

Date and Time: Friday, May 3, 2024 4:17:00PM EEST

Job Number: 223446078

Documents (88)

1. [SA politics](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

2. [Motherly eyes in the sky. Two soldiers with babies are part of a growing number of females selected by the air force to serve in prestigious positions](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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3. [MOVIES](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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4. [Attack on Israel was bitterly partisan and riddled with inaccuracies](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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5. [National: Iran : Riches galore, but president's wasteful ways leave country in economic mess: Rural support could win Ahmadinejad second term, despite his many critics](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

6. [Not for the conference alone](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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7. [Why Obama's wrong for our economy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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8. [International: Jewish vote in Florida : Young make 'great schlep' to persuade a sceptical generation to vote Obama : Days to go: Obama 49.9% McCain 42.2%: On the web:](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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9. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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10. [Inside the Times : January 3, 2009](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

11. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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12. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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13. [Steps to peace](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

14. [We must heed the sage advice of our elders](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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15. [Triumph of those who dare to resist violence](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

16. [*A day at Shefayim - ESRA celebrates 30 years*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

17. [*Vote Conservative for their record*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

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18. [*When the average Joe meets 'Yossi'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

19. [*Meade students tackle homeland security issues*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

20. [*LETTERS*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

21. [*Jordanian Students Rebel, Embracing Conservative Arm of Islam*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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22. [*It is vital to bring peace for those suffering in Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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24. [*Future of Hezbollah lies in scouting programs Complex network builds deep loyalty*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

25. [*Tensions rise as rockets hit Israel from South Lebanon*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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26. [Few tears will be shed over Bush's departure](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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27. [World Report](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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28. [WHY MUSLIMS GIVE OBAMA A PASS ON RELIGION](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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29. [Wikipedia's Arabic-language version skews the Middle East](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

30. [INSIDE THE TIMES: November 9, 2008](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

31. [INSIDE THE TIMES: January 4, 2009](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

32. [*The disappearance of law*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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33. [*Pro- Israel , pro-Africa*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

34. [*Inside the Times: January 13, 2009*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

35. [*Hezbollah's foundation is youth Complex network builds deep loyalty*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

36. [*Hezbollah's foundation is youth Complex network builds deep loyalty*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

37. [Hezbollah's foundation is youth Complex network builds deep loyalty](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

38. [Hezbollah's foundation is youth Complex network builds deep loyalty](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

39. [Scranton was at center of a wild election ride](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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40. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
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Narrowed by

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41. [To Fuel Quest, Hezbollah Harnesses Youth Piety](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

43. [*Hamas to blame for deaths of innocents*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

44. [*HAMAS SPURNS TRUCE Four Gaza children killed*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

45. [*GAZA JOURNAL: FOR WAR WIDOWS, HAMAS RECRUITS ARMY OF HUSBANDS*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

46. [*GAZA JOURNAL: FOR WAR WIDOWS, HAMAS RECRUITS ARMY OF HUSBANDS*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type

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News

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

47. [Gaza air strikes: Israel 's targets](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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48. [Claims aren't facts](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

49. [GAZA CEASEFIRE HOPES](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

50. [THE RIGHT TO HIT BACK MATTHEW BERLOW, 38, IS A JEWISH LAWYER IN GLASGOW AND A STRONG SUPPORTER OF ISRAEL AND PALESTINE . HE SAYS ISRAEL WAS RIGHT TO ATTACK.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

51. [Terrorist organizations fight dirty, says reader](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

52. [DEATH TOLL NEARS 450](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

53. [ISRAEL BATTERS GAZA AS TROOPS ENTER SUBURBS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

54. [LETTER: THE BIG ISSUE - STOP ISRAELI ATROCITIES](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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55. [So yet again we see the bloodshed](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

56. [So yet again we see the bloodshed](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

57. [So yet again we see the bloodshed](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

58. [Gaza: any killing at all is wrong](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

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59. [In defence of Israel 's actions](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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60. [Israeli approach doomed to fail](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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61. [IN DENSE GAZA, CIVILIANS SUFFER](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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62. [Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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63. [*Letters - Ian Knox insults the victims of the Holocaust*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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64. [*Peace not possible*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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65. [*Why they hate them*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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66. [*LETTER: THE BIG ISSUE - STOP CARNAGE IN GAZA*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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67. [*TO FUEL QUEST, HEZBOLLAH HARNESSES YOUTH PIETY*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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68. [TO FUEL QUEST, HEZBOLLAH HARNESSES YOUTH PIETY](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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69. [A reign of terror](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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70. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR When governments fail](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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71. [IRISH PEOPLE TRAPPED INSIDE WAR-TORN GAZA](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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72. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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73. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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74. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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75. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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76. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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77. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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78. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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79. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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80. [Protestan en Anaheim por ataque en Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

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81. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

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82. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

83. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

84. [*La colère dans les camps de réfugiés palestiniens de Sabra et Chatila Jour après jour, ils vont manifester contre Israël, mais respectent les appels à la retenue d'Hassan Nasrallah.*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

85. [*La colère dans les camps de réfugiés palestiniens de Sabra et Chatila*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

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86. [*No Headline In Original*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

87. [*No Headline In Original*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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88. [*De paarse tuinboerka Q & A Islamitisch feminisme*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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SA politics

Cape Argus (South Africa)

January 08, 2009 Thursday

e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 12

Length: 969 words

Body

I So the ANC are going to evaluate and, where required, fire incompetent public servants and figures if they are returned to power. Why wait? They can start immediately. We certainly have enough history of 14 years of gross incompetence, dereliction of responsibility and criminality to keep us busy for the next 14 years. This is another empty ANC promise or, more correctly, a lie!

I "ANC will axe bad ministers"? Hooray for the benefits of a strong opposition!

I Can I take it that the ANC's new policy of firing the incompetent ministers will start with the purge of Motlanthe and Zuma?

I If the ANC gave a fig about public trust in the police they would replace Selebi with Pikoli. Just put it to the vote. - John.

I If Zuma's fifth wedding is private, is the cost also for his private account?

I So Jacob Zuma is going to marry again! This time his fifth wife. I am curious to know where do they all live and where do they all sleep? Surely in today's world this is a custom that is outdated and also morally wrong. Are women allowed five husbands? - JB

I When exactly did Cope's cash crisis start?

I When the Zionists get criticised for their atrocities against the Palestinians, and individuals confront Jewish organisations, the term anti-Semitism is conveniently used to hide behind. But when Muslims are killed in the West's illegal so-called wars and Muslim families are attacked, then Muslim extremism and all those terms are conveniently used. Western deceit has no end.

I It's disgusting that 60% of your poll readers support the killing of innocent children and civilians. If Israel's aim was Hamas why close all borders? How can you solve this with obvious humanitarian injustices?

I The poll is very biased. It does not give an option to support Palestine. It's obvious who you support.

I I am totally against all violence - especially against civilians! Have we forgotten about the hundreds of innocent civilians killed by suicide bombers in Israel?

SA politics

I To refer to the destruction of Gaza as a defensive war is cynical and dishonest. Israel and its supporters will be held to account for the atrocities committed by them at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, Iraq, Jenin and Lebanon. As Muslims we too will not forget and we will continue to resist the oppression of our brothers and sisters by those who believe that they are the vicegerents of God on earth. Kill as many as you are able to until you are overwhelmed by their corpses.

I To all the anti-Israel protesters let's organise a protest for all the foreigners being killed. Or is this a race thing?

I It's a travesty of justice and an insult to consumers that in capitalistic countries, diplomatic thievery by banks overcharging, price-fixing by food and mining industries takes years to unravel, and when it is unravelled, it leads to just a slap on the hand and everything returns to normal. This is diplomatic high-class robbery. It is in the same category as cash heists as both are stealing from the consumers. Free and fair trade is a hoax in Western democratic countries.

I How can the train driver be charged with culpable homicide for the accident at the level crossing in Stellenbosch? He had no chance to stop in time and must be heavily traumatised and shocked! The poor man had no chance of stopping in time. Jean - Rondebosch

I Regarding postal theft: there are Amazon orders since November 25 that have yet to arrive. Someone must be stealing blind at the post office. Anyone else suffering a loss?

I There was a report that Mugabe is out of Zimbabwe on a month's holiday. What country on earth would host him? Perhaps he is right here in SA - at some fancy game lodge as a guest of our government?

I Green Point residents put up with Kaapse Klopse for years right up till March sometimes. So Bo-Kaap residents get a life and stop complaining.

I How many times must SABC and DSTV repeatedly play movies to cover their costs?

I Since 2006 homeowners have been faced with 10 bond increases: is this to pay for the billions needed for soccer stadiums and infrastructure? - NR.

I Ros from Durban: do you realise that the stuff you smoke that helps you to not see the filth and potholes is illegal? Maybe you found it in one of the holes.

I No howling south-easter so far this year. Is this a record? - Mark

I We have just come back from a drive to lovely Hout Bay harbour and are very embarrassed by the way the person who has the large seal was swearing and shouting at visitors who wanted to have a photo taken with the seal. Demanding money from them. This is not good for tourism. Hope something is done about this. Let's show the world we are civilised and friendly. There is a decent way to tell people that if they want to take a photo they must pay.

I It's time for stores and supermarkets to erect signs requiring parents to supervise their children properly while in-store. Is there any other country in the world where unruly children are allowed to run wildly between the aisles, emitting ear-splitting shrieks and crashing into others while their arrogantly selfish mothers shop, unconcerned? Shopping has become a nightmare, particularly for the elderly, the frail and the infirm.

I To the person who hopes there's hell: sorry there's no such thing. I was heartbroken when genuine Bible scholars told me that.

I We are sick and tired that every time there is a break in a TV programme those stupid sms adverts appear two or three times. Also this ridiculous Brain Box person who will always be back in a few minutes but isn't. Please realise that most of the viewers are intelligent people who don't need that rubbish over and over again.

I Modesty Blaise is disgusting - hardly modest.

SA politics

I The advice given by the American tourist Michael Schuster is hysterical! Thank you for pointing out that our roads need repair etc. We're so backward, we had NO idea!

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End of Document

Motherly eyes in the sky. Two soldiers with babies are part of a growing number of females selected by the air force to serve in prestigious positions

The Jerusalem Post

December 29, 2008 Monday

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Byline: RUTH EGLASH

Body

It's Thursday afternoon at the Israel Air Force base at Palmachim - less than 48 hours before Israel launched Operation Cast Lead against **Hamas** - and, despite the looming threat of an attack on the Gazan rocket infrastructure, Capt. Shira and Sgt. Keren, two of the **female** engineers who operate Israel's unmanned aerial vehicles, appear fairly relaxed.

"I read in this morning's newspaper that there will be military action," says Shira, a 28-year-old who has been a professional soldier since finishing her compulsory IDF service eight years ago.

She is not allowed to talk too much about such an operation, but, she explains, "if there is such an action, our job is to help those who are on the ground. We'll be their eyes from above. Usually that means identifying hostile forces and warning the soldiers about what is waiting for them."

In essence pilots on the ground, the role of Keren and Shira (IDF regulations prohibit the publication of their full names) is to operate the planes, known as Herons, by remote control and monitor any military action with the help of built-in real-time video cameras.

While such jobs, which involve advanced training and understanding of technology, were traditionally held by men, the two **women** are part of a growing number of **females** selected by the air force to serve in such positions.

What sets Keren and Shira apart from the other 20 or so other **women** performing this task is that both are brand-new mothers.

Keren, 29, has a five-month-old at home. She shrugs off what could be weeks of intense shift-work and long periods away from her family as she helps to guide Israel's offensive.

"I don't believe we're moving toward a full-blown war right now," she observes. "If there is some type of military activity, it will likely only last for a few days, and not for months like the last war [in Lebanon]. However, if we do need to be here more than usual then we'll manage, just like anyone... That's why we have husbands and babysitters to look after the babies. It will be difficult, but we'll manage."

Two-and-a-half years ago, when Israel found itself at war with Hizbullah on the northern border, Keren - who has been a UAV operator for the past four years - was thrust into the midst of the fighting... albeit by remote.

Motherly eyes in the sky. Two soldiers with babies are part of a growing number of females selected by the air force to serve in prestigious positions

"It was a difficult period personally and professionally," she recalls, describing how she was scheduled to be married in mid-August 2006 and had to plan her wedding "between my shifts."

"It was an intense period and I didn't think any of my colleagues would be able to make it to the wedding. At one point, we even had a pilot's briefing about my wedding to discuss what would happen if the war continued and we had to have the wedding during the war!" Keren said.

Luckily, the Second Lebanon War ended two days before her wedding and Keren married her former commander, who was released from the IAF only six months ago.

Despite the stress of that period, Keren says she also "had a feeling of great satisfaction during the war."

"There are so many people who serve in the army for years and never get the opportunity to utilize their training and contribute to the protection of the State of Israel," she says. "Whatever your feelings were about Israel's successes in the war, I think the air force's performance was excellent. We met all our targets and our assignments successfully."

While Keren and Shira, who served in other roles during the Second Lebanon War, point out the high and low points of those tumultuous weeks, both acknowledge that their feelings toward any similar action in the future may be a little different now that they are mothers.

"Inside every young mother there's always that feeling of anxiety when you say good-bye to your child in the morning," Keren says.

"I try to leave early twice a week to be with my son," says Shira, whose baby just celebrated his first birthday.

"There is a price we have to pay to succeed here. We often have to work on holidays, over the weekend and through the night," she continues. "However, I do believe that having this job is a very real privilege. It is a very sought after and prestigious position in the air force; many people want to do it.

"Anyone who wants to progress in their career has to work hard and, today, there are lots of women who have to work on holidays and festivals or stay late in the office. It does not seem so unusual."

In fact, with the number of females serving in UAV unit having almost quadrupled over the last four years, both women agree that the army's attitude toward women and particularly mothers shows it "is one of the fairest employers in the market."

"In the army, all my rights as a woman are protected by rules and regulations," Shira points out. "They can't fire me if I'm pregnant and they're flexible enough to let me leave early sometimes to pick up my son from nursery school. I know there are national laws, but not every private employer follows these as closely as the army does."

Almost as an afterthought, she adds: "Even though it is a great place for women to work, you still need to have supportive family, especially your husband."

Keren agrees: "When I think about where I will be 10 years from now, I think that if there is one great reason to stay in the army it's the support they give me, which I'm not sure if I would get in another place."

"It's really nice to see the number of woman working in this field really growing," Keren says.

"We have to work our shifts in pairs, and today there are very often two sets of women working in two different UAV stations," she adds. "It gives me a great sense of satisfaction to finally hear lots of women's voices over the radio talkback."

Graphic

Motherly eyes in the sky. Two soldiers with babies are part of a growing number of females selected by the air force to serve in prestigious positions

Photo: UAV PILOTS Keren and Shira, who serve as 'eyes in the sky,' stand next to a model of a plane at the Palmahim base on Thursday. (Credit: Ruth Eglash)

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End of Document

MOVIES

Geelong Advertiser (Australia)

January 2, 2009 Friday

1 - Main Edition

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Section: TV; Pg. 7

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Body

MONDAY

Capturing The Friedmans

ABC1, 9.30pm, MA15+ (2003)

Director Andrew Jarecki's Oscar-nominated doco tells the sordid tale of the Friedman family, rocked to its core when both father

and son were imprisoned for child molestation. Pieced together through home movies and interviews, this raw, devastating

portrait of the seedy underbelly of American suburbia is uncomfortable but unmissable viewing. * * *

TUESDAY

Collateral Damage

Nine, 8.30pm, M (2002)

Without even picking up a gun, Arnold Schwarzenegger proves a MacGyver-like handful in this patented action thriller. After

his wife and daughter are killed in a Colombian terrorist attack, a teary-eyed Arnold Schwarzenegger quickly goes from LA

firefighter to deadly commando as he heads down to South America to wreak revenge on the drug kingpin responsible (Cliff Curtis).

The bombastic script invites a few laughs in the direction of an arthritic Arnie, as director Andrew Davis (The Fugitive) takes gung-ho

patriotism to trivial extremes. * *

THURSDAY

MOVIES

Good Girl

SBS, 10.00pm, M (2005)

Screenwriter-turned-filmmaker Sophie Fillieres indulges her penchant for eccentric humour and understated irony in this sophisticated romantic

comedy. The titular "good girl" is voluptuous Parisian Fontaine Leglou (Emmanuelle Devos), an anaesthetist in a private mental hospital where

the staff are madder than the patients.

Fontaine's fight to maintain a sense of normality despite an increasingly complicated personal life. that includes a marriage proposal from her lover .

provides comedic fodder. But Fillieres achieves far more than laughs, her examination of the irony of day to day life is both poignant and insightful. * * * *

PROGRAMS

TONIGHT

Temptation

Nine, 7.00pm

The games up for quiz shows it seems. Viewers have been deserting the genre in droves the last 18 months or so with the axe

falling on several prime-time programs. So whats the problem? Is the format dead or is there still a chance of a return to the glory days? Even this

much-loved game show - formerly Sale of the Century - is in its final series after Channel Nine dumped its affable host Ed Phillips. So tune in while you

can as its looking like the only chance youll get to test your grey matter in this timeslot in the future is counting how many women

Charlie Sheen beds in Two and a Half Men.

SATURDAY

MythBusters: Alaska SBS, 7.30pm

Forsaking sunny San Francisco, Jamie Hyneman, Adam Savage and their ever-helpful entourage of geeks and human guinea pigs have a go at a few myths from

Americas final frontier: the sparsely populated wilds of Alaska. First on the agenda is a gruelling test of whether cabin fever exists, followed by an examination of

an elaborate anecdote involving a car on a frozen lake, a dog and a stick of dynamite.

And if the recent US election taught us anything, its that Alaska just aint Alaska unless theres a moose involved, so the gang have a go at crashing a few cars into

one - well, into a dummy of one.

SUNDAY

MOVIES

Nigel Marvens Ugly Animals

ABC1, 7.30pm

There aren't many advantages to being unattractive in human society, but in the animal kingdom it can pay to be ugly. With their featherless heads, craggy beaks and

unattractive folds of skin, vultures win no prizes for beauty. But their bald heads prevent blood and gore being embedded in them during feeding and their beaks are

perfect for ripping into the flesh of corpses. The "warts" on wart hogs are actually tough bits of skin that can prevent injury in battle.

Anyway, beauty is in the eye of the beholder - attributes that we consider ugly are actually quite alluring to the other sex of these species.

MONDAY

Kath & Kim:

The American Series Seven, 11.30pm

Marg Downey was particularly hilarious as misguided marriage celebrant Marion in the superior Aussie original, turning something as simple as sharing a cup of Jarrah into

champagne comedy. Maya Rudolph has the dubious honour of taking on the equivalent role in the beleaguered US version, starring alongside her former Saturday Night Live

co-star Molly

Shannon and Selma Blair as the titular foxy morons. Rudolph guest stars as Athena Scooberman, a spiritual guide who helps Phil (John Michael Higgins) lose

weight and develops a "girl crush" on Kath (Shannon). Meanwhile, Kim (Blair) is up to her neck in outstanding parking fines.

TUESDAY

Desperately Seeking Doctors

SBS, 7.30pm

Country lads may still be desperately seeking sheilas, but an even more pressing need for rural Australian communities is medical staff. This three-part series explores the issue

through the eyes of four health workers - Scottish GP Dr Mary Fortune, who answered an international call for doctors, Indian-born Dr Alan Majid, who

is leaving the Western Australian town of Wagin just four months into his three-year contract and medical students Jen Martins and Nabilah

Islam, who are undertaking the required country term of their courses.

Wild Vets

Seven, 7.30pm

MOVIES

Not, as the title would suggest, a show about vets roaming free on the African plains, but a glimpse of the work of specialists who spend their time tending

non-domestic animals. As far removed from the cat-and-dog work of the local clinic as an ER doctor is from a GP, animal carers such as Katja Geschke and Dave Martin often

have to catch their patients before they can heal them. This week, theres pandemonium in the chimp enclosure, a rare Kiwi chick is homeward bound, and will love blossom

when two Serval wild cats meet for the first time?

WEDNESDAY

The Omid Djalili Show

ABC1, 8.35pm

Omid Djalili (above) claims to put the fat into fatwa, the fun into fundamentalism and the ham into **Hamas**. Born in London to an Iranian father and an English mother, the

British comedian jokes about racial stereotyping and life in a multicultural society in a show that is part politics, part social commentary and part plain silliness.

Recurring sketches include "Kebab Shop the Musical", which makes fun of the family tensions between first and second generation immigrants, and "the

Flamboyant Scottish Musical Director", who unwittingly finds himself directing a video for Osama bin Laden.

THURSDAY

Carla Cametti PD

SBS, 8.30pm As this new series begins at the funeral of an Italian criminal in a grey Melbourne graveyard, its easy to be reminded of Underbelly. The comparisons

continue as several cast members from the hit gangland series appear, most notably Vince Colosimo, who is now on the right side of the law after his

blistering portrayal of doomed gangster Alphonse Gangitano. But the undoubted star is Diana Glenn (Satisfaction, above), who plays the sexy, sassy personal detective Carla

Cametti. With business booming and a large Italian family keeping her busy, Carlas life is going well - but by the end of the premiere someone she knows wants her dead.

Load-Date: January 2, 2009

Attack on Israel was bitterly partisan and riddled with inaccuracies

Irish Examiner

December 1, 2008 Monday

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Body

Its argumentation belongs to a different era and does nothing to advance the peace process.

The following are some of the myths in his article and the real historical facts:

Myth: Dr Ajjuri refers to Yasser Arafat as a leader "who had the will to make peace".

Fact: Arafat lacked the will and the political courage to make peace. In 2000, at Camp David, the then Israeli prime minister, Ehud Barak, made an extremely generous proposal for the sake of peace, offering the Palestinians most of the West Bank plus the Gaza Strip. Arafat cynically rejected the offer and again returned to violence, encouraging the Second Intifada. Even many Arabs were appalled by Arafat's refusal to seize the historic opportunity: for example, Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia personally blamed Arafat, not Israel, for the resulting disaster. President Clinton also blamed Arafat for the failure of the Camp David peace negotiations.

Myth: Dr Ajjuri states that the Balfour Declaration of 1917 (a pledge by the First World War Allies to give the persecuted Jewish people a national home in their ancient land) "constituted a death certificate for the emerging state of Palestine and the establishment of the state of Israel".

Fact: Palestine was merely the name for a region that was part of various empires over the millennia. The population of Palestine up to the 20th century was sparse and heterogeneous, made up of diverse Muslims (Arab and non-Arab), Christians, and Jews who had lived in the region for thousands of years. Arab Palestinians became interested in creating a separate Arab Palestine state only at the end of the First World War. Jews in Palestine, both natives who had lived there for thousands of years, and Jewish immigrants who had been migrating to Palestine since the late 19th century, wanted a state of their own in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration and the subsequent League of Nations' decision recognised that after thousands of years of persecution, the Jewish people, just like any other people in the world, were entitled to their own homeland.

Myth: Dr Ajjuri says "Zionist gangs conducted a campaign of terror ethnic cleansing" against the so-called Palestinians (ie, Arab Muslims in the region) so as to create the state of Israel.

Fact: The opposite is the case. From the 1920s, the local Arab population attacked the Jewish people of Palestine with organised violence and terror, such as the 1929 mass murder and expulsion of Jews from Hebron.

Attack on Israel was bitterly partisan and riddled with inaccuracies

The British authorities were largely indifferent to these attacks and appeased the Arab majority by tolerating this and halting Jewish immigration despite the rise of Nazism in Europe. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Al Husseini, was pro-Nazi. He supported the Holocaust of the Jews in Europe, and had the Nazis won the war he intended to destroy the Jewish community of Palestine.

After the war, the UN created a compromise by passing Resolution 181: two states were proposed, one for the Arab Palestinians and one for the Jewish people. The Jewish community accepted the offer, even though half of designated Israel was the barren Negev desert. The Palestinians refused and again accelerated their terror campaign, which had been ongoing for decades, against the Jewish community .

When Israel declared formal independence in 1948, five Arab nations invaded with the aim of destroying the new state of Israel. Azzam Pasha, Secretary-General of the Arab League, declared: "This will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres " Fortunately, Israel defended itself and survived. But in subsequent decades, such as in 1967 and 1973, Israel continually faced aggression by Arab countries. The cause of conflict over the decades has never been Israel's so-called occupation, it has been the refusal of Israel's neighbours to recognise Israel's right to exist.

Israel has always wanted to live in peace with its neighbours and has made huge sacrifices for the sake of peace. In return for peace and recognition, Israel gave up land to Egypt and Jordan. Particularly since the 1990s, Israel has also made repeated gestures to the Palestinians for peace, such as offering most of the West Bank and Gaza in 2000 and pulling out of Gaza completely in 2005, only to have such steps met with increased Palestinian terrorism.

Myth: Dr Ajjuri states that "Palestinians are forced to stand in separate lines from Jews so that Jews are not tainted" through "contact" with "inferior" beings.

Fact: This is false, and its implication of racism is especially offensive considering how Jews suffered from racial and religious persecution throughout history (including at the hands of Arabs from the 7th to the 20th centuries).

In fact, Israel is a vibrant liberal democracy which accords full political, civil and human rights to all its citizens, a fifth of whom are Arabs. Israeli Arabs hold positions of authority in the government, the justice system, the Knesset (Israeli parliament) and the diplomatic corps.

Indeed, Israeli Arabs enjoy more freedom and rights than do many other Arabs in the Middle East where autocratic governments suppress democracy and civil liberties. The only institutional discrimination in the Middle East is in some Arab countries where Jews, Christians and women are deprived of the most basic rights.

As to the future of the peace process, despite the continued refusal of Hamas to recognise Israel's right to exist, Israel has and will continue to negotiate with moderate Palestinians to achieve the goal of the peace process: two states living side by side in peace, the state of Israel which already exists as the homeland of the Jewish people, and a future state of Palestine as the homeland of the Palestinian people. This is the only fair and just solution to the conflict.

The Palestinian Authority, like most of the Arab world, has gradually come round to the idea of a two-state solution, ironically an idea first proposed by the UN in 1947 which, if grasped then, would have avoided the 60 years of bloodshed up to the present day as a result of aggression against Israel.

As Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni recently said: "I believe that part of the responsibility of any Israeli leadership is to make every effort to try to achieve peace with our neighbours... Israeli interests are to try to translate the vision into two states for two peoples living side by side in peace and security."

Also this month, President Shimon Peres set out the ultimate goal: "The two-state solution, namely, to establish an independent Palestinian state living side by side with Israel, with secure borders, peace and prosperity."

Zion Evrony PhD

Ambassador of Israel

Attack on Israel was bitterly partisan and riddled with inaccuracies

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End of Document

National: Iran: Riches galore, but president's wasteful ways leave country in economic mess: Rural support could win Ahmadinejad second term, despite his many critics

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theguardian

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Byline: Ian Black, Tehran

Body

Tehran's metro system is a relief from the Iranian capital's polluted, car-choked streets. Fast and efficient, it has stations named after the martyrs of the Islamic Revolution or the eight-year "imposed" war against Iraq. Each Chinese-built train has a carriage reserved for women who wish to use it.

Still, Imam Khomeini station, where the underground's only two lines meet, teems in the afternoon rush hour. Three more lines are under construction but progress is painfully slow, adding to the crippling congestion in this city of 14 million. And the fact that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has a PhD in traffic management only fuels commuters' anger at the permanent gridlock.

"The traffic is a metaphor for politics in Iran," said Mohammad Atrianfar, a magazine publisher and one of many scathing critics of the president.

Ahmadinejad is best known in the west for his stance on Israel and the Holocaust, defiance of American hegemony and pursuit of Iran's nuclear ambitions, which he insists are peaceful. Barack Obama's lukewarm response to his letter of congratulations was a reminder of his semi-pariah status on the world stage.

But at home he is far more often blamed for the economic mismanagement that is the result of his spendthrift populism. And now his chance of re-election for a second term may be under threat - and with it, his enemies hope, the three-year ascendancy of Iran's hardline conservatives and clerics.

It should have been easy to finance the Tehran metro and other big projects. Iran has the world's second largest oil and gas reserves, and with oil prices peaking at \$147 a barrel in July the state's oil stabilisation fund should have been overflowing with spare cash.

But prices are now down to about \$55 - a red line for the government. And the kitty is all but empty after an estimated \$200bn windfall was squandered on imports ranging from fruit and other staples to the petrol the country has to buy abroad because of a lack of refineries. "The oil party is over," one MP said.

National: Iran : Riches galore, but president's wasteful ways leave country in economic mess: Rural support could win Ahmadinejad second term, despite his many

"Ahmadinejad has been a total disaster," said Sadeh Zibakalam, a Tehran University political scientist. "With falling oil prices it'll be interesting to see how he is going to survive."

"Whatever he touches is ruined," said Ahmed, a 50-something taxi driver who complains that he still does not own his own home and has seen his graduate son following him into unskilled work. Unemployment is officially 10% but among the under-35s it has hit 20% or more. Inflation, officially 30%, has hurt the poorest hard.

Price controls

Paramilitary Basij volunteers, operating under the Revolutionary Guards Corps, have been used to enforce price controls. At least 14 million Iranians live below the poverty line.

With revenues from oil (80% of total state income) in such sharp decline, it will be necessary to raise more cash from the public. But last month bazaar traders such as carpet seller Javad Abdi went on strike to protest against a new value-added tax, forcing the government to postpone implementation. "Why should we pay taxes when we have oil?" the burly Azeri shrugged as women in black chadors fingered the silky Tabriz rugs in his tiny shop.

Two central bank governors have been sacked in recent months after protesting against Ahmadinejad's policies, one of them complaining of the "looting" of state assets. Last week the president was lambasted by 60 leading Iranian economists and condemned for scaring off the kind of foreign investment the Tehran metro and other projects so desperately need.

Yet although all this looks like a Farsi version of "it's the economy stupid", Ahmadinejad's troubles may not be terminal. He is popular in the countryside and small towns for the projects and cheap loans he has funded with oil money, just as he promised. What plays badly in affluent north Tehran is applauded in rural Baluchistan, where his views on Jews or "global arrogance" are no more than plain speaking from a man who sounds like "one of us".

Now, with crucial presidential elections approaching next June, his plan for direct payments to replace subsidies is under attack as brazen vote-buying. "This is not economics, its politics and propaganda and it can only be for the short term," warned economist Mohammad Khoshchereh. "It's like what Chavez did in Venezuela."

None of this muttering means that the regime is under threat. Nearly 30 years after the revolution, Iranian politics is still dominated by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has cautioned against rapprochement with the US and, unlike Ahmadinejad, is neither standing for election nor is the butt of irreverent jibes.

It is possible, though, that the economic crisis could make the country more vulnerable if the Obama administration managed to galvanise international support for tougher action over the nuclear issue. With petrol already rationed, causing long queues on garage forecourts, an embargo would cause chaos. The economists who attacked the president noted that billions of dollars were being lost because UN sanctions forced Iran's trade to be conducted mostly through intermediaries.

Sanctions

Amir, a microbiologist who used to import medical diagnostic kits, has seen his company collapse and hospital laboratories become paralysed because of sanctions blocking "dual-use" equipment. "The government persists in enriching uranium but I'm not clear why," he said. Like many of his friends and other educated Iranians, he is considering emigrating.

Anecdotal evidence also shows objections to the money spent on supporting militant groups abroad - Hizbullah and Hamas - when there are so many pressing needs at home. "We elected a president to deal with the problems of Iran and not other people's," said Mohammad Ali Abtahi, a former vice-president.

The big question is who will challenge Ahmadinejad. The great hope of the reformists is the former president Mohammad Khatami, though there are doubts over whether he will stand - and whether he could win without a

National: Iran : Riches galore, but president's wasteful ways leave country in economic mess: Rural support could win Ahmadinejad second term, despite his many

unprecedented turnout. Many analysts argue that a reformist victory is a near impossibility and that a more pragmatic conservative would have a far better chance of unseating the incumbent.

Atrianfar believes the economy will be the dominant election issue. "Iranian citizens say 'I live in a rich country with oil but I don't have a job or money and I don't see a future for my child'. People need to get used to paying taxes - holding their government to account for what it does. If people have to pay significant taxes they will not let someone like Ahmadinejad be their president. If he doesn't cheat he can't win the election. And he can and will cheat."

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Not for the conference alone

The Nation (AsiaNet)

November 13, 2008 Thursday

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Byline: M.A. Niazi

Body

President Asif Zardari will attend the UN interfaith conference convened at the initiative of Saudi King Abdullah, reminding many of his attendance often enough before in the company of his late wife, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, at the Prayer Breakfast in Washington. But whereas that was an occasion for public relationing to return to power rather than an opportunity to engage in Protestant prayer, which is what the Breakfast actually was.

This time around, the Pakistani people are not so much interested in the results of the conference, as of the sidelines diplomacy that the president will conduct. This is because the president has committed Pakistan to the War On Terror as much as the previous regime, which does not sit well with Pakistanis. The sidelines diplomacy is being closely watched in the forlorn hope that it will indicate some relief from the manifold and multiple crises that are not letting of the Pakistani state.

