsion of revenge as an instrument of justice, the teachings of Jesus and the saints of many religions notwithstanding. In the face of injustice to one's

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

family, friends, neighbors and communities, one can expect the desire for revenge to trump self-interest. Hence a cycle of unending, miserable violence.

Every injury or humiliation of Palestinians by Israeli soldiers; of Iraqis or Afghanis by American soldiers; or of any native peoples by occupation soldiers; and any collective punishment of a population, is to cultivate a collective longing for revenge. Aside from the irredeemably hateful, the ideologically brainwashed and the politically cynical of all sides, can this be what we want? It is, evidently, what they want. And our own dark side.

Hans von Briesen

Santa Fe

I want to thank Estevan Trujillo for trying to express his opposition to Israeli genocidal policies to Sen. Jeff Bingaman. I am shocked at the censorship he encountered. I wonder if my phone call to Bingaman"s office to protest the atrocities perpetuated day after day against <u>women</u>, children and other civilians in Gaza, was passed to the senator? I sincerely hope this is not an example of the "free and open government" a majority of us recently voted for.

Stephanie Roth

Santa Fe

Graphic

See pdf's for exact rendition, caption, graphics and photographer info.

Load-Date: February 2, 2009

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Survey misleading; your say

Illawarra Mercury (Australia)
January 21, 2009 Wednesday
First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Letters; Pg. 21

Length: 598 words

Body

Survey misleading

I would like to respond to the article (Mercury, January 14) relating to the results of the community survey conducted by Wollongong City Council early last year.

Across February and March 2008 the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) had revealed inappropriate behaviour by former staff and councillors and, as a result, the organisation had just been placed under administration.

The matters uncovered by the ICAC were extraordinary and the trust of the community had been violated.

Given the timing of the survey, just days after the public hearing had finished, it is no surprise that residents were unhappy with council.

Nine months later, I can report a number of significant changes in how council operates.

Council has implemented all of the 18 anti-corruption recommendations made by ICAC that related specifically to council, including the introduction of an Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel and other initiatives that introduce greater transparency to the planning process.

We have commenced a review of all our services to ensure we are providing efficient and cost-effective services to the community.

We have found substantial savings in our operating budget.

These savings are being used to fund the refurbishment and replacement of ageing roads, drains, footpaths and park equipment throughout the city, from Helensburgh to Windang.

Also, later this year we will launch a new integrated customer service centre, which will provide the community with a centralised and consistent way to obtain information and service.

It takes time to rebuild trust from where we have been, but I am confident that the community will see the improvements at council, and our next community survey will reflect the changes being made.

David Farmer, general manager, Wollongong City Council.

Survey misleading your say

Gaza facts overlooked

The letters from William Berry and Karl Munn (Mercury, January 15) about the conflict in Gaza have elements of truth, but fail to consider both sides of this awful conflict.

Whilst agreeing Israel has the right to defend itself, it is the scale and indiscriminate nature of its actions which concern many in the world today.

The deaths of hundreds of women and children cannot be morally justified.

One independent report illustrates this. The Israeli defence forces targeted a senior <u>Hamas</u> official with a missile at a block of flats without warning.

Yes they got their man, as well as four <u>women</u> and 10 children of his family. Can this be acceptable Mr Berry and Mr Munn?

You are correct Mr Munn. Israel withdrew from the strip three years ago, but maintains its blockade to stop military hardware from reaching the wrong people. However, this severely curtails basic necessities like food, medical supplies, electricity and sanitation reaching the general populace.

We in the West must take a moral stand and condemn all acts of terror and bloodletting without fear or favour.

Brian Farrell, Albion Park Rail.

Trainers should pay

Subscribers to the debate re Wollongong City Council charging fees for fitness trainers using their facilities (Letters, January 16) should familiarise themselves with the fact that fees have been levied on sporting organisations, including juniors, for many years.

The council has a schedule of fees for all use of all facilities that is reviewed regularly.

Many junior sporting clubs struggle to not only pay the fees but also the fees and insurances required by higher affiliations.

Given these facts, it is questionable that fitness trainers and participants should be exempt.

Frank Booth, Illawarra Baseball media officer, Mt Keira.

Load-Date: January 20, 2009



Clinton signals new Middle East policy initiative

The Irish Times January 14, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 10

Length: 573 words

Byline: DENIS STAUNTON in Washington

Body

HILLARY CLINTON has signalled a new American policy initiative in the Middle East, seeking to engage Syria and Iran as "constructive regional actors" and renewing efforts to achieve peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Appearing before the Senate foreign relations committee for her confirmation hearing as the next secretary of state, Mrs Clinton said the United States must use "smart power" - a combination of diplomatic, economic and military tools - to pursue its interests in the world.

"The clear lesson of the last 20 years is that we must both combat the threats and seize the opportunities of our interdependence. . . we must build a world with more partners and fewer adversaries," she said.

"America cannot solve the most pressing problems on our own and the world cannot solve them without America. The best way to advance America's interest in reducing global threats and seizing global opportunities is to design and implement global solutions. This isn't a philosophical point. This is our reality."

As senator for New York, Mrs Clinton has been a strident supporter of Israel but her comments yesterday on the violence in Gaza hinted at a more even-handed approach as secretary of state.

"The president-elect and I understand and are deeply sympathetic to Israel's desire to defend itself under the current conditions and to be free of shelling by <u>Hamas</u> rockets. However, we have also been reminded of the tragic humanitarian costs of conflict in the Middle East and pained by the suffering of Palestinian and Israeli civilians," she said.

"This must only increase our determination to seek a just and lasting peace. . . We will exert every effort to support the work of Israelis and Palestinians who seek that result."

Mrs Clinton received a friendly reception from the committee but its most senior Republican, Indiana's Richard Lugar, complained that former president Bill Clinton had not gone far enough to remove the potential for a conflict of interest involving his philanthropic foundation.

The foundation has received millions of dollars from foreign donors, including between \$10 million (EUR 7.6 million) and \$25 million from the Saudi Arabian government.

Mr Lugar said it was not enough for Mr Clinton to reveal names of past donors but that the former president should refuse to accept any foreign contributions while his wife is secretary of state.

Clinton signals new Middle East policy initiative

"The Clinton Foundation exists as a temptation for any foreign entity or government that believes it could curry favour through a donation," Mr Lugar said. "It also sets up potential perception problems with any action taken by the secretary of state in relation to foreign givers or their countries."

Committee chairman John Kerry pressed Mrs Clinton on whether Iran should be allowed to acquire a nuclear weapon and she replied that "no option is off the table" in preventing Tehran from doing so.

In the hearing's most memorable moment, Mrs Clinton noted that Mr Obama's mother, Ann Dunham, a pioneer in micro-finance, was due to attend the Beijing <u>Women</u>'s Summit in 1995 but was unable to travel because she was too ill at the time.

"I think it's fair to say that her work in international development, the care and concern she showed for <u>women</u> and for poor people around the world, mattered greatly to her son and certainly has informed his views and his vision," Mrs Clinton said.

"We will be honoured to carry on Ann Dunham's work in the months and years ahead."

Load-Date: January 14, 2009



Across the Mideast, Praise and Criticism for Obama

The New York Times
June 5, 2009 Friday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 9

Length: 1349 words

Byline: By MICHAEL SLACKMAN; Reporting was contributed by Isabel Kershner from Jerusalem; Robert F. Worth from Beirut, Lebanon; Mona el-Naggar from Cairo; Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza; Hwaida Saad from Beirut; Muhammad al-Milfy from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Nazila Fathi from Tehran; Omar al-Mani from Damascus, Syria; Iraqi employees of The New York Times from Karbala and Mosul; and Sharon Otterman from New York.

Dateline: CAIRO

Body

On one level, President Obama's speech succeeded in reaching out to Muslims across the Middle East, winning widespread praise for his respectful approach, his quotations from the Koran and his forthright references to highly fraught political conflicts.

But Mr. Obama's calibrated remarks also asked listeners in a region shaken by hatred to take two steps that have long been anathema: forgetting the past and understanding an opposing view. For a president who proclaimed a goal of asking people to listen to uncomfortable truths, it was clear that parts of his speech resonated deeply with his intended audience and others fell on deaf ears, in Israel as well as the Muslim world.

Again and again, Muslim listeners said they were struck by how skillfully Mr. Obama appropriated religious, cultural and historical references in ways other American presidents had not. He included four quotations from the Koran and used Arabic greetings. He took note of longstanding historical grievances like the stain of colonialism, American support for the Iranian coup of 1953 and the displacement of the Palestinian people. His speech was also embraced for what it did not do: use the word terrorism, broadly seen here as shorthand for an attack on Islam.

"He spoke really like an enlightened leader from the region, more than like a foreigner," said Mustafa Hamarneh, the former director of the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan. "It was very unlike the neocolonial and condescending approach of the previous administration."

Mr. Obama structured his speech almost like a Friday Prayer, blending a political, social and religious message. In style and substance, some regional analysts said, it sought to undermine the message of radical terrorists like Osama bin Laden.

"Al Qaeda benefited from the previous rhetoric about the clash of civilizations in mobilizing and recruiting individuals as part of fighting a crusade," said Mohammad Abu Rumman, research editor at Al Ghad, a newspaper in Amman, Jordan. "The speech is positive and allows us to move from the religious-civilization title of the struggle to a political-realistic title."

Across the Mideast, Praise and Criticism for Obama

Perhaps inevitably, Mr. Obama angered some on both sides. Many Arabs and Israelis alike furiously rejected what they saw as his attempt to present their suffering as morally equivalent. They picked at the content of the speech almost like a biblical text.

"How dare Obama compare Arab refugee suffering to the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust?" asked Aryeh Eldad, a lawmaker from the rightist National Union Party in Israel.

Ahmed Youssef, the deputy foreign minister in the <u>Hamas</u> government in Gaza, said, "He points to the right of Israel to exist, but what about the refugees and their right of return?"

And in Jordan, Rohile Gharaibeh, deputy secretary general for the Islamic Action Front, the political party of the Muslim Brotherhood, rejected any reference to the Holocaust. "The Holocaust was not the doing of the Muslims, it was the Europeans, and it should not come at the cost of the Palestinian people or the Arabs and Muslims," he said.

The speech included a list of topics that have soured relations with Muslims. As each topic was addressed, from religious tolerance and <u>women</u>'s rights to nuclear weapons and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, he was greeted with warm applause or icy stares, depending on the listener.

In Iraq, after six years of occupation, missed opportunities and failed promises, there was a heavy dose of skepticism.

In cafes and restaurants, televisions were turned to sports or movies or blared music videos. When a man at a restaurant in Mosul tried to change the channel to the speech, diners shouted at him, "What a stupid speech!" In the Shorooq restaurant in Karbala, a small crowd heckled Mr. Obama as he spoke about Israel. "The most important thing is to accomplish things, not just say them," said Alaa Sahib Abdullah, a 30-year-old lawyer.

In Iran, some praised the explicit reference to the 1953 coup that topped a popular Iranian prime minister.

"The coup has become a symbol of nationalism for Iranians, and the fact that Mr. Obama acknowledged the United States had intervened sends a positive message to all groups," said Alireza Rajaee, a political analyst in Tehran. "Now those who favor better ties with the United States have no fear to publicly call for it because they can say that the United States has admitted to its historic mistake."

While many listeners generally agreed with Mr. Obama's comments about violence and extremism, some said they disliked his characterization of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which they described as bloody catastrophes.

"What is astonishing is that he condemned violence, but he didn't say a word about what the United States did in Iraq," said Khaled Saghieh, the executive editor of Al Akhbar, a Lebanese daily newspaper that leans toward Hezbollah. "If you want to call for a new beginning, you should at least apologize for tens of thousands of victims in Iraq."

Political opponents of the region's autocratic governments also expressed disappointment. "What touched on democracy and human rights in the speech was far less than what we wanted," said Ayman Nour, Egypt's most prominent political dissident, who was imprisoned after challenging President Hosni Mubarak in the last election.

On the flashpoint of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Mr. Obama did little to impress his Muslim audience -- and barely enough to calm the anxieties of some Israelis. He angered Arabs when he equated shooting rockets into Israel with violence, a practice many here say is legitimate resistance against occupation.

From the Arab perspective, he did not offer any new proposals or suggest a time line for moving toward a Palestinian state. From the Israeli perspective, he criticized expansion of settlements and forcefully endorsed creation of an independent Palestinian state, which Israel's current government has refused to endorse.

Across the Mideast, Praise and Criticism for Obama

"As a legal specialist, he should know people are under occupation and cannot recognize the state while they are under occupation, only afterwards," said Mr. Youssef of <u>Hamas</u>. "Why put pressure on Arabs and Muslims to recognize Israel while it is not recognizing our existence?"

But Israelis and Palestinians also stepped back from their own concerns and said they understood the broader significance of the speech. Even Mr. Youssef hailed the speech as historic.

Israel said in a statement that it hoped the speech "will indeed lead to a new period of reconciliation between the Arab and Muslim world and Israel."

Politicians and analysts on both sides also highlighted statements they interpreted as shoring up their own causes.

Israelis were satisfied that Mr. Obama referred to America's bond with Israel as "unbreakable" and defined Israel as a "Jewish homeland"; they also appreciated his unequivocal rejection of Palestinian resistance through violence and his condemnation of Holocaust denial.

On the issue of Jerusalem, one of the most delicate and intractable in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Mr. Obama avoided political confrontation, sticking instead to a theme of religious harmony. He did not call for the city, now under full Israeli control, to be divided into two capitals, Israeli and Palestinian.

"If anything, there was a hint for the unity of the city," said Yehuda Ben Meir of the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv. "The speech should certainly be acceptable to Israelis."

Despite palpable longing for the president to change policies and not just tone, some seemed to understand he was trying to move the debate by balance and indirection.

"If I were in his shoes, what would I do?" said Mansoor al-Jamri, editor of Al Waast, a daily newspaper in Bahrain. "My closest friends are dictators, and the best strategic ally I have is viewed as a strategic enemy for the Muslim world. If he delivers on what he said, and it is a compromise, many people will ultimately be happy."

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTO: Iraqis at the Samir Amis coffee shop in Baghdad were able to keep tabs on President Obama's speech in Cairo on Thursday.(PHOTOGRAPH BY MOISES SAMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Load-Date: June 5, 2009



Pope's urging brings Gaza blockade to forefront; With no clear guidelines for what Israel will allow in, aid groups have run into trouble with everything from 90 tons of pasta to nutritional bars mistranslated as steel bars.

The Christian Science Monitor
May 13, 2009 Wednesday

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Length: 1171 words

Byline: Ilene R. Prusher Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor, Safwat Al-Kahlout Correspondent of The

Christian Science Monitor

Body

Though the rockets and shells have fallen quiet in Gaza since the January war with Israel, the prices of cooking fuel and many foods have skyrocketed. Due to both the war's aftermath and the tight restrictions Israel enforces at the checkpoints on Gaza's border, many Gazans are tightening their belts - literally. "We owe the cooking-gas man money, we had to reduce the amount of vegetables we buy, and things like meat and chicken are out of the question," says Amal Sharif, a resident of Gaza's Shati Refugee Camp and mother of 10 whose hospitalized husband is unable to support the family. "We visit supermarkets very rarely. I usually cook beans and rice and other cheap things and try to make them last over a few days."

The Israeli blockade of Gaza, which has served as a way to pressure *Hamas* since the militant group seized power in 2007, has until recently has been out of the international spotlight. But now it is moving to the forefront of pressing Israeli-Palestinian issues. Pope Benedict XVI, during his visit to Bethlehem on Wednesday, specifically mentioned the plight of Gazans, telling them: "Please be assured of my solidarity with you in the immense work of rebuilding which now lies ahead and my prayers that the embargo will soon be lifted." A week ago United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon also called for an end to the ban, which prevents all but the most basic supplies from entering Gaza, saying it was "unacceptable." Under increasing international pressure on Israel to change its policy regarding shipments into the Gaza Strip, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plans to promise US President Barack Obama when they meet next week that Israel will remove all restrictions on foodstuffs headed for Gaza, aides said. Pasta, lentils, jam all rejected During the last days of previous prime minister Ehud Olmert's term, the Israeli cabinet made a decision that there would be "unfettered" access of food and medical supplies to Gaza. But Israel's Defense Ministry, which controls the borders, has yet to implement that decision. That was in late March. But numerous aid agencies say they've seen no change, and myriad food products languish on trucks and in warehouses, are rejected as "luxury" items that don't fall into the category of humanitarian assistance, or are turned down for unexplained reasons. "The government of Israel said it would allow the transfer of food items on an unrestricted basis to Gaza, after it's been ascertained that these are food products. But we have not seen any change on the ground," says Sari Bashi, the executive director of Gisha, the Legal Center for the Freedom of Movement, based in Tel Aviv. "Even if they say all food is allowed, Israel has created an extremely onerous bureaucratic process that has made it nearly impossible to get many basic foodstuffs into Gaza." Ms. Bashi says. The process includes complicated manifests of food being sent in by various aid organizations, which can be rejected at any point in the process and not always for clear reasons. Trucks are checked, unloaded, and reloaded several times over the course of days, raising shipping costs. In recent months, all of the following items have been rejected at one point, and later allowed in only after it became an embarrassing international issue: pasta; lentils;

Pope's urging brings Gaza blockade to forefront With no clear guidelines for what Israel will allow in, aid groups have run into trouble with everything from 90....

strawberry jam; chocolate; and halvah, a Middle Eastern sweet made of sesame. A shipment of "reinforced nutritional bars" were turned back because low-level military officials misunderstood the manifest and thought they were steel bars, which - like other building materials - are not allowed into Gaza. Even tin cans are not allowed because they could be melted down for other purposes, making it difficult for farmers in Gaza to turn vegetables into canned food that will last longer. Bureaucratic maze There is no published list of items of what is or isn't allowed into Gaza, which has kept aid agencies quessing. "We've asked them, 'Please, supply us with lists, so we know upfront," says William Corcoran, president of American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA). For most of its eight years operating in Gaza, ANERA was able to deliver food and medical supplies relatively unhindered, but last November, everything changed, he says. Now, it's "a very cumbersome system, more complicated than it's ever been before." He says ANERA has banded together with other aid groups - including Save the Children, World Vision, and Mercy Corps - to get clarity on the issue, but has been unable to get any definitive answers. The group has also tried to address issues with individual shipments by going to the Israeli Defense Forces, Israeli customs, and the Israeli Embassy in Washington. "Each issue is looked into on an individual basis," says Lt. Peter Lerner, an Israeli military spokesman, in a recent interview. "Things like dairy, meat, rice, wheat, flour, fruit, vegetables, and medications are allowed. Food items and other goods are going in every day." But not, it seems, in the amount they were before *Hamas* took control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007. According to Gisha's figures, the level of goods getting into Gaza is now about 25 percent of what it was before June 2007. Until that point, about 9,400 trucks a month went into Gaza, and since June 2007, the number has been down to 2,200 trucks a month. "The situation is forcing people into dependence," Bashi says. "Israel is less likely to approve shipments to the private sector, and as a result, businesses can't survive and Gazans are becoming more reliant on food assistance." Many Gazans are making do by eating fewer meals per day, according to a recent UN study. Families are relying on more flour and rice, much of it provided cost-free by aid agencies, and eating far less protein because meat, poultry, fish, and eggs have become unaffordable. In the survey, conducted on behalf of several UN bodies looking to provide relief aid to Gaza, Gazans interviewed said their household expenditures increased 40 to 45 percent on three basic needs: water, food, and "psychosocial services." Fifty percent of female-headed households say that they have an increased expenditure on food since the war, and 42 percent on water. Ms. Sharif gets food assistance in the form of the basics that are distributed by aid agencies in Gaza, and which are allowed into Gaza unrestricted. These include oil, flour, sugar, rice, and milk. But buying eggs is a rarity: Prices have doubled because of the large number of chicken coops destroyed during Israel's bombardment of Gaza in January. "I used to buy two cartoons of eggs a week, but after the war the prices of one carton jumped and I stopped buying it," she says. "There are many things that we stopped buying completely: meat, fish, chicken. Even the price of fruit is higher." These days, moreover, she usually prepares two meals a day, not three. "We eat breakfast at 11 a.m., lunch at 5 or 6 p.m.," she says. "So no one needs to eat dinner after that." · Christa Case Bryant contributed from Boston.

Graphic

Catholic priests attend a mass led by Pope Benedict XVI outside the Church of the Nativity, the site revered as the birthplace of Jesus, in the West Bank town of Bethlehem Wednesday. Pope Benedict visited the Israeli-occupied West Bank on Wednesday to hammer home his calls for an independent Palestinian state and the lifting of Israel's embargo on Gaza. Yannis Behrakis/REUTERS

Load-Date: February 19, 2010



Faith in arms

The Jerusalem Post March 30, 2009 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 15

Length: 1244 words

Byline: SGT. S

Highlight: One soldier's religious upbringing stands him in good stead when face-to-face with the enemy. The writer served as a sergeant in an IDF special forces unit. He cannot be named due to security considerations.

Body

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

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

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

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

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

I learned this from my Torah.

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

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

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

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

Faith in arms

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

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

That too, I learned from my religious upbringing.

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

Dear readers: As long as bombs are exploding in shopping malls and rockets are falling on nursery schools, the IDF will respond.)

I RECALL TALKS in the barracks between me, a religious settler from over the Green Line, and nonreligious soldiers. We'd have deep conversations about religion, country, nationalism, etc. The ones I'd always argue with were those from North Tel Aviv - the yuppies. They saw me as a right-wing fanatic, though I consider myself politically in the center.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Does anyone remember the West Bank town of Ramallah in October 2000? Two reservists accidentally entered Ramallah and were taken to the Palestinian police headquarters there. A mob charged in and tore the soldiers apart

Faith in arms

limb by limb, disemboweling them and proudly displaying their bloody hands. They showed that humaneness has no place on the other side of the battlefield.

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

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

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

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

I've seen the flags of my enemy. The <u>Hamas</u> banners are colored green with the Shahadah, the Muslim declaration of belief. The other Palestinian brigades are also full of religious motifs.

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

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

Graphic

Photo: A PALESTINIAN FAMILY shelters in a stairwell as Israeli soldiers use their home during the Gaza operation. 'We moved the rugs and sat on the floor so we wouldn't dirty the furniture.' (Credit: Bloomberg)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Obama gives hope for a final peace

The Courier Mail (Australia)

June 8, 2009 Monday

1 - First with the news Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 26

Length: 620 words

Body

BARACK Obama, a college professor and successful author before he assumed the US presidency, knows the meaning and power of language better than most modern politicians. This is why his visit to the Egyptian capital, and the speech he delivered there, is a pivotal event. It was more than just fulfilling a campaign promise to redefine the struggle between the West and Islamic nations, which was backed with his inaugural pledge to extend an open hand if America's enemies would unclench their fists.

Throughout his long speech, punctuated by frequent applause from the audience, Mr Obama used language to change the conversation from the Bush years. ``Terrorists" and ``terrorism" were not mentioned, and were replaced by the term ``violent extremists". There was also an Islamic greeting, a quotation from the Koran and instead of President George W. Bush's hectoring lecture about democracy, Mr Obama made a plea for regional powers to exercise power ``through consent, not coercion".

Mr Obama left his audience, and the broader Middle East and Islamic world, in no doubt that America would not relent when it came to pursuing enemies such as the Taliban and Al-Qaeda and groups like <u>Hamas</u> and Hezbollah, as well as telling the rulers in Tehran to change their ways. However, his more general message was that if the US and the Islamic world could have a meaningful conversation, real progress could be made towards an eventual Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

He did not, however, present an unconditional offer, for either side. He told the Arab and Islamic people that Israel's existence, aspirations and ambitions must be respected. At the same time, Mr Obama said that the plight of the Palestinians was ``intolerable and a real peace must be strived for, with an end to Israeli settlements as part of the solution. But Mr Obama himself made clear that words alone -- or, as he said, ``one speech'' -- was not going to change things without real change and meaningful policy change on all sides. He pledged his administration to this task.

Now Israel and those crucial Islamic-Arab countries, from Jordan and Egypt to Syria and Lebanon, must be part of the follow-up. Iran also needs to be included but nothing is going to happen until after the presidential elections this coming Friday.

There is a chance that Mr Obama's conciliatory speech with its promise of a better world could have a direct effect on that poll for the better. Also, those Arab and Islamic nations should take notice of the positive reaction by their people to his speech, starting with the cheering for his call in favour of rights for <u>women</u>. Mr Bush's immediate reaction to September 11 was understandable, but a new approach is needed. Mr Obama offers that new approach, and it is worth giving it a chance.

Obama gives hope for a final peace

Sell-off no done dealIT could have been the stoush of the decade, but the soft landing delegates yesterday afforded Premier Anna Bligh turned the weekend Labor conference into something of a fizzer. Whether it was the power of compromise or Ms Bligh's own persuasiveness, the predicted fury over privatisation did not come. But while it was peaceful among the party faithful, the State Government must remember that, outside conference walls, there are still plenty of taxpayers sceptical of government sell-offs. And if trade union warnings of war over privatisation are even half-believable, Queensland Labor will face its biggest challenges in a generation.

Responsibility for election comment is taken by David Fagan, 41 Campbell St, Bowen Hills, Qld 4006. Printed and published by Queensland Newspapers Pty. Ltd. (ACN 009 661 778)A full list of our editors, with contact details, is available at news.com.au/couriermail/ourstaff.

Load-Date: June 7, 2009



CLINTON PLEDGES TOUGH DIPLOMACY AND A FAST START

The New York Times

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Late Edition - Final

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Length: 1306 words

Byline: By MARK LANDLER; Helene Cooper and Peter Baker contributed reporting.

Body

WASHINGTON -- Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton on Tuesday deflected calls for greater limits on her husband's fund-raising, struck a sharper tone toward Israel on violence in the Middle East and emerged from a daylong confirmation hearing headed for swift approval as secretary of state.

Appearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Mrs. Clinton showed a mastery of the issues that won praise from her fellow lawmakers, and outlined a muscular view of American foreign policy that she said would put diplomacy front and center in the Obama administration.

On most important issues, including Iraq and Afghanistan, Mrs. Clinton broke little ground, saying that she did not want to undermine President Bush before President-elect Barack Obama took office. But she left little doubt that she intended to be in the thick of all of these issues.

"I assure you that, if I am confirmed, the State Department will be firing on all cylinders to provide forward-looking, sustained diplomacy in every part of the world," she said.

Mrs. Clinton was one of five officials picked by Mr. Obama who faced hearings on Tuesday as Senate leaders laid the groundwork for confirmation votes next Tuesday.

The only testy notes in a day of cordial exchanges came when Republican senators warned that Mrs. Clinton could face conflicts of interest because of foreign donations to the charitable foundation run by her husband, former President Bill Clinton.

Mrs. Clinton stood her ground, saying that restrictions hammered out between Mr. Clinton and the Obama transition team were "probably as close as we can get" without hampering the foundation's work.

In addressing the spiraling violence in Gaza, Mrs. Clinton spoke more fully than either she or Mr. Obama had done previously, and she seemed to part from the tone set by the Bush administration in calling attention to what she described as the "tragic humanitarian costs" borne by Palestinians as well as Israelis.

Mrs. Clinton said she was "deeply sympathetic" to Israel's right to defend itself against rocket attacks by *Hamas* militants from Gaza, a stance that has been central to the Bush administration's message.

CLINTON PLEDGES TOUGH DIPLOMACY AND A FAST START

But Mrs. Clinton also said that the price being paid by Palestinian civilians as well as Israelis "must only increase our determination to seek a just and lasting peace agreement" that included a Palestinian state. Her emphasis on the civilian costs of the violence in Gaza suggested that the incoming administration might be more inclined than President Bush has been to urge restraint on the Israelis.

The top Republican on the panel, Senator Richard G. Lugar of Indiana, was among those who expressed disappointment over Mrs. Clinton's refusal to accept further restrictions on her husband's fund-raising. But he told Mrs. Clinton that he still intended to vote in favor of her confirmation. "Your qualifications are remarkable," he said.

Other senators tried with limited success to plumb how the next administration would conduct foreign policy differently from the current one.

On issues as varied as Iraq reconstruction, arms control and nuclear nonproliferation, Mrs. Clinton described a fortified State Department that would be an equal partner to the Pentagon. She noted that Robert M. Gates, who is staying on as defense secretary, has also urged that the State Department be given additional resources and that diplomats play a more active role.

Although Mrs. Clinton ranged widely in five hours of testimony, speaking in detail on topics that included the coming negotiations in Copenhagen on climate change, she acknowledged that the eruption of violence in Gaza was likely to dominate her first days as secretary of state. She reiterated her opposition to direct negotiations with <u>Hamas</u> unless it renounces violence and recognizes Israel.

Still, Mrs. Clinton said that "real security for Israel, normal and positive relations with its neighbors," as well as genuine security for Palestinians, must continue to be America's ideal.

"As intractable as the Middle East's problems may seem -- and many presidents, including my husband, have spent years trying to help work out a solution -- we cannot give up on peace," she said.

Likewise, Mrs. Clinton predicted a grinding process of diplomacy with North Korea, saying the United States would continue to press the government in Pyongyang on its nuclear program through multiparty talks with China, Japan, Russia and South Korea.

Mr. Clinton did not attend the hearing, but he cast a shadow over it. His foundation, which includes several initiatives to improve health and living standards around the world, has accepted large contributions from foreign governments. Donations have included multimillion-dollar gifts from Saudi Arabia, Australia, Brunei, the Dominican Republic, Kuwait, Norway, Oman, Qatar and Taiwan.

"This was bound to be a dilemma from the moment the president-elect asked you to be secretary of state," Mr. Lugar said.

In the day's only tough questioning, Senator David Vitter, Republican of Louisiana, challenged Mrs. Clinton to pledge that her husband's foundation would report its donations on a quarterly basis. The memorandum of understanding between Mr. Clinton and the Obama team stipulates annual disclosure.

"I really do think this poses a lot of real and perceived conflict issues," Mr. Vitter said.

Mrs. Clinton deflected the questions, saying, "This is an agreement that has been worked out between all the parties." At one point, the committee's chairman, Senator John Kerry, intervened to dispute Mr. Vitter's claim that the Clinton Global Initiative, which is a venture of the foundation, does not disclose its donors.

Under questioning, Mrs. Clinton defended her husband's acceptance of donations from foreign governments, but pledged to keep a close eye on the issue. "I hasten to add," she said, "my career in public service is hardly free of controversy."

CLINTON PLEDGES TOUGH DIPLOMACY AND A FAST START

The generally polite tone of the hearing was set at the start by Mr. Kerry, the Massachusetts Democrat, who is the new chairman of the panel, but who had hoped to be picked as secretary of state himself. He said that Mrs. Clinton's "presence overseas will send a strong signal that America is back."

Mrs. Clinton's daughter, Chelsea, sat in the row behind her.

In addressing other issues, Mrs. Clinton noted that Mr. Obama favored more engagement with Iran but offered no details.

She was more specific about American policy in the Darfur region of Sudan, saying that Mr. Obama might impose no-flight zones or other sanctions to rein in the actions of pro-government militia forces.

Mrs. Clinton said little about the next administration's approaches to Iraq and Afghanistan. But transition officials said that in addition to keeping Mr. Gates as defense secretary, Mr. Obama would be keeping another holdover from the Bush administration on his national security team -- Lt. Gen. Douglas E. Lute, who will keep his job coordinating Iraq and Afghanistan policy out of the National Security Council.

In addition to her answers on foreign policy, Mrs. Clinton made it clear that the State Department would have a higher profile on economic issues, which, she noted, had implications for relations with Russia. She also laid out an ambitious agenda for working on **women**'s health.

"Of particular concern to me," she said, "is the plight of <u>women</u> and girls, who comprise the majority of the world's unhealthy, unschooled, unfed and unpaid."

Mrs. Clinton noted that Mr. Obama's mother, Ann Dunham, had worked on microfinance in Indonesia and that she had been scheduled to attend a microfinance forum at the <u>women</u>'s conference in Beijing in 1995, in which Mrs. Clinton took part. Ms. Dunham, she said, was too ill to travel.

"We will be honored to carry on Ann Dunham's work in the months and years ahead," Mrs. Clinton said.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTOS: Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton said she would "provide forward- looking, sustained diplomacy in every part of the world." (PHOTOGRAPH BY DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES) (A1)

PHOTO (PHOTOGRAPH BY BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES) (A14)

Load-Date: June 25, 2011



Irish Independent

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

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Independent.ie

Section: LETTERS
Length: 1313 words

Body

The caption on the photograph of the meeting of the first Dail (Irish Independent, January 13) states that Eamon de Valera was in the chair.

Most people would accept that the Chief had a long distinguished political career. However, he appears to have been a more remarkable person than we have ever realised.

I know the wily old fox was a political genius who saw most of his opponents off the premises. However, I never knew that his political prowess extended to the supernatural.

Apparently, he had the gift of bilocation.

For while he was "chairing" the first meeting of the Dail in Dublin, at the same time he was "fe glas ag Gallaibh" (jailed by the foreigner) in England.

Indeed, was the great Michael Collins not in England at the time trying to spring his chief from prison?

I have always been sceptical when Padre Pio fans claim the great man had the gift of bi-location. However, now that Dev appears to have been equally endowed I must confess that I am no longer so sure.

Only option is for UN to take over

Regarding the Palestine/Israel conflict I would like to share with you a short story as to my own personal involvement.

In 2000, I was just your average typical Irish male in his 20s. I had left my initial career in science and had moved to Galway to figure out my life.

I had absolutely no interest in the world of politics. I had, of course, seen 'Schindler's List' and like most decent people, wished I had been born in time to help the Jews of Europe in their darkest hour.

After the start of the Intifada or War of Independence I noticed something very strange occurring in the news I was watching.

We had access to a variety of news channels. I became increasingly anxious when I noticed that any Israeli death was reported prominently on all news channels, often with background information on the victims' lives. But this never happened for the Palestinians, except on Euronews.

One weekend, when over 50 Palestinian men, <u>women</u> and children were murdered, I realised then that there was something very wrong.

I joined the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign and, with a few good people, we set up the Galway branch.

We visited the occupied territories, and did our best to inform the people of what was really going on in the Holy Land.

Following that, I went into teaching -- a profession I love dearly -- and I stayed out of the conflict, until now.

I have been so distressed by the slaughter in "Concentration Camp Gaza" and by the coverage in the media that I felt compelled to put pen to paper. I know journalists have to report on both sides of a conflict but the proper context must be set.

Al Jazeera English has reported accurately, giving the correct reason for the end of the ceasefire -- Israeli attacks, coupled with the complete siege that Gaza had endured for months on end.

They report the views of both sides, but more importantly each day they give a breakdown of the casualties -- Israeli deaths, soldiers and civilians, and Palestinian deaths, in particular the numbers of <u>women</u>, children, journalists and medical staff.

Close to half the population in Israel proper are Palestinian, not to mention the large populations of the West Bank and Gaza. Within a generation or so, they will outnumber the Jewish population.

In my opinion, the only true hope for peace is a Holy Land where no religion claims supremacy, where Christians, Muslims and Jews live side by side, as equals, with Jerusalem as a city under UN control, owned by none and shared by all. The alternative is too terrible to contemplate.

Israel is right to defend its own

I find myself in complete agreement with Kevin Myers' analysis of the current violence in Gaza.

Although I'm saddened by the huge loss of life amongst the Palestinian civilian population, Israel had no other choice but to attack *Hamas* in order to protect its own population.

Quite clearly, <u>Hamas</u> has located its rocket-firing facilities in civilian areas (just like Hizbollah in Beirut in 2006) in the hope that Israel would not respond to its repeated attacks.

No responsible government, charged with protecting its people, could fail to respond to such repeated and sustained attacks.

Since the foundation of the state of Israel, the Arabs have repeatedly chosen conflict over people; Hussein's decision to go to war with Israel in 1967, when he might have remained neutral, being one example -- a decision that cost him East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

There are others.

Israel is defending its very existence and its critics do not seem to acknowledge that it has the right to do so.

The Church was far from ignorant

Ralph Riegel, in his report on child abuse (Irish Independent, January 12) referred to a claim by an unidentified Catholic Church official that child abuse received little attention because of the lack of appreciation of how common the practice was and of the serious damage it caused.

This is an utterly dishonest proposition.

No other Irish institution had such long experience of suppressing information about the fact that over the decades, many priests, albeit a small minority, were sexually abusing children.

The Church even moved offenders from parish to parish in order to protect its own reputation and thereby facilitated further criminal acts of sexual abuse. This mirrored the behaviour of the Catholic Church in the United States which suggests that this was a considered and deliberate response by the Catholic Church.

The Church's own very peculiar attitude to sexual morality makes a nonsense of the suggestion that it was unaware of how evil and damaging this type of sexual behaviour was.

For decades, girls who engaged in normal sexual behaviour, and thus transgressed the Church's rigid rules relating to sex, were incarcerated in institutions like the Magdalene laundries.

How then can we take seriously claims of ignorance about the rape and sexual abuse of children by adults?

Knowledge of what was happening went to the very highest levels of the Church and we have to assume that the policy of containment was approved of at a high level within the Vatican.

If Bishop Magee had been preaching that priests should be allowed to marry, he would have been recalled to Rome and silenced. Instead, in the tradition of Pontius Pilate, the Vatican seeks to wash its hands of the affair.

As Shane Dunphy says in the same edition of the paper: "By remaining tightlipped, each and every cleric is complicit in what happened".

No film ending to life in the slums

It is great to see a film set in India winning four Golden Globes and being tipped for an Oscar nomination.

'Slumdog Millionaire' doesn't shy away from the dangers of growing up in the slums. Violence, gangs and sexual abuse are all living realities for the hundreds of thousands of children living on the streets of India.

Sadly, though, there are fewer Bollywood endings in real life.

I work in Chennai, the fourth largest city in India, helping to rehabilitate street children for the leading international development agency, World Vision.

More than 100,000 children, of all ages, wander the streets of Chennai.

They turn up at the main railway station every day, driven by extreme poverty and domestic violence to the 'shining lights' of the big city. That's where we go initially, trying to find runaway children before they are swept up into crime and exploitation.

Without access to basic human rights, like safe water, sanitation and healthcare, they are susceptible to all sorts of infections and diseases. Most also suffer psychological trauma or drug addiction.

There is no quick gameshow solution for them; but, with public help, agencies like World Vision can make a difference.

As well as striving to meet basic needs like shelter, food and protection, we are working to ensure these children grow up knowing they have the same human rights as their favourite film stars.