To the War On Terror has been added the global financial crisis. While Pakistan has not witnessed any bank collapses, it too has faced a liquidity crunch, which has only made worse the ongoing crises in oil, power and food staples. Attempts to parley participation in the War On Terror into cash, to allay the crisis, have not borne fruit, mainly because the USA is used to playing hardball with Pakistan, and because the crisis has meant that there is little cash to spare for Pakistan, or other non-Americans affected by the world financial crisis. Also, the USA has been going through the eight-year exercise it has set itself, of getting a new president, an exercise which is only just over, and which has left the USA with its first black president, Barack Obama.

The conference President Zardari is attending is as much linked to the War On Terror as the sidelines diplomacy, but is not closely linked to Pakistan. For a start, if there had been no War On Terror, there would have been no conference. The conference has been organised by the UN, but the first conference on the subject was held by the Saudi king. This has been the Saudi contribution to the War On Terror, presenting proof that Islam is as tolerant a religion as anybody wants, and is against the concept of suicide bombing, or resisting the USA in any way.

The Saudi king is inclined by his education, as well as the religious basis of the Saudi monarchy, to go deeper into the religious roots of a phenomenon, so there is a conference, after a religious conference at which Jews were in attendance to the permanent disabilities thereby thrown on the Palestinian cause, as well as Hindus jeopardising the Kashmiri cause; all declaring Islam a religion of peace.

The UN, in order to give the USA some satisfaction, has organised a conference where religion, previously rejected as a basis of political organisation, now emerges as the basis of identification. One result is that the conference overshadows the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, which remained the only political organisation where

membership was faith-based. However, the UN is not only a larger organisation of states, but more faiths are represented among its membership.

Another result is that Israel is attending in the hope of reviving the Saudi plan for Mid-East peace. The Saudi plan proposes a normalisation of relations by Arab countries, in return for Israel going back to its pre-1967 borders. Though the Israeli government has denied that it is ready for a settlement based on the Saudi plan, or that the interfaith conference is an opportunity for reviving it, the Israelis have been supportive of the conference, and were involved in the lobbying that led to its being held.

The absence in Pakistan of any debate on the conference reflective of that in the Arab world, shows how remote Pakistan has grown on the Palestinian issue, even though the Quaid-i-Azam saw it as linked with the Kashmir issue, and thus ensured that Pakistan played an important role in the Arab cause in the UN, back in 1948. However, the Palestinian cause reached its low point in Pakistan with President Pervez Musharraf's address to the World Jewish Congress during his 2006 visit to the USA.

The address was made when Musharraf was toying with the idea of recognising Israel, and it expressed backing for the Saudi plan. However, the Palestinian people have proceeded to take a hard line by electing Hamas to power in the territories under the control of the Palestinian Authority. Israeli mainstream opinion does not take the Saudi proposal as more than a basis for negotiation.

However, that seems a more realistic proposition than the Pakistani one, which will not see any real change in the War On Terror. It seems that this government will not accept US troops attacking Pakistani soil, though they will accept further drone attacks, even if they keep killing women and children, as the price of warding off direct attacks.

This also has the advantage of keeping the status quo unchanged. While the Bush Administration probably wants to hold things as they are, not just in Afghanistan, but in all theatres of the War On Terror, the Obama team probably wants some changes. Therefore, there should be some changes in the fighting of the War from around end-January to mid-February, after Obama is inaugurated.

However, the conference will have no influence on Obama because its purpose is not so much to develop understanding among the faiths as to promote the US agenda item, that suicide bombings (against it or its agents) are against the tenets of faith; though the conference will support the USA in its War On Terror. Probably under born-again influence, the USA wants its enemy to be as godless as communism was.

The conference will prove this, and its sidelines diplomacy will not change this. But it may have a future influence on how the War is fought. If the Obama team is adamant on ground attacks, then there will be ground attacks; but the president will certainly be arguing against. It is in this context that the Pakistan nation is placing hopes on this visit, not because of the conference.

E-mail: maniazhi@nation.com.pk

Load-Date: November 24, 2008

Why Obama's wrong for our economy

Chicago Daily Herald
November 1, 2008 Saturday
C3 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 10

Length: 1035 words

Body

Why Obama's wrong for our economy

It was recently documented that Barack Obama was the biggest recipient of campaign contributions from Fannie Mae/ Freddie Mac since his election to the Senate.

Associates of Obama from these organizations are:

— Franklin Raines, Obama's campaign's chief economic adviser. He was the chairman and CEO of Fannie Mae. He left Fannie Mae with a "golden parachute" valued at \$240 million.

— Tim Howard, also a chief economic adviser to Obama. Also charged with manipulating Fannie Mae's books. Resigned under pressure in 2004. Left with a \$20 million golden parachute.

— Jim Johnson, senior Obama finance adviser, selected to run Obama's vice presidential search. Was Fannie Mae's CEO. Under investigation for taking illegal loans from Countrywide. Left Fannie Mae with a \$28 million golden parachute.

These men will no doubt play a role in the White House if Obama is elected.

Obama thinks the best charitable organization is the IRS.

He wants more taxes from working tax payers to benefit non-working residents, tax cheats and those who pay no taxes.

He does not accept the fact that reduced taxes create jobs.

Remember, Obama represented Chicago and Illinois, where the state pension fund is the worst in the country, \$44 billion in debt.

Cook County has the highest sales tax in the nation at 11.25 percent and the Chicago Public Schools are rated one of the lowest in the nation.

Chicago has a Democrat mayor, Illinois has a Democrat governor, Cook county has a Democrat board chairman and the majority in the Illinois house and senate are democrats.

Is this the "change" he promises to bring to our country?

Why Obama's wrong for our economy

Robert W. Kuechenberg

Palatine

Why did the debates focus on attacks?

There we go again. First, the candidates smile at each other and then comes the dirt flying.

Why not concentrate on the future instead and who might be a better president to get us out of this big mess?

Forget about who was once a "hero." When it comes down to it, every one of us might be a hero, only don't talk about it.

Besides, those heroic days were so long ago. What's left is an old man, who wants to be young again.

Who cares what Sen. Joe Liebermann's got to say? He is an old man, too.

Why not give a younger man a chance with new ideas.

I mean how worse can it get? Bush invading Iraq under false pretenses and so many lives already lost, and who are they? The lower and middle class are losing their lives.

You hardly hear that a rich mom's son is killed.

You know, this time we are in stinks. Why would anyone ever want this messy job now?

And before Sarah Palin's attacks go on, why not take care of your own front door. Besides, she doesn't have enough experience.

Rita Heisler

Hoffman Estates

Buffalo Grove

officials back Kirk

Buffalo Grove needs a representative we can depend on, an experienced leader whose views reflect our district and who delivers for our needs.

Congressman Mark Kirk has proved his independence and has delivered for Buffalo Grove. We are proud to give him our endorsement.

Kirk secured funding to double track Metra's North Central Line.

He supports CN's plan to remove freight trains from the North Central Line, helping to relieve traffic gridlock and improve our Metra service. Recently, Rep. Kirk voted against a bill designed to block the CN plan, once again proving his commitment to fight for our community.

Kirk's record conclusively demonstrates his independence. In August, the Daily Herald dubbed him "Mr. Independent." The Washington Post and nonpartisan Congressional Quarterly each rated Rep. Kirk as one of the Top 10 Most Independent Members of Congress.

In light of his steadfast support for Israel, as co-chair of the Iran Working Group, co-chair of the Congressional Task Force on anti-Semitism and senior member of the State-Foreign Operations Subcommittee, which oversees all assistance to Israel, Rep. Kirk is endorsed by the Joint Action Committee and he has been honored by the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee and the National Council of Jewish Women.

Why Obama's wrong for our economy

Rep. Kirk was the key to providing "eyes in the sky" missile warning, led the campaign to fully integrate Israel into the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense system and is the leader in Congress for blocking terror payments to Hamas and Hezbollah.

With Kirk, you get the complete package — thoughtful, independent leadership and a distinguished record of accomplishment for our district, our country and our allies.

Please join us to re-elect Kirk as Congressman for the Tenth Congressional District.

Trustee Jeffrey Berman

Trustee DeAnn Glover

Trustee Brian Rubin

Village Clerk Janet Sirabian

Trustee Steven Trilling

village of Buffalo Grove

The early line on Tuesday's winner

The winner is ... The evenings news on ABC channel 7. Cheryl Burton announced that Obama is the winner by saying we have already prepared Obama's celebration in Grant Park.

Why should I take the time to consider voting if the decision has already been made for me and the rest of the voters? Completely disgusted.

John Volpe

Mount Prospect

Military service

defends free speech

Thank you, Mr. Boni for your letter of Oct 17. I am sorry for your family loss in World War II and thank them and you for your service,

You attacked Mr. Keith Olbermann for his comments about Ms. Sarah Palin. Without realizing it, you shot the messenger. In reality, Mr. Olbermann was only reporting on facts on file at MSNBC.

Then, you wonder how I would be if in the same prisoner-of-war circumstances as Mr. John McCain. We are a country of laws and cannot pick and chose the ones we will obey and the ones we will not, as Mr. Maverick has done time and again.

How I would react under those conditions? I can only tell you that I would do anything to not betray my buddies or my country.

Finally, you said only those who served can criticize. I really have to disagree, I served (the 8th U.S. Army). I served so that Americans can disagree, say and write what they want.

Someone once said I may disagree with what you say, but I shall defend to the death your right to say it. If this Veterans Day finds you at Schaumburg Town Square, look for a grizzled old guy in an 8th Army blouse. I will be glad to shake your hand, and we can agree to disagree.

Ray Case

Why Obama's wrong for our economy

Schaumburg

Load-Date: December 23, 2008

End of Document

**International: Jewish vote in Florida: Young make 'great schlep' to persuade
a sceptical generation to vote Obama: Days to go: Obama 49.9% McCain
42.2%: On the web: - Correction Appended**

The Guardian - Final Edition

October 13, 2008 Monday

 **Correction Appended**

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theguardian

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Byline: Ed Pilkington

Body

22

This year Kenny Furst came close to breaking the habit of a lifetime. Brought up in a Jewish neighbourhood in the Bronx, New York, under Roosevelt's New Deal, he is and always has been a Democrat. But this year, for the first time, the 90-year-old was veering towards voting Republican or not at all.

The problem was Barack Obama. "He's the first Democratic candidate I haven't been sure about. As far as I was concerned he was connected with the Arabs," Furst said, speaking in Tamarac, Florida, where he retired to 18 years ago.

For his wife Selma, 87, as for many Jewish Americans, the ties to the Democratic party were also umbilical. Yet she did not like the idea of an African American president, and was worried about rumours that Obama was a secret Muslim. Then something happened.

Their grandson announced he was flying from Los Angeles, 2,500 miles away, to visit. Mike Bender had learned of an internet-driven initiative to get young Jewish voters to make a "great schlep" to Florida to persuade their wavering grandparents to vote for Obama.

The viral movement was backed by a video message by the comedian Sarah Silverman, saying: "You know why your grandparents don't like Obama, because his name sounds scary. Yes Barack Hussein Obama is a super shitty name, but you'd think somebody named Manishevitz Guberman would understand that."

Bender watched the video, laughed, and decided to traverse the States to confront his grandparents.

International: Jewish vote in Florida : Young make 'great schlep' to persuade a sceptical generation to vote
 Obama : Days to go: Obama 49.9% McCain 42.2%: On th....

He was not alone. Over the weekend dozens of young Jewish Americans travelled to Florida with the ambition of swinging this ultimate swing state in favour of Obama. Hundreds more have made the lesser schlep, or "mini schlep" - lobbying their grandparents by phone.

The thinking behind it starts with the assumption, widely held by political analysts, that if John McCain, is to have any chance he must win Florida. Democrats have taken the state only three times in the past 12 presidential elections: Lyndon Johnson in 1964; Jimmy Carter in 1976; and Bill Clinton in 1996. But the contest has frequently been close, famously so in 2000 when George Bush squeezed into the White House with just 537 more votes in Florida than Al Gore.

That sense of opportunity explains why the Obama campaign has posted hundreds of staff in the state and is spending a record \$39m (£23m) there, far more than McCain. The investment has to some extent paid off, with polls showing a three-point lead, though that falls within the margin of error.

Which is where the Jewish vote comes in. About 10 million registered Jewish voters live in Florida, mainly older people in retirement condominiums along the so-called Gold Coast. Most are lifelong Democrats originating from New York and the north-east, but this year there is estimated 13% who, like the Fursts, are undecided. That equates to up to 100,000 votes: enough to determine the outcome of Florida, and with it the fate of the nation.

"The number one way to influence the outcome of the election as Jewish people is to influence your grandparents in Florida," said Ari Wallach, an instigator of the great schlep.

Those who embarked on that schlep found the going was sometimes tough. University student Cobin Dopkeen, who flew from Boston, had no need to convert his grandparents who are already for Obama, so instead accosted other residents and visitors in their retirement complex in Miami. Which is when he met Lenny, a 62-year-old Floridian out for a walk with his 92-year-old father.

"You have to be out of your fucking mind to support Obama," was Lenny's reply. "Number one: he supports Hamas. Number two: he sat with Reverend Wright for 20 years as he spied out his antisemitic hatred."

And Lenny doesn't want a black president. "I grew up in the sixties when blacks were called nigger. OK, nowadays I say N-word, but I still think it."

Republicans in south Florida predict a 10% spike for McCain in the Jewish vote over the 24% polled by Bush in 2004. Their campaign line is that if Obama wins he will be the first pro-Palestinian US president since the foundation of the state of Israel. The Democrats hit back with leaflets showing Obama by Jerusalem's Wailing Wall wearing a yarmulka.

From most schleppers' experiences, the unbending hostility of Lenny was the exception. Many reported a warm reception from most Jewish Americans in Florida who are already in the Obama camp. Others notched up success stories, including Bender's grandparents.

His visit moved and impressed. It led to long conversations in which he sought to allay their fears. Obama was a Christian, he said, a vocal supporter of Israel who has pledged to work for all Americans. The final hurdle was convincing his grandmother that Obama was not a Muslim. "I said to her that if there are any people who can understand the wickedness of lies said about them, it is the Jews. That hit home."

Within a day of their grandson's arrival, the Fursts had declared for Obama and had begun proselytising with the zeal of the newly converted. Kenny Furst has been posting Obama flyers at the bagel shop where he still works, and his wife is holding discussion groups with other Jewish women from the retirement home.

"I'm so proud of my grandparents, that they were open-minded enough to listen," said Bender.

"I've got a couple of years to go, so this vote isn't for me," said his grandfather. "All I'm interested in now is that my grandchildren should be safe. This one is for them."

International: Jewish vote in Florida : Young make 'great schlep' to persuade a sceptical generation to vote
Obama : Days to go: Obama 49.9% McCain 42.2%: On th....

Correction

We were wrong to say that about 10 million registered Jewish voters live in Florida. Florida currently has about 10.7 million registered voters in total, of whom about 5% are Jewish (Young make 'great schlep' to persuade a sceptical generation to vote Obama, page 18, October 13).

Correction-Date: October 14, 2008 Tuesday

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End of Document

Letters

The Jerusalem Post

October 22, 2008 Wednesday

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Byline: Harvey Lithwick, David Lee, Bonnie Eizikovitz, Ruth Rigbi, Peter Simpson, Daniel Ratner, G. Gershon Gubbio, Lou Scop, Helen Rauch-Elnekave, Hans Kiebart, Vitus Castelberg, Gifty Dandoe

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Real protection

Sir, - Re "A consumer protection revolution" (Editorial, October 19) will only be effective under at least two conditions:

- * that the law is made widely available to consumers. This requires that it be posted on the government's Web site in all relevant languages, and be easily obtainable by those without Web access (say, at post offices, or distributed with daily newspapers).

- * that implementation of the law is closely monitored. There is a failure by the authorities to implement laws in all areas, and by the press in particular to report on what is happening.

HARVEY LITHWICK

Metar

Hardball vs soft

Sir, - Instead of giving the terrorists 450 Palestinian criminals in return for Cpl. Gilad Schalit, would it not be better to grab, say, the 10 top Hamas leaders at large and barter them for Schalit's release? What is the point in playing softball when the other side is playing hardball? ("Peres: No progress made in Schalit talks," October 19.)

DAVID LEE

London

Heavenly waitress

balances hellish kids

Sir, - A family here for Succot sat next to us at one of Jerusalem's fine restaurants on the intermediate days of the festival.

Letters

To the parents of the four ill-mannered children from the UK, out on their own: They had no business eating out by themselves, especially since it was clear that they didn't know how to behave. When we asked them to quiet down, they replied, full of hutzpa: Yes, they should, because, after all, they were not Americans. We asked them several more times, receiving only more poor behavior and disrespect.

When their mother finally showed up, the only thing she had to say was that the two older boys had had too much to drink - which was clear by the empty bottle of wine on the table. She did not even think it necessary to reprimand them and solicit an apology for us.

We received that from the lovely waitress who took care of us!

BONNIE EIZIKOVITZ

Teaneck, New Jersey

Memories of

Yekaterinoslav

Sir, - The Menorah Center, the massive Jewish community center being built in Dnepopetrovsk, looks staggering in the computerized rendition you published, courtesy of Chabad ("Planned Menorah Center to light up Ukraine city," October 5). And the myriad other construction projects planned in the city certainly could make it a hub for the local Jewish community and a tourist attraction, courtesy of helpful millionaires.

I only wish the article had included the historical fact that Dnepopetrovsk is none other than Yekaterinoslav, the great city on the Dnieper whose original name commemorates its founder, the Empress Catherine II of Russia.

My grandfather, Dr. Moses Umanski, graduated from the classical Lyceum there and went on to study medicine at the University of Kharkov, and in Berlin. He and his wife settled in Leeds, England, in 1890. They founded the Zionist movement there and attended the Second Zionist Congress in Basel in 1898, with three young children in tow. In 1899 my grandfather became one of the founders of the English Zionist Federation.

RUTH RIGBI

Israel Association

of University Women

Jerusalem

Peace ambassador?

Sir, - Jonathan Goldstein misdirected himself in spending his time describing the peace credentials of concert sponsor Arkadi Gaydamak ("Musical ambassador for peace," Billboard, October 17). He should be examining the peace credentials of maestro Valery Gergiev.

Barely two months ago, Gergiev rushed back to Tskhinvali in Ossetia to conduct a concert to "honor those who died there." He apparently did not consider doing the same in Georgia, even assuming he would have been welcome there.

This current, well-publicized gesture seems more like political partisanship than fostering peace. Musically, Gergiev may well be a successor to Georg Solti. As an ambassador for peace - no way.

PETER SIMPSON

Jerusalem

Letters

Gigs bad and brilliant

Sir, - I read with interest David Benkof's "How Jewish were the Beatles?" (September 25) because in Montreal on September 8, 1964, Ringo Starr had a bodyguard on stage for the only show the Beatles played there. The reason for this was that death threats were being made against Ringo. Some people had apparently decided to make an example of him as an English Jew. One major error, though - he's not Jewish.

Nothing thankfully ever came of the death threats to Ringo, who called the show "the worst gig of my life."

DANIEL RATNER

Rehovot

Sir, - Re Sir Paul McCartney's recent visit to Israel: A great concert? Indeed. A talented musician? Most certainly. A warm human being? No doubt. A historic event? A little perspective, please.

G. GERSHON GUBBIO

Jerusalem

Dance, not destroy

Sir, - It is a crying shame that the Acre Festival of Alternative Israeli Theater was cancelled. Such a lot of work went into the preparation, and thousands of people will miss the entertainment - including this very disappointed member of the public ("US performers dismayed after Acre Festival gets the hook," October 15).

Dancing and music should be allowed to reach the local hotheads also, perhaps encouraging them to dance rather than destroy.

LOU SCOP

Netanya

Sour juice

Sir, - On my return flight to Israel last week with British Midlands Airlines, I had an unpleasant surprise. Curious about the Arabic writing on the boxes of juice being served by the stewardesses, I was appalled to see that they were from an Iranian company. I thought Britain was participating in economic sanctions against Iran!

I have no intention of flying British Midlands again, regardless of their bargain prices.

HELEN RAUCH-ELNEKAVE

Ma'alot

Write to me

Sir, - I am 45, a teacher of English and German, in search of male and ***female*** friends in Israel and worldwide - Jewish, Muslim and Christian. I enjoy reading, movies, swimming and cycling, as well as collecting photos, stamps and postcards. I am waiting most eagerly for responses, which should be sent to Huygens Street, 10, D-04159, Leipzig, Germany.

HANS KIEBART

Leipzig

Sir, - I'm a young Swiss, very interested in Israel. That's why I'm looking for penfriends aged 20-50 from your wonderful country. Please write in German, English or French to Aspermontstr. 19, CH-7000 Chur, Switzerland.

Letters

VITUS CASTELBERG

Chur, Switzerland

Sir, - I am very delighted to write you this letter: I found your address at the British Council Library in Accra. I am a 17-year-old girl, a student. My hobbies are music and films, collecting postcards and stickers. Write to P.O. Box GP 18259, Accra, Ghana, West Africa.

GIFTY DANDOE, Accra

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Inside the Times: January 3, 2009

The New York Times

January 3, 2009 Saturday

Late Edition - Final

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

Length: 2262 words

Body

International

AUSTRALIA AND BRITAIN BALK

At Request to Take Detainees

Australia balked at American requests to accept yet more detainees from the prison at Guantanamo Bay would be accepted. Britain expressed a similar reluctance. The prison has stirred up controversy worldwide, and the goal of closing it has become a major undertaking for the United States government. The Bush administration has approached Australia twice and appealed to others around the world to help resettle the 60 inmates who have been cleared for release, but cannot be sent to their home countries. Page A6

ISRAEL LETS FOREIGNERS LEAVE GAZA

Israel's bombing of **Hamas** and targets in the Gaza strip has just reached the one-week mark. Israel allowed hundreds of foreigners, many of them married to Palestinians, to leave the area. This move has given rise to fears that Israel may escalate its attacks. It has already pledged to continue the campaign until there are no more rockets being fired out of Gaza. Page A5

SRI LANKA CLAIMS VICTORY

Sri Lanka announced the capture of the de facto rebel capital, Kilinochchi. It was a symbolic victory over the Tamil separatists who have been trying to create a homeland of their own. The announcement seemed to have an effect, if not the desired one, when a suicide bomber on a motorcycle detonated his device at the Sri Lankan Air Force headquarters, killing at least two other people. Page A5

PAKISTAN REOPENS VITAL PASS

The Khyber Pass was briefly reopened by Pakistan after a three-day closure as part of a military action against Taliban guerrillas. The pass is the most important supply route for American and NATO troops fighting the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan. Page A6

EGYPT'S SILENCE WORRIES ARABS

Inside the Times : January 3, 2009

Egypt, which often plays the role of intermediary between Israel and the Arab world, has made public statements disapproving of Hamas's actions resulting in a new Israeli bombing campaign in Gaza. There has been mounting public pressure for Egypt to be more forceful in its support of the Palestinians. Instead there has been relative silence from Cairo and an apparent lack of pressure on the United States to intervene. Page A7

TRIBAL MEETING BOMBED IN IRAQ

A meeting of tribal leaders to discuss national reconciliation efforts in Iraq was attacked when a member of the tribe detonated an explosive vest, killing at least 24 of them and wounding 42 others, government officials said. The meeting took place at the house of an influential Sunni sheik in a region that was formerly a hotbed of insurgents until local leaders turned against Al Qaeda and began to support the American military. Page A8

national

Washington Journal

For Capital City Residents,

A Meaningful Inauguration

Hosting inaugurations is nothing new for Washington. But for its residents, more than 92 percent of whom voted for President-elect Barack Obama, the inauguration this month is special. Scheduled after Martin Luther King's Birthday, the event, and its timing, strikes a chord with the predominately black city as it welcomes the nation's first black president. PAGE A9

CLASH OF VIEWS IN OBAMA'S TEAM

As Barack Obama seeks to find the right balance between his environmental goals and his plans to revive the economy, the president-elect may have to resolve conflicting views among some of his top advisers. Lawrence H. Summers leads Mr. Obama's economic team, and Carol M. Browner, who argued against Mr. Summers regarding greenhouse gases over a decade ago, has been designated the White House coordinator of energy and climate policy. PAGE A10

OBAMA AND HIGH SCHOOL MEMORIES

Near the end of his annual vacation in Honolulu, Barack Obama returned this week to what was long known as "the whites' school." It was his school and, by his telling, one of the most formative influences in his life. PAGE A11

MUSLIMS PULLED FROM PLANE

AirTran Airways apologized for events on New Year's Day, in which airline officials pulled nine Muslim passengers off a domestic flight and refused to rebook them, even though F.B.I. agents said they had done nothing wrong. PAGE A9

CHOICE FOR COLORADO SENATE SEAT

The superintendent of the Denver Public Schools, Michael F. Bennet, a lawyer and prominent Colorado Democrat, will be appointed to fill the United States Senate seat being vacated by Ken Salazar, senior Democratic Party members said. PAGE A10

EFFORTS TO AID STEM CELL RESEARCH

Thwarted by President Bush in their efforts to expand federal spending on embryonic stem cell research, Democrats are now debating whether to overturn federal restrictions through executive order or by legislation when they assume full control of the government this month. PAGE A10

obituaries

Inside the Times : January 3, 2009

MICHAEL LEVEY, 81

As a prolific and wide-ranging art historian, he presided over the expansion of the National Gallery in London as its director from 1973 to 1987 and acquired important paintings by Caravaggio, David and Monet for its collection. PAGE A17

DANIEL NAGRIN, 91

A choreographer, performer, teacher and writer, he was known for intensely dramatic solos that became modern-dance classics. PAGE A17

WILLIAM W. SCOTT JR., 82

He was a former artillery man who lifted academic and social standards as leader of the United States Military Academy at West Point after it had been roiled by a cheating scandal and the introduction of women as cadets. PAGE A17

Business

BILL COLLECTORS, FEELING SQUEEZE,

Offering Pre-emptive Deals

In what is shaping up to be possibly the worst recession in decades, lenders and their collectors are realizing that some Americans will not be able to pay their bills as the economy deteriorates. So some are rushing to round up what money they can before things get worse, even if that means forgiving a portion of some borrowers' debts. Page B1

Manufacturing Drops Worldwide B1

FRAGMENTS OF INDYMAC PURCHASED

IndyMac Bank, a failed lender with 33 branches in southern California, is going to be up and running under new direction, federal regulators said. The scraps of the company were bought by a team of seven private investors for \$139 billion. Page B3

TUITION OUTSIDE INVESTING RULES

Saving for college is always a challenge. Invest safely and you might not keep up with the inflation in tuition, but potentially more lucrative -- and volatile -- investments may swallow a year's worth of tuition in one gulp in a year like 2008. How do you invest for something that is not priced according to the market? Page B1

AUSTRIAN BANK MANAGER RESIGNS

One of the largest casualties of the Bernard L. Madoff pyramid scheme was the management of the Bank Medici, a small Austrian merchant bank. The chief executive has resigned and a government-appointed accountant will assume the daily operations temporarily. Page B3

Fall in Semiconductor Sales B3

Speaking with Walgreen's President B3

A DAY FOR COPING? NOT ENOUGH

Nov. 17 is officially "Coping with Uncertainty Day," writes Alina Tugend, who says it might be better to have more than just a day for that. With 2008's taillights fading behind us, it seemed like the whole year was about coping with

Inside the Times : January 3, 2009

uncertainty. Even if you finished out the year with a secure job and intact investments, it will be a while before anybody can feel sure about anything. Page B6

RIGHT THEORY, WRONG TIME

One of 2007's big ideas was that foreign markets were hardy enough to withstand an American economic collapse. But people underestimated how connected the rest of the world was to America, and 2008 happened. But the theory has some new adherents, who say it was a fine idea but it was just bad timing. Page B6

Business Podcast

A Year-End Special

Looking at the economy and markets in 2008 and the coming challenges in 2009.

nytimes.com/business

Arts

MIXING STAND-UP WITH CLASSICS,

A French Film Star Finds His Role

One of the best-known character actors in French cinema, Fabrice Luchini, 57, confesses he is more attached to the theater, and more precisely, his one-man show that is touring France and may come to New York. Despite his nebbish-like looks, and all-black attire, Mr. Luchini is among the most French of French performers, an actor who can move easily from popular films to stand-up comedy and back, but who is only vaguely known outside France. PAGE C1

THE ART OF COOKING AT THE WHITNEY

The aroma of simmering veggies that wafts through the Whitney Museum lobby these days does not emanate from Sarabeth's Kitchen downstairs, but from Corin Hewitt's art installation in the ground-floor gallery. The piece is called "Seed Stage," and its ingredients include performance, photography, sculpture and cooking. PAGE C1

Television Review

Humiliation at a New Low Price

"Game Show in My Head" is a new adventure in self-abasement that comes to us from Ashton Kutcher. On the show, contestants perform various embarrassing exercises in public. Part "Candid Camera," part watered-down "Borat," the show is a yucky reminder that the next Great Depression really is coming, because, let's face it, you've got to be pretty hard up to talk about your bathroom issues to strangers, all in the hopes of making a measly amount of money, Ginia Bellafante writes. PAGE C1

Book Review

'The Invention of Air'

In "The Invention of Air," the author Steven Johnson writes about Joseph Priestley a 18th-century scientist and philosopher who along with other giants of the Enlightenment possessed a "connective sensibility," enabling him to master many fields at once, Barry Gewen writes. PAGE C3

New York

DESPITE FOREGONE CONCLUSIONS

Kennedy Is No Safe Bet

Inside the Times : January 3, 2009

The rumor mills and blogs have been churning hard with the argument that Gov. David A. Paterson has little choice but to appoint Caroline Kennedy as the next United States senator from New York. But not much attention has been paid to the question of what happens if he doesn't appoint her. After her recent upstate tour and round of media interviews, some experts wonder what exactly Mr. Paterson would risk by not choosing her. Page A13

STATES PETITION FOR FEDERAL AID

Gov. David A. Paterson was part of a chorus for aid from several large states. Their target audience? The federal government, seeking a total of \$1 trillion for all 50 states over the next two years. The funds would go to schools, public works, social services and tax cuts for the middle class, according to a stimulus plan presented by the governors. Page A15

Sports

TWO HARDY QUARTERBACKS

Face Off in Postseason

Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning and Philip Rivers, his counterpart on the San Diego Chargers, come into their first-round playoff matchup on hot streaks -- after rehabilitating from knee injuries in the offseason. Page D1

Charles Barkley as Shock Jock? D1

ON EVERYONE'S WISH LIST

Many football experts consider Rueben Randle, a wide receiver prospect from Louisiana, to be the best high school player in the nation. With the signing period for recruits still more than a month away and his mind not yet made up, players, coaches and fans from big time programs are letting him know how much they would appreciate his services. Page D2

Editorial

MR. BUSH'S HEALTH CARE LEGACY

The Bush administration has turned in a weak performance on many important health care matters, most notably failing to address the problem of millions of uninsured Americans. But President Bush can also lay claim to some achievements that we urge President-elect Obama to continue. Page A18

I'LL HAVE TO CALL MY LAWYER

"Good Samaritan" laws give legal protection to bystanders who come to the aid of people in emergencies. California's Supreme Court has now given its state law such a disturbingly narrow interpretation that we fear it could discourage would-be good Samaritans from providing help out of fear of being sued. Page A18

SHORTCHANGING VOTERS

More than three years have passed since the New Jersey Legislature required the state to install modern voting machines that provide a paper trail, which experts regard as essential to fair and accurate elections. The machines are still nowhere in sight. Page A18

Op-ed

BOB HERBERT

A sports fan explains why he believes in the supernatural. Page A19

Inside the Times : January 3, 2009

GAIL COLLINS

Before we move on, one last blast from the past. See how much you've failed to repress in the year-end quiz. Page A19

FOUR WAYS FOR DETROIT TO SAVE ITSELF

Sebastian Thrun, a professor of computer science at Stanford, and Anthony Levandowski, a product manager at Google, explore the technological improvements that would make cars safer, cleaner and more energy efficient -- and might just save the American automotive industry. Page A19

This weekend

Book Review

Chuck Klosterman's first novel, "Downtown Owl," is set, in the 1980s, in a tiny North Dakota town populated by a dizzying array of characters with unfortunate nicknames. But Peter Meehan writes that the author's voice, with its knowing turns of phrase and obscure pop culture references, derails the reader's attempts to sympathize with the town's denizens.

Education Life

A look at innovations and business ventures from college students, including greener tree harvesting, a novel way to shelter refugees and an electric motorcycle that looks as if it rides on one wheel.

Arts & Leisure

It's the season of Big, Important Movies and Career-Defining Roles. Critics pick the best in each category, highlight some scenes worth a second look and compile some of the most disastrous Hollywood takes on the lives of the famous.