Load-Date: January 14, 2009



Comment & Debate: As British Jews come under attack, the liberal left must not remain silent: It should be perfectly possible to condemn Israel's brutal action in Gaza while taking a stand against antisemitism

The Guardian - Final Edition February 4, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: GUARDIAN COMMENT AND DEBATE PAGES; Pg. 27

Length: 1234 words

Byline: Jonathan Freedland

Body

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks on September 11 2001 and July 7 2005, a noble impulse seized the British liberal left. Politicians, commentators and activists united to say to their fellow citizens that, no matter how outraged they felt at the loss of civilian life they had just witnessed, they should under no circumstances take out that anger on the Muslim community. Progressive voices insisted that Muslims were not to be branded as guilty by association, just because the killers of 9/11 and 7/7 had been Muslims and had claimed to act in the name of all Muslims.

They urged Britons to be careful in their language, not to generalise from a few individuals to an entire community, to make clear to Britain's Muslims that they were a welcome part of the national life. One week after the 7/7 London attacks, a vast crowd gathered in Trafalgar Square to hear a call for unity led by then mayor Ken Livingstone, who said Londoners should not start looking for "who to blame and who to hate".

It was the right reaction and I am glad that, writing on these pages, I shared it, denouncing the surge in Islamophobia that greeted either a terrorist attack or the revelation of a terror plot. Yet there's been a curious silence in the last few weeks. Once again many are outraged by the loss of civilian life they have witnessed - this time in Gaza. Yet there has been no chorus of liberal voices insisting that, no matter how intense their fury, people must not take out that anger on Britain's Jewish community.

It's worth stating the obvious - that Operation Cast Lead is not 9/11 or 7/7, that Israel is not al-Qaida - and noting that the silence has not been absolute. In a very welcome move, a group of leading Muslims wrote an open letter condemning apparent Gaza-related attacks on Jews. Meanwhile, Labour's Denis MacShane, in a passionate article for Progress magazine, urged those on the left not "to turn criticism of Israel into a condemnation of Jews".

Otherwise, it has been eerily quiet. Those who in 2001 or 2005 rapidly spoke out against guilt by association have been mute this time. Yet this is no abstract concern. For British Jews have indeed come under attack.

Comment & Debate: As British Jews come under attack, the liberal left must not remain silent: It should be perfectly possible to condemn Israel 's brutal action....

According to the Community Security Trust, the body that monitors anti-Jewish racism, the four weeks after Cast Lead began saw an eightfold increase in antisemitic incidents in Britain compared with the same period a year earlier. It reports 250 incidents - nearly 10 a day - the highest number since it began its work 25 years ago. Among them are attacks on synagogues, including arson, and physical assaults on Jews. One man was set upon in Golders Green, north London, by two men who shouted, "This is for Gaza", as they punched and kicked him to the ground.

Blood-curding graffiti has appeared in Jewish areas across the country, slogans ranging from "Slay the Jewish pigs", and "Kill the Jews", to "Jewish bastardz." Jewish schools have been advised to be on high alert against attack. Most now have security guards on the door; some have a police presence.

The threat is real, and yet barely a word has been heard from those who pride themselves on their vigilance against racism. But there is more than a sin of omission here.

Take last month's demonstrations against Israel. Riazat Butt, the Guardian's religious affairs correspondent, describes in a joint edition of the Guardian's Islamophonic and Sounds Jewish podcasts how at one demo she heard the cry not only of "Down with Israel" but "Kill Jews". An anti-war protest in Amsterdam witnessed chants of: "Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the gas."

At the London events, there were multiple placards deploying what has now become a commonplace image: the Jewish Star of David equated with the swastika. From the podium George Galloway declared: "Today, the Palestinian people in Gaza are the new Warsaw ghetto, and those who are murdering them are the equivalent of those who murdered the Jews in Warsaw in 1943."

Now what, do you imagine, is the effect of repeating, again and again, that Israel is a Nazi state? Even those with the scantest historical knowledge know that the Nazis are the embodiment of evil to which the only appropriate response is hate. How surprising is it if a young man, already appalled by events in Gaza, walks home from a demo and glimpses the Star of David - which he now sees as a latter-day swastika - outside a synagogue and decides to torch the building, or at least desecrate it? Yet Galloway, along with Livingstone, who was so careful in July 2005, did not hesitate to make the comparison (joined by a clutch of Jewish anti-Israel activists who should know better).

The counter-arguments here are predictable. Some will say they take pains to distinguish between Zionists and Jews. Intellectually, that's fine; in the seminar room, it holds water. The trouble is, it doesn't mean much on the street - at least not to the man who saw a group of Manchester Jews leaving synagogue on January 17 and shouted "Free Palestine, you motherfuckers," before giving them the Nazi salute.

The liberal left should know this already. After all, when Jack Straw wrote his notorious piece about the hijab, full of qualifications, progressives understood that none of that would matter: it would be read as an attack on all Muslims. And so it was. For all Straw's careful phrasing, Muslim <u>women</u> whose heads were covered were attacked. Liberals warned Straw that he was playing with fire. Today's anti-Israel activists need to realise they are doing the same.

Besides, this business of distinguishing between good and bad Jews has a long history. Anthony Julius, author of a definitive study of English antisemitism, says that, with the exception of the Nazis, Jew-haters have always made distinctions. Christian antisemites accepted Jews who were ready to convert and rejected those who refused. A century ago, Winston Churchill drew a line between homegrown British Jews and those spreading Bolshevism. Now the dividing line is affinity for Israel.

But the logical corollary of this is that, if Jews refuse to dissociate themselves from Israel, then they are fair game for abuse and attack until they publicly recant. Liberals rightly recoil from the constant pressure on Muslims to explain themselves and denounce jihadism or even islamism. Yet they make the same implicit demand when they suggest Jews are OK, unless they are Zionists. The effect is to make Jews' place in British society contingent on their distance from their fellow Jews, in this case, Israelis.

Comment & Debate: As British Jews come under attack, the liberal left must not remain silent: It should be perfectly possible to condemn Israel 's brutal action....

Nor is it good enough to say that most Jews support Israel. Yes, most have a strong affinity and family ties to the Jewish state. But that doesn't mean they support every policy, including the one that led to such mayhem in Gaza. And do we think that those who kicked the man in Golders Green first stopped to ask his opinion of the merits of Cast Lead?

I know that some will say that even raising this is an attempt to divert attention from the real and larger issue, Israel's brutality in Gaza and the colossal number of civilian deaths that entailed. I won't accept that. Regular readers know that I denounced Cast Lead from the beginning. But I shouldn't have to say that. These two matters are separate. It is perfectly possible to condemn Israel's current conduct and to stand firmly against anti-Jewish prejudice. And it's about time liberals and the left said so.

freedland@guardian.co.uk

Load-Date: February 4, 2009



Obama's challenge after tainted Iran election

The Toronto Star

June 14, 2009 Sunday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. A19

Length: 638 words

Body

It is hard to believe that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has won the Iranian presidential election, given the reported widespread support for the reformist Mir Hossein Mousavi.

With the latter claiming vote rigging and intimidation by state institutions controlled by the incumbent, the Islamic republic faces a crisis of credibility.

The shortages of ballots, the shutting down of websites and text messaging on election day, the closing down of rival campaign headquarters after the vote and the clashes between the security forces and angry citizens lend credence to the charge that the election was stolen from Mousavi.

All this suggests that Barack Obama's plan to engage Iran might become that much more difficult. Yet engage he must.

After all, it was never going to be easy dealing with a country whose president questions the Holocaust, threatens to wipe out Israel, berates the Great Satan and boasts about Iran's nuclear advances (spooking both Israelis and Arabs alike).

Yet it is also true that Ahmadinejad was never going to be central to a possible dialogue between Iran and the U.S.

He has been even more of a marginal figure than Iranian presidents usually are. Constitutionally, real power rests with the supreme leader, Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei.

The Iran-U.S. relationship never recovered from the 1979 Islamic revolution and the 444-day American hostage crisis that followed.

America's unconscionable support for Saddam Hussein's 1980-88 war on Iran and its debilitating economic sanctions on Iran failed to dent the regime in Tehran.

The invasion and occupation of Iraq strengthened Iran immeasurably - showering it with huge oil revenues; handing it a historic opportunity to consolidate its political and religious grip on Shiite Iraq; and so discrediting the U.S. military option that the Pentagon rejected the idea of bombing the Iranian nuclear installations.

Meanwhile, Israeli onslaughts on Gaza and Lebanon only helped strengthen Iran's clients, *Hamas* and Hezbollah.

That's the mess Obama is trying to clear.

Obama's challenge after tainted Iran election

Axing Bush's "axis of evil" lingo, he has been respectful of "the Islamic Republic of Iran," signalling that he's not after regime change.

In his Cairo speech, he acknowledged the 1953 CIA coup that toppled an elected Iranian government and reinstalled the Shah on the throne.

On the nuclear file, he conceded two key points: "Any nation, including Iran, should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power if it complies with its responsibilities under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

And, "no single nation should pick and choose which nation holds nuclear weapons."

Except that America is trying to do exactly that with Iran. And U.S. allies Israel, India and Pakistan, all in Iran's neighbourhood, refuse to sign the non-proliferation treaty.

Those are the sorts of issues that Ayatollah Khamenei wants addressed.

Iran is a theocracy that, despite its tightly controlled democracy, is far more democratic than Saudi Arabia or Egypt, America's close allies.

Iran imposes strictures on <u>women</u>, yet they are more liberated than any Muslim <u>women</u> in the region and have been a leading force in the worldwide Islamic feminist movement.

While Arab regimes are pro-American and their peoples are not, the opposite is true in Iran. But Iranians will stand by their government, no matter how bad, if they feel their national interest is at stake.

Iran has never invaded a neighbour in modern times. It also opposed the Taliban long before the U.S. did. Recently, it responded to the U.S. call for help for Pakistan by pledging \$300 million. It also sent ships off north Africa to curb Somali pirates.

The U.S. can do business with Iran, so long as it engages in a pragmatic give-and-take. What it cannot do is to try to dictate to Iran. That has been tried for the last 30 years - with zero success.

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Load-Date: June 14, 2009



Princeton professor calls for opening of Palestinian borders

University Wire
May 21, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 The Dartmouth via U-Wire

Length: 643 words

Byline: By Christina Wray, The Dartmouth; SOURCE: Dartmouth College

Dateline: HANOVER, N.H.

Body

Stabilizing Palestine's economy and political system is the only way to halt the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and save the Palestinian people from poverty, Amaney Jamal, an assistant professor of politics at Princeton University, said in her lecture "The Gaza Crisis: How we got here and where do we go next?" held in the Dartmouth University Rockefeller Center on Wednesday.

Because Palestine's economy is irreversibly linked to Isreal's, peace can only be achieved through the opening of Palestinian borders and subsequent growth of the country's economy, Jamal said.

Jamal pointed to the precarious economic situation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as a prime source of instability in the region.

"Any peace process needs to address the ability of the Palestinian entity to support itself economically," she said.

There has been a rapid expansion of poverty in the region since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, Jamal said. The Oslo Accords authorized the creation of the Palestinian Authority to govern Palestinian territories and mandated the withdrawal of Israeli Defense Forces from parts of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Under the Accords, Israel maintained control of the land borders, air space and territorial waters of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Between 1993 and 1996, unemployment in Palestine rose from 5 percent to 28 percent, Jamal said. She added that in 2006, 80 percent of the Gaza population depended on humanitarian aid for daily sustenance.

"Youth turn to radicalism in dire economic situations," she said. "Palestine needs foreign economic investment, which remains impossible with the current instability in the region."

Israel has also instituted an economic blockade on the Palestinian region, hindering the import of goods ranging from pasta to diapers, Jamal said. Israel's control of the borders and roads has allowed the country to institute a series of checkpoints that impede travel, even within the borders of the Palestinian territories, she said.

"All social development is being impeded by the system of checkpoints across the West Bank," Jamal said.

These checkpoints often prevent Palestinians from accessing education or adequate health care in cities only minutes away from their rural homes, Jamal said. It is not uncommon for <u>women</u> to give birth at these checkpoints as they wait hours for permission to continue on to the nearest hospital, Jamal said.

Princeton professor calls for opening of Palestinian borders

According to Jamal, since the signing of the Oslo Accords, 50 percent of the land granted to Palestinians has been appropriated by Israel for buffer zones, checkpoints and Israeli settlements. She added that the remainder of the land controlled by Palestinians consists of fragmented enclaves separated by multiple Israeli checkpoints. This fragmentation has damaged Palestinian unity, Jamal said.

In November 2008, Jamal said, violence in the Gaza Strip flared up as Israel launched an offensive in response to rockets fired by the *Hamas* government, which controls Gaza. Over a four-month period, 60 percent of the Gaza Strip's agricultural land was damaged, several towns and factories were destroyed, and 67 schools were demolished, according to Jamal.

"Dropping continuous bombs on civilian populations when citizens are not even allowed to leave the region will only lead to humanitarian destruction," Jamal said.

Jamal suggested an agreement that would open the borders surrounding the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and allow Palestine to interact with foreign economies to attract investment and trade.

"There will be no military solution to this conflict," Jamal said. "I believe there can only be a political solution."

Jamal's lecture was part of a series titled "Perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian Crisis" sponsored by groups including The Dickey Center for International Understanding and The Rockefeller Center.

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Load-Date: May 21, 2009



WORLD - DIGEST

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

June 4, 2009 Thursday

THIRD EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A9

Length: 608 words

Byline: From news services

Dateline: 0

Body

Aid won't reverse Palestinian economic decline, World Bank says

Massive aid to the Palestinians can at best slow economic decline, but won't revive the private sector or spur long-term development, the World Bank said today, challenging assumptions that have long guided donor countries. Economic growth continues to be stymied by Israeli restrictions on Palestinian trade and movement in the West Bank and the growing isolation of the *Hamas*-run Gaza Strip, the bank said. As a result, Palestinians are becoming more, not less, dependent on foreign aid, the report said.

Pakistanis control Swat Valley city - Pakistani soldiers stood guard along its narrow roads, but there was no sign of civilian life in the Swat Valley's main city, nor signs of the Taliban. Across the river stood another militant stronghold, reminding the army its work was not done. A top Pakistani commander told journalists visiting Mingora that it would be at least another year before troops could leave Swat.

British woman sentenced to life - A court in Laos found a pregnant British woman guilty of trafficking heroin and sentenced her to life in prison Wednesday, a court official said. Heroin trafficking is punishable by death, but Samantha Orobator, 20, was spared because Lao law does not allow the execution of pregnant <u>women</u>.

Sri Lanka shows support for president - President Mahinda Rajapaksa, criticized internationally for his conduct of the war against the Tamil Tigers, has been all but crowned king inside Sri Lanka. "He is a lion. He is the father of Sri Lanka," said R.S.P. Nishantha, a tennis instructor. "He has done what others did not dare to do."

Al-Qaida kills hostage - Al-Qaida terrorists have killed a Briton taken hostage in Mali, the British prime minister said. The fate of a Swiss hostage taken at the same time was unknown. Edwin Dyer was abducted in January and his captors in Mali said they would kill him by the end of May if Britain refused to release extremist preacher Abu Qatada from prison.

U.S. keeps base near Sadr City - The U.S. and Iraqi militaries have tentatively agreed to keep a joint base on the edge of Baghdad's Shiite slum of Sadr City, maintaining an American presence in a strategic area even after the June 30 deadline for U.S. combat troops to pull out of the capital. The base is one of about 14 joint facilities that U.S. officials say privately that they would like to keep in flashpoint neighborhoods after the deadline.

WORLD - DIGEST

Quebec billionaire headed to space - Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberte is set to become Canada's first space tourist when he travels on a Russian Soyuz spacecraft in September. The Quebec billionaire will become the seventh private citizen to visit the orbiting space lab.

Asteroids discovered - Swiss amateur astronomer Jose De Queiroz claimed that he has discovered two new asteroids among the hundreds of thousands between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter. The Minor Planet Center of the International Astronomical Union in Cambridge, Mass., confirmed the finds.

Shuttle getting June 13 launch - NASA has cleared space shuttle Endeavour for a June 13 launch to the international space station. When Endeavour's pulls up, the space station will have 13 people on board for the first time ever.

The Kim factor - After North Korea tested a nuclear device three years ago, the U.N. ordered a ban on luxury goods, a move that targeted leader Kim Jong II, who was known for his taste for rare cognac, lobster, caviar, sharkfin soup, caviar and sushi. He suffered a stroke in November and no longer eats such fine food - which is why, some analysts say, he was willing to test another nuclear device.

Load-Date: June 8, 2009



Seduced by conspiracy; BOOKS

Sunday Express
May 31, 2009 Sunday
U.K. 1st Edition

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Section: COLUMNS; 66

Length: 606 words

Byline: DAVID CONNETT

Body

READERS who believe that alien abductions are covered up by the military, who fancy the Mafia killed President Kennedy, that the Kennedys killed Marilyn Monroe, that the moon landings were faked by Nasa or that MI5 or MI6 connived with the Royal Family to murder Diana, Princess of Wales, stop now, this book is not for you.

That might rule out a good number of people for on the evidence in Aaronovitch's book, conspiracy theories are one of the few boom industries of recent decades. Fuelled by the spread of the internet there has been a veritable dot. con bubble.

Conspiracy is, if nothing else, a profitable business to judge from the mushrooming market for books, films and other paraphernalia.

From the Gunpowder Plot to 9/11 via Pearl Harbor and the Zinoviev letters, Aaronovitch's lively debunking of many examples of such flights of fantasy is at the heart of his book and is undoubtedly entertaining but his exploration of why so many people are prepared to believe in them is where the satisfying food for thought can be found.

Who and why are so many citizens, from MPs to newspaper editors, rich and poor, male and <u>female</u>, guilty of such wilful credulity, he asks. What is it about conspiracies that make them so seductive? In part, he readily suggests, belief stems from the fact that some conspiracies, from the security services' infiltration of the National Union of Mineworkers to the Iran Contra affair, have subsequently proved genuine and inflamed suspicions. Nevertheless, despite the comprehensive trashing of many of the wilder theories, they persist, even growing stronger with greater power.

Everyone is vulnerable. It isn't just the "crazies" or the "green ink brigade", as they are known in print journalism, who succumb.

Aaronovitch points out the middle classes and the educated are particularly susceptible with an unusual number of academics who lend their reputations to dodgy causes. From Dan Brown to Norman Baker MP, the list is a long one. It is the priests rather than the ignorant peasants who are to blame.

Explanations as to why conspiracies are believed are as thick in the air as the dust from the Twin Towers. Some suggest it is history written by losers, providing solace to those suffering from economic, political and social change. Others, that it is a simple need for drama, for stories that make sense of random, uncontrollable events around us

Seduced by conspiracy BOOKS

or else evidence of repressed inner turmoil. Conspiracy theories hold out insights into what really goes on which are gratifyingly alluring, he says, while genuine scepticism is hard and unattractive.

AARONOVITCH is particularly scathing of those who hold that the truth of a conspiracy theory is less important than its very existence, that Aids might not have been invented in a government lab as a weapon against gays or that New Orleans levees were deliberately blown up to flood poor black residential areas, because it articulates an "alternative narrative" of the powerless.

As Aaronovitch succinctly points out, belief in such mad plots distorts our view of history and can lead to disastrous decision-making.

Contemporary anti-Semitism (and the Holocaust) can be traced back to The Protocols Of The Elders Of Zion, an allegedly authentic account of how the Jews wanted to take over the world. They were discredited in the Twenties but Hitler still chose to believe them.

Even now such radical Islamists as the <u>Hamas</u> leadership refer to the Protocols as proof that Israel needs to be wiped from the Middle Eastern landscape.

Unlike conspiracy theories, Aaronovitch's blend of fact and fiction leaves you feeling liberated rather than persecuted.

Load-Date: June 3, 2009



The saga of the worst little whorehouse in Australia; Film tells story of farmer's ill-fated attempt to make ends meet

The Independent (London)

May 16, 2009 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 26

Length: 590 words

Byline: Kathy Marks IN SYDNEY

Body

MOUNTING DEBT, falling produce prices and a crippling drought are just some of the problems facing Australian farmers. However, few choose the route of Chris Rohrlach, a sheep farmer who branched out by opening a brothel in his small country town.

It seemed a good idea: Inverell, in northern New South Wales, had never had an establishment of that kind - not a legal one, anyway. Mr Rohrlach and his business partner, Danny Poulsen, consulted their wives, who gave their blessing with the proviso that "any funny business with the girls and you're out the door".

But the men quickly ran into opposition. Inverell is in a conservative Christian heartland. The pair discovered that mustering cattle and shearing sheep did not equip them to manage a brothel. And they could not attract suitable staff to their venue, First Choice Stress Relief, since prostitutes were flocking to booming mining towns in other parts of Australia.

Their story is told in a new documentary, A Good Man, to be screened at the Sydney Film Festival next month. The director, Safina Uberoi, said it was an irresistible subject. "They [the Rohrlachs] were having a baby and opening a brothel at the same time. You've got to ask, can a good father and a loving husband be a successful pimp?"

Chris Rohrlach is the "good man" of the title. Seventeen years ago, his pregnant girlfriend, Rachel, had a stroke that left her quadriplegic. She gave birth to a healthy boy and Mr Rohrlach married her and has looked after them both, spurning the option of full-time residential care for his wife.

It was when a second baby was due that he realised he had to find a way to supplement his income. Over "quite a few beers", he and Mr Poulsen, a fellow farmer, hit on the brothel idea. "We were looking to diversify and it seemed a good proposition," he said. "It was quite legal and unlike farming, not dependent on the climate."

He was unprepared, though, for the local opposition. Protest meetings were held, and The Inverell Times ran headlines such as "Moral decay" and "Brothel will defile town". The families involved were ostracised. "I was

The saga of the worst little whorehouse in Australia Film tells story of farmer's ill-fated attempt to make ends meet

starting to think I was the devil incarnate," Mr Rohrlach said. "Our names were all over the paper with 'brothel' written next to them, which was hard to take.

"We also had a lot of support, with people saying there's a need for it in the community, and it's better the men pay for it than run down Girl Guides."

After a lengthy battle, he and Mr Poulsen won planning permission. The brothel, built from scratch, was "very nice, quite flash", with polished timber floors, a solid pine reception desk and four "working rooms", one with a spa, another with mirrored walls and ceiling. But they "simply couldn't attract the right kind of staff".

"We had some really nice older ladies and there was a big demand for them," Mr Rohrlach said. "But we couldn't attract enough young, attractive <u>women</u> to make the business a success." He was unsuited to the work. He hated the late hours, and felt uncomfortable around the staff and customers. Less than a year after it opened, First Choice Stress Relief closed. Mr Rohrlach lost \$150,000 (£75,000). "It was definitely an experience, it was an education, and I'll be able to tell the grandchildren I used to own a brothel," he said. "But from a financial perspective, it was a spectacular failure."

Mr Rohrlach, who has resumed farming, hopes the documentary is not screened in Inverell.

'The Hizbollah issue won't go away any more than *Hamas* is going to slide out of sight in Gaza'

Robert Fisk,

page 38

Load-Date: May 15, 2009



YOUR VIEWS

Charleston Gazette (West Virginia)

May 10, 2009, Sunday

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. P3C

Length: 610 words

Body

Commentary told the truth about Israel

Editor:

Eva Knapp is a retired Kanawha County schoolteacher, a compassionate, fair-minded, decent human being and a good friend of ours and all peace-loving folks.

Mrs. Knapp's description of how Israel's army abused and killed civilian children, <u>women</u>, old and young was an honest and true presentation. She did not lie about anything in that column: "America must stop blessing killings of Palestinians." It is the truth, and truth is often bitter. This was confirmed by an Oct. 21, 2007, report in the Guardian, "Israel shaken by troops' tales of brutality against Palestinians," in which Nufar Yishai-Karen (a clinical psychologist at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem) and professor Yoel Elizur detailed a series of violent incidents including the beating of a 4-year-old.

Charles Pique's Feb. 13 letter to The Charleston Gazette, "Israelis are violating Geneva Convention," was urging U.S. foreign policy to stop supporting Israel in killing Palestinians. In this letter Charles also said: "Look at the kill ratio: When the kill ratio is above 100 to one, that is not a fair fight. It is genocide, a Holocaust."

Gaza is a thickly populated place and the Israeli army has used white phosphorus chemical bombs against the Gazan population. White phosphorus bombs were banned by the 1980 Geneva Convention. Israel disregards international law and the U.N. and justifies the killing of innocent, armless civilians by proclaiming self-defense. This is not self-defense; it is genocide of the Palestinians. Israel is the illegal occupier of Palestine/Gaza, divided the land into small concentration camps surrounding each with the military, building checkpoints, depriving Palestinians basic necessities like water, food, aid from other countries, access to schools/hospitals, etc. This is worse than any holocaust known in history.

At the Western nations' request, when Gaza democratically elected <u>Hamas</u>, Israel and the United States did not approve of it because the Gazans did not elect their puppets. Israel has many times elected terrible leaders like Ariel Sharon, who committed well-known war crimes against Palestinian civilians.

The Constitution of the United States guarantees free speech, but radical Jews in this country do not want anyone to tell the truth about Zionist expansionism and systematically eliminating all Palestinians, falsifying events and blaming Palestinians for their well-planned genocide by use of an American-made arsenal in the occupied territories.

YOUR VIEWS

Attacks on Eva Knapp by Paul Epstein (April 17) and by Anne Lieberman (April 26) are unfortunate, baseless and unfair for a constructive dialogue.

Abdul H. Qazi

Cross Lanes

WVU Tech band put on a wonderful concert

Editor:

I want to thank the WVU Tech band and director John Hopkins for a splendid evening of music at their spring concert on April 28. The selections ranged over varied styles of music and were well done.

The remarkable thing about Tech's band is that no one is a music major, as the school does not have a music degree program. These students all are involved in other areas of study and play music simply for the love of it.

Their rendition of "76 Trombones" from "The Music Man" was pure delight to all lovers of that great musical. The final selection featuring a drum duel between director Hopkins and guest percussionist James Anderson was incredible!

The sad thing about the concert was the lack of community support and low attendance. The concert was free of charge and provided a pleasant evening of entertainment. Thanks to the band, I had a great time. The band deserved better support than it received.

David Mitchell

Charleston

Load-Date: May 11, 2009



The New York Times

January 21, 2009 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 2

Length: 2172 words

Body

Moscow Journal

A City Shivers as a Ritual Returns

Monday was Russian Orthodox Epiphany, and roughly 30,000 Muscovites lined up to dunk themselves in icy rivers and ponds, city officials said. The annual ritual baptism, which is believed to wash away sins, is enjoying a boisterous revival (with high production values) after being banished to villages during the Soviet era. PAGE A10

BOMBS KILL 5 IN BAGHDAD

Violence rose in Baghdad ahead of provincial elections on Jan. 31, with five people killed in two separate bombings. PAGE A14

Australia Reports Rescue at Sea A16

Suit Filed in Chinese Milk Scandal A19

CHECHNYA PROTESTS LAWYER'S DEATH

Thousands of people attended a rally in Chechnya's capital, Grozny, to protest the killing of a prominent human rights lawyer who had represented the family of a Chechen girl killed by a former Russian officer. PAGE A19

CHINA SEES THREATS, NEAR AND AFAR

An assessment from China's cabinet sees threats from independence movements and American arms sales to Taiwan. According to goals implied in the paper, China is seeking to counterbalance the American military presence in Asia. PAGE A19

New Supply Routes to Afghanistan A20

Conflict in Gaza

Israel Slows Gaza Withdrawal

As the Cease-Fire Is Violated

Israel slowed its withdrawal of forces from Gaza as the cease-fire with <u>Hamas</u> suffered its first violations. Eight mortars were shot at Israel, all falling short, and Israeli troops twice came under fire. Israel responded with airstrikes on launching sites. PAGE A8

A VILLAGE REDUCED TO DEBRIS

In Juhr el Dik, a farming village on Gaza's eastern border, a swath of destruction spreads like a sea across an area where about 40 houses once stood. While the destruction was indisputable, who is at fault is not, as Israel blames *Hamas*, and the villagers blame Israel. PAGE A8

LITTLE CELEBRATION IN ISRAEL

Israel's offensive against <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza ended on Sunday. Yet there was little sense of triumph in Israel in the days after, more a nagging feeling of something missed or incomplete. PAGE A8

Tension in France Over Gaza A20

The Inauguration P1-30

National

STUDY SAYS IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Mistreated in Detention Centers

A study by the University of Arizona found that some 300 **women** held at immigration detention centers in Arizona face dangerous delays in health care and widespread mistreatment. Federal immigration officials said the study, which examined the conditions for **women** in the process of deportation proceedings at three federal immigration centers in Arizona, was narrow and unsubstantiated. PAGE A23

STATES JOIN STUDY OF OHIO RIVER

Six states bordering the Ohio River are joining the Environmental Protection Agency in a large study intended to identify and reduce dangerous levels of bacteria that plague the waterway. Unsafe levels of fecal coliform, or E. coli, which can sicken those in contact with the water, have been identified in about 500 miles of the 981-mile river. PAGE A23

TRIAL TESTS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The parents of Kara Neumann, above, an 11-year-old girl in Weston, Wis., who died from undiagnosed and untreated juvenile diabetes, were ordered to stand trial for reckless endangerment in failing to get her medical attention. The child's parents -- who believe that God alone has the ability to heal the sick -- said the charges violated their constitutional right to religious freedom. They face up 25 years in prison if convicted. PAGE A23

TRANSFER OF INMATES SOUGHT

A court-appointed receiver said that California should be ordered to transfer up to 7,000 ailing inmates to facilities with access to better medical care. The receiver, Clark Kelso, is in charge of improving medical care for inmates, but has become frustrated as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and state lawmakers have balked at providing the \$8 billion he is seeking to build medical facilities. PAGE A24

Obituaries

EDMUND DE ROTHSCHILD, 93

A merchant banker from the renowned banking family's British branch, he led the development of a major hydroelectric project in Labrador while helping his firm expand globally. PAGE B15

RAY YOSHIDA, 78

During his four decades of teaching at the Art Institute of Chicago, he was known for his mysteriously comical paintings and collages, and was one of the most admired contributors to a tradition known as Chicago Imagism, which favored surrealism, fantasy and oddball humor. PAGE B15

New York

GOVERNOR TO ANNOUNCE DECISION

On Senate Appointment

Gov. David A. Paterson said he had decided whom he would appoint to fill the United States Senate seat that is being vacated by Hillary Rodham Clinton, and would announce his decision no later than Saturday. "I have a good idea now which direction I want to go," Mr. Paterson said, but said he wanted to mull it over for several more days. PAGE A26

HARLEM TAKES IN A HISTORIC DAY

Residents of Harlem crowded into public spaces to view the swearing in of the first black president. Some had taken the day off to see it. Others darted out during their lunch breaks to watch on large screens. "I do feel this means we are one United States, one people," said one. Jim Dwyer, About New York. PAGE A29

Business

OPTIMISM IN THE CAPITAL,

But Not on Wall Street

The financial markets appear not to share the widespread optimism inspired by the incoming Obama administration. The Dow industrials plunged 4 percent, and dropped under 8,000. Above, traders on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange take a break to watch President Obama take the oath of office. Page B1

The Economic Crisis Gauging the Health Of the Economy, and Gulping

Just how bad is the economy? With help from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, David Leonhardt discovered some good news: The current economic climate isn't close to being as dire as that of the early 1980s, when more people were unemployed. The bad news? By the end of 2009, the nadir of 1982 won't be too far off. PAGE B1

UNEMPLOYMENT, IT'S BIG BUSINESS

As businesses slim down to avoid being torn down by an economy in a nose dive, layoffs are skyrocketing. And as layoffs multiply, firms that specialize in career transitions are scrambling to keep up with the volume, as many former employees of corporate America are set adrift. Page B1

LAYOFFS AT WARNER BROTHERS

Warner Brothers said it would eliminate 800 jobs, citing declining DVD sales and a lag in scripted television programming. Page B2

CUTBACKS AT CLEAR CHANNEL

The parent company of Clear Channel Communications, which owns billboards and radio stations under that name, announced that it would be laying off 1,850 employees effective immediately. Page B2

Arts

THE JOYS AND PAINS

Of Being an Animal

Temple Grandin designed the slaughter systems used to process about half the cattle in the United States and Canada, and yet her latest book, "Animals Make Us Human," argues for improving the quality of life of animals. Dwight Garner writes that the book is provocative and frequently funny. PAGE C1

FOX'S HUMAN POLYGRAPH MACHINE

Fox's new crime show, "Lie to Me," stars one of those familiar television law-enforcement types: cocky, divorced, encumbered by his skills and always right. A review by Ginia Bellafante. PAGE C1

Arts, Briefly C2

SIGN NO. 1: THEIR PANTS ARE ON FIRE

The science in the aforementioned "Lie to Me" is heavily influenced by the work of the psychologist Paul Ekman, who has trained the authorities in how to determine when someone is lying. PAGE C4

AN 18TH-CENTURY STAR SHINES AGAIN

Hester Santlow was one of the premier dancers of the early 18th century, though she has been largely forgotten. Her dances, however, were copiously notated, and a number of dance specialists have tried to bring them to life in recent decades. PAGE C3

MULLING WARHOL AND IDENTITY

The comedian Josh Kornbluth's latest show, "Andy Warhol: Good for the Jews?," details how he came to reconsider the artist, and his own identity. PAGE C5

Film Reviews:

'Dealing and Wheeling in Small Arms' C8

'The Photograph' C8

Sports

A MENTOR TO TENNIS GREATS

Heads to the Hall of Fame

Dr. Robert Walter Johnson, a Virginia physician, used to feed and clothe young black tennis players and train them on a single clay court in his backyard. Two of his proteges, Althea Gibson and Arthur Ashe, went on to break the champion color barrier at the United States Open. His election to the International Tennis Hall of Fame has come at a particularly fitting moment. Harvey Araton, Sports of The Times. PAGE B9

O'NEAL BECOMES FORCE FOR PHOENIX

The idea of a Phoenix Suns meet-and-greet on the South Lawn of the White House as N.B.A. champions sounds like a stretch in some quarters of the league, but Shaquille O'Neal is forcing some midseason reassessments. The Suns are showing signs of renewal and making a push to rejoin the West's elite. Page B9

FIGHTING OPPONENTS AND OBSCURITY

Fedor Emelianenko is the No. 1 mixed martial arts fighter in the world. He has never been knocked out. And while he has thousands of fans across Europe, North America and Japan, almost no one in his native Russia knows who he is. PAGE B10

Dining

Wines of The Times

For Cabernet Sauvignon

A New Source Appears

Napa Valley, please take a step to your left, the spotlight is getting crowded -- and besides, it's South Africa's turn. Eric Asimov writes that for cabernet sauvignon lovers, South Africa is producing some of the very best, and at prices that demand attention, if their flavor doesn't first. Page D1

Restaurants

A New Sparkle for an Old Gem

Daniel has undergone something of a change. It was fancy before, but it has traded the frilly for a strong beauty of sharp lines, deep chocolate browns and silver grays. Frank Bruni writes that it has also maintained its position as the least marginalizing of the four-star breed, and a dining experience to match the dollars spent. Page D1

HOW MUCH CAN ONE OBJECT DO?

Taking its place next to cooking items as important as pots, pans, knives and cookbooks is the cellphone. Many people now depend on it for a variety of cooking related tasks. Page D1

Food Stuff

What Happens Without the Cream D2

Put a Little Burn in This Winter D2

Religion Is Just That Sweet D2

The Minimalist

Not Mom's, but Amazing Anyway

With minimal oil needed and taste that raises the bar on an old favorite, this fried herbed chicken is right on the money for weeknight menus. Mark Bittman explains this recipe for both bone-in and boneless chicken. Page D3

A Good Appetite

It's All in the Beets

Beets need not be labor intensive to add that special sweetness. For a beet and radicchio salad with goat cheese and pistachios the raw beets can be cubed in smaller pieces and roasted, reducing the prep time and adding a caramelized sweetness. Page D3

STRAIGHT FROM THE BAYOU

Cochon Butcher is a meat market and a cafe. The supply closet doesn't have room for pens, it's hung with mouthwatering loops of sausage. You can sate your cravings for Cajun fare either at the cafe, or at home with fare cooked in your own pots. Page D4

Salvaged New Orleans Recipes D4

Conflict in the White House Kitchen D5

DINING BLOGS

Excerpts from Dining Blogs by Frank Bruni, Emily Weinstein and Eric Asimov. Page D6

\$25 and Under

The Unsung South America

For a more reasonable rate than a plane ticket, you can give your taste buds a trip to no fewer than three South American countries. Visit the tastes of Colombia at Cafecito Bogota, above; Peru at Urubamba; and Suriname at Warung Kario. Page D8

Editorial

PRESIDENT OBAMA

There was no shortage of powerful imagery at President Obama's inauguration. But as he has done so many times in his career, he both embraced the symbolism and rose above it. PAGE A30

THE (NOW SILENT) GUNS OF JANUARY

While we are relieved that the guns and rockets are finally silent in Gaza, this is not a negotiated cease-fire. For both sides, it is grudging and unilateral. The immediate challenge is to find ways to make it more stable. PAGE A30

Op-Ed

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

This is a moment for radical departures from business as usual in so many areas. So my most fervent hope about President Obama is that he will be as radical as this moment -- and put everything on the table. PAGE A31

QUESTIONS FOR MR. GEITHNER

After some delay, Timothy Geithner, the Treasury secretary nominee, will appear before the Senate Finance Committee on Wednesday. With the economy in crisis, the Op-Ed editors asked seven experts in finance and economics to pose the crucial questions that they would like to see him answer. PAGE A31

FREE THE BLUE ROOM

Harking back to the Kennedys' Camelot, President Obama and the first lady, Michelle Obama, have said that they plan to open up the White House and remind people that it is the people's house. In an Op-Ed article, Deborah Needleman suggests that the Obamas are likely to find it hard to follow the example set by Jacqueline Kennedy because of the layers of bureaucracy. PAGE A31

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTOS

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January 18, 2009 Sunday

First Edition

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Length: 2115 words

Body

THE BIG ISSUE

SEX EDUCATION

There's value in waiting

RE: "PUSH for sex ed from age 10" (11/1). I do agree that sex education is necessary in Victorian schools, however these classes should not merely focus on the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases. They should also focus on the value of sex in marriage. Many teenagers seem to think that it is normal to have sex before marriage because they are satisfying a biological need. The real question is how many teenagers in Australia know about the value of waiting to have sex until they get married.

In these sex education classes, happily married couples would express in clear terms the value and joy of having sex when they were married. Teenagers need to understand that sex is not evil but sacred, that it is an expression of deep love and not an act to satisfy one's sexual desire.

KON BOUZIKOS, Yarraville

Time to get a wriggle on

USUALLY it is sex education that is too little, too late, but this time it seems it is the AMA. Its call for a pilot program to train teachers in a trial of sex education is replicating an initiative of several years ago.