Travel

Banff National Park in the Canadian Rockies makes up in stunning mountain views now and abundant snow what it lacks in pomp and frills.

The Magazine

Were the measures used to evaluate Wall Street trades before the economic turmoil flawed? Or was the mistake ignoring them?

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian

November 28, 2008 Friday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 15

Length: 2512 words

Body

It takes two sides to reach a two-state resolution

MOST TALKED ABOUT

THE GREAT DIVIDE

IT is eye-opening to hear Janet Albrechtsen's views from Israel ("Hostages to fear and systematic loathing in Israel", Opinion, 26/11). A more successful route to peace than the current approach requires scrutiny of the actions and words of all parties. Whilst criticism of Israel is widespread, more scrutiny and accountability needs to be applied to the Palestinian leadership in what it says and does.

Albrechtsen usefully highlights an obvious but often overlooked point: there cannot be the lasting two-state resolution that the Palestinian leadership says it aspires to until that leadership stops feeding the Palestinian population a steady diet of hate and death.

Robert Friedman

Caulfield North, Vic

JANET Albrechtsen may have spent a week in Israel but noticeably makes no mention of any time spent in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. If she'd spent time in the OPT, as I have done, then she would have experienced the real reason why there can be no peace -- it's called Israel's occupation of Palestine.

Spend some time in the OPT, Janet, and this is what you will see: Israeli soldiers invading Palestinian villages and homes, kidnapping 12-year-olds from their beds in the middle of the night; Israeli soldiers detaining for endless hours Palestinian civilians at checkpoints; Israeli soldiers destroying Palestinian olive groves and homes with bulldozers, leaving whole families penniless and homeless; armed illegal Israeli settlers invading Palestinian villages, beating children and burning the crops of Palestinian farmers while the "most moral army in the world" watches; Israeli soldiers firing on unarmed demonstrators, including their own citizens, peacefully protesting Israel's stealing of Palestinian land; and, most horrifying of all, Israeli soldiers killing Palestinian children with impunity.

Then, Janet, perhaps you could explain to us how Israel's actions will bring peace.

Kim Bullimore

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Brunswick, Vic

THANK you, Janet, for highlighting the gross xenophobic nature of the Middle East. But I fear that even if they stop the indoctrination of hate in Palestinian schools, the rage will continue. For as long as the Koran labels Jews as nothing more than reincarnated monkeys and pigs, peace will elude the Middle East like bacon strips on a kebab.

Craig Merriman

Mitchelton, Qld

IT'S a sad state of affairs when the facts presented in Janet Albrechtsen's excellent article are so very rarely presented in newspapers. People's understanding of events is so often formed by inaccuracies. It's so very true that young children in Gaza are taught not only in their schools but in their homes to hate. What hope is there for peace when one side is so determined not to have peace?

Joy Schoenheimer

Main Beach, Qld

JANET Albrechtsen paints a worrying picture of the systematic indoctrination of Palestinian children to hate Israel and the Jewish people. In such an environment, where killers are revered as martyrs, what hope is there for the future?

Rachel Birati

North Balwyn, Vic

JANET Albrechtsen goes to some length in persuading us of something that I might have thought fairly obvious to the readership -- namely, that funding terrorists is not especially smart. She neglects to add, however that atrocities in the context of Jewish-Palestinian conflicts were never wholly the province of Hamas.

The state of Israel developed from the illegal occupation of Palestine by European Jews, and the land was secured and its borders expanded by terrorist acts. A former Israeli prime minister, the late Menachem Begin, was, for example, a leading figure in the terrorist gang that killed women and children with indiscriminate bombings, whilst also kidnapping and killing off-duty members of the British forces who were mandated by the UN to preserve the peace in Palestine. Inconvenient truths, Ms Albrechtsen.

Sever the funding of Hamas by all means, but nor should we be committing a single cent to Israel. As the British journalist Christopher Hitchens most perceptively noted recently: "Why should any Palestinian leave the home and the land that his forebears have occupied for centuries in order to make way for a Brooklyn Jew who claims that God gave him this land?" Why indeed.

Harry Foxley

Kingsley, WA

JANET Albrechtsen ignores the fact that Israel came into existence on the back of the dispossession, exile and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people and those who remained were subjected to being second-class citizens of Israel or stateless people, living under Israeli occupation of their land. Nothing of the six decades of Israeli oppression and greater carnage of the Palestinians, who are still fighting for their human rights, is even conceded by Albrechtsen as a causal element in the continuing conflict.

Until the root cause of the injustice to the Palestinian people is addressed and the peace negotiations are conducted within the framework of international law, we will not see a just and peaceful outcome to the Israel/Palestine conflict. It is this that, on both sides, will generate hatred for the other side for generations to come.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dora McPhee

Parkville, Vic

Opposition is 'out of touch' with economic realities

MALCOLM Turnbull and Julie Bishop seem to be stuck in a time warp, unable to adapt to fast-moving international events. Firmly fixated on the horrors of budget deficits, they cling to yesterday's economic nostrums.

When Kevin Rudd told parliament that the Government would do whatever it takes to ameliorate the effects of the deepening global crisis, including possible future budget deficits ('PM admits: we're going into deficit', 27/11), Bishop, smirking with 'gotcha' glee, reminded the Prime Minister of his more benign economic assessment in May. That was six months ago! How's that for keeping up with the times? No wonder the Opposition's responses are so out of touch with November's realities.

Georgie Machiet

Glenmore Park, NSW

WHILST I accept that a budget surplus is the preferred option and that previous Labor governments have left the country with debt, I would ask that Malcolm Turnbull and Julie Bishop actually tell us what they would do to keep Australia out of a recession? It is always very easy to criticise, it is much more difficult to offer alternatives.

So I ask Turnbull and Bishop to explain their alternative to current Government policy to keep this country out of recession and without deficit budgeting?

Tony Jakeman

Gympie, Qld

MASQUERADING as the epitome of rectitude and responsibility with respect to economic issues, Malcolm Turnbull reveals himself to be no better than a scare-mongering, opportunistic and cynical politician who is more than willing to put the (illogical) frighteners on to secure the vote of the uninformed.

P. Reynolds

Gilmore, ACT

PRIOR to the last federal election and at the time of his election to the leadership of the Labor Party, I recall Kevin Rudd exclaiming that he was looking forward to playing with the mind of John Howard. If, after all the boasting that Australia was in a good position to withstand a global downturn, the budget does go into deficit, I don't believe that the electorate will forgive the PM or his Treasurer as it will be obvious that they both have been playing with our collective minds.

Les Fergusson

Freshwater, Qld

WITH all this talk about the looming deficit, no mention is being made by Malcolm Turnbull and Peter Costello regarding the deficit created by John Howard when he was treasurer during the early 1980s.

Peng Ee

Castle Cove, NSW

Myopia of Friend's friends

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE art establishment just doesn't get it. They're queuing up to deny or fudge what the artist Donald Friend himself freely admitted in his diaries. At 30, Friend knew he would end up "a scrofulous, despicable menace to youth ... (jailed) for perverting adolescents", so he retreated to the Third World where he could get away with it. His numerous victims were as young as nine, mostly poor Balinese.

The publisher of Friend's diaries, the National Library, allowed Margaret Olley (and all the other Australians mentioned in the diaries) to vet the text. Friend's Balinese, Sri Lankan and Torres Strait victims were ignored, although they are named in the diaries. Human rights champion David Marr unaccountably failed to mention this in the blurb for the diaries.

When reviewing Volume II of the diaries in The Weekend Australian in December 2003, I wrote that "(Friend's) charmed criminality gives new meaning to artistic licence" and that NLA editor Paul Hetherington's introduction reinforced the culture of "evasion towards criminal sexual behaviour of the elite". Nothing has changed.

In Kerry Negara's documentary A Loving Friend, Barry Pearce, curator at the Art Gallery of NSW, distinguishes between good and bad pedophiles. Friend is a "white" pedophile, not an evil "dark" one, he says. In Rosemary Sorensen's report ("Artists fail to admit Friend was a pedophile", 26/11), the art publisher Lou Klepac says that Friend "definitely was not a pedophile". What a farce. Don't these art heavyweights realise that their myopic denials and contortions play into the hands of the Philistines who are persecuting artists such as Bill Henson?

We've had the unedifying spectacle of the Prime Minister acting as the Prime Wowser, revolted by Henson's photographs, egged on by that intellectual titan and art connoisseur, Assistant Treasurer Chris Bowen. The last thing creative Australia wants is to be gagged by reactionary Queenslanders.

The National Library should issue an apology to the artist's victims and Friend's institutional apologists should do likewise.

Frank Campbell

Anglesea, Vic

Put Telstra in its place

TELSTRA's childish and impudent refusal to participate fully with the Government's national broadband network tender process just shows how incapable it is of operating in a free market ("Telstra network bid 'a joke'", 27/11).

The federal Government must take back the nation's telecommunications infrastructure from Telstra, which was entirely paid for by Australian taxpayers (only to be sold by the Howard government from under us for no return), and place it back in the public's hands in perpetuity so that any and every telco can access and use it equally and we can have the quality service we deserve.

As confirmed by the sheer number of complaints annually, Telstra is the single biggest impediment to the universal access, efficiency, quality and affordability of our nation's telecommunications system and it should be forced to engage in the market on an equal footing as everyone else.

Russell Langfield

Kimberley, Tas

COMMUNICATIONS Minister Stephen Conroy is refusing to promise that he will not legislate to break up Telstra. Perhaps he would be wise to consider the fate of the Howard government.

John Howard sold off Telstra as a rock-solid performer to over 1million "mum and dad" investors. He did not warn them that he intended to squeeze Telstra's value and profits by using regulatory powers to allow foreign telcos to ride to easy profits on Telstra's back. Howard ignored warnings that he would meet those angry "mum and dad" shareholders at the ballot box in 2007.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Kevin Rudd would be wise to take Conroy aside and warn him that a dismembered Telstra would not be the same company sold by government to those ``mum and dad" investors, and undermining the value of their Telstra investment is not a good way to ensure a second term in government.

James Bowen

Glen Waverley, Vic

Save ABC Learning Centres

COULD not the 386 ABC Learning Centres facing possible closure (``ABC list a `death sentence", 27/11) be sold to one level of government or another which could then invite tenders from community-based organisations to provide an on-going service to the parents of up to 30,000 children who will have nowhere to go otherwise?

John Clapton

Greenwood, WA

Man Asian Literary Prize

WHILE it was delightful to read that David Malouf was the winner of the inaugural Australia-Asian Literary Prize (``Tales of two continents make for a prize catch", 24/11), some statements about another prize, the Man Asian Literary Prize, were inaccurate or misleading.

Your readers should know the following: the Man Asian Literary Prize aims to promote fiction previously unpublished in English by Asian-based writers. We are proud of our success in this, as witnessed by the fact that many of the 23 long-listed novel manuscripts in 2007 have now found publishers.

The prize's 2008 winner, Miguel Syjuco, is 31 years old, almost unknown outside his native Philippines, and his winning novel, *Ilustrado*, is as yet unpublished.

The prize is supported by Man, not Booker, though it is sometimes referred to, misleadingly, as the ``Asian Booker".

David Parker

(A Hong Kong-based member of the board of the Man Asian Literary Prize)

FIRST BYTE

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It could be worse. The ``D-word" is deficit, not depression.

Rebecca Howman

Leederville, WA

Is this the deficit we had to have?

Matt Pralija

Neutral Bay, NSW

The appointment of a hairdresser as an ambassador for men's health is highly appropriate. Why? Because barbers were society's surgeons and doctors for centuries from pre-Roman times. A one-stop shop for a haircut and an amputation.

Robert Maher

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Beenleigh, Qld

I have my own men's health ambassador, thank you: my GP. And there is no better source of sound advice.

Robin Flannery

Parrearra, Qld

Where does Nicola Roxon get these people? The phone book or from her Christmas card list?

Pam Slater

Berowra Heights, NSW

Who wrote Andrew Symonds's cliché-ridden mea culpa? Does Kevin Rudd's speech writer also work for Cricket Australia?

Judi Cox

Springfield, Qld

Maybe it's not the economic crisis that is making Australian expats return home in record numbers from Britain but more the thought of being in the mother country when the Ashes are regained by England. There are many Aussies who would not want to go through that again!

Alan Baxendale

Hillarys, WA

Could somebody please tell Les Palmer (Letters, 27/11) that Billy Budd and The Makropoulos Secret have both been "courageously" performed in Melbourne. Years ago.

Bill Cushing

Parkville, Vic

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post

December 17, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

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Byline: Rabbi Jacob Chinitz, James A. Marples, Howard R. Silverman, Menachem G. Jerenberg, Jessica Fischer, David Lee, Israel Zvi, P. Berman, M. Veeder

Highlight: Reader's Letters

Body

Male domination...

Sir, - Your editorial on Orthodox Jewish women making their mark in halachic studies and rabbinical courts was very much in place ("Sensitivity and Halacha," December 16). However, I do not believe that the blame for male domination in the field of Jewish marriage and divorce jurisprudence can all be laid on the male rabbis.

Unfortunately, it has to be recognized by the Orthodox, and all of us interested in the relevance of Halacha to Jewish reality, that the Torah text itself prescribes this male domination when it states: "Ki yikah ish isha" ("when a man takes a woman").

It is the man who marries and divorces, and until we tackle this issue head-on, using the principle of yesh koah beyad hachamim - the rabbis have the power - to amend Torah law to give women equal status in marriage and divorce, the underlying problems will remain no matter how much learning and actual court participation is achieved by Orthodox female scholars.

RABBI JACOB CHINITZ

Jerusalem

...no 'equal rights'

in spirituality

Sir, - This editorial made an inappropriate comparison: that we trust our lives to female doctors, implying we should trust female Torah scholars in matters of Divine consequence.

I feel that tradition is an important component in Judaic and Christian theological frameworks. We believe that God created the first man, Adam. It is certain that Adam did not seek theological counsel of a woman. I hold to the belief that Jewish rabbis and Catholic priests should be male, and adherence to that qualification helps me relate to God's plan for my life and the life of others.

Spirituality isn't subject to "equal rights laws." The sexes weren't made to be equal in all matters. Tradition, like faith itself, must be based on feelings from within and not dictated by gender quotas or biases.

Letters

JAMES A. MARPLES

Longview, Texas

Why discriminate?

Sir, - The Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations deplores the detention of Jamie and Stacy Cowen upon their arrival in Israel ("Messianic Jews detained at Ben-Gurion Airport," December 15). As president of the UMJC, Cowen spearheaded humanitarian aid to Israel and participated in social causes for the betterment of the Jewish people.

The UMJC continues to support these efforts and does not engage in any activity that is outside the bounds of Israeli law. In 2003, and most recently in the summer of 2008, the UMJC convened its annual conference in Israel, which The Jerusalem Post reported.

We call upon the government of Israel to uphold the freedom of religion of all.

HOWARD R. SILVERMAN

UMJC

Columbus, Ohio

Extremely odd

Sir, - If I didn't know better, I would accuse Jeff Barak of nepotism ("Look past the technology," December 16). How else can one explain his attaching the epithet "extreme right-wing" to the Likud's list, while terming Ehud Barak's Labor "center-left"? May I remind him that the confirmedly extreme left-wing Meretz Party is being spoken of as a possible voting alternative to Labor, since it is nearly indistinguishable in its policies!

Also, where exactly does he get off calling the defectors who formed Kadima "the sensible part of Likud"? Could it be that he is the last Israeli to realize that the Gaza disengagement was a complete and utter disaster - just as the Likud's "extreme right-wing" members warned?

MENACHEM G. JERENBERG

Ramat Beit Shemesh

Get savvy...

Sir, - How naive your Monday letter writers seem! ("Oh, Bibi!" December 15.) They have forgotten how manipulative Ariel Sharon was and Ehud Olmert is, and how much irrevocable damage their non-policies have done to the State of Israel - shown once again by this week's prisoner release to the Palestinian Authority.

Binyamin Netanyahu, on the other hand, is the consummate politician, attracting those people to the Likud whom he sees as strengthening the party and making it more centrist.

While Moshe Feiglin has been pushed too far down the Likud list, he can up and join Avigdor Lieberman if he wants to be in the Knesset, or in a coalition. There's still room.

JESSICA FISCHER

Michmoret

...about whom

we're confronting

Letters

Sir, - Re your photo of released Palestinian prisoners celebrating upon their arrival in Ramallah (December 16): I served in the war against Nazi Germany. We saw Germany as our enemy, just as the Israelis see **Hamas** and Hizbullah. We had a leader who swore Germany's destruction, not one who constantly announced his desire to surrender our land to the enemy, including half of our capital city.

Prisoners of war lived harshly behind barbed wire. They were not patted on the head and sent back to the Wehrmacht. We blockaded Germany to the maximum possible, and we bombed it mercilessly.

We did not send in lorries loaded with fuel, food and money; neither did we sit down and chat with the Germans until they were thoroughly beaten and prepared to make peace.

We did not allow our pro-Nazis to hire boats and go visiting their Nazi friends, laden with gifts. We did not act like softies or pushovers.

Israel, you are at war. You need someone like Bibi Netanyahu to lead you to victory. When the war has been won, you can pick any peacenik you like. But certainly not yet.

DAVID LEE

London

Dream on

Sir, - "The Palestinians will demand democracy, civil rights, the right to vote... the right to change the character of the bi-national state" ("The emerging bi-national reality," December 16.)

Really? The Palestinians have never made these demands before. Their demands are, in fact, contrary to the peaceful coexistence of two peoples: no Jews in the West Bank or Gaza, full control over the holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem, and a four-million-strong immigration to pre-1967 Israel of the descendants of Arabs who lived in Israel prior to the War of Independence.

Gershon Baskin's wish list is his own, and his only.

ISRAEL ZVI

Efrat

Civilized is the way

Sir, - In "Another look at the Hebron Peace House" (December 16) my impression is that Sunny Sassoon has confused two different issues.

No one is trying to evacuate Jews from Hebron. What you have here is an argument about who is the rightful owner of a piece of property.

The decision to evacuate the house before a final decision was made by the court appears to have been a political move, and of course the leadership of the Right fell into a trap because they used emotion rather than straight thinking in addressing the problem.

In the final analysis, the court will determine who truly owns the property, and its decision will stand.

Both sides in Hebron acted in a shameful manner. I am personally committed to Jews remaining in Hebron, but individual disputes must be settled in a civilized manner in a court of law.

P. BERMAN

Shoham

Letters

Seems so

Sir, - So, Bernard "madoff" with the money... ("Jewish charities face devastating losses from Madoff scam," December 16).

M. VEEDER

Netanya

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Steps to peace

The Jerusalem Post

December 14, 2008 Sunday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 1179 words

Byline: Liat Collins

Highlight: A UN-sponsored conference in the Austrian capital tries to bring Israelis and Palestinians together. First published in the International Edition of December 12, 2008.

Body

I didn't waltz while I was in Vienna a week ago. The toes I stepped on were metaphorical. They say it takes two to tango. Or to do a waltz. They also say it takes two to make peace. They (whoever they are) have never attended a peace conference.

Some 200 people sat in a splendid conference room at Vienna's Hofburg Congress Center, the former imperial palace, for the 16th International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, organized by the UN's Department of Public Information and the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs in Austria on December 2 and 3.

The city, smothered with Christmas decorations, seemed to be gift wrapped to welcome the participants. Since the theme of the conference was "The role of the international community," it is hardly surprising that the seminar was attended by more than just those directly affected by the Israeli-Palestinian situation. An Obama-supporting Native American by the name of Silverbird, for example, handed out business cards listing him as "ambassador, historian, entrepreneur."

Seeing as it was a media conference, I unapologetically spent time interviewing other journalists. Indeed, it was the discussions during coffee breaks or while seeking the nightlife in a city that goes to bed early which proved most interesting. A journalist from Jerusalem doesn't often get the chance to talk to a colleague from Algeria, even off the record.

A chat with the Cairo bureau chief of Al Arabiya News Channel, Randa Abul-Azm, was also illuminating. When I mentioned the Sunni-Shi'ite split, she countered: "That's an American invention. It didn't exist before the Iraqi invasion." I suggested that Egypt take some responsibility for Gaza, eliciting the response: "You can't expect Egypt to absorb the refugees. We're overcrowded as it is."

Fritz Froehlich, coordinator for "UNRWA at 60," pointed out that the problems have only just begun. In his assessment, the issue isn't the number of residents currently in Gaza, but the exponentially growing number in the future.

Many participants expressed concern about the Hamas hold on Gaza, cutting it off from the West Bank more effectively than any Israeli-imposed sanctions ever could.

Clearly we have a long way to go to reach solutions. The opening panel demonstrated just how far.

Steps to peace

UN UNDER-SECRETARY General for Communications and Public Information Kiyo Akasaka stressed that "the process under way has kindled new hopes that peace can be attained" and read a message from Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon urging: "If people are to have faith in the political process, there is a need for tangible improvements in living conditions and security."

Throughout, the UN struggled to preserve an image of impartiality. But the feeling of hope and goodwill dissipated as the PA's deputy foreign minister, Almutawakel Taha, took to the floor with a speech that strung together every cliché in the book, starting with: "The crucifixion continues in Palestine, not only of human beings but of birds, children, trees and houses..."

I wondered if the "so on and so forth" I heard through my headphones was the literal translation of Taha's speech or a sign the simultaneous interpreter couldn't keep up. This wasn't a peace dialogue; it was a Palestinian narrative. A very distorted version of the truth.

I sat there, far from home, wondering about the ramifications of walking out of the conference in its first session. I decided to stick around, if only to counter some of the arguments in my own speech in the afternoon panel. Fortunately, I didn't have to wait that long.

ELI DAYAN, a former deputy foreign minister in Israel, who spoke immediately after Taha, put aside his planned address and responded directly to Taha's attack. The Moroccan-born Dayan, kippa on head, recalled good neighborly relations with Arabs. He also noted that when he served as mayor of Ashkelon, the city where he still lives - under almost daily rocket fire - his first step was to create a working relationship with the mayor of Gaza. Such speeches don't help promote peace in any way, Dayan berated Taha.

Dayan said there is a consensus in Israel for the two- state solution and much of the Arab world is no longer taking the stance of non-recognition of Israel. "We should be looking ahead," Dayan said. He also took the co-hosts to task, stating: "The UN should lay off its ritual annual decisions condemning Israel, which have no effect."

His sentiments were echoed by two other Ashkelon residents: Benny Vaknin, who has just been reelected mayor after a period out of office, and a Mekorot water company official, Sion Cohen.

Vaknin, Cohen and others were in Vienna to discuss the Israel-Palestinian Civil Society Initiative, chaired by Prof. Ilan Juran. The initiative, which got off the ground following the Moscow seminar two years ago, furthers peacemaking through inter-community cooperation at a local level. Juran noted the joint wastewater program between Hadera and Beit Sahur. Hadera Mayor Haim Avitan explained the triple advantage: saving water, preventing pollution and building trust. Beit Sahur Mayor Hani al-Hayek also urged the use of joint projects for peace.

WHEN IT was my turn to speak, I felt like a party pooper. A string of panelists had warned Israel and the Palestinians that "time is running out." But how can you make real peace while holding a stopwatch? Peace is more than a signed document and photo opportunity. The aim should be to stop people from suffering or being killed. It seems more important to use the coming year to develop environmental, health and educational projects than to chase an elusive agreement, especially when the world's ability to fund even these projects is limited. Sitting comfortably in the old imperial palace, it was as if participants were deliberately avoiding the topic of the Iranian threat and evidence of global jihad.

I was also ignoring Austria's own past, although a German participant suggested I visit Vienna's Jewish Museum, and I wondered if I could find the building where my late aunt used to live - and, perhaps, a clue to the exact fate of her parents in the Holocaust.

One issue I was not prepared to overlook at a conference addressing human rights: captive IDF soldier Gilad Schalit and the several MIAs. A member of ***Women*** in Black heckled me about the Palestinian prisoners, but, I pointed out, she knew exactly where they are, how they spend their time, and when they can have visitors.

Steps to peace

WHILE WE were away, Kassams continued to fall and terrorists were arrested on their way to carry out an attack in Tel Aviv. As I returned, Israeli police evacuated Hebron's House of Peace, and hotheads attacked local Palestinians. I was pleased I didn't have to face questions on that, inexcusable, behavior.

At Ben-Gurion Airport, I overheard a discussion about Hanukka presents. I collected my suitcase, put aside emotional baggage, and headed for home in Jerusalem, far from Vienna's Christmas lights.

We might not have made peace, or even danced together, but perhaps we had taken a step - or two - in the right direction.

Graphic

2 photos: Vienna prepares for Christmas. Muslims and Jews, although warmly welcomed, sometimes felt far from home. THE AUTHOR in one of the splendid conference halls in the old imperial palace. (Credit: Liat Collins; Courtesy)

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We must heed the sage advice of our elders

The Herald (Glasgow)

November 27, 2008 Thursday

Final Edition

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The Herald

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Byline: ANNE JOHNSTONE

Body

OLD age is not what it used to be. We once sent people corny cards featuring pipes and slippers, and presented them with carriage clocks when they reached 65, so that they could count out their "declining years" a minute at a time. Today, in the words of Andre Maurois: "Growing old is a bad habit which a busy man has no time to form." And while some seem to be born middle-aged, others die young well into their nineties.

As if to make us feel guilty about sneaking off to the golf course, a group of the world's most celebrated senior citizens took it into their grey heads to spend their weekend attempting to solve the political impasse in Zimbabwe.

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, former US President Jimmy Carter and Graca Machel, human rights activist and wife of Nelson Mandela, had planned to visit Zimbabwe to assess the humanitarian situation and draw it to the world's attention. Their visas were refused by Robert Mugabe's government, which effectively turned their mission into a bizarre Pyrrhic victory. The global news agenda has such a short attention span these days that it seems to be able to handle only one African story at a time, and then only fleetingly. For a fortnight, the spotlight had flitted between eastern Congo and the waters off Somalia while Zimbabwe, where a humanitarian crisis of biblical proportions is unfolding, was quietly sidelined.

The visa refusal was significant because it showed that Mugabe would prefer to brave the negative publicity about barring this distinguished delegation than have them expose the depths of the crisis engulfing his country. The aborted trip put Zimbabwe right back on the news schedules and has shown that just when we all thought things couldn't get any worse there, they did. Now as well as spiralling hyperinflation, we have a spiralling cholera epidemic. Now hospitals are closing and even women requiring Caesareans are turned away. Now many public-sector workers aren't being paid at all and, by January, 5.1 million people, half the population, will need food aid to stay alive. As Annan put it in that precise, restrained way of his: "It is not just the extent of Zimbabwe's humanitarian crisis but the speed of the deterioration in the past few weeks that is most worrying. The scale, depth and urgency of the situation is under-reported."

Thabo Mbeki, who is meant to be facilitating a power-sharing deal between Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change, was never an honest broker and was easily bullied by the 84-year-old despot,

We must heed the sage advice of our elders

whom he regards as one of Africa's great liberators from white colonial rule. This has left Tsvangirai in the impossible position of choosing between accepting a puppet's role in government or holding out, as the deaths from starvation, cholera, political violence and HIV grow apace.

Can the Global Elders succeed where everyone else has failed (or not even tried)? The idea was born from a conversation in 1999 between entrepreneur Richard Branson and singer songwriter Peter Gabriel. If the world is becoming a "global village", they reasoned, then it requires "global elders", a group of wise old heads who will do the equivalent of sitting at the crossroads in the shade of an old tree and resolving feuds. It was partly a response to the perceived absence of calm voices in modern international disputes.

In 2001, the idea was put to Nelson Mandela, the "eminence gris" best placed to pull it off. He loved it and by the time Global Elders was launched on his 89th birthday in 2007, a dozen names had been pencilled in. Five were Nobel prize-winners, including retired Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former Irish President Mary Robinson.

The launch was accompanied by much high-flown rhetoric. In what sounded like a deliberate parody of the prayer of St Francis of Assisi, Mandela spoke of the need to "support courage where there is fear, foster agreement where there is conflict and inspire hope where there is despair". Seemingly intractable problems would be tackled "stone by stone". During their twice-yearly meetings, a symbolic empty chair is always reserved for Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi.

It's easy to mock the idea. One newspaper leading article compared the elders to the Travelling Wilburys, the 1980s band assembled by Bob Dylan, George Harrison and Roy Orbison by way of self-veneration, then suggested it could become "a makework scheme for ex-leaders who cannot let go". In truth, unlike its members, this body is too young to face judgment but does have a lot going for it. Because members give up their time for nothing, it has a certain moral authority. Unlike the UN, its members do not represent any particular country or institution. Rather, they are freelance diplomats with nothing to lose and unparalleled contacts books. They can pick up the phone to anyone. And, as Mary Robinson puts it, they can "amplify the voices of those who are trying to raise issues of concern that are not being listened to". They can also work quietly behind the scenes.

To date, there have been delegations to Cyprus, Sudan, Kenya and the Middle East with varying results. The offer to broker a ceasefire with Hamas was turned down flat by the Israeli government but in Kenya, where power rests on personalities, Kofi Annan's calming influence was decisive in breaking the impasse.

Perhaps this style of intervention works better in cultures where there is a tradition of respect for older members of the community. "Old age, especially an honoured old age, has such great authority that it is of more value than all the pleasures of youth," said the Roman orator Cicero. In classical antiquity, the retired were so revered that society operated on the basis of "seniores priores". The elderly were seen not as "wrinklies" but priceless assets, always afforded the front seats at the councils of state.

Compare that with modern British politics, where Menzies Campbell was hounded from leadership of the Liberal Democrats after being shamelessly lampooned as a doddering old fool and Vince Cable, his fellow sixtiesomething, excluded himself from the running to replace him on account of his age, despite being perhaps the liveliest voice in the Commons. No wonder. We live in a society where the overwhelming majority do not consider "elder abuse" to be a serious issue and most are more concerned about cruelty to animals. We honour our 82-year-old monarch, while 3.5 million elderly people live alone, many in poverty and loneliness.

If there's a lesson to be learned from the cheery, upbeat, jet-setting Global Elders, it is that this is a resource that we waste at our peril. Or as the French moralist Joseph Joubert put it: "Life is a country that the old have seen and lived in. Those who have yet to travel through it can only learn the way from them."

We must heed the sage advice of our elders

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Triumph of those who dare to resist violence

The Times (London)

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Byline: Daniel Finkelstein , daniel.finkelstein@thetimes.co.uk

Body

Obama's is a victory not just over the white supremacists, but also the black separatists - for democracy over terrorism

It was Sunday, February 21, 1965, and the black activist Malcolm X had just emerged on stage for another of his rallies at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem. No sooner had he done so than a commotion began. "Get your hands out of my pocket," someone shouted, as if accosting a thief. Heads turned at the diversion. And at this moment three gunmen stood up and sprayed Malcolm X with bullets. Hit 16 times, he died shortly after arriving at hospital.

I wish I could tell you that he had been killed in the service of civil rights, gunned down by white supremacists to silence him. At least then his death would have made some sort of sense, advanced a cause, changed some minds. But racial politics wasn't why Malcolm died.

Malcolm X was killed by other members of his own Nation of Islam movement, as part of a sordid squabble about women and money. He had said he would reveal that Elijah Muhammed, the head of the movement, was not the holy man and spiritual leader he claimed to be.

Instead, Malcolm believed he could show that the man was a fraudster and a philanderer. He had evidence, he said. Elijah's two secretaries had turned up on the lawn outside the leader's home a couple of years before, carrying their children and shouting that they wouldn't go away until Elijah comforted his babies. The women had been frightened off, but Malcolm, being himself familiar with violence, was not so easily frightened. Not when Nation members chased him in his car and tried to drive him off the road, not when they burnt down his house. He went on threatening exposure, so, in the end, he had to die.

I start with Malcolm X's miserable death, because I want it to be remembered in the week that an African-American went to the White House, preparing to move in. Barack Obama's victory has been widely reported as a victory for Martin Luther King. And so it is. But it is not just a victory for King over the White supremacists, and Democrats of the Jim Crow Deep South. It is also a victory for King over Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam.

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Reading now of King's campaign for civil rights, the only reaction is to be stunned by its courage, awed by its restraint. It is not just the little children who marched to jail, or the beating of marchers who got right up and kept marching that impresses. It is the discipline and the humanity.

Beaten bloody, even shot, and needing medical attention, civil rights activists would find the entrance to the hospital blocked by jeering, violent white thugs. Marching, they would be knocked to the ground. Eating in a restaurant they would be punched and kicked. Yet through it all, they would not raise their arms in violence. They had been trained not to, they taught themselves not to, they resisted that human impulse because they thought that it was morally wrong and would damage their cause. How much greater can courage get?

But to many African Americans, King's non-violent campaign didn't seem courageous at all. The students were frustrated at their elders in the movement, chafing at their compromises, yawning or even laughing at speeches from leaders - even those of King - that they sometimes thought pompous and beside the point. When Martin Luther King marched in Harlem in early 1960s, eggs were thrown at him.

So the courage King needed was not just to withstand the beatings and jailings, it was also to withstand the taunts and the accusations of people like Malcolm X.

Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam argued that non-violence would never work, that it was cowardly. Blacks and whites could never live together, they said, and there would never be anything approaching equality. So they eschewed the Civil Rights Movement, banning members from political action and holding the jail marches in open contempt. They wanted segregation of their own, based on black pride. And they openly espoused violence, even if they mainly used it against each other.

After his death, Malcolm X became a cult hero, largely as a result of his autobiography, a book that was mostly written for him by Alex Haley, the man who later wrote *Roots*. Malcolm X is considered a hero of the black struggle. There are schools named after him, and a boulevard in New York. There has been a film. There has been an opera.

The reality was rather different. The black pride of Malcolm X was understandable. The rejection of non-violence was understandable too. It required saintly forbearance not to take up arms against the oppression that black people were suffering and not everyone is capable of such saintly forbearance. What is striking about Malcolm X then is not his exotic doctrine, but that he was extraordinarily ineffectual.

Read Malcolm X's story alongside that of Martin Luther King and you will see that while King soared, moved mountains, changed lives, Malcolm X spent the best years of his life in fractious arguments with his own allies. As the Civil Rights Movement reached its peak in Selma and Birmingham and Jackson, Malcolm X was rowing with Elijah Muhammed about who should appear in *The New York Times*, or had fled abroad to avoid being gunned down by his political associates in a dispute over his mortgage.

A new film about the boxer Muhammed Ali - a devotee of the Nation of Islam, Cassius Clay was given his new name by Elijah Muhammed - attests that he addressed a Ku Klux Klan rally. And the Nation also palled about with the American Nazi party. They all wanted the same end, you see - racial segregation.

The irrelevance and the internal rows and the pacts with the Devil are all part and parcel of embracing cultist violence and rejecting mainstream compromise. And the election of Mr Obama is a rebuke to people like Malcolm X, a symbol that Martin Luther King was right with his patience, and his give and take and his belief in democracy. For, in the end, democracy triumphed. In the end, non-violence worked. In the end, moderation and self-discipline and restraint worked.

The election of Mr Obama is a rebuke too, to the Eta Basque separatists who put bombs in shopping centres, to the IRA with their pub bombs, to the Baader-Meinhof gang with their abductions and killings. It is a rebuke to the Irgun terrorists whose terrible crime was to blow up the King David Hotel and to the murders and missiles of **Hamas** and Fatah. It is a rebuke to all those who abandon law and peace in favour of the gun.

Triumph of those who dare to resist violence

And it is an affirmation that sometimes it is the moderates who are the boldest, the slow route that is the quickest, and the man who refuses to raise up his arms who is the most courageous.

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A day at Shefayim - ESRA celebrates 30 years

The Jerusalem Post

November 14, 2008 Friday

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Byline: David E. Kaplan

Highlight: Despite the feeling by some of being left out of the Israeli narrative, Anglos gather in the rain to celebrate the country and volunteering in its service

Body

The final days prior to the ESRA 30th anniversary had a D-Day countdown panic about them. There was justifiable concern about the weather. The forecasts were for heavy rain and wind. "Would the people come?" plagued the minds of event organizer Jane Krivine and her team of 100 volunteers. They needn't have worried!

While it did rain hard, the English-speaking community braved the "miserable weather," and ESRA Chairwoman Debbie Lieberman typified her organization's philosophy of responding to a negative with a positive when she animatedly bellowed at the closing ceremony at Kibbutz Shefayim: "Israel should be indebted to ESRA - we brought the much-needed rain."

For over 30 years, ESRA has brought much else. The event was not only a celebration of a journey of communal service but an opportunity to showcase to the Israeli public "who we are and what we do," Lieberman told Metro. Apart from the general press, the event was covered on Israel TV news. Former Australian and Spokesman for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert Mark Regev told a packed auditorium, "I am proud of my Anglo-Saxon roots. You can travel the length and breadth of Israel and you will see a ward in a hospital, a department at a university or an ambulance or fire station with the plaque recognizing a contribution from some faraway philanthropic Anglo Saxon from LA, London or Sydney."

What has been neglected, stressed Regev, has been the absence of the narrative "of you - 'the Anglos' - who came on aliya and settled this land, fought in its wars and contributed to its economy, its sciences, its academia and its politics."

ESRA's 30-year anniversary was in many respects a response to Regev's observation.

The day was educative and informative. Visiting the writers' corner, one could meet among the many English-speaking authors Rebecca Yeheskel, who had written a book about her childhood in India. Born in Poona, and educated in an English school, she immigrated to Israel in 1970 with her husband, a pilot in the Indian Air Force. Gathering an audience, she related the origin of the Jewish community in India, much of it covered in her book. She related how her "Jewish forefathers arrived before the destruction of the Second Temple, shipwrecked off the coast near where Bombay is today. There were seven men and seven women who survived and as time passed, they forgot their Hebrew, but certain traditions were retained."

A day at Shefayim - ESRA celebrates 30 years

People were enjoying no less the lecture in the adjacent hall by former South African Leah Zinder, IBA News diplomatic correspondent. Like many Israelis, English speakers are generally news junkies. But unlike native-born Israelis, Anglos tend to be obsessed with how Israel is so negatively portrayed in the world media. Not surprisingly, Zinder's and Regev's lectures attracted the largest audiences of the event. Zinder spoke of the "new television," and what she refers to as "the tyranny of the visual image." The line between news and entertainment "has been completely blurred," she said. News has evolved out of a milieu of moviemaking, she said, citing the Second Lebanon War as a particularly low point in TV news coverage.

"Reports were part fabricated - pictures and TV footage doctored or manufactured. Remember the pictures of buildings alleged to have just been bombed and later discovered to have been hit weeks before or the wailing Lebanese woman, standing despairingly before her destroyed home, on three separate occasions in three different towns?" Zinder asked. What the TV audiences watch the world over "is what Hizbullah or Hamas want them to see. Who guides them in these areas? Who translates from the Arabic into English? This is controlled news and the foreign media plays along with it," the reporter asserted.

Regev, on the other hand, has no problem with the rough coverage Israel receives in the world media, saying "the job of the media is to be critical." He refutes the popular local belief of "an international media conspiracy" against Israel. "While I am not na-ve [enough] to believe there is no bias or anti-Semitism in the media," he said, he generally sees the foreign media not as hostile but "aggressive" - "because that's what they're paid to be. We wouldn't want it otherwise. Who would want to read sycophantic Pravda-type papers? Not any of you! We are all from Anglo-Saxon societies nurtured on press freedom. My job is to defend Israel's actions and policies, and if I have any criticism of the foreign media it's that they're not equally aggressive when covering our adversaries," Regev declared.

There was good reason why former American Ahron Klieman, Emeritus Professor of Diplomacy at Tel Aviv University, also attracted a large audience - his subject: "The US Elections and Israel." Who would not be curious how each of the presidential candidates would impact the Middle East, particularly on the Iran question?

"We cannot bomb Iran," Klieman explained. "Since our attack on Iraq's nuclear reactor in 1982, the Iranians have taken precautions, widely dispersing their facilities underground. So all we may achieve is to stall the program. Worse, we would likely cause a disruption in the free flow of oil through the Persian Gulf." Not exactly a result that would improve Israel's shaky popularity in Europe and elsewhere. Irrespective of who would win the White House, "Neither a joint or solo military operation is likely," says Klieman, "The momentum now is to pursue a diplomatic path."

Aside from politics, ESRA's reunion boasted subjects of interest for everyone - religion, literature, medicine, photojournalism and history. The morning began with British photographer, curator and co-author Ruth Cormon joining famed Israel Prize recipient David Rubinger for "Israel Through My Lens" - a presentation of slides and readings from Rubinger's book, which has topped Israel's bestseller list for months. His photographs, covering 60 years, are a pictorial documentary of Israel's turbulent history. One impressive photo shows a line of IDF soldiers, a typical image of the Israeli army of the 1950s, young, brash and "undisciplined." In the photographer's own words: "There isn't one soldier in this line who is standing in the same position as another. Everything uniform about an army is missing. That was typical of the period. No saluting. No Prussian drill. But it wasn't a bad army, by any means."

The depiction of fortitude and grit that began the day at Shefayim also concluded the long day as it passed into night. Nineteen volunteers were presented with certificates of recognition for years of dedicated community service.

ESRA Life President Merle Guttman, who gave the keynote address, reflected back over 30 years to the meeting in Herzliya when the idea of establishing an organization to assist English-speaking immigrants in their integration was first conceived. Since its inception, ESRA has raised over NIS 50 million to support some 160 community projects throughout Israel.

It rained hard that day at Shefayim. But it didn't dampen the spirits of an English-speaking army of volunteers determined to continue making their mark on Israeli society.

Graphic

4 photos: THE OR MOVEMENT table promoting the Negev to English speakers. FOUNDER AND Life President of ESRA, Merle Guttman with fellow ESRA members. ETHIOPIAN CHILDREN from one of ESRA's projects, who performed on stage. A TABLE of English writers in Israel, Rebecca Yeheskel.

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Vote Conservative for their record

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

October 11, 2008 Saturday

Final Edition

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Body

To say Canada's federal election campaign has been overtaken by the near train-wreck that the international financial system has become would be an understatement.

And while Canada's federal government can do little to command the economic tsunami to cease, the question of who is best equipped to limit the ensuing damage to Canada, or who would exacerbate the effects of the financial crash, is critically relevant for Tuesday's election.

During this election campaign, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has been lambasted by his opponents for being "out of touch" with the world's economic situation because he repeatedly says "Canada is not the U.S." and that economic fundamentals, including the Canadian banking system, are sound.

Experts, however, agree with Harper. On Thursday, the World Economic Forum released a report saying Canada has the soundest banking system in the world, closely followed by Sweden, Luxembourg and Australia, and on the same day the International Monetary Fund said Canada will lead the G-7 in economic growth next year and avoid a recession. Nevertheless, Harper's don't worry, be happy tune hasn't done him any favours in the polls and he should have shown greater empathy toward those Canadians losing sleep or their jobs as a result of the economic downturn.

Before detailing the reasons we believe Harper and the Conservative party deserve to govern on the question of Canada's economic future, however, it is useful to first examine the Conservative government's record.

It would be troubling if Canadians chose their next government based on a five-week election campaign of smears and sound bites rather than focusing on the Conservatives' nearly three years of effective and competent governing.

The minority government led by Harper has made a significant mark in the area of foreign policy. Since coming to power in 2006, the prime minister has been consistent and coherent in his defence of human rights around the world. Several examples are noteworthy.

After the terrorist group **Hamas** was elected in Palestinian elections, Harper led the world in refusing to send direct aid to the radical Islamists intent on the destruction of Israel. Further, when Israel was attacked by Lebanese-based Hezbollah terrorists in 2006, and this after thousands of rockets from Gaza and hundreds of suicide bomb attacks since 2000, many in the Canadian establishment, media and in the state-funded broadcaster expected the prime

Vote Conservative for their record

minister to respond to Israel's invasion of Lebanon as Jean Chretien or Paul Martin would have responded: lay blame on both sides no matter the history of the terror Israel endured.

Instead, in July 2006, Harper said Canada was not "going to give in to the temptation of some to single out Israel, which was the victim of the initial attack."

The prime minister stayed the course in Afghanistan instead of abandoning Afghan women and children to a resurgent Taliban, which would have been the end result of what the other parties urged. But as has been symptomatic of a Conservative campaign left to constantly dodge minefields of unforeseen circumstances, a government report released Thursday showed the cost for the Afghan mission has skyrocketed.

Similarly, Harper has been resolute in his criticism of China, which surprised some (and disappointed others) who bizarrely thought a pro-market prime minister standing up for human rights was somehow contradictory. That Harper would draw a proper line was also evident when he, unlike previous prime ministers, met the Dalai Lama -- publicly and in his office. As well, Harper's tenacity in defence of Canadian values and sovereignty has also been evident in his willingness to spend money on the Canadian military and on asserting Canada's claim in the Arctic.

Beyond international matters, the Harper Conservatives have also been mostly prudent stewards of the public purse. While less spending would have been better, the reality is that Liberal claims they would have spent less since 2006 are highly suspect. After all, the Liberals vociferously opposed a minor \$45-million cut to the arts; it stretches credibility to then claim that party would restrain spending.

On economic and tax policy, the Harper government has properly begun cutting corporate taxes, which will help free up capital to survive tough times, cut the GST to five per cent from seven, allowed income-splitting for low- and middle-income seniors, and this past week moved to abolish \$350 million in tariffs on manufacturing equipment.

Also, in less than three years, the Tories have paid \$26.2 billion towards Canada's debt -- which results in about \$2 billion in debt-interest savings annually, or \$65 million per month. Such tax moves are evidence of a prudent return of public money to the actual public who pay taxes. To some, such actions are evidence of an ideological government.

Hardly. The Harper government has busily delivered tax dollars to Quebec's aerospace industry, Ontario's automotive sector and to "regional development" agencies on the Prairies and in Atlantic Canada. We oppose such corporate welfare, but if partisan opponents think those expenditures are evidence of a Dickensian world, it begs the question of how much more money the Liberals or NDP are prepared to spend in power.

The Harper government has not been perfect, though it has been mostly scandal-free -- Maxime Bernier's approach to official documents and his choice in girlfriends notwithstanding. Compare that minor tempest to the multibillion-dollar gun registry, Shawinigate or the Adscam shenanigans under the Liberals.

Harper broke his promise on income trusts and on fixed election dates, though in hindsight, preserving corporate tax revenues through ending trusts' exemptions now looks prudent for government finances.

It is to that issue that we now return. The New Democrats under Jack Layton would spend Canada back into deficits, and introduce measures that reek of 1930s-style American protectionism, which helped plunge the world into the Great Depression.

The Liberals would be an improvement on the NDP, but Stephane Dion's "Green Shift" carbon tax program, even if revenue neutral (which it won't be for most people), would pummel Canada's resource sector, undoubtedly the most robust of industries in Canada. Also, Dion's action plan on the economy -- consult with economists and convene with premiers -- would do nothing to improve Canada in the midst of an economic crisis. Dion's dithering might well make things worse.

Canadians need a prime minister who will act with clarity, thoughtfulness and foresight. In the past week, Prime Minister Harper has been accused of lacking all three as the effects of the U.S. subprime crisis became clear.

Vote Conservative for their record

The critics could not be more wrong. It was the Harper government that moved earlier this year to stop the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corp. from offering zero per cent down, 40-year mortgages. The Conservatives saw what was coming and moved to block problematic U.S. practices from being replicated en masse in Canada.

Thus, the choice is simple. The Calgary Herald endorses Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Conservatives. They deserve to be re-elected based on their record, competence, and on the prime minister's steady hand as Canada heads into uncharted, choppy economic waters.

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When the average Joe meets 'Yossi'

The Jerusalem Post

October 29, 2008 Wednesday

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Body

The ballots are flying. Wherever you look lately it seems like elections of some type are taking place. The US is doing it the American way - with TV spots and coast-to-coast rallies. Canada has just done it the Canadian way - politely, in two languages. Austria veered to the Right in German. The Palestinians are polls apart with Hamas in Gaza threatening not to recognize the right of Mahmoud Abbas to remain PA president after January 9 and a deadly serious campaign. Israel, meanwhile, is facing municipal elections on November 11 and is clearly gearing up for national polls in the not so distant future.

Even if Tzipi Livni manages to concoct a coalition, holding it together is not going to be easy. Although Livni, who succeeds Ehud Olmert, and whoever takes over from George Bush are not going to have a particularly hard act to follow. Meanwhile, the economic meltdown is stealing the show. It is difficult to get carried away with galloping expectations when the horse has already bolted. And, as a friend of mine likes to quote, the choice seems to be between the evil of two lessers.

Of course, it is the gimmicks that stand out although few get my vote. Barack Obama and John McCain both mobilized the average Joe toward the end of their road campaigns. "Joe the Plumber" - neither a licensed plumber nor even called Joe, apparently - has had more than his 15 minutes of fame in the global village.

I don't know any plumbers called Joe, but I do know two Yossis, the Hebrew equivalent, and though I haven't spoken to either recently, from what I gather from past conversations I suspect plumbers everywhere believe their country is going down the drain and they have ideas how to fix the problem. They just have different ideas and price estimates - the same as the politicians they end up electing.

Actually, with dire predictions of mass layoffs as a result of the financial crisis, Joe the Plumber might be in a good line of business - taxing questions notwithstanding. Ask any plumber you know and he'll tell you that even in the hi-tech world where YouTube rules, people's pipes always need fixing.

Some jobs are like that. They might not be prestigious or well paid but they'll always be there. Once, when I was in my late teens and campaigning for Soviet Jewry, as I did almost every Sunday afternoon in London in the late '70s, I came across a policeman on security detail who seemed to be in a class of his own (in London, you can still tell a person's class from their speech). It turned out that this particular British bobby had studied economics at university and, realizing that a slowdown was about to take place, had joined the force as a graduate, thus ensuring himself a tenured, if not safe, job, in which he might be in the firing line but he would be unlikely to be fired.

When the average Joe meets 'Yossi'

THE COPPER came back to mind this week because, no matter who you are and where you live, we all have certain hopes and fears in common. But who is the average Joe/Yossi? Even within a tiny country such as Israel it would be hard to say definitively who is the ordinary man (or woman) on the street, let alone in the huge area that makes up the States. Does the average Joe live in Manhattan or the Midwest? Does the average Yossi reside under threats of Kassams/Katyushas in the North or South or is he the one wondering where all the doves have flown in Tel Aviv?

Phrases like "Americans choose..." and "Israel elects..." make good slogans (and headlines) but what do they really mean?

The Joe the Plumber who got just about the biggest plug possible showed the world how similar - and different - we all are. It is a safe bet that people everywhere worry about the same basic needs as they did even before the birth of democracy: food and shelter. And no politician anywhere is ever going to mount a campaign against education and health care. Nowadays it would also be hard to imagine a politician under the sun - which seems to get hotter and hotter courtesy of global warming - rejecting the need for environmental protection. Read their lip service.

But other issues on which many an American platform has been built seem almost esoteric to the Israeli voter, to whom pro-choice is more likely to be considered a slogan to get people into the polling booth than anything to do with the rights of a woman versus the rights of a fetus. And as to the war of words about gun ownership, well, that as an issue backfires in a country where there is compulsory military service and the wars are fought on home territory, not thousands of miles away. Guns aren't used here to down a deer but protect the Lion of Judah. Same-sex marriage? Not even on the radar. But if a savvy politician were to include the issue of agunot (women whose husbands won't give them a divorce, leaving them unable by Jewish law to remarry or have children) it might grab attention and some votes.

Fighting crime (and that includes corruption) is high on the list of priorities. Changing the election system itself should be a priority - especially as the current coalition negotiations demonstrate how far from democratic principles we are. The war on terror is certainly up there: "Yossi Ha'instalator" (or hashravrav, to use the correct Hebrew for plumber) is no stranger to news about pipe bombs being smuggled in from the Palestinian areas even as Israel's leaders discuss concessions for peace. But the war on road accidents is no less necessary. We need to close economic gaps - by raising the quality of life of the have-nots, not bringing down the haves. This won't be easy in the new post-'08 Crash world.

RIGHT NOW there are plenty of parties but we are not spoilt for choice.

Perhaps it is fortunate that we have the municipal elections coming up first. In Jerusalem it's not so much a matter of getting the trains to run on time as getting the light rail to run at all, since we're already paying for it. Building more classrooms (in all sectors of the population: from secular Jewish to ultra-Orthodox and in the Arab community) definitely is on the list. So is protecting the city's unique architecture and character. The threat of more luxury high-rises is casting a dark shadow in my neighborhood (populated by Yossis and plumbers by the score). We need more (and better paid) jobs and affordable housing. And never forget that we also need to take a break now and again and could do with more events like the wonderful (and cheap) Jerusalem Street Theater Festival held over Succot in the Liberty Bell Garden.

It would be nice if politicians would remember these are elections, not a ratings war. There are real life-and-death issues at stake - and I'm not just thinking of babies who might not be born and wild animals which might be shot down. I'm thinking of babies who might be shot down and endangered animals which might not be born.

Average Joes everywhere want politicians at both the municipal and national level to look out for the little guy - whatever he's called.

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When the average Joe meets 'Yossi'

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Meade students tackle homeland security issues

The Capital (Annapolis, MD)

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Byline: JOSHUA STEWART Staff Writer

Body

It's a little after 7 a.m. and 14-year-old Matthew Thomas is sitting at a beige desk, trying to "climb inside" the mind of a **female** suicide bomber.

"I can't believe it, that people would do such a thing. I, I, I just ... "

"People do strange things," his classmate Mike Vietor said.

"I wonder if people ever thought about that, if God created them just to do that," Matthew responded.

It was first period on a Friday at Meade High School and Mike, Matt and 14 classmates were in Tina Edler's Homeland Security Explorations class, a part of the Homeland Security Signature Program that is new to the school this year.

For 86 minutes every other day they learn about numerous homeland security topics, including Kalashnikov assault rifles, as well as Delaware Sen. Joe Biden's reference to Hezbollah and **Hamas** in the vice presidential debate the day before.

They discuss rocket-propelled grenades, the Aryan Nation and Al Qaeda in Iraq in lessons pulled more from national newspapers than textbooks, among other issues.

"It's kind of like another history class, but with different subjects, like terrorists," said student Justen Hobdy.

While the homeland security industry is nothing new to the area - Fort George G. Meade is the state's largest employer, and a litany of defense contractors speckle the region - this class has witnessed the significance of the field; they were about 7 years old during the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"These are things that are happening now, in their lifetime," Ms. Edler said.

The students in the program are now freshmen, and they're guinea pigs of sorts. They're the first class to experience the program.

Matthew said that, in comparison to other classes, his homeland security class is more in-depth. It has a narrower focus than others, giving the chance to take a more thorough look at the subject.

Meade students tackle homeland security issues

In a school of 2,250 students, about 80 students have enrolled in a homeland security course. Eight of the roughly 100 members of the faculty and staff are involved and the interest of those who work at the school seems to be growing.

This year there are only courses for freshmen, but as those students become sophomores, new courses will be added.

Any students can choose to enroll or leave the program - both classes and homeland security clubs. So any students in the school can be a part of the program if they want, said William Sheppard, the administrator who runs it.

The signature program, the first in the county and one of a few related to homeland security in the country, is designed as a first step to a career in myriad jobs devoted to protecting the country - jobs that some of the state's largest employers struggle to fill with qualified workers.

For example, such an education could lead to a position writing computer programs for the National Security Agency, located just a few miles from the school, or a job as an engineer with Northrop Grumman.

"The whole intent of the overall program is to build a workforce pipeline. (Job openings) are so numerous on the domestic front that we can't fill them now, let alone in 10 years with baby boomers retiring," said Maureen McMahon, coordinator for the county school system's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Office.

And as the country devotes more of its defense strategy to asymmetrical warfare - fighting a smaller, less-equipped, poorly-funded but particularly creative and resourceful enemy - the need for a workforce with a homeland security background increases, education and defense contractor officials said.

The need for employees who have backgrounds in homeland security is apparent as Fort Meade prepares for an influx of 22,000 new jobs on the post, many requiring advanced science degrees and analytical skills to fight terrorism.

"We talked about terrorists and them not being dumb people. They're very well-educated," Ms. Edler said.

Students at Meade High aren't learning how to find carefully concealed knives by waving hand-held metal detectors over airline passengers, or how to fill sandbags to brace for hurricanes like employees in agencies under the Department of Homeland Security. Rather, they are learning advanced physics, law and engineering, skills that are the fundamentals for college and post-graduate programs.

"When they get to 12th grade, they will be able to decide if they go to a two-year or a four-year institution," Mr. Sheppard said.

Real world practice

The teachers and administrators running the homeland security program are career-educators.

Ms. Edler doesn't come from a defense background - she's a teacher through and through. But she is in the middle of a homeland security certificate program at the University of Maryland University College and is a self-proclaimed news junkie. Mr. Sheppard is in a similar situation - he's a teacher by trade and has experience starting programs.

Simply put, a few years ago they knew nothing about homeland security.

So they brought in government agencies and defense contractors to help design the program.

"If an educator does it, you may get one product that may be adequate, but it might not reflect the true needs of the community," said retired Col. Kenneth O. McCreedy, the former installation commander of Fort Meade who helped bring the program to the school.

Meade students tackle homeland security issues

"What also attracted me was this notion of community involvement in the creation of the curriculum and the community being invested and having a stake in the output," he said.

When the program was first announced, about 200 organizations swarmed to the school to become involved. But that number started to dwindle.

Today there are about 20 companies or government agencies working alongside the school. But slowly, more groups are starting to return as the school year progresses, Mr. Sheppard said.

Northrop Grumman is one of the companies involved. And like many other defense contractors, it is struggling to fill job openings with qualified candidates, said Ted Imes, who worked for 29 years as an electrical engineer and is now director of community and education outreach.

"It's a national problem that there aren't a lot of kids going into the engineering field. This is a long pipeline problem," he said.

The homeland security program piques students' interest in the subject and helps prepare students for the college-level courses they need before his company hires them, Mr. Imes said.

"It's not a specific skill, and the skills at the homeland security program are one of many and a prerequisite for the skills you need here."

For the program, some aspects of the homeland security field are incorporated into humanities and science classes.

For example, a science class has students simulate a biological weapon attack, plan how they would respond and anticipate how a deadly substance would spread and cause damage. Lessons focus on foreign and local concerns.

In one lesson plan, students evaluate the differences between Israeli and American airport security. In another lesson, "What Happened When Baltimore Burned, Hon?" the focus is on the 1904 blaze that leveled parts of the city.

And an English lesson has students figure out which warfare principles the Trojans used against the Greeks would be effective today, as described in "The Odyssey."

"There are connections. Sometimes you have to dig for them, but they're there," Ms. Edler said.

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LETTERS

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The Herald

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Body

EU must respond to callous Israeli bombing in Gaza

ISRAEL callously has used the holiday season (peace and goodwill?) and the shutting down of parliaments to launch air strikes killing hundreds of people in Gaza. Its excuse? Some rockets landed near Israeli settlements. Israel, however, does not restrict its retribution. It practises collective punishment on the Gaza population, which is already in peril through the Israeli blockades of essential and life-saving supplies. The UK government is complicit in its mealy-mouthed response for fear of upsetting the US.

Picture the terror of ordinary citizens in Gaza city as Israeli F16 jets fire missiles into one of the most heavily populated cities. Israel has developed some of the most gruesome weapons to use against civilian areas, including cluster bombs and shells that unleash hundreds of deadly metal darts. Missiles are indiscriminate, wiping out men, women children. There is a severe shortage of medical supplies. The Israelis know this, so they understand the consequences of their barbaric actions.

It is time for the world's politicians to stop pussyfooting around this warmongering Israeli government. A first step would be withdrawing all privileges Israel has and is proposed to have with the EU. Members of the Israeli government participated in this action and are war criminals; we must ensure that they are prosecuted as such. Let's hear from our politicians what they are going to do about this.

Tony Grahame, 17 Silverknowes Gardens, Edinburgh.

GORDON Brown has without doubt brought shame on this country after his pitifully feeble response to the bombardment of the Gaza strip.

By blaming Hamas for the massacre of around 300 Palestinians - the majority of whom were innocent women and children - the Prime Minister has declared our support for the actions of the Israeli government.

Well, Mr Brown, most people in this country cannot and, indeed, will not support such a callous bombardment of defenceless civilians.

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It has been months since Israel imposed a blockade of Gaza, resulting in a shortage of food, clean water, electricity, fuel, medical supplies and so on. Suffice to say, you wouldn't treat dogs as inhumanely as Israel has been treating the people of Gaza.

Meanwhile, the explanation for this onslaught is that Hamas broke the ceasefire and is "mixed in" with the civilian population.

First, it was Israel that initially broke the ceasefire on November 5 after the slaughter of six Palestinians by air strikes in the village of Wadi al-Salqa.

Secondly, could Margaret Thatcher have gotten away with such an excuse if she had sent fighter jets and warplanes to Ireland during the 1980s? Did we accept this type of explanation from the Nazis who used the same excuse for raiding villages and collectively punishing the whole populace?

It's time Gordon Brown and David Miliband developed a moral compass instead of umming and arring like Beavis and Butt-Head.

Noman Tahir, 5 Royal Exchange Square, Glasgow.

HAVING recently returned from Gaza and witnessed first-hand the suffering of the Gazan people, I am appalled by the actions of Israel. I am equally appalled by the silence of the international community that has sat back and watched as Israel has systematically destroyed the people of Gaza and its infrastructure for years.

Will they now act, tell Israel that it cannot continue to act in this way? Will Tony Blair - Middle East envoy? - intervene and visit Gaza to see for himself the suffering, the hospitals without equipment, and children without food and shelter?

The recent attacks are an act of complete barbarism and Israel must be told in no uncertain terms to stop.

Sandra White MSP, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh.

ISRAEL'S military response to Palestinian missiles is long overdue. Hundreds of missiles had been fired at Israeli civilian towns in the past week alone, let alone the past years. What a shame the Palestinian leadership did not use the end of Israeli occupation of Gaza in 2005 to make life better for the people. Instead of wasting money on missiles, it should have spent it on food and education.

Until the leadership is more concerned with the people's wellbeing instead of continuing war with Israel, the international community should not waste a penny on them. Why should we continue to fund a group that has proven time and again that the money will be spent on warfare instead of the basic necessities?

Instead of having a state, the Palestinians are in a sorry state of affairs - and the ones who should be held accountable are the Palestinian leadership.

Michelle Moshelian, 3 Henrietta Court, 52 Station Road, New Barnet, Herts.

Messianic tendency afflicts UK leaders

ALL this "British" rhetoric in the current political discourse, much of it emanating from Gordon Brown himself, is the precursor of change. For I sense a government of "national unity" coming on.

Just so long as New Labour feels itself to have a chance of winning the next election, any national unity paradigm will be kept under wraps. But when "winning" is felt to be impossible, so the clamour for a national government will resonate the more loudly, not least around 10 Downing Street.

Lord Mandelson, the principal architect of New Labour, playing what Lenin called the "useful idiot" role, will be key. He has recently compared Brown to Moses. Teflon Tony, our wee war criminal, may also try to hokey-cokey his way back into public affection on Strictly Come Dancing, while jettisoning the frustrations of being a peace envoy to

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whom nobody pays the slightest attention. Besides, the job is unpaid and the biblical "Lom" (love of money) is, indeed, his middle name.

I recall here Blair's 1999 New Labour conference speech with its quasi-religious overtones. "We thought we had eternal doctrines when they are, in truth, eternal values, " Blair droned mystically, eyes a little moist, before declaiming apocalyptically: "The battleground is the new millennium." And the chosen people none other than New Labour brethren enslaved in Egypt "by the forces of ? Conservatism". His peroration enshrined the grand expostulation: "Set our people free!" If that wasn't a grab for the Moses mantle, I don't know what was.

But now it's Brown's turn to ham it up as Moses before we descend into the 10 plagues.

Most of us thought that parody died the day Henry Kissinger won the Nobel peace prize, but Moses Brown and his national government may be about to prove us wrong. Can't wait myself.

Chris Walker, 21/23 Main Street, West Kilbride.

Human rights critique

ACCORDING to Frank Maguire: "We should not be so defensive about human rights. One of the most important rights we have is our right to life as enshrined in Article Two of the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms" (Letters, December 26).

This confuses at least two different questions: what moral rights do we actually have and what legal rights should we be accorded?

If it is a good idea to grant ourselves a legal right to, for instance, life or free healthcare, it is irrelevant whether or not we have a prior, moral, human right to life or free healthcare. Similarly, if it is not a good idea to grant ourselves a legal right to life or free healthcare, it is irrelevant whether or not we have a prior, moral, human right to such things.

That which politicians declare to be human rights do not become actual moral rights by mere virtue of their declarations; nor do politicians invariably pass wise laws. To be defensive about or - better still, perhaps - to be critical of so-called human rights can be quite appropriate.

Professor Hugh V McLachlan, School of Law and Social Sciences, Glasgow Caledonian University.

Not on the fast track

SOME 27 years after France opened the first high-speed railway from Paris to Lyon, it is depressing that the chair of the Holyrood Transport Committee can still be ambivalent towards the benefits of high-speed rail (The Herald, December 26). Trains running up to 186mph are now the mainstay of inter-city travel in France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

The Scottish Association for Public Transport has championed an AngloScottish high-speed link. The benefits were spelled out in our FastTrack North conference in Glasgow in 2005.

We were disappointed the Holyrood Transport Committee did not hear this evidence during its inquiry. The potential for high-speed rail in the UK is being studied by the Greengauge21 organisation. We urge MSPs to argue for Scotland to be part of the emerging high-speed rail network.