The AMA is right about the need for more teacher training on sexuality, but at this stage initiatives need to be statewide, involving far more than the suggested 50 schools over four years. The time for trials and pilot programs is long past. It is time to consolidate resources, assessments and experiences to build the curriculum to truly support teachers, parents and, ultimately, the relationships and sexual health of our youth.

ERIC GLARE, Elwood

A little trauma never hurt anyone

I DARESAY there'll be a bit of controversy over this idea, but I'm all for the teaching of sex to 10-year-olds. Knowledge has always been the best defence and the reason so many of our young people are contracting diseases or getting pregnant is ignorance. Let's help them prevent it.

Oh sure, you can run around blindly saying, 'But they're too young, they should be interested in something else', but that's plainly not the case. Will they be traumatised by it? Not if the curriculum is well thought-out and is actually age-appropriate. And would a little trauma be too bad? I still remember learning about sex in school, and as soon as I found out what had to be done to make a baby, I decided then and there that it just wasn't for me. Keep in mind, I was 13 at the time.

So, to those who would just dismiss this out of hand, answer this: would you rather your child be traumatised for a short time knowing about sex, sexually transmitted diseases and sexual pressure; or would you rather they be traumatised by having to go through the sex alleyway blind?

DAVID JEFFERY, East Geelong

Let's admit girls just want to have fun

THE high incidence of unwanted teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases is not just an issue of smart sex education, but also a matter of morality.

Our society still denounces sex as dirty for young <u>females</u> - and while some might be emotionally ill-equipped to deal with sexual encounters, that doesn't acknowledge that young girls may still want sex; for whatever reason, be it curiosity, need or experimentation. The truth for <u>female</u> adolescents is that unless they acknowledge they want to have sex, no safe and healthy precautions will be practised. Sex education is clearly one positive step, but until we, as a society, can allow young girls to openly admit they want sex, without fear or shame, sex education will continue to fall on deaf ears, at whatever age.

PAULYNE POGORELSKE, East Melbourne

Go public, go free

REGARDING your story "Game, set and match to the developers" (11/1), I was surprised to read the only viable solution proposed for the reduction in the amount of tennis being played is to increase the number of backyard tennis courts. Backyard courts have gone the way of market gardens in Richmond, never to return.

What we do need are free, council-maintained tennis courts at parks all over Melbourne, something that already exists in Adelaide (probably not coincidentally the birthplace of Lleyton Hewitt). Only this level of free access will get large numbers of kids from all backgrounds playing tennis rather than other sports, not just the rich.

MATTHEW McCORMACK, Thornbury

Too lazy to thrive

JOHN Alexander likes to believe the demise of backyard tennis courts at the hands of property developers has caused a lack of top 10 players from Down Under. How, then, does he explain Ana Ivanovic, who learned to play tennis in a war-torn swimming pool shell?

The problem is not the lack of tennis courts; it is the lack of drive. Many of today's top players come from countries where being good at tennis holds the promise of a better life - Russia, Serbia and Slovakia. In contrast, Australian children already have that better life and prefer to sit in front of the TV or network on Facebook.

ALEXANDRA BUSSELMAIER, Melbourne

More cameras = less speed

THE call for urban speed limit reductions in Victoria ("Pedestrian deaths drive push for speed-limit cuts", 11/1) is well-intentioned, but the issue is speed reduction and there are more acceptable ways of achieving this.

Speed limits are a blunt instrument for achieving speed reduction, as opposed to more rigorous enforcement of current limits. A 50per cent increase in speed cameras' current 6000 operational hours per month would reduce urban fatal crashes by more than 30per cent. Even a doubling of hours would be economically justified.

DR MAX CAMERON, Albert Park

Shine a light on subject

REID Sexton's informative articles on pedestrian deaths could go a step further to achieve some radical reductions in fatalities. Several years ago in a medium-sized US town, pedestrian accidents were reduced by more than 60per cent when car drivers were requested to drive with headlights on during daylight hours.

Returning to Melbourne, I wrote to the chief traffic officer of police suggesting a similar practice be tried in Victoria. After consultation with the RACV, the police replied that the burden of flat battery call-outs was too much for the RACV to handle and they thanked me for my letter. Today most car lights are turned off with the ignition. Here is a solution to the huge increase in pedestrian deaths recorded in 2008.

W. BRUCE NIXON, Yarra Glen

Lost in transit

ALTHOUGH transit lanes are a great idea in theory, in practice there are far too many drivers who flout the system. I have seen far too many single-occupant vehicles travelling along the T2 lane on the Eastern Freeway. Where are VicRoads when you need them? Drivers who break the T2 laws must be fined.

We need dedicated bus lanes along the entire length of Springvale, Stud and Warrigal roads to help speed up buses and make them a viable alternative to the private car.

We also need red-coloured pavement, T2 lanes along the Princes Highway from Dandenong, Nepean Highway from Mordialloc, Monash Freeway from EastLink, Eastern Freeway from EastLink, Calder Freeway from WestLink, and West Gate Freeway from WestLink, not just during peak time, but all day to help change the mindset of everyone.

The supposed transit lane on the Tullamarine is a joke. No one obeys it and unless it's rigorously enforced, it might as well not be there.

STEVE STEFANOPOULOS, Armadale

Swimming in chemicals

FOLLOWING on from "Common pool cleaners 'a risk to kids" (11/1), simazine works by disrupting hormone and enzyme systems, the immune system, the allergy system and altering the functioning of our genes. Simazine allows other chemicals to act and preset our bodies for illnesses (allergies, asthma, auto-immune diseases, neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's) and cancers.

The type and severity of the effects depends on the time that they affect us, and the mixture of toxins that we are exposed to, but the effects are maximal to unborn babies and children. Hormone disruptors work at extremely low concentrations. The total biological effects of these and other toxic pesticides on all the animals in our ecosystems, including humans, have not been fully investigated, let alone quantified.

It is a disgrace that the APVMA continues to allow the sale and use of simazine for this purpose when the balance of evidence clearly demonstrates that simazine can cause harm and there are safer alternatives for algal control in swimming pools.

DR ALISON BLEANEY, Binalong Bay, Tasmania

It didn't start at Beersheba

RE: "The ties that bind" (11/1). It is misleading to imply the involvement of the Australian Army in Palestine during World War 1 was instrumental in forming close ties between Australia and Israel.

As Australian First World War memorials attest, our grandfathers fought in a country called Palestine, the purpose being to wrest control from the Turkish empire. There is no mention of Israel, because it did not exist.

Those Australian Light Horsemen who famously charged Beersheba would turn in their graves if they knew what happened to that town's Arab Palestinians. It is a little-known fact that the Palestinians were forced out of Beersheba during the 1948 war that founded Israel and ended up as refugees in Gaza.

Australian government/diplomatic ties may be close with Israel, but most Australians hold no such bond. The average Australian is more likely to sympathise with the Palestinians, who continue to be savaged by the Israeli military. They obviously deserve "a fair go".

BILL O'CONNOR, North Fitzroy

The bond of conquerors

THERE is one formative experience shared by Israel and Australia. That is the fact that both nations exist because they ruthlessly displaced the original inhabitants of the lands they now occupy and now have to endure the shame of their prosperity as those displaced live as refugees in the land of their ancestors.

PHILIP LETHLEAN, Williamstown

The same values

GOOD article, but confounded itself with references to Sussan Ley and her "lonely place". Michael Danby, on the other hand, is a stalwart to our friendships with Israel. Seriously, though, we are really namesakes in that we share hardships, aspirations and democracy - and eucalypts. Unfortunately, Arabs tend to disavow those cherished values and, yes, they do hate each other. Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait would no sooner talk to <u>Hamas</u> or Hezbollah than fly to the moon, and they also hate Iran, Syria and Lebanon.

RICHARD PEARSE, Hawthorn East

Unsafe for a long time

Chris McGreal describes Israel tethering the media by refusing journalists entry into Gaza (11/1) but omits to mention the lack of safety for Western journalists in Gaza led to their evacuation long before the Israeli invasion. The kidnapping of the BBC's Alan Johnston in March 2007 led to all Western media organisations shifting their people into Israel.

McGreal's second claim that Ashkelon is not part of the war zone is at odds with the fact that it is only 19 kilometres north of the Gaza Strip, not to mention that <u>Hamas</u> spokesmen have expressed the desire to knock out its Rotenberg power station. This appears consistent with other <u>Hamas</u> initiatives to support the Gazan population, given that Rotenberg also supplies two-thirds of Gaza's electricity.

JOE LEDERMAN, Frankston

The sin of spin

MELISSA Fyfe's article regarding the lack of empathy the Brumby Government has with Victorian people is correct. I used to be interested in politics but I don't listen to anything Brumby says now as I consider it all spin and no substance. I have children and am concerned about the future with climate change. The Brumby Government has not accepted that climate change is real and has no long-term plan, except to look after big business and forget about the average person and our world.

R.W.WEST, Eltham

A selfless example

THE article on Wirginia Maixner brought me to the verge of tears. Her selflessness and humility should be an example to us all.

HUNOR CSUTOROS, Moonee Ponds

Newsflash: people do it everywhere

AT WHAT point in slipshod journalism does people fornicating become front-page news, even for a Sunday? Either The Sunday Age is becoming a worse tabloid than the Herald Sun, or it's been a shockingly slow news week. This entire story reeks of a desperate PR stunt to get people attending, and possibly having sex in, a tourist attraction no one really wanted in the first place.

Would it shock The Sunday Age to know that people are having sex in cars, public bathrooms, nightclubs, the Botanical Gardens and the driver R&R booths at Flinders Street Station? Perhaps we can have a report about, and more photos of, people having sex in their bedrooms.

In fact, I think I can see Mr Irwin with a telephoto lens in a car outside my house right now. I'd better disrobe.

AVI BERNSHAW, Oakleigh

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Graphic

CARTOON BY GOLDING

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UN told Israel's Gaza attack a `war crime'

The Australian

March 25, 2009 Wednesday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Body

THE US yesterday said UN expert Richard Falk was "biased" in calling for an investigation of Israel's January offensive in the Gaza Strip on the grounds it could be construed as a war crime.

"We've expressed our concern many times about the special rapporteur's views on dealing with that question," State Department spokesman Robert Wood said.

"We've found the rapporteur's views to be anything but fair. We find them to be biased. We've made that very clear."

In a report presented yesterday at the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council, Mr Falk, the UN expert on the Palestinian territories, called for a probe to assess if the Israeli forces could differentiate between civilian and military targets in Gaza.

"If it is not possible to do so, then launching the attacks is inherently unlawful, and would seem to constitute a war crime of the greatest magnitude under international law," Mr Falk said in the report.

"On the basis of the preliminary evidence available, there is reason to reach this conclusion," he added, pointing out that attacks were targeted at densely populated areas.

Another report presented to the UN Human Rights Council yesterday accused Israeli troops of using a Palestinian child as a human shield during fighting in Gaza, shooting Palestinian children, bulldozing a house with a woman and child inside and shelling a building they had ordered civilians to enter a day earlier.

Radhika Coomaraswamy, the UN Secretary-General's envoy for protecting children in armed conflict, said that on January 15, when the fighting in Gaza was at its peak, Israeli troops forced a Palestinian boy aged 11 to walk in front of them as they came under fire in the district of Tel al-Hawa.

The UN also cited alleged abuses by <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamist movement that rules Gaza. Ms Coomaraswamy said the group had been unwilling to investigate the charges made.

She said the abuses were "just a few examples of the hundreds of incidents that have been documented and verified" by the nine UN officials allowed into the territory after the war ended in late January.

[&]quot;Violations were reported on a daily basis, too numerous to list," she said.

UN told Israel 's Gaza attack a 'war crime'

Physicians for Human Rights said: ``Israel placed numerous obstacles in the course of the operation that impeded emergency medical evacuation of the sick and wounded and also caused families to be trapped for days without food, water and medications."

The rights group said that Israeli forces had killed 16 Palestinian medical personnel and wounded 25, and had attacked eight hospitals and 26 primary care clinics.

Israeli officials had voiced satisfaction initially at the country's handling of the media coverage during the fighting, when the authorities banned journalists from entering the enclave. Since then, however, more accusations have leaked out.

The military chief of staff, Lieutenant-General Gabi Ashkenazi, said: ``I tell you that this is a moral and ideological army. I have no doubt that exceptional events will be dealt with."

The army has been forced to open several investigations into the rash of allegations. Trying to limit the damage to Israel's battered image, it was quick to condemn soldiers who wore T-shirts joking about shooting pregnant Palestinian **women** and children.

Soldiers have reportedly started wearing T-shirts showing a pregnant woman holding a gun in the crosshairs of a sniper rifle, with the logo ``1 Shot 2 Kills". Another shows a child in a rifle's sights with the slogan: ``The smaller they are, the harder it is".

The Israeli daily Haaretz said soldiers had taken to wearing the shirts to mark the end of basic training and other courses. The T-shirts were made by a private company.

The army said in a statement yesterday that ``this type of humour is unbecoming and should be condemned", and threatened disciplinary action.

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G2: Arts: Comment: Anyone who thinks a play should be balanced is missing the point. Art isn't about being fair

The Guardian - Final Edition

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Byline: Mark Ravenhill

Body

Seven Jewish Children, Caryl Churchill's 10-minute history of Israel that ends with the bombing of Gaza, caused huge controversy recently. I was struck by how many commentators complained that the play wasn't balanced. What a strange criticism. Art isn't fair. It's not neutral. Works of art exist to expose - and often to celebrate - the prejudices of the person who made them. A great film, song or sculpture exists because its creator had a strong, peculiar sense of how the world is and felt compelled to pick up a pen or a paintbrush in order to get that vision out there. Art that isn't driven by this basic impulse to create an unbalanced view of the world is probably bad or weak.

And so art finds itself in a peculiar place in Britain today. We value consensus. We're keen to be inclusive of everyone's cultures, religions, sexualities, opinions. We apologise before we introduce anything into a conversation that might depart from the consensus, even though the liveliest conversations tend to occur when opinions aren't apologised for but are loudly expressed. Apply this consensual approach to art and we're in for a boring time. We might produce some jolly community spectacles for the 2012 Olympics, or make some marketable genre films, but we won't produce work of lasting value. Picasso didn't paint Guernica because he saw there was good and bad on both sides of the Spanish civil war. He painted those contorted bodies because he was angered by German bombs falling on ordinary men, <u>women</u> and children. Should we insist that when a gallery displays Guernica, it hangs a balancing piece nearby, showing atrocities committed by the Spanish Republicans? No we shouldn't. So do we really expect Churchill's play to be accompanied by one denouncing <u>Hamas</u>?

Dickens didn't have a balanced view of the Victorian Poor Laws. He was angered by the bad schools, debtors' prisons and awful working conditions. He wrote stories to vent his fury. There were more nuanced debates happening at the time. Maybe we could put a sample of them into an appendix to Oliver Twist. I suspect most readers would skip it. We know Dickens is offering us a personal, even a prejudiced, view of his society. That's why we're reading the book.

Great writers don't just produce goodies and baddies, though, however strongly they support one side of an argument. Ibsen clearly believes, in An Enemy of the People, that his central character, Stockmann, is right to protest about the contaminated water supply. He doesn't give room for the argument that privatised utilities serving

G2: Arts: Comment: Anyone who thinks a play should be balanced is missing the point. Art isn't about being fair

the interests of shareholders can also be a good thing. But he does show that there is a cruelty in Stockmann's zeal; alongside his heroism there is selfishness and self-aggrandisement.

Even the playwrights we like to imagine as impersonal observers aren't neutral. Chekhov, the great "balanced" artist who wrote about Russia's vanishing upper class, actually saw his characters' decline as comic. But, thanks to the interpretation by his first director, Stanislavsky (who had a private income), and by subsequent generations of British directors, his plays are now seen as a kind of tragedy.

Of course, having a strong point of view is no guarantee of great art. Flat pieces of propaganda, lacking tension and the ebb and flow of life, are often the result. But having a powerful, partial or even partisan slant is far more likely to end in a piece that, ultimately, everyone can appreciate - even if they view the world differently. So let's stop calling for balance: that way dullness lies.

Load-Date: April 6, 2009



<u>US President proposed 'a new chapter' with the Islamic world; TURKEY:</u> Obama Offers Islam a Handshake

IPS (Latin America)
April 9, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 592 words **Byline:** Hilmi Toros

Body

'The United States is not, and never will be, at war with Islam,' he told the Turkish Parliament in capital Ankara Monday. 'Our partnership with the Muslim world is critical in rolling back a fringe ideology that people of all faiths reject.'

His words rang sweet to his audience, a change from statements by former president George Bush, who was not quite so emphatic in offering an embrace to Islam. 'America's relationship with the Muslim world cannot and will not be based on opposition to Al-Qaeda,' Obama declared. 'Far from it. We seek broad engagement based upon mutual interest and mutual respect.'

In symbolic gestures, he met Tuesday with leaders of Muslim, Christian and Jewish faiths in the main metropolis Istanbul. He also visited Hagia Sophia, a landmark that was once a Greek Orthodox basilica, later a mosque and is now a museum, and toured the Blue Bosque with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

'He inspired people, he is the voice of hope,' Gulsun Zeytinoglu, a human resources executive and former board member of the Turkish <u>Women</u> Entrepreneurs Association told IPS. 'He is trying to create new relationships in a world still influenced by the old paradigm. We need his vision.'

Obama endeared himself to Turks simply because he appears, talks and acts differently from previous U.S. leaders ? and because of his middle name common in Islam. In its extensive coverage of Obama's visit to Turkey, the state television network constantly referred to him as 'Barack Hussein Obama'.

And who would quarrel with his comment: 'The United States has been enriched by Muslim Americans. Many other Americans have Muslims in their family, or have lived in a Muslim-majority country. I know because I am one of them.'

'He is solid, he makes no mistakes and got wide acclaim from the media and people,' analyst Nejdet Kivanc told IPS. 'But whether he can achieve what he wants is a question mark. He may end up following the old U.S. policy rather than changing it.'

Veysel Guler, a devout Muslim and a rank-and-file member of the Islamic- rooted ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), also had his doubts. 'He sounds hopeful, but nothing can be solved by words unless you change the perception of Islam in the West,' he said. 'The problem is there, not here. Can he change them? Will he drop America's pro-Israel policy?'

Apart from the overture to Islam, Obama's trip had other political overtones.

US President proposed 'a new chapter' with the Islamic world TURKEY: Obama Offers Islam a Handshake

Obama described Turkey as a 'critical ally.' It was significant he chose Turkey, considered a bridge between East and West and an aspiring member of the European Union, as the first Muslim nation to visit. The U.S. and Turkey were close allies in the Cold War against feared Soviet expansion, but fell out over the Turkish Parliament's refusal to let U.S. troops open a front against Saddam Hussein in the U.S. led invasion of Iraq in 2003. But that was a war Obama opposed from the start.

The United States now sees Turkey as a possible means to solve regional conflicts, on the basis of its strong relations with Iran, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan - all of continuing concern to the United States. Turkey also maintains ties with <u>Hamas</u> as well as Israel, although Erdogan's clash with Israeli President Shimon Peres at the World Economic Forum earlier this year dented Israel-Turkish ties.

Obama's visit to Istanbul coincided with an Alliance of Civilisations summit in the city at a forum co-founded by Turkey and Spain, and designed to find ways to overcome cultural divides. © 2009 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

Load-Date: April 9, 2009



Long shadows cast over Israeli army; Soldiers admit killing unarmed civilians in Gaza war; ex-president charged with rape

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)

March 20, 2009 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A4

Length: 547 words

Byline: Dina Kraft, Daily Telegraph; With files from Agence France-Presse

Dateline: TEL AVIV

Body

Israeli soldiers have admitted shooting and killing unarmed Palestinian civilians during the Gaza war.

In detailed accounts published by the Israeli media, soldiers also told of the wanton destruction of property during the 22-day conflict with <u>Hamas</u> which began in December. An infantry squad leader described an incident in which a sniper mistakenly shot a Palestinian woman and her two children.

He said: "The sharpshooter saw a woman and children approaching him, closer than the lines he was told no one should pass. He shot them straight away.

"I don't think he felt too bad about it because, after all, as far as he was concerned, he did his job according to the orders he was given.

"And the atmosphere in general, from what I understood from most of my men who I talked to ... I don't know how to describe it The lives of Palestinians, let's say, is something (that seemed) much less important than the lives of our soldiers. So as far as they are concerned they can justify it that way."

The soldiers' testimony suggests a policy, at least during part of the operation, that anyone in certain open areas would be deemed suspicious and could be shot.

The Israeli army said that its chief advocate had ordered the military police to investigate the claims.

An earlier statement said the army had no evidence to support claims published in a newspaper that soldiers had acted under "permissive rules of engagement."

Another squad leader described a situation in which an older Palestinian woman was shot and killed because she was walking about 100 metres from a house that the company had taken over.

The same soldier described seeing graffiti such as "death to the Arabs" on the walls of commandeered homes and said he saw soldiers spit on family photographs.

Page 2 of 2

Long shadows cast over Israeli army; Soldiers admit killing unarmed civilians in Gaza war; ex-president charged with rape

He said: "I think this is the main thing: to understand how much the Israel Defence Forces has fallen in the realm of ethics, really. It's what I'll remember the most."

The accounts, published in the Haaretz and Maariv newspapers, immediately met with calls for an independent inquiry.

A human-rights group, Yesh Din, said: "The testimonies ... cast a shadow not just over the specific soldiers who carried out these deeds but also on high-ranking officials who gave the commands to open fire.

"If these orders were given as described, then both the issuing of the orders and their implementation are criminal offences."

About 1,300 Palestinian were killed in the fighting, as many as half of them civilians. Thirteen Israelis were killed.

Also on Thursday, Israel's ex-president Moshe Katsav was formally charged with several counts of rape, sexual harassment and an indecent act, the justice ministry said.

"He has been indicted for rape and sexual harassment," a spokeswoman for the justice ministry told AFP.

The move follows a March 8 announcement by prosecutors that they would indict the 63-year-old Iranian-born father of five who was forced to step down from office over the charges two years ago.

Katsav has been indicted on two counts of rape, forcible indecent assault and abuse of power against an employee at his office while he was tourism minister in the 1990s, the ministry said. He is also accused of sexually harassing at least one *female* employee while he was president, and of obstruction of justice, it said.

Graphic

Photo: Katsav;

Load-Date: March 20, 2009



In Focus: Can Obama talk to the Brotherhood?

Daily News Egypt

March 24, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 671 words

Body

CAIRO: Aiming to open dialogue with rivals of the US like Iran, Syria, and Russia and the Afghani Taliban movement, American president Barack Obama treads the steps of dialogue diplomacy. But can Obama follow the same diplomacy with the banned Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt?

Unfortunately, the answer is no.

There are four reasons that will prevent the Obama administration from holding any dialogue with the Brotherhood.

First, Obama's consultants see the political discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood as conflicting with democratic values concerning equality and discrimination between citizens on the grounds of religion and gender.

Second on the list is the Brotherhood's antagonistic attitude towards Israel.

Obama's administration believes that the Brotherhood's extreme stance towards Israel is manifest in two points: not recognizing Israel as a state and supporting the *Hamas* movement, Israel's archenemy.

The third reason is the wrong American perception regarding the possibility of a return to violence by the Brotherhood, or backing it up.

Finally, is the US perception that the Brotherhood is an unofficial group, legally speaking, and so there can be no talks with it.

On closer inspection, these are only pretexts, not real reasons. The Americans use them to hide the actual reasons. Regarding the first point, it is true that the political and religious discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood seems regressive, particularly concerning the rights of Copts and <u>women</u>, but this is more a consequence of the closed political climate in Egypt which provides the Brotherhood no chance to develop their ideas easily.

Moreover, this does not apply to the Brotherhood as a whole, as there is a reformation current within the young generation which adopts a more liberal attitude and defends the rights of Copts and <u>women</u> to be president. At the same time, Obama's administration will hold talks with Taliban which forbids **women** from leaving their homes.

In Focus: Can Obama talk to the Brotherhood?

Concerning the second reason, the Brotherhood's attitude towards Israel is no less hostile than the attitude of the nationalists, the Nasserists and ordinary Arabs. The key is not in changing the Brotherhood's discourse but in the transformation of Israel's brutal policies towards Palestinians, and respecting international decisions which give Palestinians their rights.

Note that the Brotherhood's discourse is tactically tailored to recruit more people who are willing to change the instant Israel offers tangible compromise to the Palestinians.

It is relevant here to talk about what the Jordanian Brotherhood did in 1994 when they did not oppose the peace agreement Jordan signed with Israel known as "œWady Araba.€ At the time strong oppositions stemmed from the Nasserists and nationalists not the Brotherhood. This was simply because there was a good relationship between the Brotherhood and Jordanian regime, which proves that the Muslim Brotherhood is characterized by pragmatism and political realism.

The third reason is altogether wrong, associated as it is, with Western stereotypes of the Muslim Brotherhood in general. They refer to what the group was like in the 40s and 50s, not in 2009. Now the Brotherhood has criminalized violence and seeks inclusion in political life.

As for the fourth reason, it is fictional. The Brotherhood are banned legally but they exist politically and socially and they shape the only major opposition force in Egypt.

I believe that the real motive for the non-existence of American dialogue with the Brotherhood is the American administration's fear of upsetting the Egyptian regime, and the desire to maintain the historical alliance between the two sides on one hand, and the fear of upsetting Israel and maintaining its interests on the other.

The question is, does the Brotherhood want to talk to Obama? This I will discuss in my next column.

Khalil Al-Anani is an Egyptian expert on political Islam and democratization in the Middle East and is a senior fellow at Al-Ahram Foundation. E-mail: kalanani@gmail.com

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Load-Date: March 24, 2009



Late support raises Livni's chance in Israel; Deadlock still most likely result

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)
February 11, 2009 Wednesday
Second Edition

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Section: NEWS; International News; Pg. 23

Length: 561 words

Byline: JASON KOUTSOUKIS, JERUSALEM, WITH LOS ANGELES TIMES

Body

ISRAELIS will know by early this afternoon whether conservative Benjamin Netanyahu or centrist Tzipi Livni will get the chance to head their next government.

With most opinion polls suggesting the result was too close to call, it could still take weeks before a new coalition emerges.

On polling trends, Mr Netanyahu's centre-right Likud Party was clinging to a narrow lead.

But a late surge of support for Ms Livni's Kadima Party was continuing to boost her chances of becoming Israel's second *female* prime minister.

Writing in the mass-circulation daily Ma'ariv, leading Israeli political commentator Ben Caspit said last night: "If Benjamin Netanyahu loses the elections today, that will be the most impressive political surprise since Benjamin Netanyahu won the elections (in 1996) ... Bibi (Mr Netanyahu's nickname) went into this race as a sure bet, and he's ending it as a gamble."

Even if Ms Livni ends up with more seats in the new parliament, most commentators believe that Mr Netanyahu still has a better chance of forming a government. This is because Israel's right-wing parties are expected to win more seats overall than the parties on the left, meaning Ms Livni would be unable to find stable coalition partners.

Under Israeli law, President Shimon Peres will give the leader of the party with the best chance of forming a government at least 28 days to form a coalition - usually the leader of the party that has won the most seats. If a government is not formed, Mr Peres may give the leader of another party the chance to form a coalition.

On the final day of campaigning, Mr Netanyahu and Ms Livni said they would form a national unity government. But Ms Livni suggested she would not be prepared to join a government led by Mr Netanyahu, and he appeared unlikely to want to join a government she led.

"I will not participate in a government that I am not leading, and that I do not believe in," Ms Livni said.

"People have to know that if they vote for Bibi, that's what they will get, and they will get Shas too," she said, referring to the right-wing religious party that prevented her from forming a coalition government last year.

Late support raises Livni's chance in Israel Deadlock still most likely result

With about 5.3 million Israelis eligible to vote, an unknown factor is what influence the country's 1.2 million Arab voters will have on the election.

Although compelling issues are at stake, including how to deal with <u>Hamas</u>-ruled Gaza, the West Bank, Syria and the threat of a nuclear Iran, the candidates for prime minister avoided face-to-face debate and ran negative campaigns besmirching each other.

Final polls published on Friday indicated that as many as a quarter of the voters were undecided.

"The Israeli citizens will vote under duress bewildered by a downpour of media spins," columnist Sima Kadmon wrote in Yediot Aharonot. "They will decide not on the basis of conviction that anyone is a real leader but on the basis of strategic calculations proposed to them."

Israel's leading parties have sharp differences over the Palestinian conflict that could have turned the campaign into a referendum on an issue of immediate concern to the Obama Administration.

Likud wants peace efforts to focus on building the Palestinian economy, not, as Kadima proposes, on creating an independent state. Labor favours a more comprehensive, regional approach to peace, including negotiations with Syria. -- With LOS ANGELES TIMES

Load-Date: February 10, 2009



Clinton gets a warm welcome; Secretary of State hits it off with residents during a visit to a US-funded project in Jakarta

The Straits Times (Singapore)
February 20, 2009 Friday

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Length: 617 words

Byline: Salim Osman, Indonesia Correspondent

Body

JAKARTA: Indonesians cheered wildly as US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton toured a crowded slum on the last day of her visit to their country.

The rapturous welcome came as she made her way to a sanitation project funded by the United States at Petojo Utara in central Jakarta, where one-third of the inhabitants live in poverty.

The project is a showcase of US community work in the country, an example of its close ties with Indonesia which the new Obama administration has tapped as a key player in its foreign policy.

The slum is not far from Menteng, the Jakarta suburb where President Barack Obama spent part of his childhood.

There she told craftswomen she was 'proud' of their work and patted children, delighting residents and workers.

Mrs Clinton has made it clear that her visit to the massive archipelago of 234 million people on her first tour as US Secretary of State was 'no accident'.

Her first stop was Japan but Indonesia was second ahead of South Korea and China, reflecting Mr Obama's promise to reach out to the Muslim world and heal the rifts which opened under former president George W. Bush.

'Our interests aren't just focused on China,' she said, adding that 'when the United States is absent, people believe we are not interested - that creates a vacuum that destructive forces can fill.'

Earlier yesterday, she met President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono at the palace where they discussed a range of issues.

After the meeting, she told reporters in her entourage that Washington wanted Jakarta's advice and counsel 'about how to reach out, not only, to the Muslim world but to Asia and beyond'.

'Certainly Indonesia, being the largest Muslim nation in the world, the third-largest democracy, will play a leading role in the promotion of that shared future,' she told a joint press conference.

The point was first mentioned during her meeting with her counterpart Hassan Wirajuda on Wednesday. A spokesman said Mr Wirajuda had also asked the US for a currency swap agreement and a standby loan facility to help it weather the global economic crisis, amid plunging demand for its commodities exports.

Such assistance 'will also bolster democracy not just in Indonesia but also in the region,' he said.

Page 2 of 2

Clinton gets a warm welcome Secretary of State hits it off with residents during a visit to a US -funded project in

Dr Yudhoyono yesterday also urged Washington to revive the peace process in the Middle East so as to achieve a two-state solution where Israel and Palestine can coexist in peace and within their secure borders, said the spokesman

Mrs Clinton confirmed her attendance at a conference next month in Egypt to help rebuild Gaza after the <u>Hamas</u>-Israel war. She said Mr Obama wanted to re-engage in the Middle East after the Bush administration had 'not been as active in trying to bring the parties together'.

At the meeting with Dr Yudhoyono, Mrs Clinton hailed Indonesia as a model where 'Islam, democracy, modernity, and the rights of **women** coexist harmoniously', said Indonesian presidential spokesman Dino Patti Djalal.

She was also told by Dr Yudhoyono that Indonesia welcomed the foreign policy approach of the new US administration in reaching out to the Islamic world.

'There are many ways, including efforts at promoting inter-faith and civilisational dialogues,' Dr Dino quoted the Indonesian leader as saying.

The spokesman said that President Yudhoyono extended a formal invitation to Mr Obama to pay a visit to Indonesia.

'Mr Obama will be warmly received here because he is Anak Menteng,' said Dr Dino, referring to the US President's childhood in Jakarta.

Before meeting the Indonesian leader, Mrs Clinton appeared on a youth-oriented television show called 'Dahsyat' or Awesome.

Ending her visit, she flew to Seoul to continue her third leg of the Asian tour.

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See also Asia

Load-Date: February 19, 2009



International: Palestinian children's health in decline, says report: Stunted growth among young increasing: Conditions in territories affecting pregnant women

The Guardian - Final Edition

March 5, 2009 Thursday

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Section: GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 23

Length: 614 words

Byline: Sarah Boseley, Health editor

Body

A two-year international investigation has revealed an increase in the number of stunted children in the occupied Palestinian territories and conditions so extreme that Palestinian <u>women</u> have on occasion been forced to give birth at Israeli military checkpoints.

A series of articles published today by the Lancet concludes that the occupation, the recent conflict in Gaza and inter-Palestinian fighting are undermining the health and development of the population. The best solution to health in the territories is peace and security under a sovereign Palestinian state, argue the authors, who are doctors and academics from Birzeit University in Ramallah and Oxford, with assistance from international health scientists, the World Health Organisation and other UN agencies.

Since 2000, Rita Giacaman from Birzeit University and colleagues say, "life for Palestinians has become much harder, more dangerous and less secure". There is evidence that health gains during the 1990s are being eroded.

A humanitarian crisis had emerged in the Gaza Strip, "intensifying as a result of the Israeli military invasion in December 2008 and January 2009, and because of destruction of homes and infrastructure, the death and injury of civilians and shortages of food, fuel, medicines and other essentials", they say.

Infant mortality dropped between 1967 and 1987, but stalled between 2000 and 2006 at 27 per 1000 live births (the rate in Israel, they note, is 3.9 per 1000).

The rate of stunting - the failure of children under five to grow as they should - has gone up. In 1996, 7.2% of young children had stunted growth, but in 2006, the proportion had risen to 10.2%. "Stunting during childhood is an indicator of chronic malnutrition, and is associated with increased disease burden and death," the authors write. It can also result in damage to a child's mental development and link to obesity and chronic diseases in adulthood. Between 1999 and 2003 rates of tuberculosis have risen by 58% and meningococcal meningitis by 53%.

International: Palestinian children's health in decline, says report: Stunted growth among young increasing:

Conditions in territories affecting pregnant women

In spite of substantial funding and efforts, the Palestinian ministry of health has been unable to build up the health systems, the authors say. Restrictions on the movement of goods and labour between the West Bank and Gaza and within the West Bank have been a problem, as has the emergence of two Palestinian authority health ministers, one in the West Bank and one in Gaza. The problems have been compounded by the political divide between Fatah and *Hamas*. The absence of Palestinian control over water, land and the environment as well as movement has made public health strategies difficult if not impossible. Dysfunctional political systems, corruption and cronyism are among the other factors that "have adversely affected an already fragile health service".

The second article in the series, by Hanan Rahim from Birzeit University, with colleagues from Qatar, Glasgow and Yale universities, finds that the restrictions on movement in the occupied territories have made it harder for <u>women</u> in labour to get to a maternity unit. "Between 2000 and 2006, the ministry of health reported 69 cases of Palestinian <u>women</u> giving birth at Israeli checkpoints," they write. Ten per cent of <u>women</u> in labour were delayed for two to four hours on the road to the maternity facility, whereas the average time without roadblocks was 15-30 minutes.

Yesterday, Hillary Clinton said Israel's demolition of Palestinian houses in East Jerusalem was "unhelpful" and a breach of the roadmap for peace.

The US secretary of state's comments came after she held meetings with the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, and prime minister, Salam Fayyad, in Ramallah, on the occupied West Bank.

Load-Date: March 5, 2009



Israeli rivals both claim victory in cliffhanger vote; Right-wing Russian immigrant new Czar-maker

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)
February 11, 2009 Wednesday
Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A12

Length: 582 words

Byline: Matthew Fisher, Canwest News Service

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Both Tzipi Livni's ruling Kadima Party and Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud challenger declared victory as Israel's general election came to a tight finish early Wednesday, setting the stage for a power struggle.

According to a final ballot count, Kadima won a razor-thin victory, gaining one more seat than right-wing rival Likud.

Israel's central election commission said Kadima won 28 seats in the 120-member Knesset, followed by Likud with 27.

Avigdor Lieberman's ultra-nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party came in third with 15 seats -- its best-ever showing -- and the centre-left Labour party fell to 13, its worst performance in any Israeli election.

The ultra-Orthodox Shas party came in fifth with 11 seats.

However, the party with the most seats does not necessarily lead the next government.

"Today the people have chosen Kadima," Livni told party supporters in Tel Aviv as she vowed to become Israel's second *female* prime minister.

"Israel does not belong to the right in the same way that peace does not belong to the left," the 50-year-old Livni said.

But it was Netanyahu who claimed victory and told a cheering crowd of supporters that "the people want to be led in a different way."

"The national camp led by the Likud has won an unambiguous majority," Netanyahu, 59, said in Tel Aviv. "I am certain that I will be able to form the next government," he said. "I can unite all forces of this nation and lead Israel."

The former prime minister's confidence that he had been returned to the office he held from 1996 to 1999 stemmed from a surge in support for other right-wing parties, as well as Likud.

This made it more likely that he, rather than Livni, would be able to form Israel's next coalition government.

Israeli rivals both claim victory in cliffhanger vote; Right-wing Russian immigrant new Czar-maker

The real kingmaker is likely to be Avigdor Lieberman, the blunt, extreme right-wing leader of Israel Beiteinu.

The Russian-speaking immigrant from Soviet Moldova and his party were arguably the biggest winners on the night, improving their standing from 11 to 15 seats.

Lieberman's main campaign theme was that the country's substantial Arab minority must take an oath of loyalty to the Jewish state.

In a speech to campaign workers after the ballots closed, he also promised to crush *Hamas*, which continued on Tuesday to sporadically fire rockets into Israel.

Labour, which was Israel's founding party and its biggest entity for decades, was the night's big loser, slipping for the first time ever to fourth place behind Yisrael Beiteinu as it dropped to 12 seats.

The close results and the fact that 12 parties have apparently won seats in the next Knesset were the latest of many indications that it will be very difficult for either Netanyahu or Livni, who is foreign minister in the current Likud government of outgoing Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, to stitch together a coalition.

The main differences between Kadima and Likud have been over how to deal with the Palestinian issue. Kadima favours continuing U.S.-backed talks with the Palestinian Authority that would lead to the creation of a Palestinian state. Likud has advocated what it calls a "bottom-up approach," where many trust-building measures must precede such talks.

Netanyahu has also been adamant that Jerusalem must remain Israel's undivided capital and that Jewish settlements in the West Bank must be kept to protect Israel's security.