Dr John McCormick, Chairman, Scottish Association for Public Transport, 11 Queens Crescent, Glasgow.

Argument rages on over Govan philosopher

THE Rev John Nugent misses the point when he accuses the two critics of the "festive" episode of Rab C Nesbitt of being examples of "wilful failure to take responsibility for their own part in the failings of society".

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They objected on moral rather than on social grounds. No doubt they do as much as anybody "to create a more equitable society". Like me, they probably felt let down by an unnecessary surfeit of smut.

What a shame the scriptwriters feel the Govan philosopher can no longer raise a laugh through his own pith and punch and has to rely on the crudity of his cronies. Possibly these are brilliant insights saying more about the viewers than the characters. I think they detracted from the wit of the script, becoming more memorable than the message.

Using a service for the anniversary of wee Burnie's death as a vehicle for a no-show Rab verged on bad taste. Finally, if the programme is social commentary, it is harmful to assume poverty and alcoholism go hand-in-hand with lewdness.

Anne McKay, 11 Cedar Crescent, Hamilton.

I AM in awe of the Rev John Nugent. What a remarkable man. We have never met and yet, on the strength of my (93-word) letter complaining of obscenity on the Rab C Nesbitt programme, he is able to construct a litany of my faults and failings.

I learn, in humility I hope, that: I am, condescendingly, one of the "unco guid";

I represent only my own narrowminded constituency;

I make scapegoats of others to explain away my own inadequacies;

I do not take responsibility for my own part in society's failings? and so on.

Phew! My wife of 50 years laughed that even she does not know me as well as that.

Bill Waddell, 34 Ash Road, Cumbernauld.

We should value, support and protect the existing system of NHS GP provision in Scotland

THE Scottish Government plans to protect Scottish NHS general practice as the sole contractors of GP health services in Scotland. In contrast, NHS England has a commercial experiment to encourage big business to bid for GP contracts in England. The Confederation of British Industry in Scotland has objected in The Herald on the grounds of monopoly provision in a public service.

Professor Watt from the University of Glasgow wrote to defend the NHS GP provider approach in Scotland and Bupa Wellness has responded with cheap jibes and the offer of a free gift for Professor Watt to change his mind.

I have been an NHS GP contractor for 30 years. Professor Watts's contribution to academic general practice during this time has been substantial. He has an international reputation on the health problems of Glasgow and analysis of how best to provide GP services in deprived areas. The University of Glasgow and the people of Glasgow are indeed fortunate to have his advocacy, academic rigour and leadership to improve their health.

We have the failure of NHS dentistry services in Scotland during the past five years as the best example of how to destroy 60 years of NHS provision with contractual misjudgments by government. The lesson of history is that providing health services within the remote, rural and deprived areas in Scotland is very expensive and equity remains an aspiration.

The private sector of health provision will always be driven by screening to support international drug company definitions of wellbeing and illness. NHS general practice provides and supports many healthscreening programmes based on the scientific analysis and independent thinking of Scottish GP academics such as Professor Watt. The private business contractors can only provide health screening in cities and would never be able to respond to the daily health needs sorted by Scottish general practice when requested by patients with symptoms. Just look what

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happens when the GP services close for four days in the festive season and the NHS struggles in A&E and out-of-hours services to respond to the daily demand normally soaked up by a dependable NHS GP service.

Let's not repeat the contractual mistakes of NHS dental provision in Scotland with GP medical services and have the sense to value and support the existing system of NHS GP provision.

Dr James DM Douglas, Luskentyre, Seafield Gardens, Fort William.

DR GORDON McNeish (Letters, December 26) is entitled to protect his business, and I have no objection to people spending their own money as they wish, but as an article in the New England Journal of Medicine (a major US medical journal) recently commented, executive medicals fail on three counts: efficacy, cost and equity. They're not good for the patients who undergo them, not good for the companies that pay for them and not good for the health care system overall.

This issue is a distraction, however, from the complaint by CBI Scotland that the Scottish Government is set to prevent commercial companies from providing front-line primary care services in Scotland, in the same way as has been promoted in England.

The English model of privatised primary care is not a partnership between the NHS and the private sector as far as patients are concerned. On the contrary, it has involved the imposition of private providers as the UK government preferred alternative to NHS general practice when practice vacancies have arisen.

It is not difficult for commercial providers of primary care to appear as an improvement, when new premises are provided in previously underresourced or poorly provided areas, but the challenge is not just to fill gaps or boost capacity - it is to deliver long-term effective care and to do so for everyone.

The structure of UK general practice has always provided the high levels of population contact and coverage, which make possible more than 90 per cent of people being in touch over a five-year period. Two other key ingredients are continuity and the commitment of NHS staff to their practices and patients.

Survey after survey confirms the high level of public trust in the general practitioner system. Insofar as there is evidence to explain this, it relates to three things: experience of having being dealt with fairly, effectively and decently; being known and remembered; and having confidence in being treated similarly in the future.

My major concern about privatisation in primary care is whether commercial companies can recruit and retain staff with long-term commitments to local populations.

Short-term contracts and accountability to a commercial employer are an uncertain basis for the productive long-term relationships between professionals and patients (one aspect of the Scottish Government's focus on mutuality) on which effective primary care depends.

Around 43 per cent of general practices in Scotland take part in the teaching of medical students. One-third take part in research. Would this professional culture survive? Would privately-run services take part in national information programmes that allow us to monitor and evaluate the system as a whole, or will such information be withheld as being commercially sensitive?

All this goes further and deeper than the notions of customer service and satisfaction on which commercial organisations thrive. It seems to me that in buying short-term change in primary care, the English NHS is paying a high price.

Graham Watt, Professor of General Practice, University of Glasgow.

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Jordanian Students Rebel, Embracing Conservative Arm of Islam

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Byline: By MICHAEL SLACKMAN; Mona el-Naggat contributed reporting.

Body

AMMAN, Jordan -- Muhammad Fawaz is a very serious college junior with a stern gaze and a reluctant smile that barely cloaks suppressed anger. He never wanted to attend Jordan University. He hates spending hours each day commuting.

As a high school student, Mr. Fawaz, 20, had dreamed of earning a scholarship to study abroad. But that was impossible, he said, because he did not have a "wasta," or connection. In Jordan, connections are seen as essential for advancement and the wasta system is routinely cited by young people as their primary grievance with their country.

So Mr. Fawaz decided to rebel. He adopted the serene, disciplined demeanor of an Islamic activist. In his sophomore year he was accepted into the student group affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, Jordan's largest, most influential religious, social and political movement, one that would ultimately like to see the state governed by Islamic law, or Shariah. Now he works to recruit other students to the cause.

"I find there is justice in the Islamic movement," Mr. Fawaz said one day as he walked beneath the towering cypress trees at Jordan University. "I can express myself. There is no wasta needed."

Across the Middle East, young people like Mr. Fawaz, angry, alienated and deprived of opportunity, have accepted Islam as an agent of change and rebellion. It is their rock 'n' roll, their long hair and love beads. Through Islam, they defy the status quo and challenge governments seen as corrupt and incompetent.

These young people -- 60 percent of those in the region are under 25 -- are propelling a worldwide Islamic revival, driven by a thirst for political change and social justice. That fervor has popularized a more conservative interpretation of the faith.

"Islamism for us is what pan-Arabism was for our parents," said Naseem Tarawnah, 25, a business writer and blogger, who is not part of the movement.

The long-term implications of this are likely to complicate American foreign policy calculations, making it more costly to continue supporting governments that do not let secular or moderate religious political movements take root.

Washington will also be likely to find it harder to maintain the policy of shunning leaders of groups like the Brotherhood in Egypt, or **Hamas** in Gaza, or Hezbollah in Lebanon, which command tremendous public sympathy.

Jordanian Students Rebel, Embracing Conservative Arm of Islam

Leaders of Muslim countries have tried to appease public sentiment while doing all they can to discourage the West from engaging religious movements directly. They see the prospect of a thaw in relations with the West, and see these groups as a threat to their monopoly on power.

Authoritarian governments view relative moderation as more of a political challenge than extremism, which is a security problem that can be contained through harsh methods.

"What happens if Islamists accepted the peace process and became more pragmatic?" said Muhammad Abu Rumman, research editor at the newspaper Al Ghad in Amman. "People see them as less corrupt and as the only real opposition. Israel and the U.S. might look at them differently. The regime is afraid of the Brotherhood when it becomes more pragmatic."

The financial crisis only adds to the anxiety of governments in the Middle East that had hoped economic development could appease their citizens, create jobs for legions of unemployed and underemployed young people and dilute the appeal of Islamic movements. But the crisis and the drop in oil prices have hit hard, throwing the brakes on once-booming economies in the Persian Gulf region, and modest economic growth elsewhere in the region.

In this environment, governments are forced to confront a reality of their own creation. By choking off democracy and free speech, the only space where groups could gather and discuss critical ideas became the mosque, and the only movements that had room to prosper were religion-based.

Today, the search for identity in the Middle East no longer involves tension between the secular and religious. Religion has won.

The struggle, instead, is over how to define an Islamic society and government. Zeinah Hamdan, 24, has traveled a typical journey in Jordan. She says she wants a more religious government guided by Shariah law, and she took the head scarf at a younger age than anyone else in her family.

But when she was in college, she was offended when an Islamist student activist chastised her for shaking a young man's hand. She wants to be a modern religious woman, and she defines that as working and socializing in a coed environment.

"If we implement Shariah law, we will be more comfortable," she said. "But what happens is, the people who come to power are extremists."

Like others here, she is torn between her discomfort with what she sees as the extreme attitudes of the Muslim Brotherhood and her alienation from a government she does not consider to be Islamic enough. "The middle is very difficult," she said.

Focus on Popular Causes

Under a bright midday sun one recent day, Mr. Fawaz and his allies in the Islamic student movement put on green baseball caps that read, in Arabic, "Islamic Current of Jordan University" and prepared to demonstrate. Mr. Fawaz carried a large poster board reading, "We are with you Gaza."

The university protest reflected the tactics of the Muslim Brotherhood in the country as a whole: precisely organized, deliberately nonthreatening and focused on popular causes here such as the Palestinians. The Brotherhood says it supports democracy and moderation, but its commitment to pluralism, tolerance and compromise has never been tested in Jordan.

Mr. Fawaz and about 200 other students stood in a straight line, extending nearly two city blocks, parallel to the traffic on the major roadway in front of the university. More than half of the students were women, many with their faces veiled.

Jordanian Students Rebel, Embracing Conservative Arm of Islam

State security men in plain clothes hurried up and down the line. "Brother, for God's sake, when will you be angry?" one security agent screamed into his phone, recording for headquarters the slogan on a student's placard.

At 12:30 p.m., the male students stepped into the road, blocking traffic, while the women rushed off to the sidewalk and melted back into the campus. One minute later, they walked out of traffic, took off their caps and folded up their signs, tucked them into computer bags and went back to school.

"I want to be able to express what I want; I want freedom," Mr. Fawaz said, after returning to the campus. His glasses always rest crooked on his face, making him look younger, and a bit out of sorts. "I don't want to be afraid to express my opinion."

Mr. Fawaz grew up in a small village called Anjara, near Ajloun, about 50 miles from Amman. His father grew up in the Jordan Valley and worked as a nurse in Irbid. Mr. Fawaz said he was 8 years old he was first invited to "leadership retreats" with a youth organization of the Brotherhood.

When he was 13, the youth group took him on a minor pilgrimage to Mecca. So, he said, he had been enticed by religion at an early age. But he only decided to become politically active -- and to join the Brotherhood -- when he was denied a scholarship to study abroad.

While there are no official statistics on student membership in the Brotherhood, only a fraction of Jordan University students are formally affiliated. Yet many others say they share the same vague sense of discontent and yearning, the same embrace of the Brotherhood's slogan, "Islam Is the Solution," a resonant catchall in the face of many problems.

The university, with about 30,000 students from across the country, has long served as a proxy battlefield for Jordan's competing interests.

Competing Loyalties

In Jordan, unlike Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood is legal, with a political party and a vast network of social services. It also has a political party, called the Islamic Action Front. While some fear it as too extreme, others argue that it has sold out by working within a political system they see as corrupt and un-Islamic. On campus, the Islamists try to build sympathy, handing out study sheets or copying notes for students.

Mr. Fawaz decided this year to run as an Islamist candidate for the student council, an influential organization with its own budget and the right to put up posters, distribute fliers and hold on-campus events.

The Islamic students' movement had boycotted the elections for years to protest a change of election rules that called for appointing -- not electing -- half of the council's 80 members. The rule change, decreed by the former university president, was made in order to block the Islamists, who were the most organized group on campus, from controlling the council.

That is a direct echo of how the state has long tried to contain the Islamist movement in Jordan. The Brotherhood is allowed to operate, but the government and the security services broadly control the outcome of elections.

Indeed, as Islamist movements have swelled, governments across the Middle East have chosen both to contain and to embrace them. Many governments have aggressively moved to roll back the few democratic practices that had started to take root in their societies, and to prevent Islamists from winning power through the voting booth. That risks driving the leaders and the followers of Islamic organizations toward extremism.

At the same time, many governments have tried to appease popular Islamist fervor. Jordan recently granted a Muslim Brotherhood-aligned newspaper the right to publish daily instead of weekly; held private talks with Hamas leaders; arrested a poet, saying he had insulted Islam by using verses of the Koran in love poems; and shut down restaurants that had served alcohol during Ramadan, though they had been licensed by the state to do so.

Jordanian Students Rebel, Embracing Conservative Arm of Islam

This year, the new president of Jordan University permitted all student council seats to be elected, but with rules in place that would, again, make it nearly impossible for the Islamist bloc to have control.

Two days before the voting took place, Mr. Fawaz was campaigning on the steps of the education building, dressed in his best suit and tie. His campaign message to the students was simply, "For your sake."

Running as an Islamist risks consequences: Mr. Fawaz said that he was approached by a student in his class who he believed was delivering a message from the security services. "He told me that they will write about me; I will never get a job," Mr. Fawaz said.

But even when the police ordered him to take down his posters on election day, he remained resolute and confident.

"Everybody knows that I am going to win," Mr. Fawaz said, without sounding boastful. "Because I represent the Islamic movement."

But he did not win. Instead, a candidate representing a large tribe from the city of Salt won, reflecting the loyalty to bonds of kinship and family heritage even as tribal culture has begun to absorb more conservative Islamic practices and beliefs.

Yet Mr. Fawaz was untroubled. "What is important for me," he said, "is to serve the movement by spreading the word among the students."

Amjad al-Absy, 28, remembers the moment when he pledged to join the Muslim Brotherhood. He was 15 and he was identified by Brotherhood recruiters when he was playing soccer in a Palestinian refugee camp. He described how the Brotherhood monitors young men -- when they play soccer, go to school, to mosque, to work, as well as in the street and singles out those who appear receptive.

"Once you say yes, they put you in a ring, in a family," said Mr. Absy. "Outside of the Brotherhood, there is no concern for young men, there is no respect. You are alone."

Mr. Absy and his friend Tarak Naimat, 24, said that while they were students at the university, they had helped to recruit other young men.

"In the computer lab, in the mosque, you buddy up," Mr. Naimat said. "Then you participate in events together. Then he becomes a member. If he's advanced, it can take six months. If less, maybe two years."

The appeal, Mr. Naimat said, was simple: "It gives you the feeling you can change things, you can act, you can be a leader. You feel like you are part of something important."

Recruiters to the movement operate in a social atmosphere far more receptive than in the past. Every one of five young men talking near the cafeteria of the university recently insisted that the only way Jordan would have democracy was under an Islamic government, which is what the Brotherhood says it wants to achieve.

Muhammad Safi is a 23-year-old with neatly gelled hair and a television-white smile who described himself as the least religious student at the table. He said he had lived in the United States for five years and was eager to marry an American so he could return. Yet he declared: "An Islamic state would be better. At least it would take care of people."

A Political Crossroads

The task facing Middle East governments and Islamic leaders is to figure out how to harness the energy of the Islamic revival. The young -- the demographic bulge that is defining the future of the Islamic world and the way the West will have to engage it -- have embraced Islam with all the fervor of the counterculture.

Jordanian Students Rebel, Embracing Conservative Arm of Islam

But the movement is still up for grabs -- whether it will lead to greater extremism, even terrorism in some cases, and whether the vague dissatisfaction of young people will translate into political engagement or disaffection.

So the cycle is likely to continue, with religious identification fueled not only by the Islamic movements, but also by governments eager to use religion to enhance legitimacy and to satisfy demands of their citizens. That, in turn, broadens support for groups like the Brotherhood, while undermining support for the government, said many researchers, intellectuals and political scientists in Jordan.

The battle lines are clear on the campus of Jordan University. Bilal Abu Sulaih, 24, is a leader in the Islamic student movement. He returned to school this year to study Islamic law after being suspended for one year for organizing protests, he said. During the year off, he said, he worked as a student organizer for the political party office of the Brotherhood. "We are trying to participate," he said of the movement's role on campus. "We do not want to overpower everyone else."

But his reassurances were brushed aside as another student confronted him. "It's not true," shouted Ahmed Qabai, 28, who was seated on a nearby bench. He thrust a finger in Mr. Sulaih's direction.

"You want to try to control everything," Mr. Qabai said. "I've seen it before, your people talking to women and asking them why they're not veiled."

Mr. Sulaih, embarrassed by the challenge, said, "It's not true."

Mr. Qabai made it clear that he detested the Muslim Brotherhood, getting more and more worked up, until finally he was screaming. But what he said summed up the challenge ahead for Jordan, and for so many governments in the region: "We all know Islam is the solution. That we agree on."

GENERATION FAITHFUL: This is the 10th in a series of articles examining the lives of the young across the Muslim world at a time of religious revival.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: Muhammad Fawaz is an Islamic activist on the Jordan University campus in Amman.(PHOTOGRAPH BY SHAWN BALDWIN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES) (A1)

SEEKING SUPPORT: Women voted, top, in a student council election at Jordan University in Amman. Above, Muhammad Fawaz, in suit, campaigned.

DIVERSE APPEALS: Student council campaign posters competed for the attention of passers-by recently at Jordan University.(PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHAWN BALDWIN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)(pg. A10)

Load-Date: May 4, 2011

It is vital to bring peace for those suffering in Gaza

The Herald (Glasgow)
December 30, 2008 Tuesday
Final Edition

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The Herald

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 12

Length: 1332 words

Body

SOUTH African Nobel Peace laureate Desmond Tutu accurately declared that the west's complicity in the suffering of the Palestinian people takes the form of silence. The mealy-mouthed words of our Prime Minister and the inaction of the international community betray a voluntary self-censorship stemming from our continued feelings of shame and contrition for the unspeakable treatment of the Jewish people in the twentieth century.

Our silence, and the horrific treatment of the Palestinian people, must end. Concerted international action to stop Israeli aggression and settlement expansion, and thereafter broker a peace, must now begin in earnest.

The alternative, as Archbishop Tutu explained, is that the Palestinians will continue to pay the price for the west's involvement with the Holocaust.

Martyn Quinn, 6 Kinarvie Place, Glasgow.

I, LIKE many of my constituents who have e-mailed me over the past two days, am shocked at the severity and callousness of the Israeli attacks on the people living in the Gaza Strip. These attacks take place at a time when there is a power vacuum in the United States of America and Israel, and when the European Union (EU) is in the process of changing its rotating six-month presidency (on January 1) from one of the major powers, France, to one of the smaller states, the Czech Republic, which, although it pursues the policy of "balance", is often perceived as a pro-Israeli member state of the EU.

The Czech presidency must refute this perception of bias by declaring its resolve to make the tackling of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a priority of its six-month incumbency. The Czech presidency should bring forward its plans for an EU-Palestine summit and intensify the EU's efforts at mediating a ceasefire and moving towards a central position in the peace process.

The truth is the EU has not been sufficiently active in the past. The Czech presidency offers an ideal opportunity to steer the EU to fill the current power vacuum and fulfil its proper role as peace-maker.

David Martin, MEP, The European Parliament, Brussels.

It is vital to bring peace for those suffering in Gaza

THE hypocrisy of the British government when it comes to Israel's actions is astounding. It is clear that Israel waited patiently (ie, trying alternative methods to solve the problem such as diplomacy) before mounting the latest attack.

Palestinian rockets have been raining down on Israeli population centres for years - increasing after the end of the occupation of Gaza (so much for the theory that ending occupation was the precursor to peace).

The vast majority of those killed were Islamic terrorists. If Britain could wipe out known Islamic terrorists in Iraq, it would not hesitate to do so. I am sad about the deaths of civilians alongside the terrorists, but the responsibility must be placed on the shoulders of the Islamic terrorists whose nature it is to hide among civilians to ensure maximum casualties.

Israel is on the front line in the war on terror and should be supported, not criticised. Instead of the typical politically correct knee-jerk reaction of "Israel is wrong", which has done absolutely nothing to solve the very real problem in the region, Britain should be expressing its unreserved support for actions against Islamic terrorists. The only way to bring peace to the region is the end of Palestinian terrorism.

Michelle Cropman, Hana Senesh 5/2, Givatayim, Israel.

ISRAEL has again proved to the international community that it is world-class when it comes to brutality, second only to the US in its efficient disposal of human life.

Kevin Orr, Wheatley Loan, Bishopbriggs, Glasgow.

WATCHING the pictures of Israel indiscriminately bombing the people of Palestine over the past few days has horrified many of us. This horror is compounded by a feeling of despair over what we can do to stop this appalling brutality, a feeling which is made worse by the failure of the Labour government to condemn this act of genocide by Israel.

We as individuals can, of course, take action. Last night I attended a protest rally in Edinburgh with some hundreds of people; there were further demonstrations in Glasgow, London and all over the world. On Saturday there will be demonstrations all across the country. However, we should write to our MPs demanding the British government condemns the Israeli action; we should get in touch with our MEPs to demand the EU takes tough action against Israel; we should ask our MSPs to get the Scottish Parliament to condemn Israel's attacks on the Gaza strip.

Finally, we do have a role as citizens: Israel's actions have now put that country beyond the pale, to use the appropriate language of the pogrom. A nation that was born out of the Holocaust is now committing acts of genocide against the Palestinian people. Therefore, we should have no further reason not to boycott all Israeli goods, investments and cultural bodies. At this year's Edinburgh Festival, the Jerusalem Quartet were interrupted by demonstrators wishing to protest against Israel. At the time I disagreed with the demonstrators, preferring persuasion to disruption. However, Israel's latest crimes leave us no choice: a total boycott of Israel until it changes its policies.

Hugh Kerr, 23 Braehead Avenue, Edinburgh.

THE hypocrisy is appalling. Sure, war is dirty. The first person to invent a nice clean conflict should bottle it. But those who criticise Israel for finally losing patience with the constant bombardment by rockets and missiles from Gaza - more than 1000 in the first six months of 2008 and in excess of 250 during the "ceasefire" - are the same people who never call for the boycott or prosecution of Hamas or Hizbollah. Their letters, full of false accusations and figures, don't bear comparison with official reports, including those in The Herald.

Sandra White MSP (Letters, December 29) may have recently returned from Gaza but she is well aware of the quantity of aid entering Gaza and the high numbers of patients entering Israel from Gaza for medical treatment, despite the attacks on the crossings. Choosing to ignore these facts doesn't change them. She has, apparently, also turned a blind eye to the campaign of persecution, intimidation and deadly assaults upon the small Christian community in Gaza by the controlling Islamic extremists. She failed to speak out for Gazan Christians when she

It is vital to bring peace for those suffering in Gaza

had a recent opportunity to do so in the Scottish Parliament. Will she now act and tell those in Hamastan, in no uncertain terms, that they cannot continue to act in this way?

S Grossman, Newton Mearns, Glasgow.

ANYONE who is expecting Barak Obama to be any different to George W Bush should take a look at his actions before he has been inaugurated. He has appointed a team of hawks - including the Zionist Hillary Clinton and Bush's Defence Secretary Robert Gates - to take the two most prominent positions at the Departments of State and Defence respectively.

He has given Israel a carte-blanc to murder an indiscriminate number of Palestinians in Gaza.

Most disturbingly, however, he has chosen extreme right-wing Pastor Rick Warren to give the invocation at his inauguration.

Warren has compared abortion with the Holocaust, and gay marriage with incest and paedophilia. Warren believes that women should be subservient to men in marriage.

Warren believes the creationist nonsense about the Earth only being 6000 years old and that man and dinosaur existed on Earth at the same time and that man had dominion over dinosaurs (essentially believing the Flintstones to be based on reality). He also opposes stem-cell research.

Warren has openly admitted that the only difference between him and other extremist preachers such as James Dobson is tone.

Warren is part of a PR ploy by the extreme Christian right to rebrand themselves without diluting their message.

Unfortunately, many useful idiots on the liberal-left have fallen for the scam. The new, rebranded, Christian right will be a powerful voice in the new Obama administration.

Alan Hinnrichs, 20 Noran Avenue, Dundee.

Load-Date: December 30, 2008

Another look at the Hebron Peace House

The Jerusalem Post

December 16, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 15

Length: 1204 words

Byline: SUNNY SASSOON

Highlight: Those struggling to live in Hebron exemplify Jacob's legacy to the Jewish people. The writer is chairman of Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf.

Body

I was saddened to hear that many used their pulpits to criticize the brave Jewish heroes whom the government forcefully expelled from The Peace House in Hebron and the hundreds of other Jews who stood with them in support of their right to stay there.

Peace House (Beit Hashalom) was bought for them by Morris Abraham, a Syrian Jew living in New York. Mr. Abraham spent close to a million dollars purchasing this building from a local Arab, and the deal was legally consummated some 24 months ago. It was his wish that these families live there, and this wish was legally carried out.

Those of us who have had the privilege to visit these folks at the now famous house in Hebron know that it is a stone's throw away from the Tomb of our forefathers and foremothers - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their wives Sarah, Rebecca and Leah. The Tomb of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs is Judaism's second holiest site after the Temple Mount itself.

Under King David, Hebron became the first capital of the Jewish people. There has been a Jewish community in the area for thousands of years. Today, about 8,000 Jews live in Kiryat Arba (City of Four), a ten-minute walk away from Hebron's old city, where 800 Jewish men, women and children live in an enclave protected by the Israel Defense Force. Hebron itself sits about a 30-minute drive from The King David Hotel in Jerusalem.

Three weeks from now, the Torah reading portion will be Vayehi.

One cannot read this beautiful narrative about Jacob imploring his son to bury him in the Land of Israel and not be moved. More importantly, this is probably the single act in the Bible responsible for planting the seed that has so stubbornly grown into the tree we refer to as the Jewish people. It is my belief that it is this act that has brought back the Jewish people to their homeland after 2,000 years of exile, pogroms and the Holocaust. Because of Jacob's insistence to be brought back to Israel, the Jewish generations after him always felt an inexplicable yearning to come back home; if for nothing else, just to pay their respects to him and their forefathers and mothers.

I CAME to learn this through my own personal story. My own father, on his deathbed, made me and my family promise that we would bury him in Israel. Throughout his horrific, 18-month battle with cancer, he would insist that we make him this promise, and it was the last few words he uttered as we were weeping by his bedside that early evening in February, 1988.

Another look at the Hebron Peace House

For years after we buried him in Israel, I kept coming back every year for his memorial, though I had no real prior connection to my Jewish roots or tradition, or for that matter, the state of Israel. There were times when frankly I had no idea what I was doing there, or why he made this request. I asked myself whether all the trouble was even necessary - getting there, arranging for a memorial lunch or dinner, finding people to say Kaddish by his gravesite. Was I being a little nutty? After all, I had never been there with him while he was alive. Nevertheless, I kept coming back year after year, first as a bachelor, and then later as a husband, and now as a father.

One Shabbat, many years after the very first trip, I was sitting in our little synagogue in Beverly Hills, and my rabbi gave a most beautiful lesson on the chapter Vayehi. He brought my attention to this beautiful narrative, and all of a sudden, everything became clear to me. Tears rolled down my cheeks. For the first time, I understood my late father's request. For the first time, I realized how much of an impact those trips to Israel had not only over my life, but over that of all my family.

I cannot tell you enough about all the profound experiences I had during these yearly trips. I cannot even begin to think of my life today without these visits. My whole family has found a purpose bigger than ourselves because of the experiences that we were blessed to have in Israel. We have grown to love the people and the land.

ON ONE such visit last year, an old friend took me and a few of my friends from Los Angeles to Beit Hashalom. We met the families who lived there and spoke to their leader, a lady who had moved to Israel from England. She had been living in Israel for many years and when the house was bought, decided to move in with her husband and many children. My friends and I asked her many questions to try and understand how she could be as brave as she was to live there. She was a sensible, well-educated, and articulate woman in her thirties. She explained that if it was not safe for her to live in her home in Hebron because of the dangers facing her, then it was just as unsafe for anyone to live in Israel because of the dangers facing it.

She made a compelling argument that Jews should have a moral and ethical right to live anywhere in Israel, and for that matter anywhere in the world without being persecuted.

The idea that Hebron or any other area must be devoid of Jews should be antithetical to modern-day Jewish thinking, she said. After all, this is what Hitler tried to achieve with his Judenrein concept - cleansing Europe and the world of all its Jews.

Two weeks ago, this woman and the other families living with her in The Peace House were dragged out of their homes by the Israeli government. Ironically, contrary to conventional knowledge, the courts did NOT order the evacuation of The Peace House. They left it in the hands of the government to decide what to do until the legalities of the case were fully determined. Sadly, the corrupt Olmert/Livni/Barrak government chose the most divisive and provocative option.

While these Jews were being expelled, Israel continues to have its southern cities bombed with rockets since the expulsion of the Jews of Gush Katif, Iran persists on its nuclear agenda, and Hizbullah and **Hamas** continue to arm themselves to the teeth. Episodes like The Peace House expulsion are a deliberate distraction from the real issues and threats which Israel faces.

IT IS true that some of the actions of a few hot-headed Jews have crossed the line, and while I might understand their frustrations and pain, I do not condone those actions. But the acts of a handful of hotheads should not poison attitudes towards the folks of Hebron Peace House and all of the 300,000 Jews living in Judea and Samaria, who stand on the frontlines with great sacrifice. Neither should their actions obscure this fact: Just like Arabs have the right to live in Israel among a Jewish majority, Jews should have the right to live in any area they please, even if those areas have an Arab majority.

It is not my intention to offend anyone who does not share this perspective. We all know how diverse Jewish opinion can be, and this diversity is one of our strengths. My intention here is to implore all of us to show a little sensitivity and balance before making loud and sweeping condemnations of our fellow Jews.

Another look at the Hebron Peace House

Ultimately, if we can succeed in being sensitive toward each other, we can find our commonalities on our own, rather than have them forced on us by other peoples with evil agendas. This was our fate for 2,000 years before the creation of the state of Israel. It must not be allowed to remain our fate moving forward.

Graphic

Photo: YOUNG SUPPORTERS of the Hebron Peace House settlers face riot police. (Credit: AP)

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Future of Hezbollah lies in scouting programs; Complex network builds deep loyalty

The International Herald Tribune

November 22, 2008 Saturday

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Byline: Robert F. Worth - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: RIYQAQ, Lebanon

Body

On a Bekaa Valley playing field gilded by late-afternoon sun, hundreds of young men wearing Boy Scout-style uniforms and kerchiefs stand rigidly at attention as a military band plays, its marchers bearing aloft the distinctive yellow banner of Hezbollah, the militant Shiite movement.

They are adolescents - 17 or 18 years old - but they have the stern faces of adult men, lightly bearded, some of them with dark spots in the center of their foreheads from bowing down in prayer. Each of them wears a tiny picture of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Shiite cleric who led the Iranian revolution, on his chest.

"You are our leader!" the boys chant in unison, as a Hezbollah official walks to a podium and addresses them with a Koranic invocation. "We are your men!"

This is the vanguard of Hezbollah's youth movement, the Mahdi Scouts. Some of the graduates gathered at this ceremony will go on to join Hezbollah's guerrilla army, fighting Israel in the hills of southern Lebanon. Others will work in the party's bureaucracy. The rest will probably join the fast-growing and passionately loyal base of support that has made Hezbollah the most powerful political, military and social force in Lebanon.

At a time of religious revival across the Islamic world, intense piety among the young is nothing unusual. But in Lebanon, Hezbollah - the name means the party of God - has marshaled these ambient energies for a highly political project: educating a younger generation to continue its military struggle against Israel. Hezbollah's battlefield resilience has made it a model for other militant groups across the Middle East, including Hamas. And that success is due, in no small measure, to the party's comprehensive array of religion-themed youth and recruitment programs.

There is a network of schools - some of them run by Hezbollah, others affiliated with or controlled by it - largely shielded from outsiders. There is a nationwide network of clerics who provide weekly religious lessons to young people on a neighborhood basis. There is a group for students at unaffiliated schools and colleges that presents Hezbollah to a wider audience. The party organizes non-Scout-related summer camps and field trips, and during Muslim religious holidays it arranges events to encourage young people to express their devotion in public and to perform charity work.

Future of Hezbollah lies in scouting programs Complex network builds deep loyalty

"It's like a complete system, from primary school to university," said Talal Atrissi, a political analyst at Lebanese University who has been studying Hezbollah for decades. "The goal is to prepare a generation that has deep religious faith and is also close to Hezbollah."

Much of this activity is fueled by a broader Shiite religious resurgence in Lebanon that began after the Iranian revolution in 1979.

But Hezbollah has gone further than any other organization in mobilizing this force, both to build its own support base and to immunize Shiite youth from the temptations of Lebanon's diverse and mostly secular society.

Hezbollah's influence on Lebanese youth is difficult to quantify because of the party's extreme secrecy and the general absence of reliable statistics in the country. It is clear that the Shiite religious schools, in which Hezbollah exercises a dominant influence, have grown over the past two decades from a mere handful into a major national network. Other, less visible avenues may be equally important, like the growing number of clerics associated with the movement.

Hezbollah and its allies have also adapted and expanded religious rituals involving children, starting at ever-earlier ages. Women, who play a more prominent role in Hezbollah than they do in most other radical Islamic groups, are especially important in creating what is often called "the jihad atmosphere" among children.

From a distance, it resembles any other Boy Scout camp in the world. Two rows of canvas tents face each other on the banks of the Litani River, the powder-blue stream that runs across southern Lebanon not far from the Israeli border. A hand-built wooden jungle gym stands near the camp entrance, where pine trees sway in the breeze and dry, brown hills are visible in the distance.

Then, planted on sticks in the river, two huge posters bearing the faces of Ayatollah Khomeini and Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, come into view.

"Since 1985, we have managed to raise a good generation," said Muhammad al-Akhdar, 25, a scout leader, as he showed a visitor around the grounds. "We had 850 kids here this summer, ages 9 to 15."

This camp, called Tyr fil Say, is one of the sites in south Lebanon where the Mahdi Scouts train. Much of what they do is similar to the activities of scouts the world over: swimming, building campfires, tying knots and playing sports. Akhdar described some of the games the young scouts play, including one where they divide into two teams - Americans and the Resistance - and try to throw one another into the river.

The Mahdi Scouts also get visits from Hezbollah fighters who talk about fighting Israel.

Akhdar led a visitor around the tents, where boys had been spelling out Koranic phrases like "the promise" and "the owner of time" using stones. There was also a meticulously arranged grave, complete with lettering and decoration. In place of the headstone was a small photograph of Imad Mugniyah, the Hezbollah commander who was killed in February and who was widely viewed in the West as the mastermind of decades of bombings, kidnappings and hijackings.

The Mahdi Scouts were founded in 1985, shortly after Hezbollah itself. Officially, the group is like any of the other 29 different scout groups in Lebanon, many of which belong to political parties and serve as feeders for them.

But the Mahdi Scouts are different. They are much larger - with an estimated 60,000 children and leaders, they are six times the size of any other Lebanese scout group. Even their marching movements are more militaristic than the others, according to Mustafa Muhammad Abdel Rasoul, head of the Lebanese Scouts' Union. While the Mahdi Scouts fall under the umbrella of the Lebanese union, they have no direct affiliation with the international scouting body based in Switzerland.

Because of the Mahdi Scouts' reputation as a feeder for Hezbollah's armed force, the party has become extremely protective and rarely grants outsiders access to them.

Future of Hezbollah lies in scouting programs Complex network builds deep loyalty

Still, Hezbollah officials often casually mention the link between the Scouts and the guerrilla force.

"After age 16, the boys mostly go to resistance or military activities," said Bilal Naim, who served as Hezbollah's director for the Mahdi Scouts until last year.

Another difference from most scout groups lies in the program.

Religious and moral instruction - rather than physical activity - occupy the vast bulk of the Mahdi Scouts' curriculum, and the scout leaders adhere strictly to lessons outlined in books for each age group.

Those books, copies of which were provided by a Hezbollah official, show a focus on religious themes and a full-time preoccupation with Hezbollah's military struggle against Israel. The chapter titles, for the 12- to 14-year-old age group, include "Love and Hate in God," "Know Your Enemy," "Loyalty to the Leader" and "Facts About Jews." Jews are described as cruel, corrupt, cowardly and deceitful, and they are called the killers of prophets. The chapter on Jews states that "their Talmud says those outside the Jewish religion are animals."

In every chapter, the children are required to write down or recite Koranic verses that illustrate the theme in question. They are taught to venerate the Ayatollah Khomeini - Iran has been a longtime supporter of Hezbollah, providing it with money, weapons and training - and the leaders of Hezbollah. They are told to hate Israel and to avoid people who are not devout Muslims. Questions at the ends of chapters encourage the children to "watch your heart" and "assess your heart" to check wrong impulses and encourage virtuous ones. One note to the instructors reminds them that young scouts are in a sensitive phase of development that should be considered "a launching toward commitment."

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Tensions rise as rockets hit Israel from South Lebanon

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

January 9, 2009 Friday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1479 words

Byline: Andrew Wander

Body

At least three rockets were fired from southern Lebanon into Israel on Thursday, prompting the Israeli military to respond with an artillery attack near the village of Tair Harfa. During an emergency meeting Thursday night, the Lebanese Cabinet said it refuses to give Israel "pretexts" to launch a wide-ranging offensive on Lebanon.

TAIR HARFA/BEIRUT: At least three rockets were fired from southern Lebanon into Israel on Thursday, prompting the Israeli military to respond with an artillery attack near the village of Tair Harfa. During an emergency meeting Thursday night, the Lebanese Cabinet said it refuses to give Israel "pretexts" to launch a wide-ranging offensive on Lebanon.

Speaking following the Cabinet meeting at Baabda Palace, Information Minister Tarek Mitri said the government rejects turning South Lebanon into a platform for launching missiles and said the Lebanese Army has started a "serious investigation" into Thursday's incident.

Mitri added that President Michel Sleiman and the Cabinet stressed Lebanon's commitment to UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which brought a cessation of hostilities to the devastating summer 2006 war with Israel.

Three Katyusha rockets were fired from southern Lebanon and two landed in the Nahariya area of Israel, with one ripping through a crowded nursing home wounding one person. Israel hit back by firing five mortar shells across the border. No one was injured by the shells. The attacks come at a time of heightened tension on the border, where there have been fears that militant groups could open a "second front" against Israel while it is embroiled in attacking the Gaza Strip.

The Lebanese Army and the UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon, UNIFIL, stepped up their patrols on the border in an effort to bring the situation under control. The commander of UN peacekeepers in Lebanon called for "maximum restraint" in Lebanon and Israel, a spokesman for the peacekeeping force said.

Israel has also intensified patrols along the border. From southern Lebanon on Thursday dozens of Israeli armored vehicles and soldiers were visible on the frontier.

Schools on both sides of the border closed, as worried parents kept their children home from school.

Tensions rise as rockets hit Israel from South Lebanon

Ali Akil, who lives close to the impact site of the Israeli shells, told The Daily Star he thought a new war had begun when they landed.

"We woke to the sounds of explosion and we thought the war had started again," he said. "We rushed to the TV to see what was going on, but Hizbullah officials said it was not a big deal and an unknown faction had fired on Israel."

Akil added that he would stay in the area even if another conflict began.

"Even if Israel launched another offensive we will not leave our homes," he vowed.

Dozens of Tair Harfa residents, however, evacuated their homes and fled the town for fear that the events of the devastating summer 2006 war with Israel might recur.

Hizbullah was not thought to be behind the attack, and assured other members of the government that it is still committed to Security Council Resolution 1701.

Officials representing the two predominant Palestinian factions in Lebanon, Hamas and Fatah, have also both denied involvement in the attack.

Lebanese security sources contacted by The Daily Star said they believed another Palestinian militant group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), was responsible.

The security source also noted the area from which the rockets had been fired at Israel was "extremely volatile."

"The Lebanese Army has not been able to achieve any kind of control or stability within this particular area," he told The Daily Star.

Israeli military sources also blamed Palestinian militants in Lebanon, rather than Hizbullah, for the attack and said they would respond to further rocket attacks in a similar way.

PFLP-GC head Ahmed Gibreel said that he hoped that "all fronts" against Israel would be opened.

"Since the start of the assault on Gaza we have called for all fronts to engage in a war against Israel including the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon," he said.

When asked about the attacks he said: "We heard this morning about the rockets in South Lebanon. We are currently putting the issue under close scrutiny in order to formulate our opinion concerning what happened."

Prime Minister Fouad Siniora condemned the attack.

"The firing of rockets is rejected and is the work of parties who stand to lose from the continued stability in Lebanon and want to drag it to a situation it does not want and which serves the Israeli plan and does not serve Lebanon's interests nor the Palestinian or Arab interests," he said.

Observers agree that a conflict between Israel and Hizbullah would have devastating consequences for Lebanon, which is enjoying a period of relative stability. Israeli political and military leaders have pledged to expand their campaign of 2006 in any future war, when their offensive went far beyond Hizbullah.

Some 1,200 Lebanese were killed during that conflict, the great majority of them civilians, along with 160 Israelis, most of them soldiers

The security official said that he did not expect Hizbullah to respond militarily to Israel's artillery attack, but warned that further Israeli action in Lebanon could push the party to mobilize its militia against the Zionist state.

"I believe this is likely if Israel extend their retaliatory attacks beyond the areas from which the rockets have been launched," the source said. - With additional reporting by Mariam Saab, agencies

Tensions rise as rockets hit Israel from South Lebanon

Memories of 2006 as villagers flee

TAIR HARFA: The South Lebanese village from where rockets were fired at Israel resembled a ghost town on Thursday after panicked residents fled or hid in fear of massive retaliation.

Lebanese soldiers and Italian troops serving with the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) patrolled the streets seeking information on who fired the rockets early in the day from just outside the village of some 4,500 people.

Several missiles slammed into the northern Israel town of Nahariya, wounding two women as the Zionist state entered the 13th day of its massive offensive on the Gaza Strip.

"No one is left here," said Hasna Ataya, 55, one of the few residents who stayed in the border village along with her daughter Khadija, 20. "Many took their personal belongings and some rented vehicles to flee with their loved ones. I stayed behind with my daughter because we don't have a car."

Amina Rahal, 48, said she packed food for her three children before fleeing from Tair Harfa, 7 kilometres from the Israeli border.

"The last war was terrifying," Rahal said of the 34-day summer conflict in 2006 with Israel that devastated South Lebanon and killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians.

"My children can't take another war," she added. "When we saw everyone heading toward Tyre, we decided to follow their example."

Rahal said that since the early morning rocket attack and Israeli retaliation with artillery rounds, no one had dared venture into her shop on the outskirts of the village.

"My children are terrified," she said. "They heard the rocket fire this morning and were trembling. We saw black smoke rising from the fields after Israel retaliated."

Mohammad Akeel, 59, said he had rented a cab to flee to Tyre along with his wife and five children. "We'll spend the night in Tyre until things calm down," he said.

On the road out of the village, some 60 Syrian builders who work in the area could be seen trying to arrange transport to Tyre.

Yasser Khalil, 35, said he worked on building sites in the village that was largely destroyed in the 2006 war and that he heard the explosions early on Thursday.

"I'm heading to Beirut because it is not safe here any more," he said. Meanwhile at a small cafe inside Tair Harfa, several young men gathered to follow the latest developments on television. "In 2006 we were part of the resistance in this village," said Mohammad, 18, who would give only his first name. "Many people are just waiting for Israel to launch a new offensive."

No one has yet claimed responsibility for the rocket attack, but Hizbullah has indicated that it was not behind the salvo.

Officials in both Israel and Lebanon have said that the attack may have been the work of a Palestinian faction.

Ahmed Jibril, the Damascus-based leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, threatened on January 3 to open up new military fronts against Israel if its war in the Gaza Strip escalates.

A spokesman for the party would neither confirm nor deny involvement in the rocket attack on Thursday, but slammed Israel's Gaza offensive and condemned what he called inaction by Arab states.

"This war is open to all possibilities in the absence of a political will from the international community to dissuade Israel from pursuing its holocaust in Gaza," Anwar Raja told AFP in Damascus. - AFP

Tensions rise as rockets hit Israel from South Lebanon

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End of Document

Few tears will be shed over Bush's departure

Sunday Independent (Ireland)

December 28, 2008

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Sunday Independent

Section: WORLD NEWS

Length: 1475 words

Body

It is hard to imagine that many people will be looking back on the Bush Junior years with nostalgia. It is clear that President-Elect Obama will have his work cut out to address the enormity of the financial and economic problems currently engulfing the United States, and therefore by contagion the rest of the world. It may be because of this that he has decided to make someone as high-profile and charismatic as Hillary Clinton his Secretary of State. She can shoulder the external responsibilities in large measure while he concentrates on the domestic agenda, which is very largely why he has been elected. We Europeans are fooling ourselves if we think that Barack Obama was elected because Americans were uneasy about the unpopularity of the United States and its government abroad.

Yet however daunting the domestic prospect, the challenges to the world order left behind by the Bush years are truly formidable. Paradoxically the war on terror has been highly successful in one area, the area which matters most to Americans. There has been no attack on the United States homeland since September 11, 2001. Not many of us would have bet on that outcome. But according to the Bush administration's own doctrine, in its national security strategy of September 2002, it claimed to be fighting a war against terrorists 'of global reach'. In the name of this war two countries have been invaded and occupied. This declaration of war has given the terrorists the oxygen of publicity they crave and elevated criminals into soldiers for a cause. And, as those of us who live in these islands know only too well, terrorism didn't start on 9/11. And as it is a tactic, not an end in itself, is unlikely if ever to go away. Hence, how do you gauge that you have won the war on terror?

On another level, when I said that George Bush was al-Qaeda's best recruiting sergeant a few years ago, I was expressing a fairly banal thought. As the inquiries into 9/11 comprehensively demonstrated, Saddam Hussein and Iraq were not involved in the terror attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. Nor was al-Qaeda present in Iraq until after the US-led invasion of 2003. Now the jihadi genie is well and truly out of the bottle. The countless deaths of Iraqis and US and other allied soldiers at al-Qaeda's hands since the invasion are just one of the tragically unintended consequences of the Iraq war.

For many women in Iraq there has been a terrible price to pay in terms of their personal liberties: bullied, beaten and even killed for such crimes against morality as wearing Western clothes, Iraqi women must wonder why an invasion in the name of freedom and democracy should have deprived them of some of their most basic human rights.

Elsewhere along the so-called arc of instability, there is precious little satisfaction to be gained at the Bush administration's performance. Afghanistan, that other major war theatre, is proving evermore intractable as the

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Taliban and al-Qaeda reorganise and rearm from their safe havens in the tribal lands in Pakistan, where the new Prime Minister has been no more successful than General Musharraf in keeping control.

Hardly surprising when the real power in the land is the Pakistan intelligence service, the ISI, which effectively created the Taliban back in the Nineties. Afghanistan outside Kabul is in desperate straits with an alienated population, not only against the US and Nato forces, but against the Karzai government seen as increasingly ineffective and corrupt. And opium production has never been higher.

One of the main beneficiaries of the war in Iraq has been Iran, which now emerges as the regional superpower thanks to the installation in Baghdad of a pro-Iranian Shia-dominated government and all this at the hands of the "great Satan" as the Iranians call the United States. It must seem too good to be true to the mullahs. A government as divided and incompetent as the current one in Iran, which has alienated so much of its population, could be expected by now to have been significantly weakened. Yet the militaristic rhetoric coming out of Washington has united the country in a predictable way under the banner of Iranian nationalism and its right to develop nuclear power.

Nobody I know thinks that the Iranian government will stop at peaceful uses of nuclear power; on the other hand, can they be entirely blamed for wanting to develop nuclear weapons when so many of their neighbours or near-neighbours have done so? Iraq was certainly on this track in the Nineties. Israel, India and Pakistan are all nuclear states. Syria has ambitions in that direction. Why should Iran be the one out of step? That is of course the view in Tehran. For the rest of us, non-proliferation and the dramatic reduction of all nuclear arsenals remains the preferred option. It seems at this stage unlikely that the Bush administration will feel up to launching or condoning a military strike on Iran. The days of the neo-cons' quip "everyone wants to go to Baghdad, real men want to go to Tehran" quoted in Newsweek before the invasion seem long gone. But Obama/Clinton will have to give Iran a very high priority in their foreign policy programme. Talking to the Iranians rather than threatening to bomb them might be a good place to start.

Others in Bush's Axis of Evil to be "dealt with", as his former Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, put it, included Syria and North Korea. Syria's capacity for trouble-making through Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon remains legendary, though France and Britain have recently shown signs of wanting to encourage Syria to behave more constructively. But the festering sore of Palestine has remained neglected and aggravated by Bush's partisan approach so clearly illustrated by the US administration's looking on benignly while the ill-judged Israeli operation in 2006 in Lebanon strengthened Hezbollah.

To be fair to President Bush, there has been some modest success with the curtailment of North Korea's nuclear weapons programme. It looks as though North Korea has disabled part of its facilities, and only six weeks ago the United States removed North Korea from its list of state-sponsors of terrorism. So the Axis of Evil now boils down to just Iran.

But there are increasing problems with what President Reagan used to describe as the Empire of Evil. Post-Soviet Russia has been mishandled by more than just one US president. But the result is a Russia determined to reclaim first-class status after the humiliations of the Nineties and is increasingly self-confident and aggressive, particularly in its own backyard. The disastrous attempt by Georgia's Washington-backed President Mikheil Saakashvili on South Ossetia last summer prompted a predictably robust, not to say brutal, Russian reaction. Yet it is hard to believe that Saakashvili would have acted without a green light from a senior figure within the Bush administration.

In one area at least the Bush legacy will be looked at kindly. He has accelerated dramatically efforts to combat HIV/Aids and malaria in Africa, and by the time he leaves office President Bush will have doubled the level of assistance to Africa to \$8bn. Besides that, his President's Malaria Initiative of 2005 and his emergency plan for Aids relief is estimated to have reached 25 million people in sub-Saharan Africa.

If the horizontal issue of HIV/Aids and malaria has been a relative success area, another horizontal issue has been a spectacular failure, namely climate change. President Bush appears to be as much in denial over climate change as President Mbeki of South Africa was over HIV/Aids. The default unilateralist stance of the Bush administration, which could be seen in its reaction to the International Criminal Court where he refused to sign up, or in his rejection

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of the Kyoto Agreement, has been one of the main causes of friction with European allies who look to the US to take a lead in these areas. The new administration's ambassadorial appointment to the United Nations will be an interesting litmus test. Appointing John Bolton as the Ambassador to the United Nations, as Bush did, was like making Richard Dawkins the Minister for Religious Affairs.

If the current international financial turmoil shows us anything, it is how none of us can be insulated from seemingly remote events. Who earlier than 18 months ago had ever heard of a sub-prime loan? As Obama struggles with reforming the Bretton Woods institutions -- the monetary management system -- and the world recession, the new Secretary of State will have a whole series of toxic issues to deal with. She will, however, enjoy an initial surge of goodwill as a reaction to bleak disillusionment with the Bush years.

Sir Ivor Roberts, a former Ambassador to Ireland, Italy and Yugoslavia, is President of Trinity College, Oxford

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End of Document

World Report

Windsor Star (Ontario)

October 20, 2008 Monday

Final Edition

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Byline: Compiled from Star News Services

Body

ASIA

TALIBAN HIJACK BUS, DOZENS FEARED DEAD

KABUL, Afghanistan -- Taliban militants seized a civilian bus in volatile southern Afghanistan and executed at least two dozen passengers, beheading some of them, officials said Sunday.

The attack took place in Kandahar province, which was the home base of the militant Islamic movement before it was toppled by a U.S.-led invasion in late 2001. Many of those aboard the bus were women and children.

Reports about the bus assault, which took place Thursday, were sketchy but chilling.

Afghan authorities said the passengers were traveling in a two-bus convoy, a measure intended to bolster their safety. Militants manning a makeshift checkpoint fired on the first bus, which accelerated away from them. They were able to halt the second, with about 50 people on board.

Between 24 and 30 passengers were killed execution-style at the scene, according to Police Chief Matiullah Khan of Kandahar province.

Western news agencies quoted a Taliban spokesman as saying that 27 people were dragged from the captured bus and shot, and that they were Afghan army soldiers.

MIDEAST

NINE GET LASHES FOR DISTURBING PEACE

TEHRAN -- Nine men convicted of disturbing the peace and damaging public property received 74 lashes each in the religious city of Qom, an Iranian newspaper said on Sunday.

Judicial officials said the nine men had "disturbed the public peace, had group fights and damaged public property," the newspaper Sarmayeh reported. Each received 74 lashes in Qom, the Islamic Republic's centre of Shiite learning.

It said the men had damaged 15 public vehicles and broken windows with sticks and bottles.

WOMEN MINISTERS BROKE LAW OVER HIJAB: PANEL

KUWAIT CITY -- The appointment of two Kuwaiti women ministers breached the constitution and the law because they do not wear the hijab headscarf, a panel in Kuwait's conservative parliament ruled on Sunday.

"The committee unanimously decided that appointing the two ministers in the cabinet violated article 82 of the constitution and article one of the election law for failing to abide by Islamic regulations," Ali al-Hajeri MP, spokesman for the Legal and Legislative Committee, told reporters.

The four members of the seven-person panel who attended Sunday's meeting are all Islamists or tribals. The remaining three are liberal-leaning MPs.

The two female members of government -- Education Minister Nuriya al-Sebih and state minister for housing and administrative development Mudhi al-Humoud -- were appointed to the cabinet following the May 17 general elections.

If the panel's decision is approved by parliament, MPs can either call on the prime minister to dismiss the two ministers or take a more serious action of grilling the two women as a prelude to voting them out of office.

THOUSANDS CALL FOR RELEASE OF CAPTURED SOLDIER

KEREM SHALOM, Israel -- Thousands of Israelis on Sunday protested their government's failure to recover a captured soldier near the site where he was seized on the edge of the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

Three thousand demonstrators gathered at the site, according to Israeli police, with many of the demonstrators wearing shirts bearing the portrait of the 21-year-old reservist and the caption "Gilad Shalit is still alive."

The crowds held banners reading "Gilad Shalit, we have been waiting for you for two years," and "No more Ron Arad, Free Gilad," referring to an Israeli airman who disappeared in south Lebanon in 1986.

Defence Minister Ehud Barak told Israeli army radio every effort is being made to bring Shalit home.

EUROPE**IMF CHIEF'S WIFE SAYS 'ONE-NIGHT STAND' IS FORGIVEN**

PARIS -- IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn's had only a "one-night stand" with a member of the world finance body's staff, his wife insisted Sunday as the French establishment rallied round the former socialist minister.

"We have moved on," said television journalist Anne Sinclair, insisting in her personal blog that she still loves the IMF chief as much as before.

The International Monetary Fund has launched an inquiry into the 59-year-old managing director after he admitted having an affair with a Hungarian staffer, Piroska Nagy. Nagy quit a top-level post in the IMF's Africa department and is now working for the London-based European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The probe is looking into whether Strauss-Kahn showed favouritism toward Nagy, and whether he sought retribution once their relationship ended, according to The Wall Street Journal.

The investigation will also look into the severance package given to Nagy who left when the IMF sought departures.

LETTERS, CLOTHES OF LAST TITANIC SURVIVOR SOLD

LONDON -- The last remaining survivor of the Titanic received over \$50US,000 in an auction of items from the liner to raise money to pay her nursing home fees, auctioneers said Saturday.

World Report

Millvina Dean, 96, was forced to sell a 100-year-old suitcase filled with clothes which was donated to her family by the people of New York when they arrived in the United States after being rescued.

Rare prints of the liner signed by the artists along with compensation letters sent to her mother by the Titanic Relief Fund also went under the hammer in Devizes, southwest England.

GERMAN PLANE LANDS SAFELY AFTER ENGINE FIRE

BELGRADE -- A German airliner carrying 163 passengers and six crew made an emergency landing in Belgrade on Saturday after one of its engines burst into flames, Serbian media and officials said.

The country's air traffic control agency said everyone was safe aboard the Boeing 737-800 of XL Airways, which was on a flight from Frankfurt to Antalya in southern Turkey.

The pilot had reported a fire in one of the aircraft's two engines as it entered Serbian airspace and asked for permission to land at Belgrade, where crews quickly dealt with the blaze.

FRENCH BANK CHAIRMAN QUILTS OVER HUGE LOSS

PARIS -- The chairman and director general of the French bank Caisse d'Epargne quit Sunday over an \$800US million derivative trading loss at the height of the global finance crisis.

Chairman Charles Milhaud said in a statement after an emergency supervisory board meeting that he was taking full responsibility for the loss and would not seek leaving payment.

The director general of the mutual bank also resigned and a bank source said its chief financial officer had tendered his resignation.

AFRICA

CHARITY TO PROFIT FROM 1,600-KM MOTORBIKE RACE

PORT EDWARD, South Africa -- Britain's Prince Harry and Prince William on Saturday began a 1,600-kilometre motorbike race across South Africa to raise money for charity.

The two brothers joined more than 80 other riders from around the world for the almost entirely off-road trek from Durban to Port Elizabeth in the Enduro Africa '08 charity race along South Africa's Wild Coast.

"It's not just a bimbie (joy ride) across the countryside, that's for sure," Harry told reporters before setting off.

The race is intended to raise \$520US,000 dollars for the UN children's fund UNICEF, the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, and Sentebale -- a charity founded in 2006 by Prince Harry and Lesotho's Prince Seeiso to help AIDS orphans.

SOUTH AMERICA

VENEZUELA TO PROPOSE CUT IN OIL PRODUCTION: CHAVEZ

CUMANA, Venezuela -- President Hugo Chavez will urge fellow members of the OPEC oil cartel to implement a cut in production, with a goal setting a price floor of no less than \$80 a barrel, the Venezuelan leader told AFP Sunday.

"Our position for the past 10-plus years has been that we have to manage oil production," Chavez told AFP, ahead of a Friday gathering in Vienna of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

OPEC was expected to announce at the ministerial meeting that it is cutting oil output to help lift crude prices that have dived 55 per cent since reaching record highs in July, as a global economic slowdown has slashed demand.

"Now that the prices are coming down, we are going to take (to OPEC) the proposal of cutting production," Chavez said during a visit to an oil pipeline project in Cumana in northeast Venezuela.

The 12-nation cartel accounts for about 40 per cent of the world's oil.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Reuters

Photo: Nicky Loh; FIERCE PERFORMER: A man acting as the character Zhang Fei rests backstage after putting on his costume at a Chinese Peking Opera performance at the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taipei on Sunday. Chinese opera combines music, art, literature along with colourful costumes and make-up into one performance on the stage. Since the Yuan Dynasty (1271 - 1368), Chinese opera has been encouraged by court officials and emperors in China to become a traditional art form. ;

Colour Photo: Gilad Shalit ;

Colour Photo: Dominique Strauss-Kahn ;

Colour Photo: Hugo Chavez ;

Load-Date: October 20, 2008

WHY MUSLIMS GIVE OBAMA A PASS ON RELIGION

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

October 12, 2008 Sunday

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Byline: SHERRI DAY, Times Staff Writer

Highlight: They understand the distance he puts between himself and them.

Body

Barack Hussein Obama, a devout Christian politician running for president, is not and never has been a Muslim.

But even Muslim voters seem to understand reasons for the clear distance he's trying to put between himself and them.

"The Muslim community is sophisticated enough to know how politics work in this country, the nuances of politics and what people have to know to get elected," said Ali Khan, the executive director for the American Muslim Council, a Muslim advocacy organization based in Chicago. "I think Barack Obama is getting a pass."

Muslims make up less than 1 percent of the electorate - not so much less than the tally of Jewish voters - but they are seldom courted and carry little clout. By contrast the country's 6.1-million Jews, which make up roughly 2 percent of the population, are a highly sought-after constituency. The country's 2-million to 6-million Muslims - demographers say the exact number is hard to pin down - are largely ignored by politicians who fear a backlash from associating with them.

In a post-9/11 America, thanks to extremists and terrorists, many people view Islam with great distrust and disdain and sometimes make little distinction between mainstream Muslims and terrorists.

For months, Obama's campaign has worked hard to explain that he's a Christian without alienating Muslims themselves. But there have been rough patches. In June, campaign workers asked two Muslim women to switch seats at an Obama rally in Detroit. The women's error? They sat behind the lectern wearing hijabs, or head scarves, in plain view of television cameras. Obama later apologized for the snub.

While the brush-off got little more than scant mention in mainstream media coverage, Muslims around the country took note.

His campaign's outreach coordinator to Muslims was recently criticized for speaking to a group of 30 Muslim leaders, including two whom the government has accused of having ties to controversial groups such as Hamas. The Obama campaign later said they would not have attended had they seen the participant list in advance.

Respect and understanding for Obama's predicament resonated with Muslims who gathered recently at a Tampa mosque for Eid Al-Fitr, the celebration that marks the end of Ramadan.

WHY MUSLIMS GIVE OBAMA A PASS ON RELIGION

Those gathered were a melting pot of Muslims, black, white, Asian, Latino, African and Arab. After their prayer service ended, they celebrated with sweet treats and savory foods all consumed amid the unending din of noise from carnival rides and spirited conversations at the Islamic Society of Tampa Bay area in Tampa.

When asked about Obama's uneasiness with courting Muslim voters, most of the attendees quickly settled on one thing. They don't blame Obama for vigorously asserting that he is not Muslim. Because, well, he's not. And if he were, they are certain he would not be the Democratic nominee for president.

"We're the lepers of American society," said Jordan Robinson, 23, who was visiting from New York. "We do feel like we're held at arm's length, but that's not something that's going to keep us out of the process."

Robinson would not say who will get his vote. He doesn't want Muslims to be seen as loyal to one party and looks forward to the day when they will be courted as swing voters.

Dr. Adel Eldin, a cardiologist who lives in Hillsborough County, also dreams of a time when Muslims will be big players in American politics. But Eldin, a registered Republican, is growing increasingly frustrated. He said he reached out to Sen. John McCain's campaign and expressed interest in starting a Muslims for McCain group. No one returned his call.

"Whether it's Obama or McCain, they don't hear Muslim voices," said Eldin, 46.

Although Eldin also declined to reveal his choice for president, 63 percent of Muslims say they are Democrats or align themselves most often with the party, according to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. Only 11 percent of Muslims describe themselves as Republicans.

Ben Jaoudi, an Army veteran from Brooksville, said Obama's campaign strategies don't offend him. A Democrat, he plans to vote for the Illinois senator next month. But he thinks Obama has bigger problems than falsely being thought a Muslim.

"Prejudice still exists here," Jaoudi said. Obama "is educated, and he's smart. They don't care because he's black. They're going to pick McCain. You know it, and I know it. If he (were) Muslim, he'd be wiped off the map completely."

Religion - whether it's Obama's or Gov. Sarah Palin's, the Republican nominee for vice president - has unfairly taken center stage in a campaign that should be about issues, attendees said.

"Religion is supposed to have nothing to do with it," said Taiwo Emiola, a Nigerian nurse who lives in Riverview. "If you have the ability to be president, you should be able to go for it. I think (Obama) is capable of doing it."

Ayesha Sookdeo, a native of Guyana who attended the celebration with her two grown children and her daughter-in-law, agreed.

"It makes no difference whether you're Christian, Muslim, Hindu or Catholic," said Sookdeo, 61, from St. Petersburg. "Whatever it is, whoever can rule the country the way they're supposed to. That's what matters most."

Although everyone in Sookdeo's family said they planned to vote for Obama, they disagreed on the senator's faith background.

Sookdeo's son, Aftab, an auto mechanic from St. Petersburg, said he believes that Obama's name and family background make him a Muslim. In his opinion, the senator is denying his faith and culture.

"I don't think it's right," said Aftab Sookdeo, 40. "We believe everyone has a destiny. If he is a Muslim, he may not win as president. But in the end, he'll be the better person."

Rabia Sookdeo, a St. Petersburg optician, doesn't agree with her brother.

WHY MUSLIMS GIVE OBAMA A PASS ON RELIGION

"I'm sure that (Obama) wouldn't mind opening his horizons as far as what his beliefs are, but I believe that's as far as it goes," she said.

Obama would like the public to accept the truth about his faith story. But as the folks at the Tampa mosque proved, batting down persistent rumors even among Muslims is a formidable task. According to Obama's account of his life, he never practiced Islam. His father was born a Muslim but became an atheist and divorced Obama's mother when he was 2. Obama saw his father only once more before he died.

For the last two decades, Obama was a member of the Trinity United Church of Christ. It is where he accepted Jesus Christ, said his wedding vows and watched his two daughters get baptized. It was also the home church of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, whose controversial comments surfaced earlier this year and, at one point, appeared poised to jettison the senator's bid for the White House. Obama has since broken ties with Wright and the church.