Palestinians also claim Jerusalem as their capital and want most of all of the several hundred thousand settlers to leave the West Bank, which Israel captured in the Six Day War in 1967.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Reuters; Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, left, reacts at Kadima party headquarters in Tel Aviv today.;

Load-Date: February 11, 2009



THE UNLIKELIEST TWINS

DAILY MAIL (London)
February 26, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 612 words

Byline: BY DAILY MAIL REPORTER

Body

WORCESTER WANTS TO PAIR UP WITH GAZA

ONE is a picturesque cathedral city in the heart of England, famed for its china and the tangy sauce that shares its name.

The other is a grief- stricken war zone in the Middle East run by a group listed as a terrorist organisation by both the EU and the U.S.

They may not seem best suited as twins, but Worcester, birthplace of Sir Edward Elgar, could become the first British city to be twinned with Gaza City.

A motion calling for the twinning association to consider the link was passed by 29 votes to nil, with six abstentions, at a meeting of the Tory-run council.

Labour councillor Alan Amos, who first suggested the twinning, said: 'Like many I have watched the plight of the people of Gaza, seeing them get bombed and bombed by Israelis with advanced military weapons.

'But rather than sit there thinking, "Isn't that terrible" I really wanted to do something about it.

'We wanted to bring people together to show a gesture of solidarity - so Gaza could look at us and see that the whole world isn't against them, there are people who understand their plight and think what is happening to them is unacceptable.

'We are optimistic this will go ahead. And it is a humanitarian gesture and not a political move.'

Tory councillor David Tibbutt, who supported the move, said the link with Gaza City should be more than a gesture.

He added: 'It is important that we concentrate on how we can really make a difference in the areas of culture, mutual learning, social activity and in some cases humanitarian aid.'

The proposal will now go to the city's twinning association, which has already fostered links with Kleve in Germany, Le Vesinet in France and Worcester in Massachusetts.

Worcester residents have given a mixed response to the proposal.

THE UNLIKELIEST TWINS

Sandra Thompson, 62, said: 'If there are some positive outcomes for the people of Gaza City then I am 100 per cent behind the idea. People in Worcester are lucky to live in a peaceful, conflict-free environment and it is easy to forget about those who aren't as fortunate.'

But Nick Walton, 29, said: 'It is a nice idea, but I'm not sure what it is going to achieve. There are lots of cities all over the world enduring similar problems and to single one out for help is not exactly an impartial approach.'

Labour councillor Jo Hodges said the move was 'an empty gesture' and added: 'We have several successful twinnings where we are able to visit the twinning towns - this sort of activity is more or less impossible for Gaza.'

Alexandra Syrotiuk, visitor centre manager for Worcester Tourism, said: 'We have children from local schools going over to our German and French towns that we are twinned with for visits. I couldn't see that happening with Gaza.'

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Life expectancy: 77 years for men, 81 for women

Population: 93,700

Last military conflict: Royalists lost to roundheads at 1651 Battle of Worcester during English Civil War

Political leaders: Tory-run council led by Simon Geraghty, 31. His aim is to 'improve services at the lowest possible

cost to the council taxpayer'

Cinemas: Three

Sport: New Road county cricket ground

Religion: Christianity is predominant

Transport: M5 motorway and railway links to London, Midlands and North-West

Life expectancy: 73 years for men, 72 for women

Population: 410,000

Last military conflict: 1,300 killed in 22-day Israeli bombing campaign that ended last month

Political leaders: Hardliner Mahmud Zahar of *Hamas*. His aim is to destroy Israel

Cinemas: None

Sport: 10,000-seat Palestine Stadium. Pitch destroyed by Israeli air strike

Religion: Muslims 99.3 per cent. Christians 0.7 per cent

Transport: Abandoned single railway line through Gaza Strip

Load-Date: February 25, 2009



Horgan's views under the spotlight

The Irish Post February 11, 2009

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Section: COLUMNISTS

Length: 563 words

Body

I AM sending this letter of appreciation of Joe Horgan's column. Folk are quick to criticise when articles don't suit their thinking but I feel Joe hits the nail on the head with his writings about growing up in England as second-generation Irish. I almost feel we shared the same childhood and early adulthood!

His article on how the Irish were treated by their own countrymen in England was interesting because I find this subject almost treated like a taboo topic.

The Irish sub-contractors in England in the 1970s and '80s treated their employees and fellow countrymen with scant regard for their health and working conditions. It was a case of if you don't like it there is a steady supply of hands to take your place. It is a forgotten story of a bygone era but I would be interested if any fellow readers witnessed these conditions first hand. Sheridan Whiteside Via e-mail

- JOE Horgan uses his column to give vent to his anti-Irish tendencies. After reading it who could think otherwise than that he has one huge chip on his shoulder against the Irish? Or is he perhaps Polish and just having a go?

The supposed banning of Irish workers in Poland or any nationality being banned in any country from obtaining work is racist and by appearing to say that the Irish deserve it must put Mr Horgan into that category.

As for Polish workers being illtreated in Ireland: There are thousands of Polish workers in Ireland and I am sure the vast majority are quite happy with their conditions. I have worked for English, Irish and Polish firms in England for 40 years and have not been told of or seen any Irish workers ill-treated by the firms, agents or foremen. Mr Horgan appears to be the only bigot on show here. Patrick Quill Via e-mail

- J. HAMPTON'S assertion that 'the people firing the rockets are responsible for their own people being slaughtered' is entirely false. There was a ceasefire in place until Israel chose to break it on November 4 - as Kieran McNulty rightly acknowledged. The fact that Israel is attacked at all by Palestinian militants is entirely due to its illegal 41-year occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. No-one in the world would tolerate the illegal occupation of their land.

I wonder if J. Hampton believes the rocket attacks justify the illegal use of phosphorus bombs and other powerful weapons in a denselypopulated area which amounts to a war crime? If we are to compare this situation to the

Horgan's views under the spotlight

Anglo-Irish conflict we must surely concede that the IRA would still be fully armed and fully operational if Northern Ireland had remained a gerrymandered state with Catholics still being treated as second-class citizens. If there is no justice, there can be no peace. That is the lesson that must be learned from our own experience. K. McSweeney Via e-mail

- I SUPPOSE it's par for the course that J. Hampton (The Irish Post, January 24) will be crass and brutal when making the Palestinians responsible for their <u>women</u> and children being slaughtered by the Israeli military invasion of their country. The Palestinian West Bank has had over 100 children killed and maimed in the last six months by the heroic Israeli defence forces and <u>Hamas</u> does not exist there because it's run by their rivals Fatah. Also of course he is still peddling Tony Blair's fantasy world of weapons of mass destruction and Al Qaida under the bed. Lisa O'Brien Via e-mail

Load-Date: July 1, 2009



ANGRY WORKERS STRIKE IN FRANCE

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

January 30, 2009 Friday

SOONER EDITION

Copyright 2009 P.G. Publishing Co.

Section: WORLD; WORLD BRIEGS; Pg. A-4

Length: 624 words

Body

PARIS -- More than a million French workers staged a general strike and marched in massive protests around the country yesterday to vent their anger over the global economic crisis and denounce President Nicolas Sarkozy's business-friendly approach to containing the damage.

The popular outcry, organized by France's eight main labor unions and endorsed by the Socialist and other leftwing parties, marked Western Europe's largest protest to date against the financial turmoil that began on Wall Street in September and has since infected markets and paralyzed economies worldwide.

Only scattered violence was reported, and many public services, such as Paris buses, limped along despite the strike.

In a statement yesterday evening, Mr. Sarkozy called workers' concerns "legitimate" and said he would meet with union leaders in February to coordinate the government's anti-crisis measures with them.

b> LEADERS SPAR AT SUMMIT

/b>

DAVOS, Switzerland -- Turkey's prime minister walked off the stage at the World Economic Forum red-faced yesterday after reproaching Israel's president over the Gaza offensive by saying "You kill people."

The packed audience, which included President Barack Obama's close adviser Valerie Jarrett, appeared stunned as Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Israeli President Shimon Peres raised their voices and traded accusations.

Mr. Peres was passionate in his defense of Israel's three-week offensive against <u>Hamas</u> militants, launched in reaction to eight years of rocket fire aimed at Israeli territory. As he spoke, Mr. Peres often turned toward Mr. Erdogan, who in his remarks had criticized the Israeli blockade of Gaza, saying it was an "open air prison, isolated from the rest of the world" and referred to the Palestinian death toll of about 1,300, more than half of those civilians. Thirteen Israelis also died.

b> PIRATES HIJACK TANKER

/b>

ANGRY WORKERS STRIKE IN FRANCE

NAIROBI, Kenya -- Somali pirates hijacked a German tanker loaded with liquefied petroleum gas yesterday off the Horn of Africa. The ship's 13-man crew was reported safe, even though gunshots were heard over the ship's radio.

The MV Longchamp is the third ship captured by pirates this month in the Gulf of Aden, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

More than a dozen warships from countries including Britain, France, Germany, Iran, China and the United States now patrol Somali waters to protect vessels. But the warships were not near the Longchamp when it was taken, said Lt. Nathan Christensen, a Bahrain-based spokesman for the U.S. 5th Fleet.

b> CIA OFFICIAL INVESTIGATED

/b>

WASHINGTON -- The Central Intelligence Agency's senior officerin Algeria was recalled to Washington late last year and is under investigation for allegations of drugging and sexually assaulting two <u>women</u>, American officials said Wednesday. The CIA officer was identified as Andrew Warren in a government affidavit publicly released Wednesday evening in a District of Columbia federal court.

The affidavit was filed in October and sought to obtain a warrant to search a laptop belonging to Mr. Warren, who was the agency's station chief in Algiers when the assaults are said to have occurred.

b> ALSO IN THE WORLD...

/b>

Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili's opponents yesterday pressed their demand for his resignation in the wake of the August war with Russia, urging new elections and threatening protests in the coming months ... Zimbabwe's government admitted defeat yesterday in a fight against dizzying inflation, allowing business to be done in U.S. dollars and bank notes of neighboring countries ... An adviser to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said the president he will run for re-election in June. Under Iranian law, a president can run for two back-to-back terms.

Load-Date: January 30, 2009



Spare me the pieties of 'good people' on Gaza

The Irish Times

February 2, 2009 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Opinion; Pg. 13

Length: 578 words

Byline: JACK ENGELHARD

Body

As anti-Semitism apparently rises in the wake of recent events in Gaza, it s time to ask whether anti-Israeli protests are merely a front for expressions of hatred of Jews?

FRANKLY, GIVEN a choice, I prefer the skinheads and other brutes who express their anti-Semitism openly. In such places, we know the enemy.

But please spare me the pieties and the righteous indignation of those good people protesting throughout Europe against Israel s defensive operation in Gaza. True, thousands have taken up banners in support of Israel. At the same time, however, the streets of Europe (and even some in America) are in an uproar. These are the humanitarians the good, the noble, the refined, who chant peace.

Now you re up and about? Now you speak? Where were you when, throughout the years, thousands of jihadist bombs fell on Israel? The streets of Europe were empty. There were no pictures in the newspapers of grieving Jewish mothers and fathers. You called it peace as long as the Arabs were doing the killing and the Jews were doing the dying. All was well with the world.

Suddenly, as Israel answered back, you found your Cause; and how self-righteous you are in your Cause. Israel is a Jewish State. Is that your problem? At the first hint of Jewish self-defence, how quickly you show your true colours.

You speak of disproportion. You want proportion? Give Israel a population of 300 million residing in 22 countries, similar to the Arab Muslims who surround and ambush Israel instead of 5½ million Jews in one single country. There s plenty of proportion coming from your BBC, which delights in presenting one side of the story and picks up where Der Sturmer left off. Now, with this type of news, we know how Europe was conditioned for a Holocaust.

Already we see Nights of Broken Glass. Thank you, Europe, for reminding us why America was discovered just in time (and why Israel was redeemed many generations too late). You dare judge Israel? In your deportations, your expulsions, your forced conversions, your inquisitions, your pogroms, you have no moral authority over Israel or even within your own borders. You gave all that up from 1492 to 1942.

To those on the Left who sought peace, well, dear peace-lovers, peace brought this on. As for those innocent civilians in Gaza, they were given a choice and they chose *Hamas*. They chose this pestilence.

As for those refugee camps why are they refugee camps when Israel handed over all that territory for a nation to be built in peace and security alongside Israel? Why are all Palestinians automatically refugees even after they

Spare me the pieties of 'good people' on Gaza

ve been given a home? The only true refugees are the thousands of Israelis who were driven from Gaza and still live in trailer parks.

On this day, in response to a column I wrote about Theresienstadt, someone responded that I was incorrect; that Theresienstadt was not a prelude to Auschwitz, but rather a vacation resort. I wrote back wishing this person a lifetime in such vacation resorts. I wish the same lifetime vacation resorts to all those parading throughout the streets of Europe with banners crying, Death to Israel.

God bless the IDF! Go Israel!

Jack Engelhard is the author of The Bathsheba Deadline and Indecent Proposal, as well as the award-winning memoir of his experiences as a Jewish refugee from Europe, Escape From Mount Moriah. Distributed by <u>Women</u> For Israel s Tomorrow (<u>Women</u> in Green) which is based in Jerusalem; http://www.womeningreen.org

Load-Date: February 2, 2009



Rulers brought US war to Pakistan, says Qazi

The Nation (AsiaNet)

January 15, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 623 words

Byline: IQTIDAR GILANI

Body

LAHORE - Ameer Jamat-e-Islami Qazi Hussain Ahmed has said that the real problem of Pakistan is present rulers and the nation needs leadership that represents aspirations of people.

He was speaking on the Issue of the Day Programme here at Hameed Nizami Hall on Thursday. Qazi spoke on the topic 'How Can Basic Problems of People of Pakistan be solved? and What is 17th Amendment' and answered to the queries of the participants. Nawa-i-Waqt, The Nation and Waqt News TV jointly organised the event.

Qazi said that ceasing cooperation with the US in the so-called war on terror, ending military operation in tribal areas, provision of justice and relief to the poor was necessary to put the country on right path. He said that the country was on the brink of disaster due to Musharraf's mistake of becoming ally of the US in war on terror. He said that not the terrorists but innocent people including <u>women</u> and children were losing lives in the ongoing war on terror. He said that the rulers have brought the US war to Pakistan while the ongoing military action was causing resentment among people.

He said that the rulers should understand that waging war against own citizens was more difficult than fighting against the US. He said that the US was supporting India with the purpose to tighten screws on Pakistan. He said that the India has the history of maligning Pakistan for getting benefits in elections. He said that mysterious killing of Hemant Karkre suggested involvement of Hindu extremist organisations in Mumbai incident.

He said that Indian Minister Abdul Rehman was expelled from the cabinet for raising the issue of killing of Karkare. He said that it was a pity that the rulers accepted involvement of Pakistanis by banning Jamaat-ud-Daawa. He said the rulers in Muslim countries including Pakistan were silent on Gaza crises just to please the US. He said that the JI has contacted <u>Hamas</u> and leadership of Islamic movements in different countries for discussing strategy to help Palestinians. He said that the JI has established a fund for extending a helping hand to Palestinians.

To a question, the JI Ameer said that there was no separatist movement in tribal areas and tribesmen were loyal citizens who rendered matchless sacrifices for the country.

He also ruled out presence of foreign elements in tribal areas. He said that the rulers needed to revise policy to save Balochistan and tribal areas.

Qazi Hussain Ahmed said Charter of Democracy was the real will of Benazir Bhutto which the PPP government had yet to implement.

Rulers brought US war to Pakistan, says Qazi

He said that no one could authenticate will of Benazir Bhutto which was presented by Asif Zardari. He said that leadership of major political parties should understand that restoration of the constitution to its original shape, independence of judiciary and strengthening of the institutions was necessary to stop involvement of military in politics.

To another question, Qazi Hussain Ahmed said that MMA still existed and he (Qazi) was its president. He, however, argued that MMA was suspended as one of its component party was part of the government. He said that the constituent parties of APDM were pursuing one common agenda of restoration of constitution to its original shape.

He said that the MMA never accepted LFO. He said that the MMA forced Pervez Musharraf to make promise for doffing his uniform before December 31, 2004. He said that the people accusing MMA for supporting 17th Amendment should understand that Musharraf ruled Pakistan forcibly and not with the help of this amendment. He said that Parliament had not indemnified second martial law but the rulers were giving protocol to Musharraf instead of taking action against him for violating the constitution.

Load-Date: January 28, 2009



Turkish PM greeted by cheers after Israel debate clash

Guardian.com January 30, 2009

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theguardian

Length: 648 words

Highlight: Recep Tayyip Erdogan argued with Israeli president over Gaza offensive, before storming out

Body

Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, arrived home to a tumultuous reception of cheering crowds early today after storming out of a debate in Davos over Israel's recent offensive in Gaza.

Hours after clashing with the Israeli president, Shimon Peres, in angry scenes at the normally sedate world economic forum, he was welcomed at Istanbul's Ataturk airport by thousands of supporters waving Turkish and Palestinian flags and chanting "Turkey is proud of you". Sympathisers also left bouquets of flowers at his official residence.

The outpouring of support displayed the domestic political capital Erdogan gained from his performance at the Swiss resort, where he told Peres: "When it comes to killing, you know very well how to kill." He then walked off the stage, declaring that he would never return to Davos, after claiming he had not been allowed to speak by the debate moderator, the Washington Post columnist David Ignatius.

Erdogan also accused Peres of raising his voice and claimed the Israeli statesman had been allowed more speaking time than himself and the panel discussion's two other participants, the UN secretary general Ban Kimoon, and Amr Moussa, secretary general of the Arab League.

Peres had earlier made an impassioned defence of Israeli actions in Gaza, asking Erdogan: "What would you do if you were to have in Istanbul every night a hundred rockets?" Erdogan responded by saying: "President Peres, you are older than me and your voice is very loud. The reason for you raising your voice is the psychology of guilt ... I know very well how you hit and killed children on the beaches."

The prime minister's wife, Emine - who this month organised a <u>Women</u> For Peace In Palestine lunch for the wives of Islamic dignitaries - also became involved, bursting into tears after telling reporters that "everything Peres said was a lie".

Erdogan's outburst was his most high-profile in a series of outspoken attacks on Israel's Gaza operations. He had previously called the offensive - in which around 1,300 Palestinians died - a "crime against humanity" and demanded Israel's expulsion from the UN.

Turkish PM greeted by cheers after Israel debate clash

His stance has shocked Israeli officials - used to considering Turkey as their closest regional ally - but played to the pro-Palestinian sentiments of the overwhelmingly Muslim Turkish public. Mass demonstrations in favour of <u>Hamas</u> have been staged in Istanbul and other cities.

Such sympathies have prompted suggestions that Erdogan's rhetoric has been mainly for domestic political consumption and aimed at wooing voters at forthcoming municipal elections in March. Jewish groups have also voiced fears that the government's fierce anti-Israeli criticism is fuelling antisemitism. The row with Peres overshadowed a dispute between the government and the International Montetary Fund that had seen Erdgoan accuse the fund of setting unacceptable conditions, after negotiations were suspended over a proposed loan to help Turkey weather the economic recession.

On arriving at Ataturk airport, he depicted his Davos walk-out in nationalist terms, telling journalists: "This was a matter of the esteem and prestige of my country. I could not have allowed anyone to poison the prestige and in particular the honour of my country."

He also denied his comments were aimed at the Israeli people or Jews in general. A world economic forum spokesman said Peres spoke with Erdogan on the phone after the debate and expressed his respect for Turkey.

However, some observers believe Erdogan has sacrificed Turkish foreign policy, especially Turkey's self-appointed role as a regional mediator.

Before the Gaza hostilities Turkey had been mediating in negotiations between Israel and Syria. There are also fears that the pro-Israel lobby in the US will back moves to recognise the massacres of Armenians by Ottoman forces in the first world war as genocide, a move Turkey vehemently opposes.

Load-Date: February 3, 2009



Peres: New president is great hope 'for the entire world'

The Jerusalem Post January 21, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 9

Length: 547 words

Byline: GREER FAY CASHMAN

Body

"Today is a great day not only for the United States of America, but for the entire world," President Shimon Peres said in a statement Tuesday, issued just before the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States.

Referring to slavery, Peres characterized Obama's election as "the correction of one of the greatest mistakes in the annals of history."

Slavery made history ugly, said Peres, noting that <u>women</u> had been slaves to men and that black people had been slaves to white people.

Only in the 20th century had <u>women</u> been liberated, and it was not until the 21st century that people of color had been truly liberated.

"This is a profound historic and ethical change" said Peres, underscoring that nobody had done Obama any favors. "He won because of his personality, because of his philosophy, and because of the hope he offers to all of us."

Peres said that he prayed that Obama would be a great president.

"If he will be a great president of the United States, he will serve all humankind, all nations and all persons. To be a great American president today means to struggle for peace, to fight terror, to correct the environment, and to offer the young generation a better future.

"It is a great day for the United States because this most unusual hope and election, only 10 years ago, would have been unimaginable. From now on, all of us have the right to be different and equal, to be equally different. We don't have to apologize, and we don't have to divide humanity between inferior and superior," said Peres, who added that he was certain that Israel will be a good partner to President Obama.

"They say Obama will be a good president to Israel, and I say Israel will be a good country for the president, because his goals are our goals, his hopes are our hopes, his source is our source. All of us come from the same depth of biblical convictions, with a permanent respect for the Ten Commandments.

"I want on behalf of the people of Israel, actually all of the Jewish people, to tell the president, 'God bless you.' Your success will be our success. Your hope will become a reality. We should continue to dream to make the world move ahead further, better, and peacefully."

Peres: New president is great hope 'for the entire world'

Asked by reporters why he thought that Obama might be more successful than his predecessors in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict, Peres replied, "Obama has mobilized the greatest amount of goodwill and support in all walks of life. This mobilization of goodwill is becoming a strength in its own right.

"I think that all of us expect to translate this occasion into a real opportunity to pacify, to meet through dialogue, and bring a peaceful solution to all parties concerned."

In an interview with Army Radio's Razi Barkai on Tuesday, Peres said that he was not concerned about Obama engaging in talks with <u>Hamas</u> and Iran, because he doubted that those entities would respond favorably to an overture from Obama, since their aims are different from Obama's.

"He wants to build peace, but they want to build war and destruction," Peres said.

With regard to the Iranian threat, Peres said that under no circumstances would Israel take on the onus of Iran alone.

Israel must not shoulder the burden, he said, insisting that Israel would act only within an international framework.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Election deal for a new town may be the death blow to hopes for peace; The foundations have been laid but critics fear that a planned Israeli settlement will end any hope of a Palestinian state, James Hider writes

The Times (London)
April 4, 2009 Saturday
Edition 1

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 44,45

Length: 1450 words **Byline:** James Hider

Body

sign in big, red Hebrew letters " Welcome to Mevasseret the Harbinger of the Hills". three- lane road with roundabouts up the hill to a police station and lamps line the flyover that links new town to neighbouring Ma' Adumim, one of the largest settlements in Israel.

There are no houses, cars or people Mevasseret Adumim: it is a town out, waiting to be built. That is international pressure has so prevented construction from going The area is the last piece of land linking Arab East Jerusalem to the West Bank and critics that to develop it would bury the notion of a two- state solution to Middle East crisis.

According to reports in the Israeli the area has been earmarked development under a secret accord Binyamin Netanyahu, the conservative Israeli Prime Minister, and his ultra- nationalist Foreign Avigdor Lieberman.

Better known under its old British name, E1, it is the most controversial development project in the one that diplomats and observers warn will trigger the collapse of the Palestinian Authority, or it into armed resistance again.

Israeli army radio reported that the deal was struck between Mr Netanyahu and Mr Lieberman as part of the negotiations to form a government, and it would allow 3,000 homes to be built on E1.

Critics said that building a combined Jewish settlement and national park in the hills of E1 would cut the West Bank in two. And blocking mainly Arab East Jerusalem from the West Bank it would make it impossible for the Palestinians to have that side of the disputed city as their capital.

Khalil Shikiaki, a leading Palestinian political analyst, said: ."Failure to respond in an effective manner could lead to the collapse of the nationalist camp [the Fatah-led branch of Palestinian politics] My guess is, confronted with this development, the nationalist camp would probably support violence.

Election deal for a new town may be the death blow to hopes for peace The foundations have been laid but critics fear that a planned Israeli settlement will end....

Given the current tends I think of this as a potential trigger to major clashes." That view was backed by a senior Western diplomat, who feared that developing E1, which the Bush Administration urged against, may encourage <u>Hamas</u> to try to take over the West Bank.

All the pieces are in place. Land has been levelled for housing, the roundabouts indicate that more roads will soon spread out across the wooded hills and the existing road network hints at the future shape of Jerusalem, according to Haim Erlich, an Israeli researcher for the co-existence group Ir Amin.

Mr Erlich points to the almost completed flyover crossing the Jerusalem to Jericho highway, which links E1 to Ma'aleh Adumim, sealing the gap of Jewish suburbs around East Jerusalem.

Once the two are joined and then combined with smaller existing Jewish settlements and an industrial area farther out in the West Bank, the so-called Adumim block will have about 45,000 residents and cover more land than Tel Aviv, the secondlargest Israeli city, he said.

"If they are really going to build E1, the meaning of that for the Palestinians will ... [mean] that the talks about a two-state solution are only on the level of theoretical talks," Mr Erlich said. "It's the end of the idea of the two-state solution."

Construction workers are also busy completing a walled-off road with no turnings into East Jerusalem, which will run from the southern West Bank to the northern part. This would allow Israel to argue that the Palestinians have territorial contiguity. Mr Erlich and others in the peace camp argue that it will effectively leave the West Bank divided.

The office of the mayor in Ma'aleh Adumim declined to comment on the plans but in a statement that was issued recently it said that the thousands of homes would constitute "contiguous construction between our city to the capital Jerusalem and will be the Zionist response that will prevent the division of Jerusalem and the dislocation of Ma'aleh Adumim and Gush Adumim [Adumim block] from the capital of Israel".

The plans may be finalised under the Netanyahu Government but they were started two decades ago as part of the long-term Israeli strategy to secure the disputed city. A statement earlier this year from the Ministry of Defence, which has to approve all housing construction in the West Bank, made it clear that the state is not about to cede any of the area to the Palestinians.

"Ma'aleh Adumim is an inalienable part of Jerusalem and the State of Israel in any permanent settlement," the statement, which was issued by the office of Ehud Barak, the Labour Party leader and Defence Minister in the previous and current governments, said. "E1 is a corridor that connects Ma'aleh Adumim to Mount Scopus [a longstanding Israeli pocket of land in East Jerusalem] and therefore it is important for it to remain part of the country.

This is the position of Labour since Yitzhak Rabin and also of the Government of [Ehud] Barak in 1999, and the Americans know this position." Hagit Ofran, of the anti-settlement group Peace Now, said that building in E1 would fit with the reluctance of Mr Netanyahu to allow a sovereign Palestinian state.

"It's very hard to expect this Government will go for a two-state solution and negotiations," said Ms Ofran, whose organisation protested outside parliament at the government inauguration with banners declaring: "This is not a unity government but a settler government." She said that the involvement of Mr Barak's centrist Labour Party in the Government would not act as a figleaf for the rightwingers' ambitions.

"Barak is worse than Netanyahu," she said, pointing to the increasing numbers of settlers in the West Bank during Mr Barak's last term as Defence Minister. "They are trying to make it impossible for a two-state solution."

The two-state solution - an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, alongside a safe and secure Israel - has for two decades been the central plank of American peacemaking efforts in the Middle East.

Election deal for a new town may be the death blow to hopes for peace The foundations have been laid but critics fear that a planned Israeli settlement will end....

Yet support for the approach is dwindling both among Israelis, who have just elected a prime minister reluctant even to mention the phrase and among Palestinians, who fear being handed a series of loosely connected cantons divided by Jewish settlements and with no real sovereignty.

The development of the area known as E1, the last open parcel of land connecting Arab east Jerusalem to the West Bank, would be seen by many here as the final nail in the coffin of the two-state solution. The 1993 Oslo accords, once the shining hope for peace efforts, are tarnished by years of unending bloodshed.

This week a Palestinian man killed a defenceless 13-year-old boy with an axe at a Jewish settlement in the southern West Bank.

Binyamin Netanyahu, the new Prime Minister, was forced to make a public pledge to honour the Oslo accords in order to woo Move could trigger rise in violence James Hider Jerusalem the Labour leader Ehud Barak, the toughtalking Defence Minister, into his Government against vehement opposition from much of the centre-left party.

But Mr Netanyahu has long preferred a different solution, what he calls an "economic peace" in which Palestinians receive limited sovereignty in return for economic stimulus packages. The logic is that if the West Bank prospers and attacks decline, Israel can remove its military checkpoints and Palestinians will receive more autonomy.

That has done little to impress Palestinians, who point out that they were doing very well economically when the first intifada started in 1987. And while the Palestinian Authority, dominated by the mainstream Fatah movement, was meant to be a government for Palestinian self-rule, it is increasingly seen as fig leaf for continuing Israeli occupation and as a propped-up bulwark against a *Hamas* takeover similar to that in Gaza in 2007.

If the E1 development goes ahead, the Fatah old guard will be forced to re-evaluate their position and will probably be pushed into a long-delayed convention of the mainstream movement. That would likely lead to their being swept away by Fatah's Young Turks, who take a far more militant approach to Israel. That could trigger more violence and make the prospects for real peace even more elusive.

Online

Latest news and pictures from the Middle East timesonline.co.uk/mideast

Spot the difference, ladies

Jerusalem Two <u>women</u> serve in Israel's new Cabinet but some Israelis would rather not see them. Newspapers aimed at ultra-Orthodox Jews, who consider it immodest to print images of <u>women</u>, tampered with the inaugural picture of the Cabinet, top right, erasing ministers Limor Livnat and Sofa Landver.

In the daily Yated Neeman, the image was changed, below, to move two male ministers into the places occupied by the *women*.

Another publication simply blacked the women out.

'The Oslo accords are now tarnished by years of bloodshed'

Load-Date: April 4, 2009



Election deal for a new town may be the death blow to hopes for peace; The foundations have been laid but critics fear that a planned Israeli settlement will end any hope of a Palestinian state, James Hider writes

The Times (London)
April 4, 2009 Saturday
Edition 2

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 44,45

Length: 1451 words **Byline:** James Hider

Body

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Election deal for a new town may be the death blow to hopes for peace The foundations have been laid but critics fear that a planned Israeli settlement will end....

All the pieces are in place. Land has been levelled for housing, the roundabouts indicate that more roads will soon spread out across the wooded hills and the existing road network hints at the future shape of Jerusalem, according to Haim Erlich, an Israeli researcher for the co-existence group Ir Amin.

Mr Erlich points to the almost completed flyover crossing the Jerusalem to Jericho highway, which links E1 to Ma'aleh Adumim, sealing the gap of Jewish suburbs around East Jerusalem.

Once the two are joined and then combined with smaller existing Jewish settlements and an industrial area farther out in the West Bank, the so-called Adumim block will have about 45,000 residents and cover more land than Tel Aviv, the secondlargest Israeli city, he said.

"If they are really going to build E1, the meaning of that for the Palestinians will ... [mean] that the talks about a two-state solution are only on the level of theoretical talks," Mr Erlich said. "It's the end of the idea of the two-state solution." Construction workers are also busy completing a walled-off road with no turnings into East Jerusalem, which will run from the southern West Bank to the northern part. This would allow Israel to argue that the Palestinians have territorial contiguity. Mr Erlich and others in the peace camp argue that it will effectively leave the West Bank divided.

The office of the mayor in Ma'aleh Adumim declined to comment on the plans but in a statement that was issued recently it said that the thousands of homes would constitute "contiguous construction between our city to the capital Jerusalem and will be the Zionist response that will prevent the division of Jerusalem and the dislocation of Ma'aleh Adumim and Gush Adumim [Adumim block] from the capital of Israel".

The plans may be finalised under the Netanyahu Government but they were started two decades ago as part of the long-term Israeli strategy to secure the disputed city. A statement earlier this year from the Ministry of Defence, which has to approve all housing construction in the West Bank, made it clear that the state is not about to cede any of the area to the Palestinians.

"Ma'aleh Adumim is an inalienable part of Jerusalem and the State of Israel in any permanent settlement," the statement, which was issued by the office of Ehud Barak, the Labour Party leader and Defence Minister in the previous and current governments, said. "E1 is a corridor that connects Ma'aleh Adumim to Mount Scopus [a longstanding Israeli pocket of land in East Jerusalem] and therefore it is important for it to remain part of the country. This is the position of Labour since Yitzhak Rabin and also of the Government of [Ehud] Barak in 1999, and the Americans know this position." Hagit Ofran, of the anti-settlement group Peace Now, said that building in E1 would fit with the reluctance of Mr Netanyahu to allow a sovereign Palestinian state.

"It's very hard to expect this Government will go for a two-state solution and negotiations," said Ms Ofran, whose organisation protested outside parliament at the government inauguration with banners declaring: "This is not a unity government but a settler government." She said that the involvement of Mr Barak's centrist Labour Party in the Government would not act as a figleaf for the rightwingers' ambitions.

"Barak is worse than Netanyahu," she said, pointing to the increasing numbers of settlers in the West Bank during Mr Barak's last term as Defence Minister. "They are trying to make it impossible for a two-state solution."

Move could trigger rise in violence

James Hider Jerusalem

The two-state solution - an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, alongside a safe and secure Israel - has for two decades been the central plank of American peacemaking efforts in the Middle East.

Yet support for the approach is dwindling both among Israelis, who have just elected a prime minister reluctant even to mention the phrase and among Palestinians, who fear being handed a series of loosely connected cantons divided by Jewish settlements and with no real sovereignty.

Election deal for a new town may be the death blow to hopes for peace The foundations have been laid but critics fear that a planned Israeli settlement will end....

The development of the area known as E1, the last open parcel of land connecting Arab east Jerusalem to the West Bank, would be seen by many here as the final nail in the coffin of the two-state solution. The 1993 Oslo accords, once the shining hope for peace efforts, are tarnished by years of unending bloodshed.

This week a Palestinian man killed a defenceless 13-year-old boy with an axe at a Jewish settlement in the southern West Bank.

Binyamin Netanyahu, the new Prime Minister, was forced to make a public pledge to honour the Oslo accords in order to woo the Labour leader Ehud Barak, the tough-talking Defence Minister, into his Government against vehement opposition from much of the centre-left party.

But Mr Netanyahu has long preferred a different solution, what he calls an "economic peace" in which Palestinians receive limited sovereignty in return for economic stimulus packages. The logic is that if the West Bank prospers and attacks decline, Israel can remove its military checkpoints and Palestinians will receive more autonomy.

That has done little to impress Palestinians, who point out that they were doing very well economically when the first intifada started in 1987. And while the Palestinian Authority, dominated by the mainstream Fatah movement, was meant to be a government for Palestinian self-rule, it is increasingly seen as fig leaf for continuing Israeli occupation and as a propped-up bulwark against a *Hamas* takeover similar to that in Gaza in 2007.

If the E1 development goes ahead, the Fatah old guard will be forced to re-evaluate their position and will probably be pushed into a long-delayed convention of the mainstream movement. That would likely lead to their being swept away by Fatah's Young Turks, who take a far more militant approach to Israel. That could trigger more violence and make the prospects for real peace even more elusive.

Online

Latest news and pictures from the Middle East timesonline.co.uk/mideast

Spot the difference, ladies

Jerusalem Two <u>women</u> serve in Israel's new Cabinet but some Israelis would rather not see them. Newspapers aimed at ultra-Orthodox Jews, who consider it immodest to print images of <u>women</u>, tampered with the inaugural picture of the Cabinet, top right, erasing ministers Limor Livnat and Sofa Landver.

In the daily Yated Neeman, the image was changed, below, to move two male ministers into the places occupied by the *women*.

Another publication simply blacked the women out.

'The Oslo accords are now tarnished by years of bloodshed'

Load-Date: April 4, 2009



Civil liberties

The Jerusalem Post June 21, 2009 Sunday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 723 words Highlight: Editorial

Body

Islamic Movement Northern Branch leader Sheikh Raed Salah last week urged Arab students to sacrifice themselves as shahids in the war against Israel. He charged that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu "aims to implement plots hatched during his previous administration and complete the takeover" of the Temple Mount.

How will that takeover be facilitated? According to Salah, "Netanyahu's plan is to dig tunnels under al-Aksa and replace it with a Jewish Temple." He added: "We will not compromise on our principles or holy sites. We prefer to die as shahids and will welcome death joyfully."

Salah's audience of about 100 responded enthusiastically with chants of "Allahu Akbar" - God is great.

Who is Salah? He is an Israeli Arab and the former mayor of Umm el-Fahm. In 2003, he was convicted and imprisoned for two years on charges of raising millions for <u>Hamas</u>. That year he also published the following poem in the Islamic Movement's periodical: "You Jews are criminal bombers of mosques/ Slaughterers of pregnant <u>women</u> and babies/ Robbers and germs in all times/ The Creator sentenced you to be loser monkeys/ Victory belongs to Muslims, from the Nile to the Euphrates."

In 2007 Salah orchestrated riots against an archeological dig and a new pedestrian bridge near the Temple Mount. He accused Jews of "eating bread dipped in children's blood." He praised and eulogized slain terrorists. He threatened anyone who acknowledged any Jewish connection to the Western Wall, "even to just one stone."

WHERE DID Salah speak last week and who came to hear him? Salah's incendiary rhetoric wasn't delivered at Gaza's Islamic University but at the University of Haifa. He had been invited by Muslim students to speak on campus.

The university administration repeatedly sought legal remedies to keep the demagogue off campus on the grounds that his inflammable presence could lead to clashes. Arab students challenged the ban and university lawyers agreed that keeping Salah out was legally untenable. Salah's right to speak on campus was protected under the rubric of civil liberties. To minimize the chances of violence, invitations to the event were posted in Arabic only. Word of the lecture reached the University of Haifa Students Union at the last minute. The university also barred Jewish students from the auditorium to prevent clashes, bringing in additional security to maintain order.

Some 150 Jewish students congregated outside the auditorium, protesting their exclusion from a campus event and chanting: "This isn't Teheran."

Civil liberties

Indeed it is not. Nor, for that matter, is it Concordia University in Montreal where anti-Israel activists prevented Netanyahu from lecturing in 2002; or the University of California at Berkeley where in 2004 an address by pro-Israel columnist Daniel Pipes was disrupted by left-wing and Arab students; or UC Irvine, where Pipes was heckled in 2007.

In an op-ed entitled "The Real Agenda of Pro- Palestinian Campus Activists," Jerusalem Post Palestinian affairs reporter Khaled Abu Toameh referenced the intolerance and intimidation he encountered at 14 American campuses because he did not embrace the standard Arab line on Israel: "I never imagined that I would need police protection while speaking at a university in the US."