Islamic scholars back up Obama's telling of his faith background. He is not a Muslim, they said, because he was not raised in a Muslim household. He also has never followed the principles of Islam.

"There's no doubt in my mind he is not a Muslim," said Ihsan Bagby, a professor at the University of Kentucky and one of the country's leading scholars on Islamic studies. "But I applaud him in the fact that in denying Islam, he is not slandering Islam or making it a fault."

Khan, the national Muslim advocate, says Muslims who believe Obama shares their religious beliefs are engaging in wishful thinking.

"At the end of seeing so much discrimination in this country, (they) are hoping they can find somebody who can be sympathetic towards Muslims," Khan said. "But they're living in a delusional world."

Khan said he has known Obama since his days as a state senator. Back then, Obama was accessible, attending various events in the Chicago area, Khan said.

He recalls holding fund-raisers for Obama long before handlers guided his footsteps.

Although the advocate understands the current political climate, he said the candidates for president ignore Muslims at their own peril. There are millions of Muslims in the United States, and they vote. If politicians reach out, Muslims will reach back.

In the primaries, Khan said he stumped for Sen. John Edwards, the North Carolina Democrat. He said he did it because the Edwards' camp asked. He hasn't heard from Obama.

Times researcher John Martin contributed to this report. Sherri Day can be reached at sday@sptimes.com or (813) 226-3405.

Graphic

PHOTO, LARA CERRI, Times: "Religion is supposed to have nothing to do with it," said Taiwo Emiola, left, a Nigerian nurse who lives in Riverview. PHOTO, LARA CERRI, Times: Sister, brother and mother Rabia, Aftab and Ayesha Sookdeo will vote for Obama but disagree with each other about his faith.

Load-Date: October 12, 2008

Wikipedia's Arabic-language version skews the Middle East

The Jerusalem Post

November 25, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: ECONOMICS; Pg. 18

Length: 1540 words

Byline: DAVID SHAMAH

Highlight: Digital World

Body

I almost hate to do this - after my last round with Wikipedia, they're going to think I'm picking on them. Last June, I wrote about accusations that pro-Israel organizations were somehow trying to manipulate the on-line encyclopedia's entries to make Israel "look good"; the truth, it seemed to me, was that much of the information on Wikipedia regarding Israel is skewed, with terms and descriptions weighted against Israel taken as "fact" and legions of pages containing built-in prejudices that virtually no one questions.

Unfortunately, that goes double for Wikipedia's Arabic-language version. What an opportunity to break down stereotypes and promote understanding between strangers, even enemies - and they're blowing it!

If we are counting on the "brand name" of Wikipedia to help break down barriers and stereotypes, the site has a lot of work to do, it seems. Wikipedia, with its more than 10 million articles (there are only 500,000 in the Encyclopedia Britannica), is quickly becoming the de facto place to look for information, almost anywhere there is an Internet; increasingly, the Wikipedia entry comes up first when you Google for information about almost anything these days.

How does Wikipedia make sure it stays more or less accurate? Through "peer-editing"; it is assumed that when inaccurate information is listed in an article, someone will come in and correct it, or at least present an opposing point of view (<http://tinyurl.com/fccjr>). According to the site, thousands of articles have been amended or rewritten since Wikipedia came into being in 2001, thus proving the validity of the system.

But what happens when you have a society that has a very definite set of "everybody knows" beliefs - where inaccuracies and outright lies plague Wikipedia articles, but no one does anything about it, because everyone believes them? If somebody writes that the earth is flat in an article, and all the peers believe that the earth is flat, then readers who are counting on the information in Wikipedia are going to read that the earth is flat, and that's all they're going to hear. So the system isn't foolproof.

Unfortunately, this "what if" scenario is not theoretical; it actually happens on pages I checked out in the Arabic-language version of Wikipedia (<http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki>). Many Westerners get nervous when they see Arabic writing, like there must be some terrorist-oriented message embedded in the text. But thanks to the miracle of Google Translations (<http://translate.google.com/translate-t#>), Arabic and dozens of other languages no longer need be a mystery. While clearly not professional translations, Google returns a satisfactory rendering of a page that (usually) gives you a pretty clear picture of what the site in question is trying to say.

Wikipedia's Arabic-language version skews the Middle East

I don't read or speak Arabic, but thanks to Google Translations, I'm able to get a much better insight into the point of view of Arabic speakers on-line. My method: Type in a search term at the translation site, then copy the resulting Arabic characters and do a Google search for them, then click on the "translate this page" link on results.

Using this method to Google for "hot-button" items like Israel, Jew, Zionism, etc., returns results like you would unfortunately expect, in many cases. Which is what led me to Wikipedia. Interestingly, in Arabic-language Google searches, Wikipedia entries were usually at the top of the list, too. That's good, I thought; wouldn't Arabic-language Wikipedia pages be translations of English-language pages on the same subject? Not that I'm such a fan of Wikipedia's point of view on Israel and Jewish-oriented issues, but it's a lot more palatable than what many of the "native" Arabic sites present.

But it turns out that Arabic Wikipedia (AW) is not necessarily a translation of English-language Wikipedia (EW). While, as I mentioned, the Google Translation rendering of these pages is clearly not totally accurate, the discrepancies between AW and EW were so great that you quickly realize that the two versions have very little to do with each other, at least on the hot-button issues.

I think that is a major problem. Wikipedia is such an authority today that if a Wikipedia page says, for example, that the Haganah's fighting against Arab villages in Palestine before the establishment of Israel is a "genocide," akin to the Holocaust or genocide in Rwanda, how can we be surprised when kids in Ramallah, Jenin or Gaza rally behind suicide bombers who wantonly kill Israeli women and children? Wouldn't we have been happy if Polish Jews had conducted an "intifada" against the Nazis? (Note that there is a separate AW page titled "Gaza Holocaust," referring to a battle in Gaza last March, in which Hamas said 116 Gaza residents were killed).

You won't find a hint on AW of what was well-documented by the Haganah during the War of Independence: how residents of these Arab villages actively took part in the war, giving themselves the status of combatants, or how the vast majority ran away when told to do so by the Arab armies invading the newly established State of Israel, the better to clear out and give the Arab Legion a clear field to perpetrate a genocide of their own, against the Jews. Of course, one man's terrorist attack is another's "freedom fight," but you have to really be out there in anti-Israel land to claim that the Haganah conducted a near-genocide against anyone, especially given the well-known historical facts.

Among the historic genocides listed on the AW page are the Cambodian genocide, the Rwanda genocide, "French massacres in Algeria from 1830 to 1962," the "Armenian genocide" and others. The next paragraph on this page reads: "Human history has witnessed several cases of mass murder, but the debate is the use of the term genocide by around the intent to destroy [sic], in whole or in part, because this group is the core purpose of genocide, but difficult to demonstrate." Listed here is "Mongol invasion of Baghdad," "Annihilation of Native Americans (Indians)" and "Massacres against the Palestinians by gangs Haganah Jewish [sic] at the beginning of the Zionist occupation of Palestine."

Politics plays heavily on anything having to do with Jerusalem, and the AW page on the city makes for interesting reading. Prominent on the AW page, for example, are references to "the Judaization of Jerusalem." The introductory line says: "Jerusalem is the largest city of historic Palestine under Israeli control today"; the city's status "as the capital of a Palestinian state within a Palestinian declaration of independence" is the second sentence. Security Council Resolutions 476 and 478 are the context for the mention of the city as Israel's capital (the resolutions condemned Israel's unification of the city). Interestingly, the history of Jerusalem on the AW and EW pages are quite different, with Canaanites and Egyptians stressed far more strongly on the AW page (the "debate" link on this page makes clear why).

As far as the entry for Jews goes, the article seemed pretty balanced, except for a comparison of Purim to Halloween (wearing costumes and getting drunk), and of Hanukka to Christmas (gift giving) - false stereotypes Western Jews worked hard to debunk. That, and a discussion as to how the Jews and the Children of Israel are not the same entity (not very clear, but it appears to be not very complimentary). Plus, a reference to "Aerosmith: Crazy," which I always thought was a song by that rock group, but turns out to be, when you click on the link, a discussion of a heavy Koranic concept!

Wikipedia's Arabic-language version skews the Middle East

The entry on Israel recited the country's familiar history, but key elements ("In 1947, the world witnessed the partition of Palestine, which gave the Jews living in Palestine 55% of the land, when they accounted for 30% of the population") are just plain wrong.

Besides issues that concern us, Wikipedia gives us an insight into how Arabs see their own history. There is no reference to a century of French genocide in Algeria in EW, but there is a page dedicated to the Setif massacre, in which French troops shot and killed Algerian rioters (as few as 1,100, or as many as 45,000, depending on who you believe).

Most interesting was the AW entry on the Armenian genocide, compared to the EW entry. On the AW page, it appears as if the Armenians were in league with the Russians to fight the Ottoman Turks, and the Armenians died in the general starvation of World War I, like everyone else (i.e. there was no "genocide," and even if there was, the Armenians had it coming because they acted like "a fifth column" in Turkey, armed by the Russians). The EW page on this subject has the more familiar version of an organized extermination of the Armenians.

The disparity between the two versions is really wide, which means that one of the Wikipedias isn't getting the story right. I could go on, but you get the idea. Like a Tower of Babel, Wikipedia aims to build a body of knowledge that all humanity can benefit from. But if we're not speaking the same language - figuratively and intellectually, not just literally - what chance do we have of making that happen? And should Wikipedia be lending its authoritative name to the process?

<http://digital.newzgeek.com>

Graphic

Map: THE GALILEE, as it appears in an Arabic-language map from Wikicommons Media.

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Body

INTERNATIONAL

DEEP IN TALIBAN TERRITORY,

A Push for Electricity

When up and running, the new 200-ton hydroelectric turbine for the Kajaki Dam, provided by the United States, will double the electricity supply to the towns and districts of southern Afghanistan and provide jobs and economic renewal to the most troubled and violent part of the country. But it is part of an overall project repeatedly delayed by Taliban attacks and logistics. PAGE A18

IRAQI SECTS LIMITED

Iraq's executive council ratified a bill that gives Iraqi religious minorities fewer guaranteed seats in provincial councils than the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq had advised. Iraqi Christians have complained that the bill leaves them underrepresented in provincial councils, and President Jalal Talabani hinted that he might veto the bill in the executive council meeting. But it passed unanimously. PAGE 21

RICE UNVEILS AID TO JENIN

In the first visit by an American secretary of state to the city of Jenin, a once-infamous hub of Palestinian militants, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced a \$14 million assistance package and sought to strike a positive chord. And the militant group **Hamas**, which controls the Palestinian territory of Gaza, withdrew from negotiations with Fatah, the rival group that controls the West Bank. PAGE A18

NATIONAL

WHAT A DIFFERENCE

Nine Weeks Can Make

Gov. Sarah Palin has returned a changed person -- 2012 presidential contender? political footnote? -- to a changed Alaska, one where oil revenues are below the level required to balance the state budget and tension continues over the fate of Senator Ted Stevens, who was convicted of ethics violations last month. PAGE 23

FIGHT LOOMS ON UNION BILL

Labor unions hope that having a friend in the White House will benefit their agenda, including their No. 1 priority, a push to get the new president and Congress to pass legislation that would make it easier for workers to unionize. But the nation's business community has already declared war on the bid. PAGE 25

H.I.V. SCARE AT SCHOOL

Life has been far from normal for students at the struggling Normandy High School in suburban St. Louis since they learned last month that as many as 50 of their classmates may have been exposed to H.I.V., the virus that causes AIDS. "It's the only thing we talk about," said Jamar McKinney, a junior. PAGE 28

OBITUARIES

MIKE DAVIS, 68

His landlubber's vision of one day gripping an oar and skimming a rowboat through the gentle chop of the Hudson River inspired something of a movement to reclaim New York's waterways for recreational use. PAGE 38

NEW YORK

A LIFETIME OF STRUGGLE

For Police Accuser

Interviews with friends and acquaintances of Michael Mineo, who has accused police officers of assaulting him at a subway station, depict a man who lost both his parents to drug overdoses while he was young, who more than once lost the roof over his head, and who has had both a longtime ambition to be a rap artist and a series of run-ins with the police. PAGE 36

NOW WHAT?

A spike in Obama-ware -- T-shirts, pens, hoodies, buttons, caps and the like -- followed in the post-election elation in Mount Vernon, N.Y. But it was a little hard to see what specific impact people expected in their own lives, Peter Applebome writes. Our Towns. PAGE 36

SPORTS

LINEBACKER AT HOME

In a World of Strikes

While the N.F.L. is filled with Pro Bowlers, linebacker David Bowens is the Jets' pro bowler. Through all of his four stops in the league, bowling has been his constant, his little piece of home. It is a legacy from his stepfather, Frank Williams, a 62-year-old former professional bowler. PAGE 1

A NEW CHALLENGE

He spent 20 months trying to help his brother-in-law get elected president. That worked out. Now Coach Craig Robinson of Oregon State turns his attention to a program that is coming off an 0-18 season in the Pacific-10 and carrying a 21-game losing streak. PAGE 1

The Magazine

THE WHITE HOUSE,

And Imperial Presidency

The Bush administration expanded executive power, secretly and, many would say, unconstitutionally. Will the new president and a new Congress redefine who is in charge? Page 42

CHECK CASHERS, REDEEMED

Many low-income Americans were wary of banks even before the latest round of failures and takeovers. Is a semi-reformed payday lender the right guy to bring the urban poor into the banking system? Page 36

Questions For:

Ron Howard 13

Book Review

A QUIETER JIM CROW

In America's North

Most of the images from the civil rights movement are from marches and confrontations in the places like Memphis and Birmingham. In his new book, "Sweet Land of Liberty," Thomas Sugrue takes an exhaustive look at the less-examined but equally pervasive role that unofficial but powerful segregation played in Northern life. PAGE 9

DOWN THE RIVER

Peter Ackroyd's "Thames" tells the story of the river that cuts through the heart of London, and teeters between morbid factoids -- where the desperate may best jump off a bridge, for example -- and lyrical evocations of the underworld. Miranda Seymour says that concluding chapters "are extraordinary, perhaps the finest he has written in a prolific career." PAGE 14

T Magazine

A GLOBAL SUMMIT

In Columbia County, N.Y.

To house their growing collection of Chinese art, Christopher Tsai and Andre Stockamp commissioned an even larger work of art: an austere, corrugated metal weekend house in upstate New York, designed by the Beijing-born artist Ai Weiwei. PAGE 98

ARTFUL LODGERS

For six women, home life imitates art. PAGE 89

Arts & Leisure

TRYING VIRGINIA WOOLF

On the Stage, Again

Virginia Woolf has never been much of a stage presence, and attempts to adapt her fiction to the footlights have seldom been successful. But in 2006, Kate Mitchell's adaptation of "The Waves" played to sold-out audiences in London. Fresh from a tour in Britain, "Waves" makes its way to the United States and will run at the Duke on 42nd Street. PAGE 8

Travel

MAKING A CASE FOR

A Caribbean Getaway

The tourism industry in the Caribbean has been hit hard by earthquakes, hurricanes and a financial downturn that has made travelers scale back on their vacation plans. But there are still plenty of reasons to visit the islands, writes Austin Considine -- 39, in fact. PAGE 3

IAN FLEMING'S JAMAICA

Several of the best-selling 007 spy novels were largely or partly set in Jamaica, and the films for "Dr. No" and "Live and Let Die" were shot there. That's not a coincidence: Ian Fleming, James Bond's creator, spent his winters in Jamaica for nearly two decades, and its beauty, history and potential for danger made it a fitting backdrop for postwar espionage adventure. PAGE 8

Sunday Styles

GENERATION O

Gets Its Hopes Up

They are tech savvy, and log in to Facebook and share (overshare?) with their friends and acquaintances on MySpace and Twitter. And they campaigned, volunteered and voted overwhelmingly voted for Senator Barack Obama for president. But is the Generation O's logical next step disappointment? PAGE 1

DROWNING IN REDS

One of the ways to gauge the health of the American economy is to consult the Lipstick Index, a financial barometer which holds that cosmetics sales rise in direct relation to an economic downturn. (In case you were wondering, makeup sales are up 40 percent over the last few months.) PAGE 3

Sunday Business

OPEN THE DOOR

And Turn On the Lights

A new team in the White House can't right the country's economic ship overnight. But the new White House has the immediate opportunity to make sure that sweeping financial fixes are done properly, not just quickly. The first step: make the bailout more transparent. Gretchen Morgenson, Fair Game. PAGE 1

FIXING THE MESS

A group of economists discuss what can be done to fix the economy as the next president prepares to take office, and call on the new president to restore confidence in the markets, work across the aisle, help struggling American households and change what the government taxes. Economic View. PAGE 4

Automobiles

A SILVER SOUVENIR

Of Family Journeys

Robert La Rocca was 15 in 1966, and his Bronx family took a transatlantic cruise to his father's native Italy -- with his father's silver Cadillac Coupe de Ville convertible in tow. The car is of great sentimental value to Mr. La Rocca, now 59, who recently had it restored, if not completely. "I'd rather have the original seats," rips and all. "I made those marks," he noted. SPORTS, PAGE 9

Week in Review

SEEKING A POET

For the Great Mess of '08

"The Great Crash, 1929" was John Kenneth Galbraith's well-respected if controversial history of that moment, which chronicled the collective delusions that led to it. Michael Powell writes that a look at Mr. Galbraith's work now reveals some intriguing parallels to our current financial crisis and the economic culture that has led to a parade of economic bubbles. PAGE 1

HARNESSING A CAUSE

Sam Tanenhaus writes that the conservative movement and the civil rights movement are the two outsize political forces of recent political history. Both have exacted large demands from the two parties, which was no less true this election. PAGE 3

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

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Body

International

ANGER IN RUSSIA RISES

After Father's Acquittal

Russian authorities are calling for heavily restricting or shutting down the adoption of Russian children by American families. The furor follows a string of abuse cases and the acquittal in December of an adoptive father in the death of a Washington-area toddler, above, born Dmitri Yakovlev. Page 5

SINGAPORE'S LAST HAMLET

Singapore is a veritable monument to growth and modernization. Yet, on its outskirts is the tiny village of Kampong Buangkok. The last rural hamlet in the area may soon be gone for good, as the government has scheduled the village for demolition. Page 5

A NEW LEADER IN GHANA

The opposition leader John Atta Mills won a narrow victory for Ghana's presidency in the closest race in the nation's history, officials announced. Page 7

SOMALI INSURGENTS SEIZE POLICE STATIONS

Three unoccupied police stations in Mogadishu were taken over by insurgents after Ethiopia began withdrawing its troops -- who had been bolstering the country for two years -- from the city. Many fear the move will spark a violent scramble for power among Islamist factions. Page 6

News Analysis

A New Chapter

There is no question that President-elect Barack Obama will have his work cut out for him. The Bush administration is leaving more than a few loose ends. In Europe, where many issues have been stalled, there may be hope for new dialogue. Still, there's a great deal left to resolve, even if the lines of communication are open. Page 8

INSIDE THE TIMES: January 4, 2009

National

SAN FRANCISCO CONSIDERS

Fees to Ease Congestion

Following the lead of other congested cities like London and Singapore, the San Francisco County Transportation Authority is considering a plan to ease traffic by charging drivers a fee upon entering notoriously clogged sections of the city at certain times. Page 14

MIXING PIETY AND POLITICS

Tom Riner, a Kentucky representative and devout and active minister, has been taken to the world's corners and gutters by his faith. But it has gotten him in trouble, too, as Mr. Riner does not believe there is a separation between church and state. He is troubled by what he sees as a country moving away from its heritage as one nation under God. Page 12

New York

POLICE FORCE SHINES,

But History Remains

Crime rates in New York are at the lowest they've ever been, and public approval of New York City police officers is soaring. But there are still concerns, both in current actions like stop-and-frisks and in past abuses that haunt the department. Page 21

GAZA CONFLICT SPURS RALLY

Anger over the Israeli offensive on Hamas- controlled Gaza spilled into Times Square as hundreds of protesters condemned the attacks in a demonstration that stretched four blocks and clogged much of the city's central tourist district for several hours. Page 24

DISCLOSURE FOR KENNEDY

That Caroline Kennedy has not filed disclosure forms, even when she was employed by the city's Department of Education, has been a recent cause for questions. These forms are a yearly procedure for thousands of New York employees. Page 21

CHECK, MATE AND SUED

In chess, a cool head prevails. But a rift among the board members of the United States Chess Federation, the game's governing body, has led to a series of lawsuits that has all the bad blood of a professional wrestling rivalry. Page 27

This Weekend

Arts & Leisure

A Primetime Player,

Without Aiming for It

As a shy college student, Kristen Wiig made a haphazard detour into theater. Now 35, She finds herself in a most unlikely position: the senior female cast member of "Saturday Night Live," in just her fourth season. PAGE 1

D.J.'S UNDER CURFEW

INSIDE THE TIMES: January 4, 2009

The Martinez Brothers, also known as T.M.B., have developed an ardent following, packing in crowds at Manhattan dance clubs by blending house music and techno. That out-of-place-seeming guy in the argyle sweater? Their dad, making sure there's nothing in the under-age D.J.'s cups stronger than Gatorade. PAGE 12

A Leaner City Opera 1

The Magazine

Risk Management

Were the measures used to evaluate Wall Street trades before the economic meltdown flawed? Or was the mistake ignoring them? PAGE 24

CREATURE COMFORTS

It's no longer just guide dogs for blind people. Service animals now include monkeys for quadriplegics, parrots for psychotics and at least one assistance duck. Should the law recognize all of them? Page 34

The Ethicist 14

Questions For: Joan Rivers 11

Education Life Alpha Testing In the Dorm

A look at innovations and business ventures from college students, including greener tree harvesting, a novel way to shelter refugees and an electric motorcycle that looks as if it rides on one wheel. Page 1

Automobiles In It for the Long Run

From the mid-1970s to mid-1980s, Mercedes-Benz manufactured a line of diesel cars that were notable mainly for being very noisy and very slow. Tom Cucinello of Ramsey, N.J., owns three of the durable old diesels, which have logged about 170,000 miles apiece, and hopes to coax another million miles out of them. PAGE 1 (Page 10 in Sunday Business in some copies)

Travel

A Resilient Mumbai

In the weeks after the terrorist attacks in Mumbai that left 170 people dead, the city of 16 million had already begun the process of getting back to normal. PAGE 3

THE QUIET STAR

Of Canada's Rockies

Banff National Park in the Canadian Rockies, above, makes up in stunning mountain views and abundant snow what it lacks in pomp and frills. PAGE 1

Sunday Business

Reconsidering Some Basic Assumptions

Investors may have made the financial crisis worse by adhering to conventional wisdom rooted in the bull markets of the past quarter-century. And some of those ideas may have run their course. Paul J. Lim, Fundamentally. PAGE 4

BEYOND HIS GUIDE DOG

INSIDE THE TIMES: January 4, 2009

When glaucoma took his eyesight at 14, T.V. Raman didn't allow it to slow his interest in math and technology. Now, as a highly respected computer scientist and engineer at Google, he develops custom technology for blind users, including a version of Google's search engine for the visually impaired. Page 1

Sports

EAGLES' DEFENSIVE SAFETY

Outruns Clock and Critics

Brian Dawkins was facing up to some hard rocks in his future. He's 35, his contract was coming up, and he'd been absent from the spotlight. But he turned that around, facing it all head on. His productive season for the Eagles shows a wise, not wizened, asset. Page 1

GROOMING PLAYERS YOUNG

The inaugural game of Football University Youth All-American Bowl has 143 players in it, all barely teenagers and many already being offered scholarships. The path for these youngsters is being carved out far ahead of them as America searches for its next big star. Page 1

RED STORM TOPS THE IRISH

St. John's rewarded a crowd of 9,807 at Madison Square Garden by picking up perhaps the biggest basketball victory in Coach Norm Roberts's five seasons, beating No. 7 ranked Notre Dame, 71-65. The Irish became the highest-ranked opponent to fall to the Red Storm in Coach Roberts's tenure and the first ranked team St. John's had beaten in almost two years. "It's been a long time coming," said forward Justin Burrell. Page 2

CELTICS' LINCHPIN

When Rajon Rondo is not helping the Celtics maintain their dominance, he can be found roller-skating at the rink in his hometown of Louisville, Ky. The 22-year-old's game belies his age, a blend of speed and authority that is helping to offset the departure of two of the team's key members. Page 3

Week in Review

AN OLD WAR IN MIDEAST

May Have New Meaning

The shockwaves from Israel's recent military actions in Gaza could emanate as far as President-elect Barack Obama's promised attempts at calming the region. A decisive win could help the case against extremism and Iran's fostering of it. The effect of the conflict in this small area could very well change the face of the region. Page 1

100 Ways to Become Senator 1

WORLD GOVERNMENT INC.

The world government -- that is, structures like the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund -- date from World War II, and that world no longer exists. With so many nations emerging, and fast, reinvention is thick in the air. Page 4

Editorial

TAXES AND MR. OBAMA

INSIDE THE TIMES: January 4, 2009

Stimulus spending is front and center now, but the nation needs far more tax revenue. President-elect Barack Obama needs to establish himself from the start as a proponent of fair and adequate taxation. Week in Review, Page 7

EXIT, STONEWALLING

True to its mania for secrecy, the Bush administration is leaving behind vast gaps in the most sensitive White House e-mail records, information that deserves to be part of the permanent historical record.

Week in Review, Page 7

A VOICE FOR THE CONSUMER

The time has come to give the American consumer a stronger voice in Washington. President-elect Barack Obama has named what amounts to an energy and environmental czar. Americans deserve no less.

Week in Review, Page 7

Op-Ed

FRANK RICH

The one indisputable talent of President Bush's White House was its ability to create and sell propaganda to the public and the press. Now that bag of tricks is empty as well.

Week in Review, Page 8

NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF

Barack Obama's election marks a triumph over the legacy of slavery. Now he can lead a new abolitionist movement against 21st-century slavery -- like the trafficking of girls into brothels.

Week in Review, Page 8

THE COLLAPSE OF FINANCE

In an Op-Ed article, Michael Lewis and David Einhorn explain how the American financial world collapsed -- and how it can be rebuilt.

Week in Review, Page 9

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

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The disappearance of law

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Body

The Arab pogrom in Acre on Yom Kippur was yet another wake-up call. The 200 Israeli Arabs who shattered the windshields of 110 Jewish cars, and burned and looted dozens of Jewish businesses in the city on the eve of Yom Kippur while shouting out, "Death to Jews!" "Allah Akbar!" and "We'll kill you if you leave your homes!" couldn't have made their point any more clearly.

They don't like Jews. They don't want peaceful coexistence with Israel. They don't recognize the authority of Israel's laws. They don't accept their identity as Israeli citizens.

If the actual violence wasn't enough to clarify matters, then we have the invitations for the Arab theater festival that began on Thursday, and its program.

Acre's Arab leaders decided to organize their festival in response to Mayor Shimon Lancry's decision to postpone indefinitely Acre's annual Alternative Theater Festival. Fearing continued violence, Lancry opted over the weekend to postpone the annual event that was scheduled to take place this week.

The Arabs called their festival, "Acre Is Not Alone." In the invitations distributed to the Arab residents of the city, the organizers wrote: "We will not surrender to the emergency laws that were enacted after the settlers' [that is, the Jewish residents of the city's] attacks. The settlers are trying to enact an ethnic cleansing of the eastern neighborhoods of the city. We call on Acre's Arab residents to come to the Old City and break the siege that has been enacted against the merchants there. We are organizing these activities to preserve the importance of Acre as a center of Palestinian tourism, culture, history and geography."

So in short, "Acre is not Alone" has been organized to raise Arab awareness of Arab suffering at the hands of the Jews in Israel. Its main attractions include a movie that portrays the Arab riots in October 2000 from the perspective of the families of the Arab rioters killed by police trying to quell their violence against Jews; a one-man play fulminating on the victimization of Arabs in Israel and the Palestinian Authority by Jews; and an "artistic" narration of the plight of an Arab who left Acre in 1948 as a result of Jewish "aggression," and died in a UN camp in Lebanon.

It is important to pause for a moment and set out as precisely as possible what happened in Acre on the eve of Yom Kippur and the following night, after the holiday ended.

On Wednesday night, when as is customary, after prayers ended Jews milled about in the streets that were empty of moving cars out of respect for the holiday, Acre resident Jamal Tawfik drove into the city's predominantly Jewish

The disappearance of law

Ben-Gurion neighborhood. Jewish residents claim that Tawfik was driving at high speed with his windows down and music blasting out of his speakers, in a clear provocation of the Jews. Tawfik denied the allegations.

By all accounts, some Jewish youth approached his car. Some accounts claim that a handful of teenagers hit the sides of his car. Some accounts claim that some teenagers pelted his car with stones. All accounts agree that he exited his vehicle unscathed.

Just after this altercation, a still-unidentified Arab in the Old City broadcast that a Jewish mob had murdered Tawfik via the loudspeakers of a mosque. More than 200 Arab residents then descended on the Ben-Gurion neighborhood with axes and knives. They shattered the windshields of some 110 Jewish-owned cars. They then moved into the business district and looted and vandalized the Jewish-owned stores and businesses. Despite multiple calls for help from terrified Jews, it took the police several hours to appear on the scene. And when they arrived, they did nothing to end the Arab rampage.

The next evening, after the holiday ended, the Jewish residents started a spontaneous protest against the Arab riot. Arab rioters returned.

This time, the police, equipped with riot gear, succeeded in separating the Arabs from the Jews. A group of Jewish protesters, demanding revenge, torched a handful of Arab-owned apartments in mixed neighborhoods. The Arabs continued looting Jewish businesses and attacking Jewish cars. Police arrested rioters on both sides.

In the days that followed, Arab leaders published condemnations of violence "on both sides," and asked Jewish leaders to join them in their statements. Most Jewish leaders in the city refused. As Acre's Chief Rabbi Yoseph Yashar told a reporter, "As long as they speak of the Arab rioters from the eve of Yom Kippur in the same breath as the acts of vengeance carried out by Jews in response, it will be very hard to calm matters down."

On the national political level, Kadima and Labor party leaders have embraced the Arabs' moral equivalence. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and their subordinates have all decried "acts of violence" and "lawlessness," while refraining from making any special mention of the fact that the violence was carried out almost entirely by Acre's Arabs.

Olmert went further than his colleagues. During a meeting with anti-Israel activists from the Arab sector, including the deputy head of the Hamas-linked northern branch of the Israeli Islamic Movement on Monday, Olmert claimed, "There can be no doubt that for years the Arab population has suffered from discrimination that stemmed from a variety of sources."

By making the statement to some of the most extreme anti-Israel voices in Israeli Arab society, Olmert seemingly justified the lawlessness of their followers.

The police have reacted to the Arab violence with now customary passivity. Decrying the police's belated and feckless response to Wednesday night's violence, Likud MK Yuval Steinitz minced no words: "The public security minister [Avi Dichter] and the chief of police [David Cohen] must resign. The State of Israel has become the only country in the Western world where pogroms are carried out against Jews. Physical assaults are carried out against them and against their property amid calls of 'Death to the Jews.' A police force that is incapable of defending Jewish neighborhoods requires a serious overhaul."

WHILE STARTLING, the events in Acre - and the official response to them - are not new phenomena. Last Yom Kippur, an Arab driver from Shibli in the Galilee mortally wounded nine-year-old Tal Zino from neighboring Kfar Tavor. The driver entered the community at top speed on his all-terrain vehicle. Children playing outside the synagogue ran to evade him. Tal couldn't get out of his way fast enough. He ran her over.

As Tal's mother, Haya Zino, told Ma'ariv last Friday, that incident was the first attack against Jews carried out by an Arab operating a heavy motor vehicle. In her view, the more recent murders of Jews in Jerusalem by Arab bulldozer operators are simply a continuation of the attack on Kfar Tavor that killed her daughter.

The disappearance of law

Two years ago, an Arab mob in Acre violently attacked yeshiva students dancing in the streets on Simhat Torah. The students were forced to flee to their yeshiva, where the Arabs then besieged them. Rather than disperse the crowd, the police simply helped the students escape to their homes through the yeshiva's backdoor.

And in the riots in Peki'in earlier in October 2007, the police refused to confront the Arab mob that attacked the Jewish homes in the village. They allowed a policewoman to be held hostage for several hours and essentially begged anti-Israeli local leaders to intervene on her behalf.

THE EVER-INCREASING radicalism of Israeli Arabs, who today openly and officially oppose the existence of the Jewish state, shows the imbecility of the government's plan to "separate" from the Palestinians by withdrawing from Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem.

Given that Israeli Arabs and Palestinian Arabs openly identify themselves as one society, there is no way to separate from the Palestinians.

But the fact that Israeli Arabs are indistinguishable from Palestinian Arabs does not mean that there is no way to contend with their rejection of Israel. To the contrary, it points to the only way to contend with both the Palestinian Arab and the Israeli Arab rejection of Israel: By reestablishing law and order and respect for the law both within the 1949 armistice lines and in the areas Israel took control of in 1967.