THESE DAYS, too many campuses in America and Europe have become bastions of politically correct intolerance, with no small number of university administrators unenthusiastic about protecting the rights of unpopular speakers to have their say. But even when the rights of, say, a Pat Buchanan or a Nick Griffin to speak on campus are guaranteed, the practical and immediate costs to society are minimal. In contrast, the prospect that someone in Salah's audience in Haifa might be moved to carry out a terrorist attack is hardly beyond the realm of possibility.

Nevertheless, if we genuinely believe in free speech, Israeli society must protect the right of demagogues like Salah to spout away.

Israel is the only country in this region that protects a speaker hostile not merely to this or that government policy, but to the legitimacy of the regime itself. Salah delivered his Haifa speech under the protective umbrella of Israel's police and courts as guardians of his civil liberties.

When we say Israel is a Jewish state and the only democracy in the Middle East, that's what we mean.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



The Jerusalem Post May 22, 2009 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 3003 words **Byline:** SAM SER

Highlight: IDF Spokesman Brig.-Gen. Avi Benayahu and Lt.-Col. Avital Leibovitz, head of the foreign press liaison

unit, are working to make sure that Israel's case is heard around the world.

Body

"Let the general in," she says with a smile.

The Armored Corps brigade commander is tall and broad- shouldered, radiating experience and machismo with a trim gray beard covering a strong jaw. He's the third general to come to this office this week seeking guidance.

The woman sitting behind the desk is several years his junior and a few ranks below him, too - yet when the brigade commander sits down, it is Avital Leibovitz who is giving the orders. Fox News wants an interview with a senior officer who can explain what happened in the alleyways of Gaza during Operation Cast Lead, and it is Leibovitz's job to make sure the journalists hear what the IDF Spokesman wants them to hear.

"Every question they ask you, answer with an example from the field. Describe what you have seen with your own eyes, what you and your soldiers have experienced. Be as descriptive as possible," she says.

"It bothers me that they're talking about soldiers abusing Palestinians [during the operation], wrecking homes and whatnot," the general says. "For every ugly story like that, I can give two stories that are the total opposite. I'm talking about reservists sending letters of apology to the families whose homes they commandeered, sending them money and leaving them food, that sort of thing."

Leibovitz looks the commander in the eye.

"That's exactly what they need to hear," she says.

And now he's ready to go.

This is today's IDF: coordinated, rehearsed, media savvy. Perhaps even more significantly, it is an army in which its spokesmen play a larger role than ever before - for better and for worse.

THE MEDIUM is the message, as communications theorist Marshall McLuhan famously said. Just in case, though, the IDF Spokesman's Office now controls both. The foreign press liaison unit, as the face and voice of Israel's army to the entire world, is the gateway through which information flows (or, often, does not flow), and it has transformed from something of an afterthought into a major part of the military's arsenal. As wars are increasingly fought on the virtual battlegrounds of television and the Internet, the soldiers of the IDF Spokesman's foreign press liaison unit are a new breed of pressed-uniform commandos.

Leibovitz's highly motivated crew includes recent immigrants like Lee Hiromoto, a 26-year-old Yale graduate from Hawaii, Harvard graduate Arie Hasit, 25, and Aliza Landes, 26, a McGill grad.

"The North American desk must be one of the best educated units in the IDF," Landes says only half-jokingly.

It was Landes and Hiromoto who came up with the idea, a day into the fighting of Operation Cast Lead at the end of December, to launch a YouTube channel with material from the IDF Spokesman's Office. It quickly became the most viewed channel in the world.

Here, initiative is the name of the game. Another recent immigrant on Leibovitz's staff of 20, Devora, called one of the top military journalists in her native Belgium and offered to introduce him to Belgian Jews serving in combat units. He's due here soon to produce a lengthy feature for television that will be distributed across Europe.

"We're proactive. We no longer wait for someone to come to us with a request; we are now the initiators. We suggest stories to journalists, instead of the other way around," says Leibovitz, who has just been promoted to lieutenant-colonel.

"Since each area has its own unique characteristics and its specific areas of interest, we provide each 'audience' with what it needs," she adds. "We tailor information and stories for North America, for Europe, for Russian-language media, for Arabic media and for Latin America and the Far East."

Whereas interaction with the Spokesman's Office once meant long delays and garbled armyspeak, there is now a greater focus on productivity and efficiency, of providing what journalists need.

"I send out SMS messages to 400 reporters each day," Leibovitz says. "If someone wants to know how many Kassams fell in 2008, they can call me and get an answer within five minutes."

And if the phone is busy, journalists can simply pop in. After several years based in Tel Aviv, the foreign press liaison unit returned to Jerusalem a few months ago - setting up shop in the Jerusalem Capital Studios building that houses the offices of some of the most important foreign media companies.

"The fact that we're here at JCS is significant," Leibovitz says. "As soon as something happens, we can respond and brief them immediately. So they don't have to start running around, calling up people in Gaza, asking, 'What's going on? What are you hearing? What can you report?' We tell them, 'We're attacking here and here, because *Hamas* did this and this.' They get all the information they need from us. So there's much less spin."

"The IDF is very adept at ensuring that its message gets out there, and gets out there quickly - and I don't say that as a smart-ass remark," says ABC Australia correspondent Ben Knight.

"During the war, it didn't take much effort to get people into the office at short notice and hear their side of things. We never wanted for comment from the IDF, and we never had to wait too long. So they are obviously very well aware of the importance of doing it and very well practiced at getting their point of view out there. The Australian army does things quite differently, I can tell you that."

WHERE THE unit once was distant, today it seeks out contact with foreign correspondents.

"I have learned that if you don't take a journalist out to see things with his own eyes, you just won't get through to him," Leibovitz says. "But once you do...!"

One example of the positive effects of taking journalists into the field has been in coverage of the West Bank security barrier. In its early days, inefficiency at the roadblocks and transfer points meant lengthy waits, exposed to the weather, for Palestinians. More recently, improvements in procedures and infrastructure have significantly eased the situation, and showing that to the world helps reduce pressure on Israel.

"Back in 2003, all you saw were stories about the unbearable wait at roadblocks and all that. But things are so much better now, so much more efficient," she says. "I take journalists out there all the time to inspect roadblocks. I

tell them, 'However long you want to wait here, I'll wait with you.' So they stay there for two and three hours, and they can't believe what they see - that it only takes a few seconds to check a car and let it through. One Scandinavian group waited hours in the sun, turning red, expecting to see trouble that never came."

(Some journalists respond, however, that while the army insists on showing them these improvements, it is loath to let journalists review the multitude of roadblocks and barriers throughout the West Bank that restrict the movement of Palestinians.)

And, whereas visiting journalists may have once been treated with at least a little disdain, the IDF now sees them as vehicles for getting its message abroad.

"We're dealing, in many cases, with foreign correspondents who are flying in from Washington, or from Zimbabwe, or from Finland. They've had so little time to digest what's happening here - they've heard a little, they've read a little - so that any chance we have to show them what is really going on, and help them put it in context, we have to take it."

Leibovitz has plenty of stories to offer: articles on technological advances in the army, which portray the IDF as a professional organization; on krav maga; on the ongoing development of the Merkava IV tank; on the increase in **women** serving in combat roles; on new immigrants in uniform, etc. - any chance to present the IDF as something other than just a fighting machine.

"We believe that the IDF has nothing to hide," Leibovitz says. "I'm not taking journalists on secret missions or anything like that, but I have no reason to hide a squadron of fighter jets. So, just the other day I brought the staff of 30 media outlets to an air force base to see the technology used in our F-15Is, our attack helicopters and more."

The army has invested in improving the quality of photos it sends out, and it sends out many more of them now than before. During the Gaza war, it made colorful, readable maps available to its reservists who escorted foreign journalists, so they could appreciate the seriousness of the rocket threat to the Western Negev. And every morning, Leibovitz sends out a report on the amount of humanitarian aid the army allows into Gaza.

In the information war, then, the IDF is convinced it is holding its own.

"We showed Palestinians setting up rocket launchers next to schools, or using civilian buildings as weapons storage facilities," Leibovitz says. "What did the other side show, except for people with their faces covered, making statements?"

The unit doesn't take its work for granted, though, monitoring the foreign press to measure the tone of coverage on the IDF and to see whether the army's perspective is reflected in that coverage. Soldiers even scan blogs, Twitter and all manner of new media to gauge the effectiveness of their work.

"I want to know whether our message got through," Leibovitz says. "If we're trying to get across that we're not targeting innocent civilians, for example, I want to see that that message comes through in the media."

During the war, Leibovitz enlisted the help of those outside the Spokesman's Office who could make Israel's case credibly.

"It's very important for us to have commanders tell the stories of what they experienced personally," she says. "Also, we had briefings almost every day, with an artillery expert, or an expert on weapons and international law. It wasn't me speaking, it was outside experts. After that, when you read the wires, you read the quotes of those experts."

Despite the experts, and the photos, and the SMS messages and maps, however, there were still plenty of media outlets that chose not to present those materials.

"You know," Leibovitz says with a sigh, "sometimes there are correspondents here who 'get it' and file fair stories, but their editors back home change the stories. I can only send out the information, I can't make them use it. But I'm not going to just throw up my hands and give up. We're not defeatists."

NO, THERE are no defeatists in Leibovitz's office. But, for all the improvements in the functioning of the IDF Spokesman's Office, there remain certain elements that are self-defeating.

Take IDF Spokesman Brig.-Gen. Avi Benayahu, for example. At a toast with foreign journalists shortly before Pessah, celebrating the liaison unit's move to the JCS building, Benayahu gave a speech that was more a lecture on the evils of <u>Hamas</u> than a welcome speech to professional journalists. He talked at the journalists, not to them, and his tone suggested he sees himself not as the "national explainer" that the popular former IDF spokesman Nachman Shai was, but as the army's chief propagandist.

The journalists largely ignored Benayahu anyway, instead sharing with each other their frustrations about his unit's apologetics, denials and stonewalling on sensitive issues.

It was just one sign of how, despite doing many other things right, the army still doesn't completely "get it," either.

While the world saw images of deprivation in Gaza, Benayahu and others insisted that there was no humanitarian crisis there.

"Of course there is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza!" Leibovitz says, incredulously. "Look, there's a difference between having only pita to eat but at least having something to eat, and having nothing at all. Now, lots of trucks are going into Gaza every day - every day - with humanitarian aid."

For European viewers sympathetic to the Palestinians, though, answering the cry, "It's terrible there!" with the angry retort, "No, it's not terrible, it's only very bad" does not help Israel's case.

What would help is more photos of terrorists operating in civilian areas - photos that the IDF had in spades both before and during Operation Cast Lead, but failed to release in time.

"I can tell you that our response time this time around, in comparison to the Second Lebanon War, was vastly improved," Leibovitz counters. "During the Gaza war, we distributed video four times a day."

As the death toll in Gaza climbed, and Palestinians claimed most of the dead had been innocent civilians, the IDF countered that the vast majority had been involved in the fighting or members of armed groups. Yet, even when it later produced a report claiming the final death toll was lower than the Palestinian figure by several hundred, it refused to release the names on its list so journalists could investigate the differences between Israel's claims and the Palestinians'.

The army's response was essentially that identifying bodies was not its job. Its insistence on refuting Palestinian claims, but not substantiating its own, turned the death toll issue into a he said-she said argument that, ultimately, Israel lost.

Leibovitz's response - "the asymmetrical warfare that <u>Hamas</u> wages is not limited to the streets of Gaza. It extends to the press as well. In the end, the Palestinian narrative comes from unreliable sources" - typifies a "they're wrong, and that's the end of it" approach that makes many correspondents bristle.

Leibovitz said further that "the asymmetrical warfare that <u>Hamas</u> wages is not limited to the streets of Gaza. It extends to the press as well. In the end, the Palestinian narrative comes from unreliable sources."

Furthermore, "our list of names went through a very lengthy verification process that included extensive intelligence gathering," she explains. "We won't release the names because we do not wish to harm our intelligence sources."

Be that as it may, without the names, no journalist could take the IDF's numbers at face value - although that's exactly what the army expected of them.

Of course, foreign journalists could have investigated on their own, had they been allowed into Gaza. But they weren't. Despite the painful lessons from the false reports of a "massacre" in Jenin in 2002, Israel did not allow foreign journalists into the Gaza Strip during the fighting.

The ban was part of a general restriction on information that came in response to the army's much more open approach during the Second Lebanon War in 2006, and it damaged Israel in two ways: It deeply frustrated many foreign correspondents who might have been made to see the war from Israel's perspective, and it left the reporting to Palestinian and Arab media stationed in Gaza. This, in turn, allowed those reporters to allege various Israeli war crimes that no Western media could later disprove.

As one correspondent, speaking to The Jerusalem Post, notes, "When the IDF keeps quiet, it gives the other side an advantage."

CLEARLY, NOT all foreign journalists share the enthusiasm of ABC's Knight. The IDF Spokesman's Office, says the anonymous correspondent, "is terrible about getting us information."

"Oh, sure," he says, "they'll call us up and offer us the chance to talk with the first <u>female</u> officer in the canine unit or something like that. But when it comes to the army's use of white phosphorous or war crimes [allegations] - nothing."

Investigating claims, and sharing the results of those investigations openly and quickly, is another sore spot.

"I don't say that the IDF is all pure and white, that we never do things that aren't right. But when something happens, we admit it. We learn from it, and we make sure things get better," Leibovitz says.

"Well," answers a correspondent, "it's a problem that they're the ones investigating themselves. It seems like they never find themselves guilty of anything."

That perception may be inaccurate - but since perception is reality, the IDF needs to combat it better.

The controversy over war crimes allegations leveled at the IDF from within its own ranks illustrates the point. A few weeks after the fighting, two veterans of the conflict told others gathered at the Rabin Pre-Military Academy that their comrades had shot and killed unarmed <u>women</u> inside Gaza. It took the army several days to investigate the claims - and while they were ultimately exposed as false in an internal IDF investigation, they did tremendous damage in that time to the IDF's mantra that it is the most moral army in the world.

Another complaint, says a journalist, is that access to senior officers is often highly restricted, "and when we can meet with them, they either don't say anything of substance because the lawyer sitting next to them tells them not to, or they tell us things that become worthless as soon as they forbid us from revealing their identity."

Another correspondent complains that the IDF is "very amateurish about important things," such as providing findings of official investigations but forbidding all reference to them as such. "They just don't seem to know about, or care about, our rules of attribution."

Additionally, both note with frustration, stories about which they have inquired without receiving a response often turn up in the Hebrew press - and then, when they call for a comment on the Israeli reports, the IDF refuses to even acknowledge that the story has already been published.

"We understand that the army has to limit information based on security concerns," says the first correspondent. "But so much of this has nothing to do with security. Too often, they're hostile to us, or they act like they just don't care about us."

"Ultimately," Leibovitz answers, "the IDF is my client, not the media."

That, of course, is absolutely true. The IDF Spokesman's Office is tasked with furthering the interests of the army, and those interests are bound to conflict with the interests of journalists sometimes.

"We have to explain why we're right, why we're fighting," Leibovitz says with genuine conviction. "And we have to contend with the image of the Palestinian underdog versus us as the larger, stronger force. It isn't easy, but we're doing our best. And I promise, we'll continue to get better."

Graphic

9 photos: An officer from the IDF Spokesman's Office talks to the press. CNN Chief International Correspondent Christiane Amanpour reports from the Gaza border. A Fox News correspondent broadcasts from the Gaza border. A foreign correspondent reports from the Gaza border, during Operation Cast Lead. The IDF Spokesman's foreign press liaison unit in Jerusalem. Lt.-Col. Avital Leibovitz, Head of the IDF Spokesman's foreign press liaison unit in Jerusalem. An IAF strike explodes over Gaza City on January 9, as Israel continued to target terror infrastructure in the Strip. Rockets fired from northern Gaza on January 7 fly towards Israel. Trucks loaded with food supplies for Gaza wait at the Kerem Shalom border crossing during Operation Cast Lead. Now, according to Leibovitz, 'lots of trucks are going into Gaza every day... with humanitarian aid.' (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski; Ahikam Seri/ Bloomberg News; Khaled Hasan/Bloomberg News)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



This 'victory' is a disaster for Iran and the world

The Sunday Telegraph (London)

June 14, 2009

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The Sunday Telegraph

Section: FEATURES; Leading Article; Pg. 24

Length: 663 words

Body

Poor Iran. It suffers from being a pseudo-democracy in which voters' hopes are raised by a choice of candidates to parliament and the presidency, only to be thwarted by an unelected clerical source of power. This was painfully clear in elections to the

Majlis in 2000, when reformists swept the board but were then shackled by the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the revolutionary apparatus of the so-called "guardianship of the jurisprudent".

Expectations were even higher in the presidential poll on Friday, when, after a campaign marked by sharp television debates and huge rallies, Mir-Hossein Mousavi appeared to have a good chance of beating the incumbent, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, or at least of forcing him into a second round. Results announced yesterday were a bitter disappointment: the electoral commission gave Mr Ahmadinejad nearly 63 per cent of the vote and his main challenger nearly 34 per cent. The surprisingly poor showing of Mr Mousavi in the capital, Tehran, and in his northwestern heartland of Tabriz suggests that the figures have been cooked. He called the result a "dangerous charade". However, Mr Ahmadinejad's re-election was praised as a "real feast" by Ayatollah Khamenei. And it is there - backed, if necessary, by the brute force of the Revolutionary Guards - that ultimate power lies.

The extent of the protests in Tehran yesterday are a measure of popular frustration, at least among educated town-dwellers. Iran has been condemned to a further four years of a president who is economically innumerate, socially repressive and diplomatically crude. Take first the economy, the greatest failure of the Islamic Revolution whose instigator, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, described economics as "for donkeys". His disciple, Mr Ahmadinejad, once said that he prayed to God that he would never know anything about a subject that was a tool of Western imperialism. The result has been high inflation, unemployment, the subordination of private enterprise to the dead hand of the state, and the sidelining of experts by cronies. The president's gross mismanagement was epitomised in 2007 by the introduction of petrol rationing in a country that was the second largest producer among members of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. Now it is having to contend with a drastic drop in prices for its main source of revenue.

Socially, Iran under Mr Ahmadinejad has not returned to the level of repression that preceded the election of the reformist presidential candidate, Mohammed Khatami, in 1997. But expectations of freedom, particularly among educated <u>women</u>, have since risen, and the prospect of a second term for the former Revolutionary Guard is a cause for despair.

This 'victory' is a disaster for Iran and the world

On the diplomatic front, it is idle to pretend that the election of Mr Mousavi would have made much difference to Iran's nuclear ambitions. These predate the Shah's fall in 1979 and were made a revolutionary priority in the 1980s during the long war of attrition with Iraq. However, a different presidency might have enabled the resumption of what Mr Khatami called a "dialogue among civilisations".

From the American side there is a willingness to deepen engagement with the Muslim world, as laid out by President Barack Obama in his speech at Cairo University on June 4. But there seems little chance of progress with an Iranian leader who glories in his country's nuclear programme and backs Hizbollah and <u>Hamas</u> as the means of destroying the state of Israel.

These are uncomfortable facts for the new Democratic administration to digest. It would, however, be denying the aspirations of millions of Iranians for greater freedom were it to pursue dialogue as if Mr Ahmadinejad's seemingly fraudulent victory were of no account.

After 30 years, poor Iran is lumbered with a corrupt, repressive regime that has squandered its economic potential and pushed it to the margins of civilised discourse. Four more years of the same? Its people deserve much better.

Load-Date: June 14, 2009



Obama appeals for fresh start between US and Muslims

The Irish Times

June 5, 2009 Friday

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Section: FRONT PAGE; Pg. 1

Length: 634 words

Byline: MARY FITZGERALD, Foreign Affairs Correspondent

Body

US PRESIDENT Barack Obama yesterday called for a new beginning in relations between his country and the world's Muslims, and argued that the cycle of suspicion and discord between Islam and the West must end.

Seeking to both repair the damage caused by his predecessor George W Bush and change Muslim perceptions of the US, Mr Obama, recalling a speech he gave in Turkey earlier this year, said: America is not and never will be at war with Islam.

Mr Obama s address to a 1,000-strong crowd gathered at Cairo University fulfilled a pledge he made during his inauguration to deliver a major speech aimed specifically at Muslims.

Acknowledging that his address came at a time of tension between the US and Muslims around the world tension rooted in historical forces that go beyond any current policy debate Mr Obama nevertheless appealed for a fresh start.

I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect, he said. America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition.

In a wide-ranging speech that alternated between addressing the grievances many Muslims hold against the US, and stressing the need to jointly tackle issues such as violent extremism, Mr Obama struck a respectful, conciliatory, and at times firm, tone.

He opened with a traditional greeting in Arabic and frequently quoted from the Koran, drawing raucous applause and cheering from the audience.

He referred to his own Muslim father and recalled his childhood in Indonesia, the world s most populous Muslim nation.

So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, he said.

Mr Obama told his audience of millions watching and listening from across the world that he did not want a permanent US troop presence in Iraq or Afghanistan, and he repeated his wish to resolve differences with Tehran on the basis of mutual respect. It will be hard to overcome decades of mistrust, but we will proceed with courage, rectitude and resolve, Mr Obama said.

Obama appeals for fresh start between US and Muslims

He affirmed his commitment to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, saying it was in the interests of all concerned, but announced no specific changes to US policy in the region.

While he referred to America s unbreakable bond with Israel, he also strongly rebuked Israel for building illegal settlements.

He described the Palestinians life under occupation as intolerable but added that they must abandon violence and acknowledge Israel s right to exist.

Despite addressing issues such as democracy, human rights and <u>women</u> s rights, Mr Obama offered few specifics, and his failure to mention offending regimes by name disappointed many activists, particularly in the Arab world.

He decried negative stereotypes of Islam but said some Muslims were also guilty of stereotyping the US and its citizens.

Mr Obama himself admitted one speech would not make much of a difference, and he said many were opposed to the idea of a fresh start.

Some are eager to stoke the flames of division, and to stand in the way of progress.

Some suggest that it isn t worth the effort that we are fated to disagree, and civilisations are doomed to clash.

There is so much fear, so much mistrust. But if we choose to be bound by the past, we will never move forward.

Reaction to the much-anticipated speech was mixed. In Damascus, <u>Hamas</u> leader Khaled Meshaal praised Mr Obama s new language but echoed the feelings of many in the Middle East when he said he was looking for more than just mere words.

Mohammed Habib, deputy leader of Egypt s Muslim Brotherhood, described the speech as a public relations address.

Iranian officials criticised it, as did representatives of Hizbullah in Lebanon.

Load-Date: June 5, 2009



National digest

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

May 28, 2009 Thursday

FIRST EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A6

Length: 639 words

Byline: From news services

Dateline: 0

Body

Drew Peterson cracks joke from jail

Drew Peterson cracked jokes live from jail on Wednesday on a Chicago radio show that he called collect.

The former Bolingbrook police officer, charged in his third wife's death, offered snippets of a comedy routine on WLS-AM Radio's "Mancow & Cassidy" show.

"\$20 million bond. Legal fees: tens of thousands. Being falsely accused of a homicide that didn't happen: priceless," Peterson said.

Peterson, who once proposed a "Win a Date With Drew" contest, offered a jail version called "Win a Conjugal Visit with Drew." He also joked about prison showers, his legal fees and his "bling" handcuffs, saying humor is how he deals with stress.

Not guilty plea in Chandra Levy case - A man serving a prison sentence for attacking <u>women</u> in a Washington park pleaded not guilty Wednesday of killing federal intern Chandra Levy. Ingmar Guandique, 27, was arraigned in District of Columbia Superior Court on six counts, including first-degree murder, kidnapping and attempted sexual abuse. He pleaded not guilty on all counts.

Muslim charity leaders sentenced - Founding members Shukri Abu Baker, 50, and Ghassan Elashi, 55, of what was once the nation's largest Muslim charity were each sentenced to 65 years in prison for funneling millions of dollars to the Palestinian militant group *Hamas*. Mufid Abdulqader, 49, was sentenced to 20 years on three conspiracy counts. Mohammad El-Mezain, 55, got 15 years on one count of conspiracy to support a terrorist organization. Abdulrahman Odeh got 15 years on three conspiracy counts.

Ship becomes underwater tourist attraction - A ship last used by the Air Force to track missiles and spacecraft has been sunk in the Florida Keys, creating a new artificial reef for sport divers and anglers. The Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg sank in less than two minutes Wednesday, after demolition experts triggered a series of explosives that lined both sides of the ship.

Man told to stay away from Giuliani - A New York judge has issued an order of protection, instructing a Long Island filmmaker to stay away from former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and his wife. John McCluskey was given

National digest

the order during his arraignment on a charge of second-degree harassment over his confronting Giuliani and his wife, Judith, on a street in Bridgehampton, N.Y.

Former Florida House speaker indicted - A grand jury has charged former Florida House Speaker Ray Sansom with perjury in an indictment related to \$6 million Sansom steered to Northwest Florida State College for an aircraft hangar. Also being indicted is Sansom's friend and political supporter Jay Odom, who is charged with official misconduct.

Husband gets 32 years in singer's death - Retired New York City police Sgt. John Galtieri has been sentenced to 32 years to life in prison for killing his ex-wife, singer Jeanne Kane, 58, in January 2007 while she sat in her car in a parking lot waiting to pick up her daughter. Kane was a member of the singing group the Kane Triplets, who performed regularly on TV variety shows including the Ed Sullivan and Jack Benny programs.

Tire fire under control - Fire crews in Texas have contained a stubborn blaze at an abandoned tire dump, and officials have lifted the order that forced hundreds of residents of a small town to leave their homes. The toxic smoke had closed schools and forced the evacuation of most of the town's 1,500 residents. No injuries were reported.

Girl, 7, drives to safety - Police in New Mexico say a 7-year-old girl drove the family's damaged vehicle to get help after her father was killed in a crash. Guillermo Montes, 40, of Bovina, Texas, was thrown out of the vehicle Saturday night when it rolled off a highway. Elizabeth Kazza realized her father was dead and drove herself and her 4-year-old brother for about three miles until a passing motorist spotted her.

Graphic

Photo by The Associated Press - This photo by Stephen Fournet of Lafayette, La., shows an albino dolphin and a darker one south of Lake Charles, La. Biologists say albino dolphins are rare.

Load-Date: June 1, 2009



Amid dust and death, a family's story speaks for the terror of war

Guardian.com January 19, 2009

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theguardian

Length: 1374 words

Highlight: 48 members of the Samouni family were killed in one day when Israel's battle with *Hamas* centred on

their homes

Body

Helmi Samouni knelt yesterday on the floor of the bedroom he once shared with his wife and their five-month old son, scraping his fingers through a thick layer of ash and broken glass looking for mementoes of their life together. "I found a ring. I might find more," he said.

His wife Maha and their child Muhammad were killed in the second week of Israel's 22-day war in Gaza when they were shelled by Israeli forces as they took shelter nearby along with dozens of relatives. In total 48 people from one family are now known to have died that Monday morning, 5 January, in Zeitoun, on the southern outskirts of Gaza City.

Of all the horrors visited on the civilians of Gaza in this war the fate of the Samounis, a family of farmers who lived close together in simple breeze-block homes, was perhaps the gravest.

Around a dozen homes in this small area were destroyed, no more than piles of rubble in the sand yesterday. Helmi Samouni's two-storey house was one of the few left standing, despite the gaping hole from a large tank shell that pierced his blackened bedroom wall. During the invasion it had been taken over by Israeli soldiers, who wrecked the furniture and set up sand-bagged shooting positions throughout.

They left behind their own unique detritus: bullet casings, roasted peanuts in tins with Hebrew script, a plastic bag containing a "High Quality Body Warmer", dozens of olive-green waste disposal bags, some empty, some stinking full - the troops' portable toilets.

But most disturbing of all was the graffiti they daubed on the walls of the ground floor. Some was in Hebrew, but much was naively written in English: "Arabs need 2 die", "Die you all", "Make war not peace", "1 is down, 999,999 to go", and scrawled on an image of a gravestone the words: "Arabs 1948-2009".

There were several sketches of the Star of David flag. "Gaza here we are," it said in English next to one.

Helmi's brother Salah, 30, had an apartment in the same house. He too was pulling out what he could, including an Israeli work permit once issued to his father. "They gave him a permit and then they came from Israel and they killed him," said Salah. In the attack he lost both his parents, Talal and Rahma, and his two-year-old daughter Aza.

Amid dust and death, a family's story speaks for the terror of war

During the war, Israel banned journalists from entering Gaza. But the accounts of Salah and his neighbours outside the rubble of their homes yesterday corroborate the accounts from witnesses given in the days after the attack, accounts which led the UN to describe the killings at Zeitoun as one of the gravest episodes of the war and the Red Cross to call it, in a rare public rebuke, "a shocking incident".

More than a dozen bodies were pulled from the rubble on Sunday, and one more yesterday, bringing the Samouni death toll to 48, according to Dr Mouawia Hassanein, head of Gaza's Emergency Medical Services. With more bodies being recovered each day, the death toll from Israel's three-week war now stands at 1,360. On the Israeli side, 13 were killed.

On the second Saturday of the war, after a week of Israeli air strikes, there came a wave of heavy artillery shelling which preceded the ground invasion of Gaza. That night, Salah Samouni took shelter on the ground floor with 16 others from his family. By the next morning, Sunday 4 January, more neighbours had come looking for shelter and the number now there was approaching 50.

"They fired a shell into the upstairs floor and it started a fire," said Salah. "We called the ambulance and the fire service, but no one was able to reach us." Soon a group of Israeli soldiers approached. "They came and banged on the door and told everyone to leave the house," he said. They walked a few metres down the dirt road and entered the large, single-storey home of Wa'el Samouni.

There they stayed for the rest of the day, now a group of around 100 men, <u>women</u> and children, with no food and little water. Though there may have been Palestinian fighters operating in the open fields around the houses, all the witnesses are adamant that those gathered in Wa'el Samouni's house were all civilians and all from the same extended family.

On the Monday morning, four of the men - Salah among them - decided to go out to bring back firewood for cooking. "They fired a shell straight at us," Salah said. Two of the four were killed instantly, the other two were injured. Salah was hit by shrapnel on his forehead, his back and his legs. Moments later, he said, two more shells struck the house, killing dozens of them.

Salah and a group of around 70 fled the house, shouting to the soldiers that there were <u>women</u> and children with them. They ran to the main road and on for a kilometre until ambulances could reach them. Others stayed behind.

Wa'el Samouni's father, Faris, 59, lived next door to the house where the crowd had taken shelter. He had a single-storey house with only a corrugated iron roof and so his family had moved next door to shelter, but he had stayed behind. He was unable to leave his building for fear of being shot, but on the Tuesday the survivors called to him to bring water. He ran quickly the short distance and joined them.

"Dead bodies were lying on the ground. Some people were injured, they were just trying to help each other," he said. There among the dead Faris found his wife Rizka, 50; his daughter-in-law Anan; and his granddaughter Huda, 16

Only on the afternoon of the following day, the Wednesday, were the survivors rescued when the Red Cross arrived to carry them out to hospital.

The Israeli military has said it is investigating what happened at Zeitoun. It has repeatedly denied that its troops ordered the residents to gather in one house and said its troops do not intentionally target civilians.

Others in the family saw a different but equally grim fate. Faraj Samouni, 22, lived with his family next door to Helmi and Salah. Again on the Saturday evening the family had sought shelter from the heavy shelling, a group of 18 of them gathering in one room for the night. On the Sunday morning the Israeli soldiers approached. "They shouted for the owner of the house to come out. My father opened the door and went out and they shot him right there," said Faraj.

With the body of his father Atiya, 45, slumped on the ground outside, the soldiers fired more shots into the room, he said, this time killing Faraj's younger half-brother Ahmad, who was four years old, and the child's mother.

Amid dust and death, a family's story speaks for the terror of war

Yesterday there was blood on the wall of the small room where the child had been sitting.

Then the troops ordered them to lie on the floor. But when a fire started burning in the room next door, sending in acrid smoke, they began shouting to be allowed out. "We were shouting 'babies, children'," Faraj said.

Eventually the soldiers let them out and they ran along the street, passing the others who had gathered in Wa'el Samouni's house and making their way out on to the main road and to safety.

When Faraj returned, he found his home completely destroyed, a pile of twisted iron bars and concrete. On a small outdoor grill were the charred remains of the eight aubergines that the family had been cooking that Sunday morning for their breakfast.

Only on Sunday was he able to bury his father's body and even then there was a final injustice: Gaza's graves are now so crowded and concrete so scarce because of Israel's long blockade that he had to break open an older family grave and put his father in with the other corpse.

"How can we have peace when they are killing civilians, even children?" said Faraj. "I support the ceasefire now. We have no power. If there wasn't a ceasefire we couldn't even bury our dead."

Some Gazans speak privately of their anger at <u>Hamas</u>, blaming the Islamist movement that rules the small territory for dragging them into this conflict. But by far the larger majority are speaking now of their bitter anger at Israel and their deep resentment at the apathy of the Arab world and the rest of the international community, which failed to halt the destruction and the killing.

"We blame everyone," said Ibrahim Samouni, 45, who lost his wife and four of his sons in the killings at Zeitoun. "We need everyone to look at us and see what has happened here. We are not resistance fighters. We are ordinary people."

Load-Date: January 19, 2009



AS OBAMA GIVES TOUGH SPEECH, AUDIENCE IS THINKING: YES, BUT

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

June 7, 2009 Sunday

4 State / Suncoast Edition

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Section: NATIONAL; Pg. 10A

Length: 680 words

Byline: SUSAN TAYLOR MARTIN, Times Senior Correspondent

Body

In his speech to the Muslim world last week, President Barack Obama certainly hit many key points: democracy, religious freedom, *women*'s rights, the need to confront violent extremism, and end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But the president was often circumspect despite his admonition that "we must say openly the things that too often are said only behind closed doors." Here are some of Obama's remarks - and some of the things many in his global audience were probably thinking as he made them:

* * *

Issues of women's equality are by no means simply an issue for Islam.

Yes, but there's probably no country on earth where <u>women</u> have fewer rights than Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam. Saudi <u>women</u> can't drive, they can't travel without permission of a male "guardian," they can't play sports in school and not a single woman sits on the 150-member Shura Council, the closest thing Saudi Arabia has to a parliament. (And it's not very close, given that Saudi Arabia is also one of the world's least democratic countries.)

* * *

Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance.

Yes, but wouldn't it be nice if the Saudis, custodians of the holiest sites in Islam, could be a better role model? Their country bans all other religions and, as countless Christian visitors have discovered, even confiscates Bibles and Christmas music at the airport. The terribly intolerant strain of Islam known as Wahhabism - exported to Pakistan and Afghanistan - had its roots in Saudi Arabia.

* * *

It was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra, our magnetic compass and tools of navigation, our mastery of pens and printing, our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed.

Yes, but those innovations were centuries ago. In recognizing the top 50 contributions to science and technology in 2008, Scientific American did not list a single noteworthy breakthrough in any of the world's 48 Muslim-majority nations, encompassing more than 1 billion people. One reason for the paucity of innovation: madrassas, or schools, that stifle creative thinking in favor of rote learning.

AS OBAMA GIVES TOUGH SPEECH, AUDIENCE IS THINKING: YES, BUT

* * *

Palestinians must abandon violence. Resistance through violence and killing is wrong and does not succeed.

Yes, but it was continued attacks by <u>Hamas</u> and other radical groups that ultimately convinced Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that Israel could no longer afford to keep its settlers and soldiers in the Gaza Strip. And a year after Israel pulled out of Gaza in 2005, it fought a war with Hezbollah that helped strengthen that group's image in Lebanon and the rest of the Arab world.

* * *

The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements.

Yes, but what can it do about them? For decades, U.S. presidents have criticized the spread of Jewish settlements as impediments to creation of a Palestinian state. But the settlements continue to mushroom - some 250,000 Israelis now live in the West Bank, and the settler population is growing at a rate, 5.6 percent, that far exceeds the Israeli average of 1.8, the New York Times recently reported.

* * *

As reaction to the speech poured in, it was clear that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the world's most contentious issues. Many Israelis accused Obama of making a "moral equivalence" between the Holocaust and the plight of displaced Palestinians. Many Muslims rapped him for not going far enough to condemn Israeli aggression and occupation.

But as Obama said: "The Arab-Israeli conflict should no longer be used to distract the people of Arab nations from other problems." What he meant was: The conflict has been a convenient safety valve for Muslim dictators, who would rather see their citizens protesting against Israel than their own autocratic and oppressive governments.

Of course that's a tough message to deliver when you've just come from Saudi Arabia, where elections have been postponed for the umpteenth time. Or when you're speaking at a university in Egypt, where the same man has been president for 28 years.

Susan Taylor Martin can be reached at susan@sptimes.com

Load-Date: June 8, 2009



'Smart sanctions' key to reining in mullahs

Scotland on Sunday
June 7, 2009

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Length: 678 words

Byline: Struan Stevenson

Highlight: THIS week, Iran's Supreme Leader will have a chance to "elect" the person he favours to lead the Islamic Republic. For, unlike democratic Europe, Iran is ruled by theocratic dictators and, as such, the polls there

are a farce.

Body

The fundamentalist mullahs are brutally suppressing the people of Iran. Thousands are on death row and Iran is recognised as the most prolific executioner of minors, having judicially murdered dozens over the past three years. Last month, it hanged Delara Darabi, a talented young <u>female</u> artist, for an alleged a crime that she had denied committing at the age of 17.

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, more than 120,000 political prisoners have been executed. The regime uses more than 170 forms of physical and psychological torture, including public hangings, stoning to death, amputation of limbs, eye gouging and draining prisoners' blood.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is Supreme Leader Khamenei's favourite to continue as president, has also ordered a crackdown on universities and <u>women</u>. Nearly a million Iranians were harassed on the street by security forces last year. None the less, Iranian universities have been a hotbed of student activism and protests, and Iranians held 8,000 anti-government rallies last year. Last month, several hundred teachers chanted "death to the dictator" at a Tehran rally in defiance of the regime's feared security apparatus.

Despite the atmosphere of heightened repression, millions of Iranians demand the freedoms offered by the country's parliament-in-exile, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), and its president-elect Maryam Rajavi, whom I co-chaired the Friends of a Free Iran inter-group with and invited to the European Parliament on several occasions, to act as the voice of those millions yearning for change.

Ahmadinejad had once promised to bring oil revenues to the dinner table of poor Iranians'. He promised to eradicate poverty and tackle unemployment.

In office, he handed lucrative contracts to cronies, including his former colleagues in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. Under his watch, the official level of Iran's annual inflation rate reached 29.4 per cent and the price of food items increased on average by two to five times.

Rather than work to solve the people's financial woes, Iran spends billions of dollars annually on its illicit nuclear weapons programme and sends money to terrorist groups, such as <u>Hamas</u> and Hezbollah, to derail the fragile Middle East peace process.

Ever since the NCRI blew the whistle on Iran's nuclear sites at Natanz and Arak in 2002, European leaders have wasted time trying to negotiate with the regime and offering countless incentives.

'Smart sanctions' key to reining in mullahs

European Union officials pinned hope on behaviour change and moderation on the part of the mullahs. But, moderation of Iran's fundamentalist regime is only a mirage. The mullahs ignored countless incentives.

EU leaders have to face the reality that the regime is interested in negotiations only to buy time to press ahead with its nuclear projects. The mild sanctions currently in force are having little effect, not least because the EU continues to remain Iran's biggest trading partner. But time is now running out.

Fortunately, under the Obama administration, the prospects of US military airstrikes are off the table. But, the EU's current policy of appearing the regime has had the effect of making it more brazen in its unlawful behaviour.

At a time when Iranians are yearning for change, Rajavi says the EU should extend a hand of friendship. Comprehensive, smart sanctions are needed to target the mullahs' economic lifeline. This should be coupled with western support for democratic change by the Iranian people and their organised Resistance.

Hundreds of colleagues at the European Parliament have since declared their support for this "third option", signalling that the people of Europe stand on the side of the millions in Iran who seek freedom. EU leaders should start acting fast.

We should count ourselves lucky that we have a free and fair election process in Europe; it is something of a distant dream in Iran.

For the past five years Struan Stevenson has been co-chair of the Friends of a Free Iran Intergroup in the European Parliament. He is standing for re-election to the parliament

Load-Date: June 6, 2009



Pretoria News (South Africa)

May 19, 2009 Tuesday

e1 Edition

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Section: Pg. 12

Length: 680 words

Body

ISTANBUL: A Turkish Airlines domestic flight was forced to make an emergency landing after a flock of birds hit its engines, the Anatolian news agency said yesterday. The plane, which left the central Turkish city of Konya for Istanbul late on Saturday, returned safely to Konya airport after the bird strike. Two injured people were treated at a hospital. The plane was carrying 140 people.

SYDNEY: Australia plans to build a solar array in the Outback with three times the generating capacity of the world's biggest solar-powered electricity plant, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said yesterday. The 1 000MW plant would eclipse in size world leader California, and would gobble up R8.75 billion in public funds. Australia uses coal for 80 percent of its domestic power generation.

Bucharest: <u>Women</u> in wedding gowns smoke cigarettes during the "Bride Parade" in the Romanian capital yesterday. The event gathered future and former brides under the slogan "Be a bride for one more day".

MEXICO CITY: An armed gang freed more than 50 inmates from a prison in Mexico on Saturday - including two dozen with ties to a powerful drug cartel. The daring raid took just five minutes. The prison director, 40 guards and two police commanders on duty at the prison have been detained. Governor Amalia Garcia Medina said security cameras indicated guards helped the gang.

LONDON: Yoko Ono is to judge the world's first interactive poetry competition, which was due to start in London today. Commuters arriving at King's Cross station will be invited to submit haiku-style poems on the subject of the British summer from their cellphones using Twitter, the free social blogging site. The best will appear within minutes on the digital display board at King's Cross.

Carrabelle: Three Florida prison staff were fired and two resigned after demonstrating stunguns on children as young as five on a "Take our daughters and sons to work" day. More than 40 children were jolted by the weapons. At one prison, the children held hands, passing the shock around the circle, while at another they were shocked individually. Some parents had granted permission for the stunt.

MADRID: Another bit of history about Spanish dictator Francisco Franco (1892-1975) was revealed yesterday: he only had one testicle, according to the granddaughter of his doctor. Ana Puigvert, herself a doctor, told El Mundo newspaper her grandfather, a urologist known to have had Franco as a patient, told her about the dictator's condition. It is believed his loss stemmed from a war injury in 1916.

BERLIN: A German worker was boiled alive in an empty industrial-sized soup vat while trying to clean it, Bild newspaper reported yesterday. The 36-year-old, named only as Markus, was scrubbing the 2m-high pot when the lid accidentally closed, automatically starting the jets of boiling water used to disinfect vegetables. By the time the unfortunate worker was found, he was already dead.

NAPLES: Raffaele Amato, a clan leader of the Camorra Neapolitan Mafia on the run since 2006, has been arrested by Italian and Spanish police in Malaga, Spain, Naples police said yesterday. He was an important figure in the clan warfare in the region, which has been responsible for scores of deaths in recent years and was documented in last year's Mafia film Gomorrah.

EL-ARISH: Egyptian police say a smuggling tunnel beneath the border with Gaza has collapsed, killing one Palestinian. The victim suffocated, while several other smugglers survived yesterday's accident. Palestinians use such tunnels to bring food, clothing, fuel and even livestock into the Gaza Strip. Egypt and Israel have blockaded Gaza since <u>Hamas</u> seized control of it two years ago

LONDON: Arguing with his girlfriend, Norman Llewellyn became so incensed that he took it out on her Yorkshire terrier. He kicked Phoebe the dog so hard that he killed her instantly. Police issued 52-year-old Llewellyn with a caution. In a decision that has caused outrage, the RSPCA said the death was so quick that the little dog did not suffer - and therefore no cruelty charge could be brought.

Load-Date: May 17, 2009



Pretoria News (South Africa)

May 18, 2009 Monday

e1 Edition

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Section: Pg. 12

Length: 680 words

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Load-Date: May 17, 2009



Playing Ahmadinejad's games

Guardian.com
April 22, 2009 Wednesday

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Length: 735 words

Body

ABSTRACT

Saeed Kamali Dehghan: Those who walked out on the Iranian leader at the Durban conference help to draw attention from his domestic failures

FULL TEXT

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came back home from Geneva in a new suit instead of the famous "Ahmadinejad's coat" that he normally wears, amid huge official support in Tehran.

He was welcomed at the airport by some of his supporters, students and <u>basijis</u> who were holding the <u>Hamas</u> and Palestinian flags. The Iranian parliament, the Majlis, also made a statement congratulating him on his speech at the <u>Durban Review Conference</u>.

Keyhan, an Iranian radical newspaper whose former editor-in-chief now sits in Ahmadinejad's cabinet as the culture minister, Mohammad Hossein Saffar Harandi, published a big photo of the Iranian president <u>surrounded by people at the airport</u> with a headline reading "Ahmadinejad bombarded Israel with his speech".

The <u>Jerusalem Post</u> was also a focus for news media in Tehran. State-run TV claimed the Israeli paper "revealed that three young people yelling at Ahmadinejad in the Geneva conference had been appointed and paid by the Israeli foreign ministry".

The state-run broadcaster also portrayed the <u>protesters in the conference hall</u> as "jesters who came into the conference with permission from the Israeli government". The revelation that the walkout had been "arranged before the speech" has also been one of the focal point for the Iranian media.

Meanwhile, the Iranian reformist papers criticised Ahmadinejad for his action at the anti-racism conference. Etemaad, an Iranian reformist paper which has been threatened with closure several times by the government, headlined its front page: "Reformists object to Ahmadinejad's behaviour in Geneva."

The two reformist candidates for the coming presidential election in June, <u>Mehdi Karoubi</u> and <u>Mir Hossein Mousavi</u>, also objected to Ahmadinejad's participation in the conference. Karoubi, who was giving a campaign speech in Arak

Playing Ahmadinejad's games

University in central Iran, criticised him for "putting Iranians in a situation to be humiliated". Karoubi's objection was welcomed by thousands of Iranian students who were listening to his lecture at their university.

Mousavi, who is backed in the coming presidential election by the Iranian former moderate president <u>Mohammad Khatami</u>, criticised government media for covering Ahmadinejad's mistakes up by "using heroic adjectives" for describing what he did in the conference.

The few reformist papers that have survived Ahmadinejad's media purge were the only sources reflecting Iranian opposition to his speech in Geneva.

One of the most important news events in Iran yesterday was an <u>International Conference of Islamic States' Prosecutors</u>. More than 200 prosecutors from 60 countries were invited to Tehran to draft a case against Israeli crimes in Gaza - calling it "the Gaza Holocaust". The conference presented 5,160 documents said to demonstrate Israeli crimes in the Gaza war. Ahmadinejad also made a quick visit to the conference where he was applauded warmly by the prosecutors for his speech in Geneva. A Syrian prosecutor impressed by the Iranian president's anti-Israeli speech stood up suddenly and read a poem in his praise.

Yesterday, the state-run TV reported that 60 countries meeting in Iran had agreed on Israeli crimes and racism, while a "few countries made a walkout of the Geneva conference and supported racism".

The day before yesterday, I was seated accidentally on the plane next to an international prosecutor from a non-Islamic country who had been invited to the Tehran conference. I was astonished to find this western prosecutor admired Ahmadinejad's "struggles in showing the Israeli crimes in Gaza". In the course of our brief chat I found this pro-Ahmadinejad western prosecutor was not aware of the detention of journalists, bloggers and <u>women</u> activists in Tehran's notorious Evin prison or the juvenile executions in the country.

Antony Lerman was right to ask in his recent <u>article for Cif</u>. "Since when has the UN been a children's tea party?" The west is underestimating Ahmadinejad's capacity for playing political games and is ignoring how hasty decisions - such as the Geneva walkout - can make him more popular in Iran than before. He is successfully distracting the whole world's attention from the government's mismanagements in his own country, and the west is providing him with a stage on which to do it.

Load-Date: April 23, 2009



Passing the Palestinian patriotism test

The Jerusalem Post April 12, 2009 Sunday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 622 words

Byline: DAOUD KUTTAB

Highlight: The writer is general manager of Community Media Network Radio Al Balad.

Body

The film won Arab and international praise for its courage in tackling some of Palestine's more difficult issues. But the hardest and most obnoxious reviewers were back at home.

The movie is Najwa Najjar's Pomegranates and Myrrh, which opened the Dubai International Film Festival, Rotterdam, Sundance and had a special screening hosted by the Berline-Bradenberg Prime Ministry during the Berlin Film Festival. Many more festivals have plans to show the film.

The Gulf News called it a movie made in heaven, giving it the following introduction: "Palestinian filmmaker Najwa Najjar's new film reflects both the sweetness and bitterness of life in her homeland. An old Arabic proverb says that in every pomegranate, one seed is made in heaven. It is the seed of hope that made Pomegranates and Myrrh a reality, reflecting life's sweetness and bitterness."

The sweetness is that it is simply a Palestinian love story, the bitterness is that the man finds himself in jail and the woman fights cultural emotions as she tries to continue her dancing career, and as she is tempted into a fling by her dance instructor.

FOREIGN AUDIENCES filled cinema halls hoping to see these Palestinian <u>women</u> heroes (both the director and the film's heroine). Arab audiences gave it a mixed reaction, but possibly the harshest response came in the wake of the film's debut in Ramallah. While many welcomed it, others felt that somehow Najjar treaded on forbidden territory when she took the audience inside the head of a liberal prisoner's wife. She showed the wife's conflict about going back to dancing, and even had her exchanging special looks with her trainer. Some seemed to think it lunacy, others treason.

A report highlighting the angry statement of a viewer appeared in the media and seems to have made its way inside the Israeli prisons. There, <u>Hamas</u> prisoners started a campaign asking that the film be banned because it negatively portrayed the prisoners' wives.

The filmmaker's protagonist couple are patriotic Palestinians from the nationalist liberal wing, yet this did not stop the campaign. Some see this campaign as a reflection of the overall Palestinian political and social divide. Countercampaigns, one led by well-respected Palestinian novelist Lina Bader, have also been initiated.

A few years ago I had the privilege of touring in Palestine with Hollywood star Richard Gere who, during his stay, met many Palestinian artists. It was then that Najjar gave him the script of this film. Unusual for an American

Passing the Palestinian patriotism test

celebrity, Gere took time to read the script and sent her a handwritten letter endorsing it. Despite this high-level recommendation, it took Najwa about four years to raise the money, find the talent, shoot and edit the film (mostly in Palestine).

One of the problems facing Palestinian creative talent and intellectuals is that they often give themselves the awesome difficulty of having to carry the entire Palestinian cause on their shoulders. Even paintings have to have the colors of the Palestinian flag, or some kind of embroidery, or cactus, or Handallah, or the map of Palestine in order to pass the test of patriotism. But artists are not obliged to do that.

A Palestinian fiction need not be the official narrative of all Palestinians; neither should any other work of art, of culture, have that requirement. By attempting to mass everything into every work, Palestinians fall into exactly the stereotypical trap that has been set up for them.

Pomegranates and Myrrh is a sensitive film by one Palestinian filmmaker about one Palestinian point of view. This is exactly how we can create our own genuine narrative - one stitch at a time - in order to produce the quilt that represents the people and cause of Palestine.

Graphic

Photo: SCENE FROM 'Pomegranates and Myrrh.' A sensitive film about one Palestinian point of view.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



<u>Troop T-shirts joke about killing children; Army threatens action after more</u> claims of atrocities emerge Israel

The Times (London)

March 24, 2009 Tuesday

Edition 1

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 33

Length: 610 words **Byline:** James Hider

Body

A United Nations report accused Israeli troops yesterday of using a Palestinian child as a human shield during fighting in Gaza, shooting Palestinian children, bulldozing a house with a woman and child inside and shelling a building they had ordered civilians to enter a day earlier.

The allegations, made by a group of UN human rights experts, were the latest claims against the Israeli military over its three-week campaign in Gaza at the start of the year.

Some of the most damning recent charges have been levelled by Israeli soldiers who fought in the conflict which left an estimated 1,400 Palestinians dead, most of them believed to be civilians. At the same time, there have been reports of soldiers wearing T-shirts mocking the deaths of Palestinian <u>women</u> and children.

Radhika Coomaraswamy, the UN Secretary-General's envoy for protecting children in armed conflict, said that on January 15, when the fighting in Gaza was at its peak, Israeli troops forced a Palestinian boy aged 11 to walk in front of them as they came under fire in the district of Tel al-Hawa.

The UN also cited alleged abuses by <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamist movement that rules Gaza. Ms Coomaraswamy said that the group had been unwilling to investigate the charges made.

She said that the abuses were "just a few examples of the hundreds of incidents that have been documented and verified" by the nine UN officials allowed into the territory after the war ended in late January. "Violations were reported on a daily basis, too numerous to list," she said.

The UN report coincided with claims by an Israeli human rights group that the Israeli army had attacked Palestinian medics and refused to allowed wounded people to receive medical treatment. "Israel placed numerous obstacles in the course of the operation that impeded emergency medical evacuation of the sick and wounded and also caused families to be trapped for days without food, water and medications," Physicians for Human Rights said.

Troop T-shirts joke about killing children Army threatens action after more claims of atrocities emerge Israel

The rights group said that Israeli forces killed 16 Palestinian medical personnel and wounded 25, as well as attacking eight hospitals and 26 primary care clinics. It cited the example of one man, identified as Mr Shurrab, whose two sons were shot by Israeli troops while driving in the southern Gaza Strip.

"One of the sons died immediately, the other bled to death over 12 hours," the report said. "All that time the Israeli soldiers were within a short distance from the Shurrabs but did not provide any assistance despite the father's repeated requests." Israeli officials had voiced satisfaction initially at the country's handling of the media coverage during the fighting, when the authorities banned journalists from entering the enclave. Since then, however, more accusations have leaked out.

The military chief of staff, Lieutenant-General Gabi Ashkenazi, said: "I tell you that this is a moral and ideological army. I have no doubt that exceptional events will be dealt with." The army has been forced to open several investigations into the rash of allegations.

Trying to limit the damage to Israel's battered image, it was quick to condemn offensive T-shirts reportedly worn by soldiers. The shirt designs, according to Haaretz, the Israeli newspaper which produced the mock-up versions pictured above, include a pregnant woman in the crosshairs of a sniper rifle, with the logo "1 Shot 2 Kills". Haaretz said soldiers had taken to wearing the shirts to mark the end of basic training and other courses. The shirts were made by a private company.

The army said in a statement yesterday that "this type of humour is unbecoming and should be condemned", and threatened disciplinary action.

Graphic

One slogan read: "The smaller they are, the harder it is." The shirts, replicas of which are seen here on models, were worn by soldiers after basic training

PHOTOGRAPHS BY YANAI YECHIEL

Load-Date: March 24, 2009



<u>Troop T-shirts joke about killing children; Army threatens action after more</u> claims of atrocities emerge Israel

The Times (London)

March 24, 2009 Tuesday

Edition 2

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 33

Length: 610 words **Byline:** Israel James

Body

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The allegations, made by a group of UN human rights experts, were the latest claims against the Israeli military over its three-week campaign in Gaza at the start of the year.

Some of the most damning recent charges have been levelled by Israeli soldiers who fought in the conflict which left an estimated 1,400 Palestinians dead, most of them believed to be civilians. At the same time, there have been reports of soldiers wearing T-shirts mocking the deaths of Palestinian <u>women</u> and children.

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The military chief of staff, Lieutenant-General Gabi Ashkenazi, said: "I tell you that this is a moral and ideological army. I have no doubt that exceptional events will be dealt with." The Army has been forced to open several investigations into the rash of allegations. Trying to limit the damage to Israel's battered image, it was quick to condemn offensive T-shirts reportedly worn by soldiers. The shirt designs, according to Haaretz, the Israeli newspaper which produced the mock-up versions pictured above, include a pregnant woman in the crosshairs of a sniper rifle, with the logo "1 Shot 2 Kills". Haaretz said that soldiers had taken to wearing the shirts to mark the end of basic training and other courses. The shirts were made by a private company.

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Graphic

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY YANAI YECHIEL

Load-Date: March 24, 2009



The War Widow

The New York Times

March 15, 2009 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section MM; Column 0; Magazine Desk; Pg. 13; QUESTIONS FOR JEHAN SADAT

Length: 626 words

Byline: Interview by DEBORAH SOLOMON

Body

Your new book, "My Hope for Peace," comes at a sadly unpeaceful moment. So much has unraveled in the 30 years since Anwar el-Sadat signed the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. He won a Nobel Prize for his heroic efforts. How do you feel when you read the headlines these days? Sometimes it's very painful for me. I want to see what he did prevail. He paid his life for it, and every day there are either Palestinians sending rockets to Israel or Israelis invading Gaza.

You were with your husband when he was assassinated in 1981 by Islamic extremists. Did you actually see him gunned down? No, my guard pushed me down.

What do you make of <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamic militant group that now controls the Gaza Strip? I wish they would unite with Fatah, the more moderate Palestinians, and face their problems together. They have to be one delegation to negotiate with Israel.

Earlier this year, I was surprised to read about violent clashes between the Egyptian border police and Palestinians who were trying to flee Gaza and buy food and supplies in your country. That's right. When you want to cross into Egypt, there are rules. But the Palestinians want to cross and come without anything, just like that. There were thousands and thousands and thousands who wanted to cross, which is not legal.

Why can't the Palestinians, your fellow Muslims, be part of your country? Because they are not Egyptian. Gaza is their land, and they have the right to have their own state.

I've heard the Palestinians characterized as being very smart and fond of argument, not unlike Israelis. Believe me, they are more like the Jews than us. By the way, most of the Palestinians are very well educated. Because they are a minority, they are like the Jews. They are intellectuals.

Any thoughts on Hillary Clinton, who just completed her first mission to the Middle East as secretary of state? I'm very proud of her, this lady. I know her, and she is very intelligent. When [her husband] became president, I paid a courtesy visit to her in the White House, and she was taking notes while I was talking. Very practical woman!

These days, you divide your time between Cairo and suburban Washington, and you serve on the board of the University of Maryland. From time to time, I teach a class about the status of <u>women</u> in the Middle East, mainly in Egypt.

The War Widow

Why is Islam so hard on gays, particularly in Saudi Arabia, where homosexuality remains illegal and punishable by flogging or prison? Homosexuality is against Islam. Here in Egypt, there are not many homosexuals, not like the United States. There are some. We've had them since the Pharaohs.

You mean some of the Pharaohs were gay? No, no, no. There were gays at that time. Now, it's more or less closet gay. I have a friend who is a lesbian. She doesn't say it, and I pretend as if I don't know it. But I know that she is. I respect her because she's very clever in her work and it's none of my business.

You were barely 16 when you married Sadat, who at the time was 29 and a national hero who had been imprisoned for fighting the British in Egypt. I married on the 29th of May, two months exactly before I turned 16. You know, we were just two lovers devoted to each other.

What year was that? 1949. But why do you write that? People will say, "What an old, very old woman, this one." I'm 75. I swim every day, and I walk one hour in the morning.

Do you belong to a mosque in Washington? No. Neither in Egypt.

Why is that? Is the mosque a men's club? Some <u>women</u> go to the mosque. They have a certain place behind the men or a separate room. Myself, I prefer to pray at home. I pray in my room, and I believe God is everywhere.

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED, CONDENSED AND EDITED BY DEBORAH SOLOMON

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

(PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON LARKIN)

Load-Date: March 15, 2009



We don't always know best in Afghanistan; LETTERS

The Sunday Times (London)

March 22, 2009

Edition 1

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 24

Length: 685 words

Body

BRITAIN'S role in Iraq and Afghanistan needs better evaluation (Only a surge in fudging will tame Afghanistan, Comment, last week). We must face up to the fact that we do not always "know best", a hangover from superpower days, and adjust to punch our weight.

Our problem was summed up by Vladimir Putin's comments during Russia's spat with Georgia: "We have the political will, the economic strength and the military power." The UK is deficient on all three, particularly the will when it comes to analysing our performance in Basra. Our biggest problem now appears to be the meltdown of our financial sector, the ramifications of which could be the most serious ever faced.

Allan Nash

Billericay, Essex

Time to talk

Although we have demonised the Taliban for years, it was Mullah Omar who said that all problems can be solved at the negotiating table before the invasion. They are not fools or demons if we just take time and talk and stop delivering ultimatums. The Pashtuns are good at negotiating.

Richard Scott Drake

Colorado, USA

Obama'll fix it

The US and Britain have failed to solve this problem with violence. It's time to try something else. Thank God Barack Obama is in charge.

D Behrman London

Peace for the few

Welcome to the peaceful Afghanistan of the future. No suicide bombers or air raids.

Only musicians, teachers and women have anything to fear.

N Cook London

The blame starts here

I laud your editorial (We should just laugh at these clowns, last week) for highlighting the virtues of democracy. The British army has been pivotal in removing tyrannies and spreading freedom. Kosovo and Bosnia stand as an example of risking lives to prevent suffering.

But who doesn't agree that the Iraq war has caused the unjustifiable deaths of innocents, that America and Britain helped in the installation of puppet regimes from Pervez Musharraf in Pakistan to Nouri al-Maliki in Iraq and Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan, and shunned democratically elected *Hamas*.

The Iraq war has been unleashed under spurious pretences and the anger should be vented not on the lunatics who abused homecoming soldiers, but on those who sent them to Iraq to face death.

Dr Munjed Al Qutob

London SW5

Fear on home ground

Where is serious criticism, never mind dismissive humour, about Islam and its more extreme manifestations anywhere in our stage, film or written media? Was a Dutch film-maker not refused admission because of a work, good, bad or indifferent we do not know, that might have been unpalatable to Muslims?.

There is physical fear of extremists, fear of causing agitation among the significant minority in our midst and fear of suggesting to them that they become an integrated, identifiable, part of our culture. Until there is a sea change we shall see ever more intrusive laws.

Name and address supplied

Stop funding misfits

Your editorial is misguided. As absurd as figures like Anjem Choudary appear, sadly there are plenty of poorly educated misfits that are only too willing to lionise his ilk and become dupes to his particular brand of warped rhetoric. It does not take a genius to become a suicide bomber.

The state is supporting Choudary and his family while he rails against our society and encourages the financing of military actions against British troops in Afghanistan. If he is plotting our destruction on a full-time basis, he will not be looking for employment to support his family.

Simon Bradley

London SE1

Luton was criminal

The events in Luton last week have raised strong emotions.

Call them what you will but for God's sake do not call them jihadist, Islamist or Muslim terrorists. These terms have given the primitivists false credibility in the eyes of some fellow Muslims. To chop off the head of the serpent of

We don't always know best in Afghanistan LETTERS

radicalism and terrorism, it is essential that their link with Islam is severed. Once this is done, the terrorists will be treated as common criminals, for they will lose credence in the eyes of Muslims.

While there is illiteracy and poverty in some countries and dimwitted leaders in others, the primitivists will continue to use Islam as their cloak and terrorism as their dagger.

Dr Shahid Khan

Load-Date: March 22, 2009



UN told Israel's Gaza attack a 'war crime'

The Australian

March 25, 2009 Wednesday

2 - All-round First Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 10

Length: 679 words

Byline: Correspondents in Washington

Body

THE US yesterday said UN expert Richard Falk was "biased" in calling for an investigation of Israel's January offensive in the Gaza Strip on the grounds it could be construed as a war crime.

"We've expressed our concern many times about the special rapporteur's views on dealing with that question," State Department spokesman Robert Wood said.

"We've found the rapporteur's views to be anything but fair. We find them to be biased. We've made that very clear."

In a report presented yesterday at the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council, Mr Falk, the UN expert on the Palestinian territories, called for a probe to assess if the Israeli forces could differentiate between civilian and military targets in Gaza.

"If it is not possible to do so, then launching the attacks is inherently unlawful, and would seem to constitute a war crime of the greatest magnitude under international law," Mr Falk said in the report.

"On the basis of the preliminary evidence available, there is reason to reach this conclusion," he added.

Israel government spokesman Mark Regev last night slammed the report as ``one-sided".

"Unfortunately, this is a further example of the very one-sided, unbalanced and unfair attitude of the Human Rights Council," Mr Regev said.

``This sort of report does the service of human rights no good whatsoever. It's a politicisation of human rights."

Another report presented to the UN Human Rights Council yesterday accused Israeli troops of using a Palestinian child as a shield during fighting in Gaza, shooting Palestinian children, bulldozing a house with a woman and child inside and shelling a building they had ordered civilians to enter a day earlier.

Radhika Coomaraswamy, the UN Secretary-General's envoy for protecting children in armed conflict, said that on January 15, when the fighting in Gaza was at its peak, Israeli troops forced a Palestinian boy aged 11 to walk in front of them as they came under fire in the district of Tel al-Hawa.

UN told Israel 's Gaza attack a 'war crime'

The UN also cited alleged abuses by <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamist movement that rules Gaza. Ms Coomaraswamy said the group had been unwilling to investigate the charges made. She said the abuses were ``just a few examples of the hundreds of incidents that have been documented and verified" by the nine UN officials allowed into the territory after the war ended in late January.

"Violations were reported on a daily basis, too numerous to list," she said.

Physicians for Human Rights said: ``Israel placed numerous obstacles in the course of the operation that impeded emergency medical evacuation of the sick and wounded and also caused families to be trapped for days without food, water and medications."

The rights group said that Israeli forces had killed 16 Palestinian medical personnel and wounded 25, and had attacked eight hospitals and 26 primary care clinics.

Israeli officials had voiced satisfaction initially at the country's handling of the media coverage during the fighting, when the authorities banned journalists from entering the enclave. Since then, more accusations have leaked out. The military chief of staff, Lieutenant General Gabi Ashkenazi, said: ``I tell you that this is a moral and ideological army. I have no doubt that exceptional events will be dealt with."

The army has been forced to open several investigations into the allegations. Trying to limit the damage to Israel's battered image, it was quick to condemn soldiers who wore T-shirts joking about shooting pregnant Palestinian **women** and children.

Soldiers have reportedly started wearing T-shirts showing a pregnant woman holding a gun in the crosshairs of a sniper rifle, with the logo ``1 Shot 2 Kills". Another shows a child in a rifle's sights with the slogan: ``The smaller they are, the harder it is."

The Israeli daily Haaretz said soldiers had taken to wearing the shirts to mark the end of basic training and other courses. The T-shirts were made by a private company. The army said in a statement yesterday that ``this type of humour is unbecoming and should be condemned", and threatened disciplinary action.

Load-Date: March 24, 2009



Netanyahu calls for unity

The Star (South Africa)
February 23, 2009 Monday
e1 Edition

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Section: Pg. 4

Length: 676 words

Body

Israeli Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday called on his main rival Tzipi Livni to join him in a unity government but warned against arm-twisting and dictates in the negotiations to set up a governing coalition. Livni has already said she prefers sitting in the opposition to sitting in a Netanyahu-led government. Netanyahu has up to six weeks to form a coalition.

Authorities in western India have arrested eight doctors for alleged medical malpractice after a hepatitis B outbreak killed at least 36 people. At least 100 others in the Modasa district of Gujarat state were infected in the past two weeks and were being treated, state Health Minister Jaynarayan Vyas said yesterday. The doctors are alleged to have used the same syringe on multiple patients.

South Korean animal rights activists in masks symbolising meat and meat dishes parade to promote vegetarian food in Seoul yesterday. The more than 400 demonstrators said meat production had a devastating impact on the environment and urged people to follow a vegetarian lifestyle instead.

The US military would leave Iraqi cities by the end|of June, US military spokesperson Major-General David Perkins has said in Baghdad, reiterating|a commitment to the Iraqi government under a deal in November. Talks were continuing over the transfer of troops to Afghanistan, where there are 38 000 US soldiers, according to the Pentagon. There are 146 000 in Iraq.

A gas explosion ripped through a coal mine in northern China yesterday, killing at least 74 miners, hospitalising 114 others and trapping dozens. It is the country's deadliest coal mine accident in more than a year. China's mines are the world's most dangerous, with more than 3 000 deaths a year in fires, floods and explosions. Most of the injured miners suffered from carbon monoxide poisoning.

The Islamabad local government is to distribute 30 000 rifles to villagers to help security forces fight the growing strength of Taliban and al-Qaeda militants in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, officials said yesterday. Similar village militias, backed by the US, have been credited with reducing violence in Iraq, and a comparable initiative is under way in Afghanistan.

An 11-year-old Japanese boy turned detective when he trailed a thief and led police to his front door. Police yesterday said the boy saw the man take a box of DVDs away from a parked car in|front of a bookstore in Sendai city and, finding|his behaviour suspicious, decided to follow him.|He alerted the bookstore owner before tailing the thief for more than a kilometre.

Netanyahu calls for unity

A South Korean masseur who confessed to strangling eight <u>women</u> has been indicted on additional charges of burning alive his wife and mother-in-law. Kang Ho-sun (38) set fire to his mother-in-law's home in 2005, killing both <u>women</u> to claim insurance money. He has admitted killing eight office workers, karaoke bar employees and university students between 2006 and 2008.

The Israeli military confirmed in Jerusalem yesterday that an army dog bit an elderly Palestinian during|a West Bank raid. Salem Bani Odeh said he was|in his bed when he was bitten repeatedly. He was|in hospital yesterday with a gash in his left ear.|The 99-year-old's relatives say he is paralysed.|The incident occurred before dawn in the village|of Tamoun on Friday.

A military court in Gaza City has sentenced a man to death by firing squad for allegedly collaborating with Israel. <u>Hamas</u> spokesperson Mohammed Nahal provided no other details. The death sentence technically cannot be carried out unless Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas approves it. He has not allowed executions to take place since he came to power in 2005.

Ignacio Carlos Flores-Figueroa, an undocumented worker from Mexico, made a curiously bad decision. After working in the US under an assumed name|for six years, he decided to use his real name and exchanged one set of fake ID numbers for another. His suspicious boss called in the authorities, who found the numbers belonged to real people. The man was charged with identity fraud.

Load-Date: February 22, 2009



No Kenyan tribunal

The Star (South Africa)
February 13, 2009 Friday
e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4 Length: 682 words

Body

Kenya's parliament has voted against a bill to establish a tribunal to try suspects in the country's post-election violence last year, which claimed the lives of more than 1 000 people. The decision means a list of suspects - including top politicians, businessmen and policemen - will likely be handed over to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands.

A surfer was seriously injured yesterday in Sydney's second shark attack in two days, police said. Shark attacks are rare off Australia's largest city, although the number of fish - including sharks - in Sydney Harbour reportedly is increasing as government policies and industrial changes reduce water pollution. On Wednesday, a navy diver fought off a shark in the harbour.

US actress Susan Sarandon, dressed as Carmen from Prosper Merimee's Carmen, |pose for Montblanc's Signature for Good charity initiative. Celebrities teamed up with Montblanc and Signature International to create 12 unique portraits taken by renowned US photographer Roger Moenks, which will be auctioned to support Unicef educational programmes.

A French skier on a helicopter expedition was killed by an avalanche near the Turkey's Black Sea coast. Officials said the skier was among a group of six in the mountains around Uzungol in Turkey's north-eastern Trabzon province. The avalanche crashed onto the skier soon after the group were dropped off on a remote mountain by helicopter. The five other skiers were not hurt.

The British Office for National Statistics says marriage rates have hit a record low in England |and Wales, with 230 000 marriages registered in 2007 - 3% fewer than in 2006. The 2007 data is the most recent year recorded. Marriage Week UK says many couples wed abroad to save money, while others are establishing careers first and waiting longer to marry.

An elderly man, who appeared to have difficulty walking, blew himself up and killed a policeman who was helping him in Afghanistan yesterday, a local official said. The suicide bombing happened outside the offices of the governor of the eastern province of Paktika, a day after 26 people died in multiple Taliban attacks on the capital Kabul. Five people were wounded in yesterday's blast.

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Load-Date: February 12, 2009



Netanyahu calls for unity

Pretoria News (South Africa)
February 23, 2009 Monday
e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 10

Length: 676 words

Body

Israeli Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday called on his main rival Tzipi Livni to join him in a unity government but warned against arm-twisting and dictates in the negotiations to set up a governing coalition. Livni has already said she prefers sitting in the opposition to sitting in a Netanyahu-led government. Netanyahu has up to six weeks to form a coalition.

Authorities in western India have arrested eight doctors for alleged medical malpractice after a hepatitis B outbreak killed at least 36 people. At least 100 others in the Modasa district of Gujarat state were infected in the past two weeks and were being treated, state Health Minister Jaynarayan Vyas said yesterday. The doctors are alleged to have used the same syringe on multiple patients.

South Korean animal rights activists in masks symbolising meat and meat dishes parade to promote vegetarian food in Seoul yesterday. The more than 400 demonstrators said meat production had a devastating impact on the environment and urged people to follow a vegetarian lifestyle instead.

The US military would leave Iraqi cities by the end of June, US military spokesperson Major-General David Perkins has said in Baghdad, reiterating a commitment to the Iraqi government under a deal in November. Talks were continuing over the transfer of troops to Afghanistan, where there are 38 000 US soldiers, according to the Pentagon. There are 146 000 in Iraq.

A gas explosion ripped through a coal mine in northern China yesterday, killing at least 74 miners, hospitalising 114 others and trapping dozens. It is the country's deadliest coal mine accident in more than a year. China's mines are the world's most dangerous, with more than 3 000 deaths a year in fires, floods and explosions. Most of the injured miners suffered from carbon monoxide poisoning.

The Islamabad local government is to distribute 30 000 rifles to villagers to help security forces fight the growing strength of Taliban and al-Qaeda militants in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, officials said yesterday. Similar village militias, backed by the US, have been credited with reducing violence in Iraq, and a comparable initiative is under way in Afghanistan.

An 11-year-old Japanese boy turned detective when he trailed a thief and led police to his front door. Police yesterday said the boy saw the man take a box of DVDs away from a parked car in front of a bookstore in Sendai city and, finding his behaviour suspicious, decided to follow him. He alerted the bookstore owner before tailing the thief for more than a kilometre.

Netanyahu calls for unity

A South Korean masseur who confessed to strangling eight <u>women</u> has been indicted on additional charges of burning alive his wife and mother-in-law. Kang Ho-sun (38) set fire to his mother-in-law's home in 2005, killing both <u>women</u> to claim insurance money. He has admitted killing eight office workers, karaoke bar employees and university students between 2006 and 2008.

The Israeli military confirmed in Jerusalem yesterday that an army dog bit an elderly Palestinian during a West Bank raid. Salem Bani Odeh said he was in his bed when he was bitten repeatedly. He was in hospital yesterday with a gash in his left ear. The 99-year-old's relatives say he is paralysed. The incident occurred before dawn in the village of Tamoun on Friday.

A military court in Gaza City has sentenced a man to death by firing squad for allegedly collaborating with Israel. <u>Hamas</u> spokesperson Mohammed Nahal provided no other details. The death sentence technically cannot be carried out unless Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas approves it. He has not allowed executions to take place since he came to power in 2005.

Ignacio Carlos Flores-Figueroa, an undocumented worker from Mexico, made a curiously bad decision. After working in the US under an assumed name for six years, he decided to use his real name and exchanged one set of fake ID numbers for another. His suspicious boss called in the authorities, who found the numbers belonged to real people. The man was charged with identity fraud.

Load-Date: February 22, 2009



No Kenyan tribunal

The Star (South Africa)
February 13, 2009 Friday
e2 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4 Length: 682 words

Body

Kenya's parliament has voted against a bill to establish a tribunal to try suspects in the country's post-election violence last year, which claimed the lives of more than 1 000 people. The decision means a list of suspects - including top politicians, businessmen and policemen - will likely be handed over to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands.

A surfer was seriously injured yesterday in Sydney's second shark attack in two days, police said. Shark attacks are rare off Australia's largest city, although the number of fish - including sharks - in Sydney Harbour reportedly is increasing as government policies and industrial changes reduce water pollution. On Wednesday, a navy diver fought off a shark in the harbour.

US actress Susan Sarandon, dressed as Carmen from Prosper Merimee's Carmen, |pose for Montblanc's Signature for Good charity initiative. Celebrities teamed up with Montblanc and Signature International to create 12 unique portraits taken by renowned US photographer Roger Moenks, which will be auctioned to support Unicef educational programmes.

A French skier on a helicopter expedition was killed by an avalanche near the Turkey's Black Sea coast. Officials said the skier was among a group of six in the mountains around Uzungol in Turkey's north-eastern Trabzon province. The avalanche crashed onto the skier soon after the group were dropped off on a remote mountain by helicopter. The five other skiers were not hurt.

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Load-Date: February 13, 2009



Shift to the right in Israel

The Star (South Africa)
February 11, 2009 Wednesday
e2 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4 Length: 686 words

Body

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's centrist Kadima party led exit polls after yesterday's parliamentary election by two seats over right-winger Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party. Three exit polls by broadcasters showed Kadima taking 29 or 30 seats and Likud 27 or 28. Exit polls confirmed a general shift to the right, with 14 or 15 seats for far-rightist Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu party.

Hundreds of British workers were today to protest at power stations nationwide, the latest in a wave of labour unrest over the use of foreign contractors on major construction projects in recession-hit Britain. Unions say the hiring of external workers is particularly troubling since engineering construction is one of the few areas of the economy that is expanding.

Orlando Cachaito Lopez - seen here performing in Havana in 2000 - died from cancer on Monday at the age of 76. He was one of Cuba's best-known bass players and a founding member of the legendary Buena Vista Social Club ensemble.

A German court in Berlin yesterday ruled that a Jewish man from Florida in the US was the rightful owner of a rare poster the Gestapo seized from his father in 1938 on the order of Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebels. The ruling set the stage for the return of the entire collection of thousands of posters - all rare, with only small original print runs - now worth at least e4,5-million (R56-million).

A Dutch man who phoned in a hoax hijack threat to stop his ex-girlfriend travelling to Turkey with her new boyfriend has been sentenced to six months in prison. The Transavia jet was detained for hours on Rotterdam Airport's runway with all passengers and crew still on board in August after the man called police to say al-Qaeda planned to hijack the plane. The call sparked a terror alert.

Amnesty International said in London yesterday that <u>Hamas</u> fighters in the Gaza Strip carried out killings, torture and abductions of people accused of helping Israel, during and after the recent Israeli offensive. At least two-dozen men were shot dead and scores of others were shot in the legs, knee-capped or injured in other ways intended to cause permanent disability.

Officials in Moscow say alcohol and pilot confusion over the instrument panel on a Boeing737-500 passenger jet were responsible for a crash east of the Russian capital last year that killed 88 people. Investigators also said in a final report released yesterday that the subsidiary, Aeroflot-Nord, gave the pilots insufficient training. An unspecified amount of alcohol was detected in the pilot's body.

Shift to the right in Israel

A Pakistani man went on trial in France yesterday for setting his ex-girlfriend alight after she refused to marry him, in a case rights groups are using as a symbol of violence against <u>women</u> in poor Parisian neighbourhoods. Amer Mushtaq Butt (28) allegedly doused Chahrazade Belayni in petrol and set fire to her. She suffered third-degree burns on 60% of her body. Now 21, she works for the police.

The EU yesterday offered Libya e20-million (R253-million) to help cope with growing illegal migration, the EU's external relations commissioner said in Tripoli after meeting Libyan officials. Border patrols and coastal radar have made it harder for illegal migrants escaping poverty to enter Spain from Morocco and tens of thousands are trying to reach Europe further east.

Mayors from more than 350 cities across Europe yesterday signed a climate change agreement in Brussels, pledging to cut carbon dioxide emissions by more than 20% by 2020. The pact covers urban areas in 23 countries and includes major cities. New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg said in a video message that his city would aim to reduce emissions by 30% by 2030, and backed the EU plan.

The Helsinki Appeals Court has fined Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's former girlfriend for writing about intimate details about their love life. It said the kiss-and-tell book by Susan Ruusunen, The Prime Minister's Bride, caused him distress by exposing his private life. The court fined her e300 (R3 800) and her publisher e840. The book has steamy sauna scenes and intimate text messages.

Load-Date: February 10, 2009



Stop the Bomb activists, stockholders demand Siemens halt Iran dealings

The Jerusalem Post

January 28, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 685 words

Byline: BENJAMIN WEINTHAL, Jerusalem Post correspondent

Body

MUNICH - Pro-Israel activists affiliated with Stop the Bomb distributed 3,500 flyers at the start of the Siemens annual stockholder meeting in Munich on Tuesday - International Holocaust Remembrance Day -calling for the engineering and energy giant to stop its business deals with Iran to prevent a genocide against the Jewish state.

Stop the Bomb, a non-partisan coalition with chapters in Germany and Austria, advocates harsh economic sanctions on the Iranian regime to force suspension of its nuclear enrichment program.

In the bitter cold outside the massive Olympic Hall, 35 activists distributed flyers as over 12,000 stockholders entered. BSrbel Illi, a member of the German-Israeli friendship society in Stuttgart who traveled to Munich to pass out flyers, told The Jerusalem Post that "Siemens is quite deeply involved in business with Iran."

Illi noted that "too little" is being done in Germany to prohibit German-Iranian trade and prevent a nuclear- armed Iran.

According to the "Siemens Iran" Web site, 350 employees are presently active in Iran and, in 2007, Germany garnered 465 million Euros in trade with Iranian customers.

A spokesman for Germany's Federal Office of Economics and Export Control (BAFA) informed the Post that the German government approved 36 "dual-use" contracts, which can be used for military and civilian purposes, with Iran between January and November of 2008. He declined to comment on whether Siemens had secured permits for dual-use contracts. In the same period as the dual-use deals were authorized, German-Iranian trade grew by 10.5 percent over 2007.

Individual stockholders and members of Stop the Bomb gave voice to their rising displeasure with Siemens's flourishing commercial relationship with Iran. Shareholder Andrea Duchek asked CEO Peter Lsscher and Chairman of the Board Gerhard Cromme for a breakdown of trade volume and slammed Siemens for its business "alliance" with "the main supporter of the <u>Hamas</u> terror regime." She demanded an immediate end to Siemens's commercial dealings with Iran.

Michael Spaney, a spokesman for Stop the Bomb, asked Lsscher and Cromme how it was possible that Siemens, which "already profited from slave labor in Auschwitz and was also involved in other Nazi crimes," was once again acting "as an important mainstay of an anti-Semitic and terrorist regime?"

"What does the Siemens Managing Board have to say about the countless human rights violations in Iran, the brutal destruction of trade unions, the violent suppression of <u>women</u>, the terrorizing of minorities and the murder of homosexuals. as well as the threat to Israel?"

Lsscher replied that "compliance and ethics have the highest priority in the area of human rights."

Spaney peppered Lsscher with questions about Siemens's contracts. Lsscher said Siemens provided Iran with "150 diesel-powered vehicles" valued at 294 million Euros, as well as the delivery of 13 gas turbines and 20 compressors to the firm Mahtab. Contradicting a Guardian news report from November, 2007, that asserted that Siemens "has pulled out of all new business dealings with Iran," Lsscher confirmed Siemens's ongoing activity in Iran, stating that in December 2008 the company had sealed a 32m.-Euro deal involving three compressors, and referenced business transactions in the gas, oil and medical sectors.

He declined to comment on whether Siemens had provided Iran with surveillance technology which, according to media reports, can be used against Israel and persecuted minority groups in Iran.

Asked whether Siemens had commenced deals with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, a group designated a terror organization by the US government, Lsscher gave no specific answers.

Lsscher repeatedly told the shareholders that Siemens complied with the United Nations and European Union sanctions against Iran.

He said, however, that Siemens could not exercise influence deals cut in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that facilitated the transport of merchandise to Iran. The free- trade zone in Dubai, UAE, is a non-regulated area that companies use to bypass European Union and United Nation sanctions.

Graphic

Photo: STOP THE Bomb activists leaflet attendees at Siemens' annual stockholders' meeting in Munich yesterday. The sign reads 'Stop the Iranian Regime.' (Credit: Cornelia Fiedler)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Your Say

Herald Sun (Australia)
January 16, 2009 Friday
1 - FIRST Edition

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 33

Length: 678 words

Body

LETTER OF THE DAY

MY friends and I joined a mob of commuters, tourists and shoppers boarding a tram.

As we did so, we helped an elderly gentleman, dressed in a crisp navy suit and holding a bunch of yellow roses in arthritic fingers.

As the tram moved off, he gripped the door frame, the pronounced white of his knuckles showing the exertion required.

A woman clambered aboard, pushing past the gentleman, who was balanced precariously in the doorway. He stumbled, and grasped the railing.

The woman grabbed the senior citizen and spun him around; behaviour which belittled this proud man. By now, his roses were crumpled and his eyes glistened with what seemed to be tears.

At this point I could not prevent myself screaming, "Can someone please give this gentleman a seat!"

Passengers turned and stared, but no one offered a seat.

It seems etiquette has deteriorated considerably in this city.

Sarah Carroll, Armadale

Our letter of the day winner receives a stylish Parker Sonnet fountain pen, courtesy of Parker.

Kosky has run out of time

I TOOK a later train to the city yesterday morning to try to avoid the chaos of the past two days.

By the time we reached Parliament station at 9.25am, there were more than 60 people standing in my carriage alone.

I'm tired of hearing Lynne Kosky making excuses and blaming others.

The time for her to find a resolution is well overdue. She can continue the inaction and blame game at her own peril.

Your Say

S. Smith, Mitcham

Singapore just did it

SINGAPORE'S Mass Rapid Transit underground stations had protective glass panels and doors installed on platform edges years ago.

This provides maximum protection for waiting passengers, is much quieter and prevents wind gusts from incoming trains.

Will it happen here? Talk is cheap, action expensive.

Singapore's Government talks, listens and then appears to adopt the Nike principle: Just do it.

Steve Pivetta, Mount Waverley

Minister's tough hide

LYNNE Kosky's misguided spruiking and disregard for angry rail commuters makes me realise that she must have a skin as thick as a rhinoceros.

This is compounded by a premier we didn't vote for refusing to do something about it.

David Weaver, Caroline Springs

Rail upgrade years late

THE ailing transport system is the result of many years of neglect of the whole system.

Ageing rolling stock, not enough rolling stock and old tracks are simply some of the signs that a massive overhaul is long overdue.

And with the latest Victorian Transport Plan talking about much and delivering little, it looks more like a triumph of spin over substance.

What is needed is a transport minister with the vision and tenacity to advocate for a system that provides for Victorians both now and into the future.

Victoria stands at the crossroads. Premier Brumby should choose a path.

M. Knight, Malvern East

Banks without compassion

HEARTLESS Kiwis, demanding parents pay for dead Melbourne brothers' rental bills.

Of course, we all know that, because of the tragedy, Australian banks will waive any outstanding credit card debts they may have, won't they?

Yeah, right!

Allan Harris, Dingley Village

Gaza deaths, injuries shameful

ISRAELI Foreign Minister Livni asserts that the Gaza offensive is serving the interests of the Palestinian people.

Killing nearly 1000 people, nearly half of them <u>women</u> and children, is "good" for the Palestinians? Wounding nearly 4500 Palestinians -- this is "serving the interests of the Palestinian people"?

Your Say

As a Jew myself, I regard it as shameful that such things are being done in my name.

Judy Bamberger, O'Connor, ACT

Benefits seen on West Bank

IT'S interesting that the reaction to Israel's offensive against <u>Hamas</u> has been more muted in the West Bank than in some European and Australian cities.

Perhaps it's because the economic and security situation in the West Bank has improved significantly over the last few years thanks to increased co-operation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and Palestinians there recognise the benefits that come through co-operation rather than violence.

That's where the moderates are now.

Justin Lipton, Melbourne

Load-Date: January 15, 2009



Karzai tells of gag bids

Pretoria News (South Africa)
February 05, 2009 Thursday
e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 10

Length: 667 words

Body

President Hamid Karzai said in Kabul yesterday that there were "serious tensions" in his relationship with Afghanistan's foreign allies, who criticised him for being weak. He said they were pressuring him to stop complaining about civilian casualties. "Our differences in opinions and tensions became serious" after incidents last year when US troops killed Afghan civilians in bombing raids.

At least 52 civilians were killed and 80 wounded in shelling in Sri Lankan's northern war zone, the UN said in Colombo yesterday, while a crowded hospital was hit again and Britain and the US urged a ceasefire. It was unclear who was responsible for the attacks. Aid agencies say 250 000 people are trapped in Tamil Tiger-held areas, but the government says the number is about half that.

A zookeeper feeds a one-week-old hairy armadillo, abandoned by its mother, in Jerusalem's Biblical Zoo in Israel yesterday. Armadillos are known for having a leathery armour shell. They grow to an average length of about 75cm.

The Vatican yesterday ordered a traditionalist bishop who denies the Holocaust to publicly recant his views if he wants to serve as a prelate in the Church. The Holy See said Pope Benedict was not aware of Bishop Richard Williamson's denial of the Holocaust when the pontiff lifted excommunications on him and three other traditionalist bishops last month.

An aid group working in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo yesterday condemned UN peacekeepers for not protecting civilians attacked by Ugandan rebels. Medecins Sans Frontieres said more than 900 people had been killed in a series of massacres in daily attacks since Christmas, while peacekeepers failed to intervene. The UN said it was difficult to protect civilians against the rebel group.

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's environmental efforts have caught the eye of the American Chamber of Commerce in Germany. It is to award him its annual Transatlantic Partnership Award for "extraordinary commitment to the environment and energy" in the US state. He was also cited for "being a role-model in building bridges between the US, Germany and Europe".

French archaeologists in northern Sudan have unearthed a 5 500-year-old Stone Age tomb they believe confirms the location of Africa's "oldest human sacrifice". The tomb of a man and a woman facing each other in a ditch, with the bodies of two <u>women</u>, two goats and a dog buried nearby, was dug up in a graveyard in Al-Kadada, north of Khartoum.

Karzai tells of gag bids

<u>Hamas</u> police have broken into a warehouse full of UN humanitarian supplies and seized blankets and food parcels. A UN spokesperson yesterday said the armed officer forced their way into the warehouse in Gaza City on Tuesday and took 3 500 blankets and 400 food parcels ready for distribution directly to 500 families. Officials had refused to hand over the supplies to the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The founder of an influential Catholic religious order, disciplined in 2006 for sexual abuse of boys and men, lived a double life for many years and also fathered at least one child with a mistress, his order acknowledged yesterday. The latest scandal to rock the Catholic Church concerns Father Marcial Maciel, Mexican founder of the Legionaries of Christ, who died last year aged 87.

Gunmen in Nigeria have kidnapped the wife of a former oil minister, an employee of Italian energy firm Agip and an electoral official in recent days, police in Port Harcourt said yesterday. The separate incidents on Monday and Tuesday underline growing insecurity in the Niger Delta, where gunmen last week killed the 11-year-old daughter of an oil worker and abducted his 9-year-old son.

Taiwan, after issuing shopping vouchers last month, plans to issue education vouchers to allow unemployed college graduates and young white-collar workers to receive vocational training while waiting for jobs. The scheme will cost up to \$900-million (R9-billion). Taiwan's jobless rate soared to 5% in December, with nearly half a million people out of work.

Load-Date: February 4, 2009



Passengers of freighter seized by Israel return home with tales of abuse

The Daily Star (Lebanon)
February 7, 2009 Saturday

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Length: 666 words

Byline: Andrew Wander

Body

A group of activists arrested after the Israeli navy seized an aid ship bound for the devastated Gaza Strip were expelled from Israel on Friday, a day after being detained by the military. Fifteen of the Togolese-flagged Tali's crew members were deported back to Lebanon and Syria early on Friday, and three others were preparing to fly to London.

BEIRUT: A group of activists arrested after the Israeli navy seized an aid ship bound for the devastated Gaza Strip were expelled from Israel on Friday, a day after being detained by the military. Fifteen of the Togolese-flagged Tali's crew members were deported back to Lebanon and Syria early on Friday, and three others were preparing to fly to London.

Nine Lebanese and a Palestinian were handed over at the border with Israel to the UN peacekeeping force responsible for monitoring stability in southern Lebanon.

The freed crew told how they were beaten and handcuffed after Israeli gunboats fired on the ship and sailors stormed the vessel, arresting everyone on board. The boat was then towed to the Israeli port of Ashdod where it was searched.

Salam Khodr, an Al-Jazeera journalist who was on board the vessel, said the Israelis had taken the crew's possessions when they were arrested. "The Israeli army confiscated all our videotapes; we were separated from each other, we were blindfolded and handcuffed. They beat some of us; I was beaten," she said.

"The soldiers kicked Dr Hani Suleiman, in the chest and back; we asked for a physician to check Dr Suleiman who suffered short breath; one Israeli <u>female</u> soldier answered: 'You should have thought about his health condition before you attempted to come and break the siege of Gaza'," Khodr said.

An Israeli military spokes-man admitted that no arms had been found on the ship, which turned out to be laden with medicine, food, and humanitarian supplies for the population of the war ravaged enclave.

Israel is enforcing a tight blockade of Gaza, but said that blood donations that were on board had been immediately transferred to territory. More than 1000 units of donated blood were part of the ship's humanitarian cargo.

Passengers of freighter seized by Israel return home with tales of abuse

The Arab League described the seizure of the vessel and the detention of those on board as "an act of piracy," and said it would complain to the United Nations about the incident.

But Israeli officials defended their actions, saying that the boat had raised suspicions because "it could threaten security concerns, or furthermore, the boat could be used for smuggling banned equipment [weaponry etc.] into or out of the Gaza Strip."

The ship set sail from Tripoli on Tuesday, docking in Cyprus where its cargo was checked before beginning its onward journey towards Gaza. But it was intercepted by Israeli helicopters and gunboats as it tried to enter Gazan territorial waters.

Israel denies that their sailors fired at the ship, but passengers insist that they came under attack. "They opened fire on us," Khodr said.

The Tali remains in port at Ashdod and there has been no indication of when it will be allowed to sail.

In the months before Israel's recent military offensive in Gaza, several boats breached the naval blockade to deliver aid and free Palestinian students trapped in the coastal strip.

But since fighting in Gaza began at the end of last year, Israel has clamped down on aid shipments entering the enclave. Last month an Iranian ship was prevented from delivering humanitarian supplies, and in December a vessel belonging to the Free Gaza Movement was rammed and badly damaged by an Israeli gunboat.

The interception of the Tali marks the first time Israel has captured an aid ship and its crew, and will be seen as a clear signal that it will not tolerate further attempts to circumvent the blockade of Gaza.

<u>Hamas</u> has said that lifting the crippling restrictions on the territory's borders is a precondition for any sustainable ceasefire with Israel, but the Jewish state has so far refused to consider relinquishing control of the borders. - With agencies

Load-Date: February 6, 2009



The Tuesday Column - BBC needs to rescind its dangerous decision

Irish News

January 27, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: Pg. 2

Length: 676 words

Byline: Breidge Gadd

Body

My first reaction on hearing the BBC and other media channels' refusal to give airtime to the Disasters Emergency Committee was that I had misheard or that the reporter had got it wrong.

As it became clear that this news report was in fact accurate my disbelief was followed by utter incredulity.

How could supposedly experienced, intelligent people make such a crass monumental mistake? Where have they been over the years as well known news reporters, or occasionally pop or film stars, made impassioned appeals for the victims of war in Europe, in Africa and Asia, without even a whiff that by so doing they were aligning themselves politically, or indeed in any other way, with any of the protagonists in the conflict?

Furthermore, one of the unselfish actions taken by the people living in developed countries is our preparedness and capacity to give money to humanitarian disasters, irrespective of their cause. Underpinning our willingness to give is a trust that the large charities such as Concern, Trocaire or Red Cross will deliver our aid to those most in need in as non-political and impartial a way as possible.

Of course, at times there will be grumbles that these charities could be more efficient, spend less on administration, act faster and so on. But never have they been accused of taking political sides in a conflict. In fact they go to great lengths to protect their neutrality and their independence and thus the integrity of the money entrusted to them. Some have died serving their calling to deliver aid to the needy, regardless of political expediencies.

Thankfully other media organisations have come to their senses and made good their initial mistake but as I write the BBC remains resolute in its policy to treat this one plea for aid as a potential taking of sides. Do they not understand that by so doing they turn their own position into a political one?

I hope that their current stance is not influenced by the pro-Israeli lobby which has been vociferous in its accusations that most of the reporting on the recent war in Palestine has been pro-Palestinian. If such sensitivity underpins their present stance, the BBC that we have come to respect for its impartial, comprehensive and sanguine coverage is in serious trouble.

True, most of the reporting has been from the perspective of the war as it impacted on the people of Gaza. True, the nightly pictures on our screens are of Palestinian children and <u>women</u>, dead in the streets, or being treated in hospitals or alternatively wandering lost and weeping among the rubble of their homes.

The Tuesday Column - BBC needs to rescind its dangerous decision

We have not seen similar pictures of Jewish children and their grieving parents. But then we have not seen wholesale and seemingly indiscriminate destruction of Jewish streets, nor have we seen Israel civilians attempting to shelter from rocket and gun attack on an hourly basis.

We have seen and heard the effect of a <u>Hamas</u> rocket attack on an old people's home in Israel and the pain and sense of violation was every bit as heartbreaking among the Jewish victims as the Palestinian ones.

Nevertheless it is accurate to say that the reporting has been largely one-sided because the war has been largely one-sided. Those reporting capture what the evidence is and the number killed wounded and currently in desperate need of food, shelter and medical supplies speaks for itself.

Irrespective of the rightness of the cause and the personal political sympathies of those who report, or those who offer help, both categories of professionals work on the evidence in front of their eyes. Nothing else.

This focus on evidence, not opinion not emotion, seems to be one of the most fundamental principles that both reporters and aid workers must hold as an absolute. Move from that and truth moves as well.

The BBC by its refusal to allow a plea for funding for humanitarian aid like many pleas before it, no more no less, has chosen to make the request for generous aid for people desperately in need of help a political action. It is imperative that they immediately rescind this dangerous decision.

Load-Date: January 27, 2009



Israeli government is stepping up efforts to suppress dissent in the streets; MIDEAST: A 'Police State' Celebrates

IPS (Latin America)
January 29, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 659 words

Byline: Nora Barrows-Friedman

Body

According to Israeli police reports, at least 763 Israeli citizens, the majority of them Palestinian and 244 under 18 years old, have been arrested, imprisoned or detained for participating in such demonstrations. Most have been held and then released, but at least 30 of those arrested over the past three weeks are still being held in prison.

Ameer Makhoul, director of Ittijah, the Union of Arab Community-Based Associations in Haifa, tells IPS that these demonstrations 'are part of the uprising here inside the Green Line, to share responsibility and to share the challenge with the people in the Gaza strip.'

As an organiser of many of these solidarity demonstrations inside Israel, Makhoul himself was arrested by the Shin Bet (the Israeli secret service). 'They called me, came to my home and held me for four hours,' he tells IPS. 'They accused me of being a terrorist and supporting terror. They said that they are watching me and monitoring me.' Israel, he said, 'has become a terror state.'

The Shin Bet has accused Makhoul and the hundreds of others arrested of 'being a rebel, threatening the security of the State of Israel during war time.'

Makhoul believes that such threats are being implemented by Israel's security forces '(in order to) break our will and the spirit of our people. But I think our spirit is much, much stronger here in Haifa and in Gaza than the Israeli oppression.'

On Jan. 15, a Haaretz-Dialog public opinion poll taken in Israel found that 82 percent of the Israeli population believes that Israel did not go too far in its three-week operation in Gaza, 'despite pictures from Gaza depicting massive destruction and a large number of wounded and killed, including <u>women</u> and children,' reports Haaretz.

At a demonstration last week in front of Kishon prison north-east of Haifa, where some of the Palestinian demonstrators are being held, Israeli anarchist and professor of mathematics Kobi Snitz tells IPS that this figure is indicative of the current social climate inside the state.

People are made to be afraid. Virtually all Israelis, particularly Israeli Jews, are convinced that <u>Hamas</u> was the one that violated the ceasefire. This just isn't true...(But) you won't find this in the Israeli media. There is no understanding of the level of violence used on Gaza by the Israeli military. And the police operate under the assumption and guidelines that every political expression now is to be repressed and prevented.'

Israeli government is stepping up efforts to suppress dissent in the streets MIDEAST: A 'Police State' Celebrates

IPS asked Snitz to describe the momentum of these daily protests across the country. 'These demonstrations happened virtually by themselves,' he says. 'At this point, anybody who is not severely indoctrinated or ignorant just feels compelled to do something every day. It's unbearable to sit at home and not do anything.'

Last Saturday night in the coastal town of Jaffa, south of Tel Aviv, several thousand demonstrators - including Palestinians, various peace groups, Israeli anarchists and teenaged Israeli refusniks fresh from jail for refusing to serve in the mandatory military - marched through the main street in the old city with flags, banners, and vociferous determination to keep up the fight inside Israeli society against their government's lethal operations in Gaza. Israeli security forces, carrying weapons and video cameras, heavily flanked the protesters.

But activists say it is crucial to expand the discussion from this current struggle for Palestinians inside the Gaza strip outward into the larger context. 'I'm here to take a stand for Gaza,' Mahmood Jreri of the acclaimed Palestinian hip-hop group DAM, based in Lydd (east of Tel Aviv), tells IPS during the march.

'The main reason (I'm here) is to say that we are not part of what the Israeli government is doing. The Palestinian people are fighting for their freedom and fighting against the occupation. When Palestinians have their freedom, then there will be peace here.' © 2009 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

Load-Date: January 29, 2009



What the commentators say today ...

Guardian.com January 19, 2009

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theguardian

Length: 661 words

Highlight: In association with media analysis firm Editorial Intelligence

Body

In association with media analysis firm Editorial Intelligence

ECONOMY: The Sun's Trevor Kavanagh says our banks owe more than every citizen and business in this country can produce in wealth. George Pascoe-Watson believes this is the week in which Gordon Brown must sink or swim - his plan to get banks working again must succeed because there is no Plan B. The Daily Mail's Peter Oborne writes that after the failure of the government's £37bn bail-out last autumn, Britain is on the brink of bankruptcy. Melanie Phillips writes that by announcing another desperate measure to control toxic debts, Brown has shown that his last attempt has failed. Ambrose Evans-Pritchard writes in the Daily Telegraph that the treasury's £200bn plan to soak up toxic debt will be followed within days by a US variant from the Obama team. Germany cannot be far behind. In the Daily Express, Leo McKinstry says in spite of Brown's pronouncement last year that he saved the banks, our financial institutions are sinking ever deeper into crisis. His massive bail-out has not worked and credit remains frozen.

In The Times, Patrick Hosking notes that a miscalculation of scale has meant ministers having to rescue the banks by writing cheques and issuing guarantees for unimaginable sums of money. Peter Riddell believes the government has had no choice but to embark on another huge bailout of the banking system. Gary Duncan says that for the past week it has become clear from a torrent of grim developments that Britain's economy is only just clinging on as a chasm of recession opens up; and those charged with saving the rest of us have still to grasp the full scale of the looming danger. Simon Wolfson, chief executive of Next, believes that if there is one quality we need, above all, to guide government in the dangerous months ahead, it is common sense. In the economic climate, few of us feel immune, says Jenni Russell in The Guardian. The fear about what might happen to us has forced a sudden reassessment of what we value. We're in panicky retreat from risk, only we don't know where to go.

OBAMA: From tomorrow, the story of Barack Obama ceases to be about what he is and moves to what he does, says Gary Younge in The Guardian. And Obama has a daunting to-do list when he finally enters the White House tomorrow, writes Larry Elliott. Making the economy a priority makes sense. In The Times, William Rees-Mogg says the great American presidents have emerged from the great challenges (Roosevelt, Great Depression and Second World War; Lincoln, Civil War) and Obama's presidency will be shaped by the challenges he faces: the depression that began in 2007 and the creation of a foreign policy that will restore international confidence in America. Libby Purves notes that the Obama story is classic: a poor mixed-race 'mutt' rising through intelligence and courage to become a beloved and magnanimous leader. The Daily Telegraph's Janet Daley says whatever Obama achieves or

What the commentators say today ...

fails to achieve in office, the extraordinarily moving fact of his election will dominate history's view of him. It is scarcely possible to take in the full measure of its significance. The Daily Mail's Peter McKay writes that most American presidents hark back to Lincoln, but surelyObama is in danger of overdoing it by quoting Lincoln throughout his campaign.

GAZA CEASEFIRE: The Independent's Yasmin Alibhai-Brown says that for the trapped people of Gaza, this respite will bring some relief, but it will not and cannot curb their grief and outrage after what was done to them while the West stood still. Robert Fisk believes that after killing hundreds of <u>women</u> and children, Israel is the good guy again, declaring a unilateral ceasefire that <u>Hamas</u> is certain to break. In The Guardian, Alastair Crooke, former security adviser to the EU, says the ceasefire a return to square one: the situation at the end of the last ceasefire. Israel's declaration contains the potential for further conflict.

Load-Date: January 19, 2009



making |THEIR POINT

Post (South Africa)

January 21, 2009 Wednesday

e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 17

Length: 645 words

Body

THE article, "Twins to kick their way to Greece" (January 14 - 18) bears reference. There are a number of children who do not have food and school books and also a number of children who need life-saving operations. Children go to school on empty stomachs. Yet, the parents of these children referred to, are gainfully employed, and should take a loan instead of seeking financial help. All parents would like to see their children kick their way to an activity like this for mere glory and pleasure. My child has also been selected and I cannot afford to send him but will not stoop to this level. In fact, the entire class has been chosen to go to Greece.

To readers out there, please donate money towards a charitable and worthy cause, instead. Your reporter should have established whether it is true that the mother sells hotdogs to raise funds for the trip.

CHOP - CHOP

Verulam

Reporter Candice Soobramoney responds: Yourshika Rajcoomar, the mother, who is divorced from the children's father, confirmed, again, that with the help of a neighbour, who runs a tuck shop, she sold hotdogs to raise additional funds, in the hope of sending her sons to Athens, Greece, in July.

AFTER watching regular news reports about Palestine, I am depressed, traumatised and can't seem to fathom the need for this war. Innocent children are being killed. Like the two-year-old who was shot in the centre of his body. If the Israelis say that they are not out to kill innocent people and that they are just looking for <u>Hamas</u>, then why did they tell a family of 30, mostly <u>women</u> and children, to stay indoors and then bombed the building.

It just does not make sense. Most of the casualties were children, aged six years and above.

What if they were our kids?

Regardless of religion, what is happening is wrong. Every other country has taken a stand. Where are our Muslim brothers when we need them? I think that we all should get together and protest this inhumane act.

Why isn't our country sending medical aid to the victims? But we could loan Zimbabwe millions of rand and ten days later Robert Mugabe went on vacation.

Even though it is not happening directly to us, it is not something that we should just brush off.

making |THEIR POINT

Muslim leaders in Musjids need to preach about this in their congregation, take a stand and protest against all Israeli products. Do your bit! You don't know how many children's lives it may save.

CONCERNED MUSLIM

Overport

A ceasefire was announced at the weekend, which, if respected, should bring to an end the carnage of recent weeks. There have been some protests in the country. - The Editor.

WHY does the DSTV Indian bouquet include Al Jazeera and Iqraa - I cannot find any Indian connection to these channels?

The Indian bouquet has six channels, namely Zee TV, Sony, B4U, NDTV, Saffron and Sony Max at R222.75 per month which works out to R37.12 per channel. The premium bouquet has 80 channels at R468.99 (R5.86 per channel) - why the colossal difference in prices? Saffron TV is also included in the premium bouquet - seems like a double charge to some subscribers.

B4U and Sony Max, most of the time, televise the most outdated or low budgeted movies. Are there any moves to replace these channels? When is DSTV pulling the plug on Saffron TV - a huge mistake? Also, why are there so many repeats on these channels, in such a short space of time? I hope the forthcoming pay networks have a better choice of programming.

SWITCHED OFF

Reservoir Hills

A response from DSTV will be published, when received. - The Editor

I CHUCKLED when I read one of the weekend newspapers. There, in the form of advertisements, were tacit tit-fortat claims between Logie Naidoo and Amichand Rajbansi on who got which awards, and where in India. It certainly helped to bring some comic relief. We should brace ourselves for more comedy as the 2009 elections draw closer.

CHAK-DE INDIA

Durban

Load-Date: January 21, 2009



How can I speak out?

Guardian.com January 17, 2009

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theguardian

Length: 651 words

Highlight: Tabish Khair: As a Muslim I cannot take the easy path of a rousing condemnation of Israel

Body

The statistics are clear: about 1,000 Palestinians, including more than 400 children and <u>women</u>, killed by Israeli forces in the first 20 days of the current misadventure in the Middle East.

Given these statistics, it should be easy to condemn Israel. But it is not. Not unless you are Jewish.

As a Muslim I cannot take the easy path of a rousing condemnation of Israel. Because I have to bear in mind not only Muslim experiences but also Jewish ones. I have to bear in mind not only Zionism but also Nazism. I have to bear in mind not just the duplicity of Israeli politicians but the stupidity of Muslim ones. If I were Jewish I could simply condemn Israel's latest misadventure. If I were Jewish, I could choose to overlook my own, Jewish, contexts and focus instead on the rights and suffering of the other: of Muslim Palestinians. If I were Jewish, I could hardly do anything else - as a significant minority of Jewish intellectuals has demonstrated - without lying to myself about my own motives and twisting facts. But as a Muslim I cannot give myself the right to overlook the fears of the other: in this case, Israeli Jews.

I cannot deny the holocaust, as fact and fear. I will not deny the holocaust just to obstruct Zionism, for that would be to play into the hands of the odious racism of the European right, which led to Nazism. I want Palestinian Muslims to have a safe, viable state, but I will not win that state for them with the tacit or direct support of Nazism. All I can do is point out, as the Jewish leader Meir Ya'ari did, that Israeli leaders are using means of dispossession against Palestinians that bear a close resemblance to this earlier period in history. I will also not deny the right of Jews, in Israel or elsewhere, to be assured of life and property and human rights. For that is what I want for myself, and for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and elsewhere.

I will continue to speak up for the Palestinian people and support their struggle for a decent life, a viable state. But I do not want to use that for the sort of populist exercises that many Muslim, particularly Arab, leaders seem to be prone to. The missiles <u>Hamas</u> fires into Israel are of that nature. They are deplorable not only on humane grounds but also on strategic ones.

Arab leaders, being politicians with fragile popular bases, like to posture at times. Saddam did so most recently. When their bluff is called, it is the Arab people who suffer - as the Palestinian people are suffering right now. Just as Zionists take the support of Jews for granted, expecting them to justify every crime committed in the name of a Jewish homeland, many Muslim leaders take the solidarity of the Muslim "ummah" for granted. I refuse to let these

How can I speak out?

leaders - Jewish or Muslim - take my support for granted. I refuse to suffer for them or let ordinary people - Muslim or Jewish - pay the price of their juvenile politics.

Above all, I refuse to subscribe to Biblical reasoning. It is this that has infected Muslims, Jews and Christians on all sides of the international tragedy of the Palestinians, sharing as they do the assumptions of Old Testament logic. God cursed the ancestor, and the present is a consequence of the curse, that legacy. Switch on any talk show and you find Jewish, Muslim and Christian (though sometimes they pretend to be secular) champions hammering at the details of the past, using them either to justify or condemn Israel or Palestine.

Well, God was wrong. The sins of the father cannot and should not be visited on the daughter. That is the main condition for sensible living in the present. History is there to learn from, not to justify or destroy the present. And hence, as a Muslim I take my stand only on the ground of the present: a present that should assure all human beings, including Palestinians, of basic human rights. I take my stand on hope that is not rooted in the deprivation of others.

Load-Date: January 17, 2009



The Jerusalem Post March 23, 2009 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1615 words

Byline: David Herman, Dr. Batya L. Ludman, Leon Abramowitz, Samuel Samuelson, Haim M. Lerner, Hillel

Goldberg, Reuven Porath, The IDF Spokesman responds, Josef Gilboa

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Let's free all...

Sir, - What I propose will not be very popular with the vast majority of the public, and it obviously would involve a considerable risk for Israel.

On the other hand, there is a good chance it could open up a whole new avenue for peace with the Palestinians, with favorable repercussions throughout the Middle East and on world opinion.

My suggestion: Free all the Palestinian prisoners in our jails, simultaneously, as an unparalleled, enlightened gesture of a truly magnanimous people and in the spirit of Pessah, our festival of freedom. The impact of such a gesture, coming out of the blue, perhaps even from the soon to be formed government, would be greeted with incredulous joy by the Palestinians; bring about the immediate release of Gilad Schalit; open up new avenues for peace talks and a final settlement with the Palestinians; stop Palestinian terror; immeasurably raise Israel's stock throughout the world and turn this country from being the whipping boy of the world media into its darling.

Of course, such a step can only come from a farsighted and visionary leadership. Carefully prepared, it could generate unprecedented amounts of goodwill, first and foremost from the Palestinian prisoners and their families, whose opinion of Israel and their captors would be radically altered and radiate throughout the Palestinian and Arab world.

The exodus of these bloodstained Palestinian prisoners from our jails could signal a new era of peace, understanding and cooperation for our blood-drenched, tear- stained, hope-parched land.

It's a gamble, I know, but one which could, overnight, change the face of the Middle East for the better.

As we prepare to celebrate Pessah, let us reflect that freedom - whether it be for Israeli or Palestinian, for Jew or Muslim, or for any human being, is the greatest, most precious prize of all ("Held hostage," Ruthie Blum Leibowitz, March 20).

DAVID HERMAN

Jerusalem

...those friendly, likable terrorists

Sir, - Last year I participated in an international course on the psychological aspects of terrorism. We were granted special permission to tour one of the maximum- security prisons in Israel and given the opportunity to interview a Palestinian terrorist.

"Our" terrorist spoke perfect English. He had attained his B.A. in Jordan, and a degree in engineering from an American university.

What I found most outstanding was his pleasant demeanor. He was a good looking, clean-cut man in his early forties. He made good eye contact and appeared quite friendly and likable. Had I sat next to him in a cafe, I wouldn't have given him a second glance.

While I couldn't help but notice the perspiration on his forehead, despite the cold room, he was articulate and his answers were smooth and spoken like a true psychopath. He knew exactly what he wanted to convey, and did so effortlessly.

I ended my interview with one question. Did he have any regrets about anything at all? His answer was a quick "No."

After the interview, we found out that this amiable, articulate fellow was the leader of <u>Hamas</u> in Tulkarm, Abbas a-Sayid, and the mastermind behind the bombing of the Park Hotel in Netanya on Pessah 2002. While in Israeli custody awaiting trial, he planned the 2005 terrorist attack in a nearby shopping mall which killed five and injured 86, and claimed responsibility for yet another bombing, which killed two. He is currently serving 35 life sentences, but is among those whose release <u>Hamas</u> demands in exchange for Gilad Schalit.

Having met him, I have no doubt that this man, given the opportunity, would repeat what he did in a minute. And lest you feel sorry for this poor "militant" suffering in jail, I should point out that he shares an air-conditioned room with two others, with a bathroom, television and DVD, has outside sports time twice a day and prayer time, and is allowed visitors on a biweekly basis. He is currently, while in prison, pursuing a degree in international relations from the Open University.

It doesn't get much better than that now, does it? Isn't it time we rethought our handling of the terrorists we hold?

DR. BATYA L. LUDMAN, PSY.D., FT

Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Ra'anana

Sir, - Israel's present policy encourages the kidnapping of its citizens, to be used as pawns for the release of murderous terrorists. Israel needs a death penalty for acts of murder committed by Arab terrorists.

The release of such murderers must stop. Far too many have gone on to commit additional crimes. A dead terrorist cannot commit any more murders.

LEON ABRAMOWITZ

Jerusalem

Why let Shoah denial

measure Jew-hatred?

Sir, - In "Sweden's anti-Israel apartheid policy is about more than sport" (Abraham Cooper and Harold Brackman, March 9), which concluded with statistics on how much of Swedish youth denies the Holocaust, we were again treated to the assumption that Holocaust denial is the test of Jew- hatred.

How long are we going to use this litmus test for where we stand with people and nations? What other nation bases the legitimacy of its existence upon past suffering? What other group places its need for a state above the fact that it has a state?

Isn't it time we based ourselves on our victories instead of on our suffering? Our legitimacy was established by the United Nations granting us a birth certificate on Nov. 14, 1947, even before we were born. And we were born not because our mothers were suffering labor pains and our fathers were martyrs, but because we defeated seven Arab peoples who wanted to throw us into the sea as abortions of history.

We are a member of the UN, and another member has no right to demand our disappearance. We are legitimate because we are a nation occupying our space on earth, and because we can defend that space.

SAMUEL SAMUELSON

Jerusalem

Two views

of the Poles

Sir, - A very peculiar people, those Poles ("Polish film shows glimpse of Jewish life before WWII," March 22).

First, for the most part, they collaborate with the Nazi murderers, who were their own tormentors, to exterminate millions of Polish Jews; then, a generation later, they're looking for traces of these "exotic" neighbors! Very strange indeed.

HAIM M. LERNER

Ganei Tikva

Sir, - I have 1,000 reasons to love Poland and 3.5 million reasons to respect the Polish people.

Knowing that Poland also had its share of anti-Semitic incidents, mostly during foreign occupation under which all citizens suffered, it is worth remembering that it became the birthplace of some of the finest leaders and the founders of the modern State of Israel.

Today, Poland wants to be our staunchest friend in Europe. And we, too, want to confirm that Jews never forget good friendship, and certainly do not forget deeds of self- sacrificially saving Jewish lives during the Holocaust.

While many nations turn against Israel today, the Polish people support the vibrant development of Jewish life in their country. Likewise, their government promotes Poland-Israel relations, notably by having declared 2008/2009 Poland-Israel year - Poland's 90th anniversary (of regaining independence) and Israel's 60th.

Poland's Ambassador Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska has proven her country's good intentions by many actions, including dozens of Polishcultural events in Israel fostering personal friendship between the two nations.

Remarkably, too, last year Premier Donald Tusk as well as President Lech Kaczynski, in addition to two former presidents Lech Walensa and Aleksander Kwasniewski, visited Israel.

Which other country has sent four top statesmen to us in the space of a year?

HILLEL GOLDBERG

Jerusalem

Rank and guile

Sir, - I agreed in general with Asher Meir's analysis of Admiral Eliezer Marom's behavior ("Wholesale and retail exploitation," Ethics@work, March 13), but am disturbed nevertheless by the implications of his reportedly lying to the chief of staff in claiming that his visit to a strip- club was a "one-off" occurrence. I also fear that his authority over subordinates - especially *female* ones - has suffered.

Incidentally, as an former naval officer, I can state with certainty that neither of the two senior woman ex- officers interviewed for the column were ever in the navy. They both served in their time as OC <u>Women</u>'s Corps, with the rank of Brig.-Gen.

One more rather bizarre point concerning Adm. Marom (and, I believe, some of his predecessors): His proper rank is aluf, equivalent to Maj.-Gen. or, in the navy, rear- admiral (two-star rank). Yet in the accompanying photo he is seen wearing the stripes of a vice admiral (three-star rank). I understand this is also the rank he uses in English.

By doing so he places himself on a par with the chief of staff - i.e., Lt.-Gen. (Rav-Aluf) - which is a three- star rank, outranking all the other alufim in the IDF!

This situation probably causes misunderstanding and confuses military and protocol officials abroad.

REUVEN PORATH

Haifa

The IDF Spokesman responds:

Since the 1990s, with the consent of the then chief of staff, Israel's naval heads have been presented to their counterparts abroad with the rank of vice-admiral, an interim rank whose significance varies in foreign armies. The current chief of staff has decided to leave the situation as it is for the time being.

Sir, - Goodness me, a sailor went to a strip club - scandalous!

Imagine the English sacking Lord Nelson because of his affair with the married Lady Hamilton, or the Americans dumping Ike because of his liaison with his driver, Kay Summersby.

Adm. Marom's job is to give us the best navy our budget can afford, and to defend our sea frontier with all the skills and vigor he can command.

He is a war leader, not a teacher of propriety. He should not be judged by any other standard.

JOSEF GILBOA

Jaffa

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



We won't be silenced say Iran's opposition

Scotsman

June 26, 2009 Friday

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Length: 745 words

Byline: Michael Purcell

Highlight: WITH an iron-fisted crackdown on the streets, the Iranian regime appears to have weathered the biggest anti-government protests since the 1979 Islamic Revolution - but it has failed to silence a defiant opposition challenge to the disputed presidential election results.

Body

Undeterred by the harassment, Mir Hossein Mousavi, the man millions of Iranians believe was the real winner on 12 June, insisted yesterday that his followers had a constitutional right to protest peacefully. He said the authorities were increasingly isolating and vilifying him in an attempt to get him to withdraw his election challenge - which he vowed he would not do.

"My access to people is completely restricted," he said. He condemned a crackdown on his media group, saying his two websites were being tampered with and his newspaper closed down and its staff arrested.

While the regime has proven it has the muscle to repress the street unrest after conducting one of the harshest crackdowns in its history, it must know that dealing with a possible campaign of mass civil disobedience will be much more difficult.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the official winner of the "stolen" election, meanwhile lambasted Barack Obama for his condemnation earlier this week of the violence in Iran. He warned the United States president not to interfere in Iran's affairs, accusing him of falling into a trap set by some European states, such as Britain, that are led "by a bunch of politically retarded people".

Mr Ahmadinejad's remarks were among the most strident so far in a crude, government- orchestrated campaign to scapegoat western powers for the regime's misfortunes.

The US has been preparing for a historic engagement with the Islamic Republic, but the Iranian president warned Washington that if Mr Obama continued to act like his hawkish predecessor, George Bush, there "will be nothing left to talk about".

Mr Ahmadinejad's outburst is likely to heighten fears that Iran's deeply divided leadership could try to exacerbate tensions in the region to distract attention from its domestic worries. US-backed Arab leaders in Sunni Muslimmajority countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt have been quietly gloating over Shia Iran's self-inflicted problems.

We won't be silenced say Iran 's opposition

They regard Mr Ahmadinejad as a dangerous demagogue who is destabilising the region and meddling in Arab affairs by sponsoring groups such as Hezbollah and <u>Hamas</u>. They suspect there is less chance now of a rapprochement between Tehran and Washington, which they had feared could undermine their interests.

The regime's apparent victory on the streets may well prove to be Pyrrhic. Hundreds of opposition activists are believed to have been taken into custody - including 70 academics arrested as they left Mr Mousavi's home on Wednesday night.

Seventeen protesters are officially acknowledged to have died during the crackdown, although reformists say the true death toll is probably higher. But the upper echelons of the regime have never been so divided, its rifts never so publicly exposed. Mr Ahmadinejad's victory party on Wednesday night was snubbed by nearly two-thirds of the members of Iran's 290-seat parliament. The regime and its supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei - who hailed Mr Ahmadinejad's victory as a "divine blessing" - have lost all semblance of popular legitimacy, analysts say. There have been unprecedented chants of "Death to Khamenei!" at opposition demonstrations.

One furious <u>female</u> voter wrote on her Facebook page: "They are changing Iran from an 'Islamic Republic' to 'Islamic' by their actions. This is the death of democracy in Iran."

The president and supreme leader are now confronted by a powerful coalition of insiders who have been forced by events into an unlikely opposition role. Foremost is Mr Mousavi, who was Iran's prime minister during the war with Iraq in the 1980s.

He is being backed by two influential politician-clerics, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a pragmatic conservative, and Moh-ammad Khatami, a popular reformist: both are former presidents. Their alliance lacks military muscle but has people power.

Today, Mr Mousavi's supporters plan to release thousands of balloons printed with the message: "Neda you will always remain in our hearts" - a reference to the young woman, a philosophy student, killed by security forces last week, who has become an icon of the protests where **women** have been on the front line.

Nightly, thousands of Iranians have taken to their rooftops in a symbolic and peaceful ritual of opposition unity, chanting "God is Great!" and "Death to the Dictator!" - both rallying cries of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. They are well aware that comparing today's protests with those against the US-backed shah 30 years ago infuriates the regime.

Load-Date: March 14, 2011



MR. PRESIDENT, STAND WITH THE PEOPLE OF IRAN

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

June 20, 2009 Saturday

SOONER EDITION

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. B-6

Length: 789 words

Byline: Charles Krauthammer

Body

Millions of Iranians take to the streets to defy a theocratic dictatorship that, among its other finer qualities, is a self-declared enemy of America and the tolerance and liberties it represents. The demonstrators are fighting on their own, but they await just a word that America is on their side.

And what do they hear from the president of the United States?

Silence. Then, worse. Three days in, the president makes clear his policy: continued "dialogue" with their clerical masters.

Dialogue with a regime that is breaking heads, shooting demonstrators, expelling journalists, arresting activists. Engagement with -- which inevitably confers legitimacy upon -- leaders elected in a process that begins as a sham (only four handpicked candidates permitted out of 476) and ends in overt rigging.

Then, after treating this popular revolution as an inconvenience to the real business of Obama-Khamanei negotiations, the president speaks favorably of "some initial reaction from the Supreme Leader that indicates he understands the Iranian people have deep concerns about the election."

Where to begin? "Supreme Leader"? Note the abject solicitousness with which the American president confers this honorific on a clerical dictator who, even as his minions attack demonstrators, offers to examine some returns in some electoral districts -- a farcical fix that will do nothing to alter the fraudulence of the election.

Moreover, this incipient revolution is no longer about the election.

Mr. Obama totally misses the point. The election allowed the political space and provided the spark for the eruption of anti-regime fervor that has been simmering for years and awaiting its moment. But people aren't dying in the street because they want a recount of hanging chads in suburban Isfahan.

They want to bring down the tyrannical, misogynist, corrupt theocracy that has imposed itself with the very baton-wielding goons that today attack the demonstrators.

This started out about election fraud. But like all revolutions, it has far outgrown its origins. What's at stake now is the very legitimacy of this regime -- and the future of the entire Middle East.

MR. PRESIDENT, STAND WITH THE PEOPLE OF IRAN

This revolution will end either as a Tiananmen (a hot Tiananmen with massive and bloody repression or a cold Tiananmen with a finer mix of brutality and co-optation) or as a true revolution that brings down the Islamic Republic.

The latter is improbable but, for the first time in 30 years, not impossible. Imagine the repercussions. It would mark a decisive blow to Islamist radicalism, of which Iran today is not just standard-bearer and model, but financier and arms supplier. It would do to Islamism what the collapse of the Soviet Union did to communism -- leave it forever spent and discredited.

In the region, it would launch a second Arab spring. The first in 2005 -- the expulsion of Syria from Lebanon, first elections in Iraq and early liberalization in the Gulf states and Egypt -- was aborted by a fierce counterattack from the forces of repression and reaction, led and funded by Iran.

Now, with Hezbollah having lost elections in Lebanon and with Iraq establishing the institutions of a young democracy, the fall of the Islamist dictatorship in Iran would have an electric and contagious effect.

The exception -- Iraq and Lebanon -- becomes the rule. Democracy becomes the wave. Syria becomes isolated; Hezbollah and *Hamas*, patronless. The entire trajectory of the region is reversed.

All hangs in the balance. The Khamenei regime is deciding whether to do a Tiananmen. And what side is the Obama administration taking? None.

Except for the desire that this "vigorous debate" (press secretary Robert Gibbs' disgraceful euphemism) over election "irregularities" not stand in the way of U.S.-Iranian engagement on nuclear weapons.

Even from the narrow perspective of the nuclear issue, the administration's geopolitical calculus is absurd. There is zero chance that any such talks will denuclearize Iran. On Monday, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared yet again that the nuclear "file is shut, forever." The only hope for a resolution of the nuclear question is regime change, which (if the successor regime were as moderate as pre-Khomeini Iran) might either stop the program, or make it manageable and nonthreatening.

That's our fundamental interest. And our fundamental values demand that America stand with demonstrators opposing a regime that is the antithesis of all we believe.

And where is our president? Afraid of "meddling." Afraid to take sides between the head-breaking, <u>women-shackling</u> exporters of terror -- and the people in the street yearning to breathe free. This from a president who fancies himself the restorer of America's moral standing in the world.

Notes

Charles Krauthammer is a syndicated columnist for The Washington Post (letters@charleskrauthammer.com)./

Load-Date: June 20, 2009



Ripples from Iran crisis reach far and wide

The Toronto Star

June 18, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 Toronto Star Newspapers, Ltd.

Section: OPINION; Pg. A21

Length: 716 words

Body

What's happening in Iran is domestic but its ripples reach Lebanon, Israel and the United States. And it stirs the 100,000-strong Iranian diaspora in Toronto.

Tehran being ahead of Toronto by 81/2 hours, it was clear here by Friday night that something wasn't quite right about the hurried official announcements that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had won handily over Mir Hossein Mousavi.

Mehrdad Ariannejad and Mehrdad Loghmani, Toronto computer engineers, decided to "do something." Human rights activist Lily Pourzand came on board. Her father, a journalist, had been jailed in Iran. Her mother, a lawyer, is in exile, a teaching fellow at Harvard.

There would be a rally on Sunday. More than 2,000 people turned up at Mel Lastman Square.

Some carried signs similar to those in Iran: "Where's my vote?"

Given the wide range of Iranian ideological divisions in Canada, present in the crowd were some monarchists, some Communists and also those from other factions, noted Reza Moridi, MPP for Richmond Hill (the first Iranian Canadian elected to a legislature).

Alluding to the deep divisions, Jian Ghomeshi of CBC Radio (emcee of choice for Iranian Canadian events) said that watching what's happening in Iran "has been devastating. But these are also the kinds of events that can ... bring this community together."

He said Iranian Canadians wanted for Iranians what we have - fair elections. "I am a proud Canadian, I am also a proud Iranian."

To the uninitiated, that may have sounded banal. But it wasn't. Most Iranians who came to Canada after the Islamic revolution were "anti-mullah." Many took to calling themselves Persian (prompting people like to me to ask mischievously: "Where is Persia?") Ghomeshi is proudly re-appropriating the Iranian heritage for them.

In the absence of international monitors, it's hard to know the merits of Mousavi's complaint that 5 million voters were denied ballots, that thousands of scrutineers were barred from polling booths.

The election machinery was indeed controlled by Ahmadinejad's allies. Yet he had something else going for him: the P{+2} factor, his constituency of the poor and pious, which may have been underestimated by the urban elite, on whom the foreign media over-rely.

But it's also clear that the government is facing a crisis of credibility.

Ripples from Iran crisis reach far and wide

The slogans of the tens of thousands of protesters are telling. Echoing the revolutionary Marg bar Imrika (Death to America) and Marg bar Shah, they are shouting Marg bar diktator and Marg bar coupe d'etat. They are on rooftops after dark to shout the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's revolutionary rallying cry, Allah o-Akbar.

This is unprecedented.

So is the crackdown. It is not yet known how many have been killed and how many are under arrest.

Unless the results are overturned, an unlikely prospect, Ahmadinejad's win consolidates the power of hardliners. They control the judiciary and the security services (the dreaded interior ministry, and the Revolutionary Guards and its militias, the "guardians" of the Islamic republic).

Their ascendancy may mean culture wars against <u>women</u> and the young, and a witch hunt against the reformists/pragmatists who may want to compromise with the U.S. ("the Great Satan") and Israel ("the Zionist entity").

However, Ayatollah Syed Khamenei, the supreme leader, retains his veto on all key policies. He reflects the national consensus on the nuclear issue and also Israel. He considers *Hamas* and Hezbollah as legitimate forces battling Israeli occupation/invasions/oppression. He'll bend only when he thinks Israel has done right by the Palestinians.

If Ahmadinejad would rather talk about Israel than his domestic political and economic problems, Benjamin Netanyahu would rather talk about Iran than Palestine.

But the Israeli prime minister's rhetoric won't budge Iran. It's also not likely to move Barack Obama off his goal of resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Obama has had a sensible response to the crisis in Iran. The U.S. promotes democracy. It wants a peaceful resolution. But it's up to the Iranians themselves to choose their leaders. The U.S. will deal with whomever they choose.

It has no choice, given the centrality of Iran to that whole region.

Bringing Iran out of its isolation also offers the best hope of making it more democratic.

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Load-Date: June 18, 2009



Pray for the man who can lead us to peace

The Herald (Glasgow)
June 8, 2009 Monday
Final Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 15

Length: 710 words

Byline: RON FERGUSON

Body

IT'S called leadership. President Barack Hussein Obama's set-piece address at Cairo University, calling for a new beginning between the US and Muslim world, was the mix of visionary and pragmatic politics that is badly needed.

Pledging America to a two-state solution in the Middle East, President Obama warned that settlement building in the West Bank must stop. He defended passionately Jews' right to a homeland, before condemning Muslim anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial as baseless, ignorant and hateful. He also talked about the Palestinians' 60-year "pain of dislocation, " and went on: "So let there be no doubt: the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable. America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity and a state of their own." He called on <u>Hamas</u> to end its violence. "It is a sign neither of courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old <u>women</u> on a bus. That's not how moral authority is claimed; that's how it is surrendered."

To dismiss Obama's words as "just a speech" is to underestimate the power of words. Of course actions are needed to back up the rhetoric; we will have to wait to see if America will use its clout to "encourage" the main players to sit down at the same table for serious negotiations. But tone is important, and Obama was close to being pitch-perfect. An intelligent and sophisticated Christian with strong family roots in the Islamic world, Barack Obama might, just might, broker a viable settlement in the Middle East. Even if he does nothing else during his time in the White House, he will be history's man.

The nuanced address was trailed by the White House as a bid to "change the conversation" with the Islamic community. Saying that the partnership between America and Islam must be based on what Islam is, not what it isn't, he went on: "I consider it part of my responsibility as President of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear." The changing of this particular conversation is long overdue. Terrorists and suicide bombers have hogged the headlines, but they no more represent Islam than football "casuals" represent the clubs they claim to support.

But what have the Romans, I mean the Muslims, done for us? Well, Muslim architecture, mathematics and philosophy have at times led the field.

Pray for the man who can lead us to peace

Islam, as Obama has acknowledged, carried the light of learning through many centuries, paving the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment. The Muslim world gave us the magnetic compass and tools of navigation, our mastery of pens and printing, our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed.

Apart from that, they've done nothing.

A critical question lurks behind all this: how are we to live with each other on this fragile planet? If we cannot get beyond gross stereo typing, we citizens of the nuclear age are doomed as a species.

Truthful conversation would demand a private and public critique of aspects of Islam - attitudes to <u>women</u>, for starters - in solidarity with Muslims who are already making that critique themselves. Islam needs a reformation, particularly in relation to interpretation of sacred texts. But so does Christianity. The so-called "Christian" west, with its patronising rhetoric of assumed superiority, needs to attend to a Muslim critique of our sacred kye; it would certainly challenge British enthronement of the individual adult, our unprotesting submission to the worst excesses of market-driven modernity, our piggishness in the midst of famine, the yobbishness and incivility that run through all classes of our national life, our quickness to abort inconvenient foetuses and our treatment of the problematic elderly. There are things we need to hear. Genuine conversation is a two-way street.

Changing the terms of our domestic, national and international conversations - with respect for human dignity and human rights at the core - is not an optional extra. Without it, we are spiritually, and ultimately physically, dead. Barack Obama understands this. He will also know that changing entrenched conversational styles can have people reaching for their guns. We should pray for the black man in the White House every day.

Load-Date: June 8, 2009



The New York Times

January 25, 2009 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

Section: Section A; Column 0; Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 2

Length: 1472 words

Body

International

AS ECONOMY TIGHTENS,

Educated Chinese Pinched

In China, the great boom in urban middle-class wealth over the past decade and a half is slowing because of the global financial crisis, and the job market has tightened for the college-educated Chinese, who grew up thinking that economic prosperity was guaranteed to them. PAGE 6

2 DEAD AFTER U.S. RAID

American soldiers fatally shot an Iraqi couple in their home near Kirkuk after the wife reached for a pistol hidden under a mattress, American and Iraqi officials said. PAGE 8

SUICIDE BOMB KILLS 15

At least 15 people were killed and 24 others injured after a suicide car bomber aimed at an African Union peacekeepers base in Somalia exploded.

PAGE 10

REVIVING LIFE IN GAZA

One week after Israel and <u>Hamas</u> each declared unilateral cease-fires, life in Gaza is restarting -- shops are reopening, people are walking the streets and traffic once again is becoming a problem. But the region remains in a kind of stupor, with 4,000 homes destroyed, 21,000 badly damaged and 100,000 people homeless. PAGE 14

National

FOR WHITE-COLLAR JOBLESS.

Support in Hard Times

Providing a spur as well as solace, a growing number of networking organizations for unemployed executives and other professionals offer support in turbulent times and a glimpse into the travails of highly educated and skilled individuals whose lives had once seemed comfortably upper- middle class. PAGE 17

Cookies Omit Kosher Label 18 Retiree Pay Cut for a Militia 19

OBAMA BACKS STIMULUS

In his weekly video address, President Obama argued that a proposed \$825 billion package of spending programs and tax breaks -- which would pay for everything from laying 3,000 miles of transmission lines for a new national electric grid to guaranteeing health insurance for 8.5 million Americans -- was critical not only to turning around the economy but to rebuilding the nation for a new era. PAGE 20

HIS FIRST DAYS IN OFFICE

President Obama spent his first few days in office rolling out a series of executive orders on matters ranging from new ethics rules to shutting down detention camps, intended to signal that he would take the nation in a very different direction. But it did not take long for the new president to discover that there are limits to turning his campaign rhetoric into reality. PAGE 22

New York

DRIVERS BEWARE

When Fighting Tickets

Since New York City introduced a settlement program in 2005 to speed the resolution of parking tickets, drivers who fight tickets are finding it easier to get their fines reduced but harder to get a ticket dismissed, according to Department of Finance statistics. PAGE 26

HUDSON'S MANHATTAN

It was 400 years ago that the English navigator Henry Hudson washed ashore on the tip of Manhattan. This week Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg will join Mayor Job Cohen of Amsterdam and other Dutch officials in heralding the quadricentennial of Hudson's voyage of discovery. PAGE 26

EXPERTS OF A FEATHER

A bird feather from the wreckage of US Airways Flight 1549, which crashed in the Hudson River, is going to be processed at the Feather Identification Lab at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington. At the lab, samples from bird-plane collisions are compared with a library of 620,000 bird samples, some gathered by Charles Darwin and John James Audubon. PAGE 27

Obituaries

JIM HORNE, 91

Perhaps the most widely seen male model in the country for about 15 years beginning in the late 1940s, he appeared in hundreds of advertisements and commercials. PAGE 28

Sports

THE CIVIC RELIGION ENJOYS

A Revival in Montreal

The N.H.L. All-Star Game is being held in Montreal as the Canadiens celebrate their 100th anniversary. It is a chance for Montreal's fans to bask in the history of their storied franchise, one that perhaps has no parallel in any sport. PAGE 1

FITZGERALD'S TIME AT PITT

Before the Cardinals selected Larry Fitzgerald as the third pick in the 2004 draft, he dazzled everyone at the University of Pittsburgh, wherehis skills were honed and he developed into the most potent threat to the Steelers in Super Bowl XLIII. PAGE 1

DEMOLISH IT

And the Park Will Come

Months after its official farewell, old Yankee Stadium stands strong. The stalled demolition is at the expense of cherished parkland to be replaced in one of the nation's poorest Congressional districts. Enough is enough, Harvey Araton writes. Tear down this stadium, Mr. Bloomberg! PAGE 3

THE CRADLE OF COACHES

In 35 seasons at Tennessee, Pat Summitt's winning percentage is .844, but a better measure of the coach's success is the 45 Lady Volunteers, about a third of the players who have passed through her program, who have become coaches from youth leagues to the pros. PAGE 1

Week In Review

NO COMMON GROUND

In This Land

One of the major hurdles to brokering peace between Israelis and Palestinians is that almost no place, date or event in the conflicted region is spoken of in a common language. PAGE 1

FEARING A QUAGMIRE

President Obama's military planners are preparing for the first wave of a new Afghanistan "surge," but there is growing debate about how the troops can accomplish their mission -- and what exactly their mission is. PAGE 1

A FUMBLED HANDOFF

Compared to other political dynasties like the Bushes and the Clintons, the Kennedys have a hold on high elective office that has been relatively modest. But what the Kennedys may lack in titles they make up for in mystique, though even that is waning in the wake of Caroline Kennedy's aborted Senate bid and Barack Obama's inauguration, with its promise of a new political order. PAGE 1

Editorial

UPHOLD VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Some people claim that Barack Obama's election has ushered in a "postracial" America, but the truth is that race, and racial discrimination, are still very much with us. The Supreme Court should keep this reality in mind when it considers a challenge to an important part of the Voting Rights Act that it recently agreed to hear. The act is constitutional -- and clearly still needed. WEEK IN REVIEW, PAGE 9

Op-Ed

FRANK RICH

The austerity of Obama's Inaugural Address was a tonal corrective to the glitz and the glut of the past eight years. WEEK IN REVIEW, PAGE 10

NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF

While Bill Gates sometimes misses his work in the tech kingdom, he relishes his new role as full-time philanthropist. And even in these difficult times, he wants Americans to do more for the world's poorest. Read about his plans and see a sneak preview online. WEEK IN REVIEW, PAGE 12

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

We're getting perilously close to closing the window on a two-state solution in the Middle East, because the two chief window-closers -- <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza and the fanatical Jewish settlers in the West Bank -- have been in the driver's seats. WEEK IN REVIEW, PAGE 10

PUBLIC EDITOR

A recent inspector general's report said that there was nothing wrong with a Pentagon public relations program revealed last year by The Times. Clark Hoyt takes a look. WEEK IN REVIEW, PAGE 10

This Weekend

Arts & Leisure

A New Take on a Mainstay

Sherlock Holmes is usually portrayed in film and television as urbane, polished and sexlessly debonair, but a new movie starring Robert Downey Jr., right, promises a very different take on the fictional detective. Page 1

The Magazine

What Do Women Want?

A new generation of post-feminist sexologists are trying to discover what ignites *female* desire. Page 26

Revolution, Facebook-Style 34

Book Review

How Sweet the Words

Toni Bentley writes that "Ballet's Magic Kingdom" by Akim Volynsky -- available in English for the first time -- considers the art form through the eyes of probably the greatest writer on the subject in its 350-year history. Page 1

See the Web Site, Buy the Book 23

Sunday Business Wal-Mart's Green-Light Special

By virtue of its sheer size, Wal-Mart's decision to go green dragged much of corporate America along with it, leading mighty suppliers like General Electric and Procter & Gamble to transform their own business practices. It was a move that bolstered the retailer's reputation and its bottom line. PAGE 1

Travel

Caribbean Resorts:

Ready to Deal

Economic times are tough, but that doesn't mean you can't cut loose. The Caribbean, in an effort to attract the frugal and ward off a dismal tourist trade, is on sale. Page 3

A MUSEUM IN NEW LIGHT

The Palazzo Massimo in Rome has revamped the interior presentation and has several special shows in honor of the museum's 10th anniversary. Page 5

Brew Pubs in Utah 9

ROCKING AN R & B CRADLE

Cincinnati is rediscovering a landmark it wasn't even aware was in its midst: the building that once housed King Records, once the home of greats like James Brown, Nina Simone and Charlie Feather. Page 24

Sunday Styles Spotlight Finds Jason Wu

Few people outside of the fashion world knew who Jason Wu was. Then Michelle Obama showed up to the inaugural balls in a white chiffon dress he designed. PAGE 1

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTOS (pg. A2

pg. A3)

Load-Date: July 13, 2011



Obama's uplifting overture to Muslim world

The Times (London)
June 5, 2009 Friday
Edition 1

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3 Length: 733 words Byline: James Hider

Body

Before a crowd of robed Muslim clerics, dissidents who have served time in jail, students from across the region and besuited government officials from authoritarian regimes, President Obama made an historic speech yesterday to try to mend America's battered ties with the world's 1.5 billion Muslims.

From such a diverse audience he received as many cheers for espousing <u>women</u>'s rights as he did for quoting the Koran or championing the principle of a free Palestinian state.

Mr Obama made obvious attempts to win Muslim hearts and minds - reminding them that Thomas Jefferson taught himself Arabic, and praising the Islamic world as a beacon of learning during Europe's Dark Ages - but refused to shy away from the difficult issues of religious extremism, human rights abuses and nuclear proliferation that plague the region.

"We meet at a time of tension between the United States and Muslims around the world - tension rooted in historical forces that go beyond any current policy debate," he said, in the grand auditorium of Cairo University, where 2,000 carefully selected guests had gathered. Outside, Cairo's usually chaotic streets fell quiet under a tight police cordon.

In a frank 50-minute speech - at one point interrupted by a shout of "We love you" - Mr Obama admitted to America's mistakes, all but conceding that the Iraq war had been an error. He called on Israel to end all settlement activities in the West Bank and made a direct appeal to *Hamas*, the Palestinian militants who rule Gaza, to end violence and shoulder the responsibility placed on them by their 2006 election victory. He also delved into the complex entanglements between East and West, citing the latter's Cold War use of Muslim countries as mere "proxies" and the Islamic world's suspicions of globalism and the changes that it had wrought on traditional societies.

With a tone that owed almost as much to therapy as diplomacy, Mr Obama invited traumatised nations beset by war, repression and suspicion of the outside world to look at themselves honestly and face up to hard truths. Those

Obama's uplifting overture to Muslim world

included the Muslim world's need to acknowledge the suffering of the Jews in the Holocaust and its effect on Israel's mentality, as well as the "daily humiliations" of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

He also acknowledged his country's mistakes. "Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq was a war of choice that provoked strong differences in my country and around the world," he said. "Although I believe that the Iraqi people are ultimately better off without the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, I also believe that events in Iraq have reminded America of the need to use diplomacy and build international consensus to resolve our problems whenever possible."

He also made digs at the Arab world's authoritarian regimes, including that of his host, President Mubarak, long propped up by America. He invited his allies to reform and embrace "the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose".

And while reaffirming America's commitment to Israel, he made perhaps the toughest condemnation yet by a US president of the Jewish settlements spreading in the West Bank. "The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace," he said. "It is time for these settlements to stop."

Mr Obama received a standing ovation and most members of the audience left buoyed by a sense that real change was coming. "His criticism of authoritarian regimes really touched my heart," said Nada Maher, a young Egyptian student. "This means that he's taking it seriously."

Professor Mohammed Abdelhadi Imam, of the Islamic al-Azhar University, said: "The most important thing was his call for peace. I feel happy and hopeful for the world after hearing this speech. He was talking from heart to heart."

There was criticism, however, mostly from the young bloggers who have taken on Egypt's heavy-handed regime and often been jailed. "He was addressing the religious emotions of the people, not their minds," said Wael Abbas, a prominent blogger.

Israel welcomed Mr Obama's promise of a "new beginning" with the Muslim world, but said that safeguarding its citizens remained its priority.

Online

Read the speech in full timesonline.co. uk/mideast

Graphic

President Obama during a tour of the Sultan Hassan Mosque in Cairo before his speech yesterday

LARRY DOWNING / REUTERS

Load-Date: June 5, 2009



War in Middle East too general to be best method

Canberra Times (Australia)
March 25, 2009 Wednesday
Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. 12 Length: 718 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

Clive Williams ("Troop deployment should focus on volatile Pakistan", March 23, p9) appears to recommend more Australian troops be sent to both Afghanistan and to Pakistan, though in his informative article he also comments that the international effort should focus on improving governance, the economy, public education and security forces, and on countering extremist ideologies.

This is common sense, but such a program does not need troops.

Indeed, many think that troops make the situation in both countries worse.

Top military brass have said that the shooting war in Afghanistan is unwinnable, and instance the failure of Soviet troops there.

Williams says the United States is understandably committed to the task [of winning the war in Afghanistan] because of 9/11, but a growing number are convinced that declaring war on an entire country was not the best way of bringing bin Laden and his fellow terrorists to justice.

As John Pilger has commented, going to war in Afghanistan to deal with al Qaeda was equivalent to bombing Sicily to get rid of the mafia. Harry Davis, Braddon Clive Williams argues for an increased Australian engagement in Pakistan, "focusing on improving governance, the economy, public education and security forces and on countering extremist ideologies".

If through those measures, we can make life better for Pakistan's beleaguered <u>women</u>, let's do it. I am still traumatised from reading Virginia Haussegger's column ("Two wrongs, no rights", Forum, March 21, p16) about Mukhtar Mai who was gang-raped by order of a tribal council in southern Punjab on the trumped up charge that her 12-year-old brother had had an affair with a woman of another tribe. What century are these people living in?

Juxtaposed with Williams, however, was George Monbiot's frightening account of where we are heading with climate change ("Opportunity for 2 degrees lost, March 23, p9").

According to Monbiot, the United Nations suggests rich countries should be transferring between \$72 billion and \$109billion per year to poor countries to help them cope with climate change.

Pakistan will need a lot of aid once the snows of the Himalayas have melted and the Indus runs dry.

It is already ninth on the index of failed states?

Where will it be when it can no longer feed its own people?

Jenny Goldie, Michelago, NSW Radicalised Israel This week the UN's Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, Richard Falk, has concluded that there is reason to believe that Israel's recent offensive into the Gaza Strip was a war crime.

This comes on top of candid revelations by Israel Defense Force soldiers in recent days that there was a culture, of sorts, during the engagement that Palestinians were of lesser value, and were sometimes killed in highly questionable situations where the IDF could see some factor of minimising risk to their soldiers.

This is well and truly borne out by the 100-to-one ratio of deaths.

It does seem, to this observer at least, that Israel has radicalised to some extent; and that recent events have seen them broadly losing support because of the extremity of their actions.

They have been sorely provoked, of course, by <u>Hamas</u> rockets but the Israelis have also played the provocation game vigorously over time.

The Israeli version runs to leadership assassinations, bulldozers, expanding settlements, and state-sponsored deprivations.

And now we may even be seeing a shift in Israeli politics further in a hawkish direction. In figuring how Israel long supported in view of the history of persecution comes now to be singled- out by the UN (and others) as very possibly perpetrating war crimes, we perhaps need to review the work of noted psychologist Irving Janis, who in 1972 described a phenomenon he called "groupthink".

This is a process which can lead a "cohesive in-group" to become intemperate and risky in decision making, due to an excessively self-referent focus and a desire to avoid criticising one another.

Sound familiar?

Two new factors, however, are coming into play: Intemperate action by Israel has undoubtedly cost it some international support; and secondly, one suspects that the Obama Administration, although pledged to back Israel, has entered the meeting rooms fresh, and may already have found it impossible to avoid critiquing any such groupthink.

Ross Kelly, Monash

Load-Date: March 24, 2009



Obama's on-target message to Muslims

Christian Science Monitor April 7, 2009, Tuesday

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. 8

Length: 713 words

Byline: the Monitor's Editorial Board

Body

Barack Obama's message to Muslims during his Turkey visit is not the final word, the White House keeps saying. Watch for more outreach, including a major speech soon in a Muslim country.

Still, enough has been said to recognize that the president wants to unite with Muslims on a broader agenda than fighting Al Qaeda - and to see what he's up against as he tries to turn hopeful rhetoric into meaningful policy.

So far, his outreach has consisted of feel-good words and symbols. This is not a criticism. After all, he's been in office less than three months and has an economic crisis on his hands.

And bridge building does begin with words and attitudes. Since inauguration day, Mr. Obama has been consistent in his message. "To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect," he said on that bright, cold January day at the foot of the Capitol.

He repeated this phrase multiple times in Turkey. It is what Muslims most want from the United States and the West - or at least the "respect" part is, according to Gallup's multiyear study, "Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think," released a year ago.

At the end of January, in an interview with Al-Aribiya, Obama reiterated the "respect" line and added another message: "My job to the Muslim world is to communicate that the Americans are not your enemy." A variation on this theme made headlines in his speech before the Turkish parliament this week. "The United States is not at war with Islam," he emphasized, plainly and unequivocally.

Obama has underscored his sincerity by anchoring his words in his own person, referring to his own Muslim family members and his own childhood in a Muslim country (Indonesia).

Added to this are a multitude of symbolic gestures: early phone calls to Arab leaders, the announcement that the US will close Guantanamo Bay, the appointment of former Sen. George Mitchell (of Northern Ireland peacemaking fame) as special envoy to the Middle East, an overture video to Iran, and the trip to Turkey itself (followed by a surprise stop in Iraq).

It will never be time to turn off the rhetoric, but now begins the much harder part of matching policy to words. Next week, Mr. Mitchell will head to Israel and the Palestinian territories to try to revive stalled peace talks. The president will follow in June.

Obama's on-target message to Muslims

Muslims roundly criticized Obama's silence during Israel's recent war in Gaza. The White House also faces a much more difficult situation now that Israel has elected a center-right government that has not embraced a two-state solution.

Hard policy choices lie ahead that are bound to inflame Muslims and nonMuslims, depending on the path taken. Should the US talk to <u>Hamas</u>? Should it cease antiterrorism airstrikes on Pakistani soil, as most Pakistanis want? How should it proceed with Iran?

And what about the stories of human rights violations that flare up every so often and reinforce stereotypes on both sides? The latest is a new Afghan law about the treatment of Shiite <u>women</u>. It has caused a diplomatic clash between Afghan President Hamid Karzai and NATO countries whose troops have been fighting to help establish democracy in Afghanistan.

In Ankara this week, Obama stated his conviction that "there are not tensions, inevitable tensions, between cultures." His example was Turkey, a predominantly Muslim nation - but a secular democracy.

The American president could have also pointed to his former home, democratic Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country. On April 9 it holds its third parliamentary elections since the fall of dictator Suharto in 1998. The country's motto is "unity in diversity," and therein lies the great challenge for the nondemocratic Muslim world.

Even as Obama extends a hand, autocratic Islamic nations have their own path to tread, one that helps them arrive at "unity in diversity" - the same principles of self-government, liberty, and individual rights that inspired modern Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

Obama should continue his Muslim outreach, being ever mindful of mutual interest and mutual respect. But there is that word "mutual," which implies that bridge building can't be one way. It is a patient process, for both sides.

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