Here, it is worth pointing out that in their rejection of the authority of Israel, the Israeli Arab rioters in Acre are little different from the French Muslim rioters who set their country ablaze in November 2005. In both cases, the rioters demonstrated their abject contempt and rejection of the state in which they live, at the same time that their governments were doing everything in their power to appease them as a suffering minority.

Responding to the violence, French voters elected President Nicolas Sarkozy. Sarkozy campaigned on a law and order platform. Sadly, since taking office, he has done little to abide by his campaign pledges in this regard.

In Israel's case, no political leaders have made the connection between law and order and Israeli Arab or Palestinian Arab irredentism. Indeed, since the Arab riots in 2000, Israel has simply stopped enforcing its laws in the Arab sector. This is true not only with regard to violent crimes and treason, but also in relation to lesser offenses. For instance, polygamy is illegal in Israel. Yet, over the past decade, the prevalence of polygamy among Israeli Beduin has grown to unprecedented levels.

Last spring the government announced its intention to contend with the issue by forming committees and support groups for children of polygamous marriages and women who are involved in these illegal relationships. No thought was given to the obvious remedy of arresting the polygamous husbands and trying them for their crimes.

And this gets to the heart of the matter. While no doubt, historically, Israel has witnessed discrimination against members of its Arab sector, today, the chief form of discrimination they suffer is what US President George W. Bush has referred to as "the soft bigotry of low expectations." This of course causes both Israeli Jews and Arabs to feel contempt for the law and so increases the tendency of both Jews and Arabs to take the law into their own hands.

But more important, the pro-Arab discrimination of Israel's political and law enforcement arms has facilitated the radicalization of Arab Israeli society. Far from appeasing them, Israel has shown them that they are right to reject its authority. And their rejection of Israel - like their Palestinian Arab brethren's rejection of Israel - only increases as Israel seeks to appease them. By opting not to assert its authority over Arabs in Israel and the Palestinian Authority, by refraining from punishing their lawlessness and aggression against Jews, and even rewarding it, Israel guarantees that yet more dangerous attacks will soon follow.

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The disappearance of law

End of Document

Pro-Israel, pro-Africa

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Byline: LARRY DERFNER

Highlight: As a former African refugee to Israel herself, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem's Charmaine Hedding is doing all she can for the thousands who have fled across the Egyptian border. Box at end of text.

Body

At last week's inaugural meeting of the council of South Sudanese refugees in Israel, Charmaine Hedding, who organized the group, sticks out - as usual. Tall, fair-skinned and platinum blonde, she sits surrounded by seven Sudanese men who also tend to be tall, but whose skin is the color of mahogany.

The meeting takes place in the old German Colony mansion that houses the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, where Hedding is in charge of special projects, mainly the annual Feast of the Tabernacles, which is expected to draw some 8,000 Christians to Israel this week. (Her father, Rev. Malcolm Hedding, heads the embassy, which is co-publisher of The Jerusalem Post Christian Edition.)

But in the last year and a half, Charmaine, 35, has become one of the leading activists on behalf of the thousands of African refugees who've crossed the Egyptian border into Israel. Devoting three days a week to their cause, she's put the well-funded, well-connected embassy, the pioneer among contemporary Christian Zionist organizations in Israel, at the refugees' service. With the government generally treating them as an unwanted burden, Hedding at times works with, but at other times around, Israel's powers-that-be, usually in concert with left-leaning Israeli human rights organizations.

She grew up in South Africa identifying with the anti-apartheid struggle, a predominantly left-wing movement that, to outsiders, would seem foreign to Christian Zionism. Yet she is no left-winger on the Israeli-Arab conflict - but then she is no apologist for Israeli abuses of innocent Palestinians, either. In several ways, Hedding breaks the stereotype about Christian lovers of Israel. She sticks out from the evangelical mainstream almost as starkly as she does at a table with seven men from Sudan.

The council, which was elected by the (mainly Christian) South Sudanese refugees around the country, is meant to be a voice for the community to the government. The main thing the community wants, say the men, is education for their children. In Eilat, where the refugees work at the hotels, a lot of Sudanese teenagers are roaming around and getting into trouble because there's no school for them and they're too young to work. The children spent so many years in refugee camps and on the run that they are way behind in their education, and the parents want them to have a future - ultimately, back in Southern Sudan.

Hedding speaks English to them in her soft South African accent while the men speak a jumble of English and Sudanese dialects, which they translate for her. Toward the end of the meeting, one says: "You know, Charmaine,

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we are Africans, we come from different communities, there are a lot of disagreements, a lot of confusion, and you don't have to help us, you're doing it because you want to, which we really thank you for so much. But it's going to be a long time, a lot of work, until we can go back home. Are you really going to be with us until then?"

Hedding has a very quiet, gentle manner, but her composure and purposefulness, together with her tall, blonde good looks and classy clothing, give her an authoritative presence. Folding her hands and leaning slightly forward, she tells the inquirer: "One of the first words I learned when I came to this country was *savlanut* [patience]." It is the only Hebrew word spoken at the meeting, and the refugees laugh and nod in recognition. An understanding has been reached.

THE MEETING with the Sudanese is a rare break for Hedding from the project that's completely dominated her time lately, the Feast of the Tabernacles. In the embassy's computer room upstairs, she gives instructions to 10 women volunteers preparing for registration day, goes around to guide them on how to use the software, meanwhile making calls to try to smooth the arrival of foreign VIPs and delegations.

A smartly dressed, widely grinning woman comes into the room. "Charmaine? Hi! Carrie Burns from Champaign, Illinois." Hedding was a guest on Burns's Christian radio show some months ago, and Burns is here studying Hebrew, training at Yad Vashem to teach the Holocaust at American churches, and to volunteer for the Feast. Hedding gets up and gives her a hug.

Recalling the interview, Burns says to her, "You did such a good job. What you said just really engages believers. It shows that with all the bad news from Israel, there's good news too."

Later, I ask Burns what Hedding told her audience. "She talked about the refugees who came from Sudan through Egypt to Israel, and how the embassy is helping these Christian Sudanese, how it's helping the government of Israel care for them."

I ask what impression Hedding gave of the government's treatment of the Africans. "Positive," replies Burns. In this mission of mercy, she says, the Christian Embassy and the Israeli government are "a partnership made in heaven."

In truth, the only government bodies in Israel that have taken a positive attitude toward the refugees are the Tel Aviv and Beersheba municipalities; otherwise, it is Israeli civil rights organizations, synagogues, churches, charities, a few medical institutions and random volunteers who have kept the refugees afloat.

In view of her radio interview with Burns, I ask Hedding whether this is a sticky dilemma for her - whether her Christian Zionism, the embassy's role as an advocate for Israel, and the demands of the evangelical community compel her to sugar-coat the government's handling of African refugees.

She maintains there's no dilemma. "I do criticize the government, and pretty candidly. If people ask me, I will talk about it," Hedding says. "When Israel was starting the policy of 'hot return' [forcing apprehended refugees right back across the border to Egypt], I did a news conference with [activist] Eitan Schwartz and I spoke about the dangers in no uncertain terms. When people come to your country to ask for asylum, and you deny them entry without knowing whether they're at risk, you're placing human lives in danger." She noted that she began the day with a 7:30 a.m. meeting with civil rights attorneys attending the Supreme Court challenge of the "hot return" policy.

However, while Hedding has her criticisms of Israel's refugee policy, she empathizes with the government and gives it more credit for effort than most of her allies in the human rights NGOs do. "I know for a fact that Israel is training people to interview the refugees when they first arrive, to see if they have a legitimate claim to asylum. It isn't easy - Israel used to get, what, 50 refugees a year coming over the border, and now suddenly there are 12,000."

Recently she went to Southern Sudan and Kenya to see the problem at its source, and she plans another trip to Africa next month. Beyond the issue of how to help the few thousand Southern Sudanese in Israel, she is preoccupied with the fate of the nation as a whole, which lost two million people in its struggle for independence, and which remains under threat from the genocidal Sudanese government in Khartoum.

"The world says 'never again,' but are we going to let genocide happen again?" she says plaintively. "We have to keep the pressure on Khartoum, because if the peace agreement [in effect in Sudan since 2005] breaks down, then genocide will happen again."

FOR HEDDING, there is a moral link between the cause of Southern Sudan and that of Israel. There is also a moral link between those two causes and the one that shaped her childhood - the fight against apartheid.

Her father was part of it. As the anti-apartheid movement's confrontation with the South African government escalated in the 1980s, Malcolm Hedding was an Assemblies of God minister preaching against apartheid to a large congregation in Durban. "I told them the Bible upholds the dignity of all people, and that as white people in South Africa they have to realize that the system of apartheid is bankrupt and cannot be sustained," he says.

Some unfamiliar faces began showing up in the church and Rev. Hedding realized they were government spies. But one day in 1986, a long-time parishioner whom he didn't suspect came to his office "with a file a couple of inches thick," Hedding recalls. "He told me, 'I'm not who you think I am.' He was from the Bureau of State Security - BOSS - and he told me, 'We've got our eye on you.' He told me they were planning to detain me without charges, which they would do to people they didn't like for 90 days, and on the last day they'd release you and arrest you again as soon as you walked out the prison door, and they'd hold you for another 90 days. This could go on for years."

The government spy told Hedding all this because he'd developed a guilty conscience. "He told me to get out of South Africa as soon as possible," says the minister.

For over a decade, Rev. Hedding had been involved in Christian Action for Israel, so he was able to arrange a job at the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, and he, his wife and three children boarded the first plane available.

"We each had one suitcase," recalls Charmaine, who was 12 at the time. "These are the kinds of memories I have from childhood." Given her upbringing, she was appalled and ashamed by apartheid. "I thought, 'Oh my goodness, this is my country that's doing this.'"

As the Christian Embassy tends toward the Right on the Israeli-Arab conflict, the Heddings obviously don't agree with the notion that Israel is an apartheid state, or that Israeli rule in the West Bank amounts to apartheid. (The embassy, however, is not as right-wing about the conflict as it once was, nor as right-wing as pro-Israel evangelicals in the US; see box.) Rev. Hedding didn't have to be asked about this issue - he raised it in our interview.

"You can't equate this situation [in the West Bank] with what happened in South Africa," he says. "That was a political issue. The big mistake here is that everyone tries to hide the fact that behind the Palestinian fight is a strong Islamic theological idea - that this entire land is part of Dar al-Islam" - the realm of Islam.

While stressing that the embassy will support any decision taken by an Israeli government regarding the borders of the country, Hedding says that privately he opposed the Oslo accord and the disengagement from Gaza, and opposes any concessions in the West Bank now - but not on territorial grounds so much as for reasons of security. **Hamas**, Islamic Jihad, Fatah - they're all terrorist, anti- Israeli movements, he says.

Yet he does not whitewash the instances of abuse by Israeli soldiers and settlers against innocent Palestinians, citing the recent filmed incident in which a soldier shot a blindfolded, bound Palestinian in the foot from point-blank range. "That was a display of bravado, a reckless act. This type of injustice clearly is an issue that has to be addressed in this country," noting that one of the key measures of a democracy is "how it treats its minorities." But this, he stresses, is the "micro" story of the conflict; the more important "macro" story is the terrorist "jihad" being waged against Israel, and since the world seems interested only in the micro, Hedding and the embassy do all they can to remind it about the macro.

Only if the Palestinians were to come to terms with Israel's existence as a Jewish state and offer genuine peace in return for land - something he doesn't see anywhere on the horizon - might Hedding see the merits of rolling back

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Israeli control over the West Bank. "The Palestinians have to find their own Nelson Mandela, their own F.W. De Klerk," he says.

His daughter Charmaine is not deeply involved in the hasbara end of the embassy's work, and she isn't as steeped in Israeli-Arab politics as her father. When I asked how she viewed Israeli rule over West Bank Palestinians in comparison to white rule over blacks in South Africa, she leaned toward her father's opinion. She pointed out that Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups were worlds apart from the African National Congress, adding that the Palestinian Christian minority was often preyed upon by Muslim militants.

So she doesn't liken Israel's West Bank presence to apartheid. But when I asked if she saw no similarities whatsoever, Charmaine paused, then said that many Israelis, like most white South Africans during the time of apartheid, are liable to become "desensitized" to the abuses of innocent Palestinians that occur in the West Bank.

LATER, IN the embassy's computer room, one of the volunteers pipes up with exaggerated glee, "It's the candy lady!" as a woman comes through with a bag of sweets. Another volunteer shows up at the entrance and calls out in a Southern accent, "What are you doing here, girlfriend?" The girlfriend looks up and says in a New Jersey accent, "Oh my gosh!" then goes to give her Southern friend a hug.

"We're working at Mach 10 speed for the Feast," says Charmaine, who'd been there until midnight the night before. She's on the phone with someone from the Ministry of Tourism. "Did you speak to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about getting visas for our two groups coming from Congo and Gabon? Otherwise they have to cancel their flights.... They should call the local Israeli consulate?... Okay, but if you could see whether the Foreign Ministry knows about their visas, because it's very important and time is running out," she says, always in that quiet, composed, civilized South African voice.

This time, though, it does no good. Soon she hears that the visas for the Gabon and Congo groups, each with about 10 pilgrims, won't be forthcoming. "We've been on this for weeks, it's not like we haven't tried, but we've hit a brick wall," she tells a volunteer who, because she speaks French, will be relaying the bad news to the Gabon and Congo contingents. However, Charmaine has managed to straighten out visas for a large mission of pilgrims from Nigeria. "One out of three," she figures.

Her father describes her as "a brilliant marketer. She can open any door, she's highly efficient, and since she's tall, pretty and blonde, she's a bit disarming to Israelis."

After returning to South Africa with her family in 1989, by which time De Klerk was in power and apartheid was starting to wind down, Hedding studied financial management and marketing in college, then got a job training store managers at a large retail chain.

"When I went into a store, I was usually the only white employee there," she recalls. She found that there would be black, "colored" and Indian clerks who'd been with the company for decades, yet had never been given the opportunity for a promotion to manager. Thus, they had no loyalty to the company, and when they came under threat from criminal gangs to cooperate in thefts, they cooperated.

"I trained them to be managers, which gave them incentive, and the stores where they worked became profitable," Hedding recalls. "That's when I realized that my concepts of how to do things were different from the norm."

With violent crime skyrocketing in South Africa, Hedding, who had access to a lot of money when going from store to store, traveled with two armed security guards and a panic button around her neck. I ask if she was ever mugged. "Once. But I fought them off. With a purple Parker pen," she replies, laughing through her embarrassment. "Two guys came up to me in Pietermaritzburg, and one of them grabbed me from behind, but I pulled out a purple Parker pen and I sort of... stabbed him in the arm, and they ran away."

By 2004 she'd married, left the company to follow her husband to England, given birth to a son, Ethan, and gotten divorced when she received two job offers: to accept a higher position with the South African retail company, or move back to Jerusalem, where her parents and younger sister were again living, and organize the Christian

Embassy's annual Feast of the Tabernacles. She left Africa for God, family and Jerusalem- but Africa followed her here.

Last year she organized a conference in Jerusalem for Christian and Jewish women about issues that religious communities ordinarily do not discuss - domestic violence, incest, trafficking in women. Some 700 women came from all over the world, and what Hedding remembers most vividly are the tales of violence and victimization told by two Southern Sudanese women. "They were crying, but they went on anyway. There was a hush in the auditorium."

By then, the flow of African refugees across the Egyptian border had stepped up dramatically. In the government's absence, the NGOs and volunteers were left to deal with the humanitarian challenge. Hedding knew where she was needed.

Her new mission began at the beginning of that summer when some 10 families of refugees apprehended at the border were bused to Beersheba and let off on the street with no place to go. Sigal Rozen, head of the Hotline for Migrant Workers, the lead civil rights NGO aiding the refugees, recalls Hedding's response. "Without thinking about where the money was coming from, she right away put them on buses to Jerusalem and rented them hotel rooms in the Old City. For the next month, she made all the arrangements for them - getting them food and clothing, health care, registering them with the UN, finding them work. When I see those families today, they still talk about her."

Since then, Hedding has been spending three days a week going around to the different refugee communities in Eilat, Beersheba, Arad, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and elsewhere, finding out what they need, then going about getting it. She used her connections at Jerusalem's Crowne Plaza Hotel, the embassy's headquarters for the Feast, to get five African refugees hired on as cleaners. "They worked out so well that the manpower company they went through asked me, 'Do you have any more?' I said, 'I sure do.' Now there are refugees working in hotels all over the city."

Hedding says she's "gotten lost on every street in South Tel Aviv," the nerve center of the refugee community. She's lost count of how many hundreds of Africans she's helped, or how many hundreds of thousands of dollars the embassy has spent on them.

"There were eight families in Ketziot prison who needed places to live in order to be released, and with landlords asking two months' rent plus a security deposit, we needed about \$20,000 to get them out of prison and into their own apartments," Hedding recalls. "So I put out the word to our embassies around the world, including poor countries like Papua New Guinea and India. I'd get \$10 donations from a poor Christian family in India who wanted to help the refugees here. Within a couple of days, I had the \$20,000."

She also gets help for the refugees from a long list of Israelis and Israeli institutions - including synagogues, Hadassah Hospital and the Terem clinics. "Last Christmas there was a strike by the refugees in Ketziot because they weren't being provided socks and underwear. I rented a truck and filled it with more socks and underwear than I've ever seen and drove down to Ketziot with an embassy volunteer. There were 93 children among the strikers, so we also brought 93 book bags filled with goodies that were donated by families in North Tel Aviv."

Most of the refugees who've come Hedding's way happen to be Christians, but "she makes no distinction about religion, she helps Muslim refugees just like she does Christians," Rozen points out.

Hedding recalls making arrangements with Hadassah for the birth of the first baby born in Israel to a Darfuran refugee family, then arranging for the father, a construction worker, to get work on the restoration of Christ Church in the Old City. "Here was a Muslim woman giving birth in a Jewish hospital, which was providing all her pre-natal care for free, and then the Muslim father is able to start earning a living by helping rebuild Christ Church," she says. "I mean, this is what it's all about."

Her ecumenical approach used to surprise a lot of left-leaning Israeli activists for the refugees, given the right-wing, anti-Arab reputation of Christian Zionists. "But it's gotten to the point with the Israelis I work with that we can enjoy our differences," she says. "Once I was in a meeting with a lot of Israelis, and one of them said to me, 'An evangelical Christian working with all us secular, leftist Israeli Jews - you could almost think the messiah had come.'

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Then both of us said, at exactly the same time, how this depended on whether we were talking about the messiah's first or second coming. Everybody in the room just broke up laughing."

And how do the black African refugees react to the presence of a white South African? "They all know South Africa's story - we are the 'rainbow nation.' They know I wouldn't be working with them if I was a racist. I'm an African, and that's how they treat me - as one of their own."

It is the cause of the African refugees that keeps her in Israel, she says. Hedding has had offers to work in the US, both in the business sector and with the International Christian Embassy.

"But I'm staying in Israel," she says. "I have unfinished business here."

(BOX) Christian Zionism with a difference

Many Jews, especially on the Left, suspect that evangelical Christians line up on the Right behind Israel for purely instrumental reasons: because the New Testament says Jesus Christ can only return once the Jews have returned to Zion, and that can't happen if Israel gives up Judea and Samaria.

Whether or not those suspicions are justified about evangelical Christianity as a whole, they're not with regard to the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem today. Rev. Malcolm Hedding, who's been executive director of the embassy since 2000, agrees that some streams of evangelical Christianity are loaded with "radical Christian Zionists... We get e-mails from around the world from people prophesying war between Gog and Magog - because Putin sneezed. It's kind of crazy." That's not Hedding's brand of theology.

"This is a more Eurocentric ministry, and we believe in biblical Zionism, which recognizes that there are lots of things playing out in Israel over which we have no influence," he says. Hedding trusts that God will ultimately fulfill his promise to bestow the Land of Israel on Abraham's descendants, but the Land of Israel goes well beyond Judea and Samaria. "It stretches from the Euphrates [in Iraq] to 'the river in Egypt,' and the people of Israel have never in their history been in control of all that land. So while there may be a more complete fulfillment of this promise in the future, we will leave that to God."

Some circles of American Christian Zionism tend more toward the "political, eschatological" form, he says, which believes in idea of "Greater Israel" and insists that Israeli governments adhere to that belief. The embassy itself once leaned more toward that sort of Christian Zionism, especially in response to the 1993 Oslo accords. While Hedding doesn't mention any names, this maximalist Christian Zionism is the politics of some of Israel's best-known evangelical supporters in the US.

While Hedding and the ICEJ opposed the disengagement (and the Oslo accord before it) on security grounds, he refused to campaign against it, despite entreaties from many evangelicals. "There were many Christian leaders saying God wouldn't allow the disengagement. We told them, 'Guys, you're playing God now.'

"Israel is not a theocracy, it is a democracy," he stresses. "We believe that the people of Israel, through their elected representatives, have the right to make their own decisions on this country's future, and we have said that we will support the State of Israel wherever it chooses, or chooses not, to extend its sovereignty."

Hedding speaks of the Jews as a people who have returned to their land, who "have benefited the world," who've won so many Nobel Prizes. "We engage with people as people."

By contrast, the rigid demand by many evangelicals that Israel hold onto every inch of territory "is highly dangerous," he says, "because then Jews become pawns in your religious agenda."

Graphic

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6 photos: Charmaine Hedding sits in her office at the Christian Embassy surrounded by kits for the Feast of the Tabernacles. Christian pilgrims visit the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. Christians from around the world take part in the Feast of the Tabernacles festivities. This year an unprecedented 8,000 are expected. Hedding has helped find jobs for hundreds of refugees in hotels and manpower companies across the country. (Credit: Estaban Alterman; Courtesy)

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Body

International

SOUTH AFRICAN LEADER TO FACE

Graft Charges, Court Decides

Jacob Zuma, the leader of South Africa's governing party, was off the hook. A judge dismissed graft charges against him in September and he resumed his path toward the presidency. But an appellate court has ruled that charges were wrongly dismissed, meaning it is likely he will assume the nation's highest office while facing numerous charges. Page A5

Rome Journal

Nobody Is Rendering Unto Caesar

Rome's tourism industry is gasping as bad weather and a strong euro have reduced the number of tourists visiting. Although the ones that do are keeping a tight grip on their wallets. And not because of pickpockets. Page A6

SOMALIA'S NEW PEACE CRUMBLES

An opportunity for some peace and time to heal for Somalia brought by a power-sharing deal between Somalia's parliament and Islamist leaders, is threatening to come undone. There is already political infighting over selecting a president and violence has erupted in several locations. Page A6

THOUSANDS HOMELESS IN GAZA

What started as a small number of people fleeing their homes in Gaza for the shelter of relatives' houses, schools, and even parks, has become a torrent. As the Israeli Army presses forward in its campaign in Gaza, an estimated 90,000 have left their homes, according to the United Nations. Page A5

8 DIE IN IRAQ; BIDEN VISITS

Vice President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr., made an unannounced visit to Iraq. Hours before his arrival, bombings around Baghdad killed 8 and wounded 29, Iraqi officials said. Page A9

A U.S.-CHINA CELEBRATION

Inside the Times: January 13, 2009

A two-day summit meeting held in China was an opportunity for Chinese and American leaders to celebrate 30 years of diplomatic and commercial ties. Page A8

FOR ONCE, MONEY WORRIES UNITE

Under the banner of an economic crisis comes a gesture of unity as Japan and South Korea decided to put aside centuries of enmity to vow to stand alongside each other in the financial maelstrom. Page A8

IRAN IS HEDGING ITS BETS, FOR NOW

With fighting in Gaza and cease-fire talks in Egypt, Iran sits on the sidelines -- waiting. After an initial cry to arms, Iran has been hanging back, waiting to see what happens because it has a vested interest in the outcome of the fighting between Israel and Hamas. But not enough to tip its hand, yet. Page A10

National

CONGRESS SET TO RENEW

Health Care for Children

Congressional Democrats said they planned to pass a bill to provide health insurance to millions of low-income children. The bill is similar to legislation twice vetoed by President Bush but includes a major provision to restore health insurance benefits to legal immigrants under 21, a goal of Hispanic groups since those benefits were terminated in 1996. Page A12

KERRY TAKES ON NEW ROLE

John Kerry has struggled to find his footing in the Senate since losing his bid for the White House in 2004. The newly named head of the Foreign Relations Committee, Mr. Kerry finds himself in the awkward position of considering the nomination of Hillary Rodham Clinton for secretary of state -- a position for which he himself lobbied. PAGE A12

M.I.T. RETHINKS ITS LARGE LECTURES

Students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology petitioned against changing the site of its introductory physics course from the huge windowless amphitheater known by its number, 26-100. But since the move to smaller classes that emphasize hands-on, interactive, collaborative learning, the failure rate for the course has dropped 50 percent. A12

COURT WEIGHS LAW ON CLEMENCY

The Supreme Court tried to make sense of a federal law that provides lawyers to poor inmates on state death rows when their cases move to federal court. The question for the justices was whether the law also requires the federal government to pay those lawyers to present clemency petitions to governors and other state officials. PAGE A16

POLICE IN 3 STATES SEARCH FOR PILOT

Marcus Schrenker, a financial adviser from Indiana who disappeared after faking a distress call and parachuting from a small plane that crashed in Florida, turned up 220 miles north of the crash site unharmed. There is some evidence that he may have been trying to falsify his own death and Mr. Schrenker's appeared to be having money troubles, according to court documents. PAGE A16

The Inauguration

Gay Bishop Asked to Give Prayer at Inaugural Event

Inside the Times: January 13, 2009

President-elect Barack Obama has asked V. Gene Robinson, the openly gay Episcopal bishop of New Hampshire, to deliver the invocation at an inaugural event on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Gay rights advocates saw the move as a way to compensate for Mr. Obama's decision to give to the Rev. Rick Warren, a prominent pastor from California who opposes same-sex marriage, the role of delivering the invocation at the inauguration. PAGE A15

New York

FIGHT OVER HISTORIC BUILDING

Could Result in Its Foreclosure

The Apthorp, a Manhattan apartment building built in 1908, has been the home to millionaires as well as celebrities like Al Pacino and Rosie O'Donnell. But the owners have been entangled in a dispute that is threatening to throw the historical building into foreclosure. PAGE A18

PLAN TO CLOSE 14 CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn is considering shuttering at least 14 elementary schools at the end of this academic year. If the proposal is carried out, it will mean that one of the nation's largest Catholic dioceses has shuttered nearly 40 percent of its grade schools in the last seven years. PAGE A19

Business

WORRIES OVER SMITH BARNEY SALE

Send Citigroup Stock Tumbling

Just when Vikram S. Pandit, the chief executive of Citigroup, was earning back some trust on Wall Street, an attempt to make a deal with Morgan Stanley for its Smith Barney brokerage unit spooked investors, who worried that the move was a sign the bank's troubles may again be deepening. Its shares fell to the lowest level since the government last gave it backing, in November. PAGE B1

BILLIONAIRE'S DEATH STUNS TOWN

Adolf Merckle's suicide shocked the citizens of the small south German town of Blaubeuren, who angrily blamed his death on his creditors. In his sole interview in the months before his death, Mr. Merckle, who was recently listed by Forbes as one of the 400 richest people in the world, blamed his woes on a "chain reaction" that broke a financial model that had worked "superbly" before the crisis. PAGE B1

G.M. WORKS ON OVERHAUL

Rick Wagoner, the chairman of General Motors, said the troubled automaker was stepping up talks with its unions, dealers and lenders ahead of a Feb. 17 deadline to complete reorganization plans tied to its federal loans. The company is now focused on its latest plan to cut its labor costs, reorganize its debt and reduce the number of dealers and brands. PAGE B3

Obituaries

CLAUDE BERRI, 74

He was one of the most influential figures in the French film industry over the last 40 years. As a filmmaker, he had a mainstream sensibility and favored stories of either quirky charm -- many from his autobiography -- or grandiose sweep. PAGE B12

Arts

FOR 'IDOL,' MORE AFFIRMATION

Inside the Times: January 13, 2009

And Less Humiliation

A sign of the dynamic times? An acknowledgement that its formula was starting to show a little age? Whatever the reason, the producers of "America Idol" say the show will showcase fewer of the obviously untalented aspirants who dominate each season's early episodes. PAGE C1

HOLLYWOOD HONORS THE OFFBEAT

With Hollywood studios scaling back or scuttling their indie divisions, the Golden Globes became a showcase for far-flung, independent cinema, like "Slumdog Millionaire" and "Happy-Go-Lucky." PAGE C1

RACE AND THE MEDIA: A COMEDY

Young Jean Lee, a Korean-American playwright, consciously set herself the uncomfortable task of creating what she calls a black identity-politics show. That may sound heavy and intimidating, but Charles Isherwood writes that the result, "The Shipment," is a send-up of media caricatures, as hilarious as it is smart, and would offend only the humorless. PAGE C1

FOLLOWING THE MONEY

Niall Ferguson, the best-selling author and scholar, adapts "The Ascent of Money," his recent book about financial history, to PBS for a two-hour documentary of the same name. But Neil Genzlinger writes that the program jumps to different locations and subjects so quickly that some of the issues and questions it raises never get more than a passing glance. PAGE C2

Science Times

MAPPING THE OCEAN'S MINUTIAE

With Its Deepest Mysteries

Dr. Sylvia A. Earle has participated in more than a half-century of ocean exploration and protection. She has done pioneering research on algae, probed the ecology of coral reefs and is an author of "Ocean: An Illustrated Atlas," published recently by National Geographic. Its maps and graphs, prose and pictures detail the sea's deepest mysteries. PAGE D1

BOOK STIRS VACCINE MOVEMENT

"Autism's False Prophets," a new book that defends vaccines, is written by the doctor Paul A. Offit, who is infuriated by the claim that they cause autism. The book is galvanizing a backlash against the antivaccine movement in the United States. "When Jonas Salk invented polio vaccine, he was a hero -- and I'm a terrorist?" he jokes, but there will be no book tour because he has had too many death threats. PAGE D1

LITTLE BOTTLE OF ANTI-LOVE POTION

Can you imagine a love potion? In the new issue of Nature, the neuroscientist Larry Young, who analyzed the genetics of romance, predicts that it won't be long before a pharmaceutical love potion exists. But the really good news, according to John Tierney, is that we might reverse-engineer an anti-love potion. Could any discovery be more welcome? PAGE D1

HUMANS AFFECT EVOLUTION

Human actions like hunting and commercial fishing and some conservation regulations are increasing the rate of evolutionary change in plants and animals subject to "harvest selection" in ways that may hurt their long-term prospects for survival, scientists are reporting. PAGE D3

VISUALIZING A VIRUS IN 3-D

Inside the Times: January 13, 2009

For the first time, researchers at an I.B.M. laboratory have captured a three-dimensional image of a virus with a technique that has some similarity to M.R.I., now routinely used by physicians to peer inside the human body, but 100 million times better in terms of resolution. PAGE D3

THE MOSQUITO'S MATING DUET

A mosquito, at upper left, may not be anyone's idea of a hopeless romantic, but the insect does produce a love song of sorts -- the whine of its beating wings, resonating from its thoracic box. But the mosquito species *Aedes aegypti* carries the song to new aural heights, with both males and **females** raising their whines to about 1200 hertz, producing for the first detectable time a "harmonic convergence." PAGE D3

Sports

ROOTING FOR THE HOME TEAM,

With Political Ramifications

Gov. Ed Rendell of Pennsylvania, the former mayor of Philadelphia, is a huge Eagles fan -- he even hosts a weekly postgame show. There's a legitimate chance his beloved team could reach the Super Bowl and face the Pittsburgh Steelers, which might become a conundrum. "I have to be loyal," he said. "If it costs me some political points, that's life." PAGE B15

DUNGY RETIRES FROM N.F.L.

Tony Dungy narrowly missed his own promise that he would not coach past age 50. Dungy, who two years ago became the first African-American football coach to win the Super Bowl and was one of the most successful coaches in history, stepped down as the head coach of the Indianapolis Colts. He plans to recede into a quieter life with his family in Florida and work with a prison ministry. PAGE B13

Sports of the Times

Hall Voters Can't Forgive Or Forget McGwire

For the third straight year, Mark McGwire was not voted into the major league baseball's Hall of Fame. His gaudy statistics are offset by the perception that he used performance-enhancing drugs to attain them. And each year, his percentage of votes grows lower. George Vecsey, Sports of the Times. PAGE B13

Grand Jury in Clemens Case B14

Editorial

A SENSE OF WHO WE ARE

The United States cannot afford to put immigration on a back burner and merely continue with the existing enforcement regime. The costs are too high for the country's values. And they are too high for the economy. Page A20

NOT WHAT WE CALL DUE DILIGENCE

Despite rising concern that conflicts of interest may bias the outcome of clinical trials, the Food and Drug Administration has distressingly limited interest in rooting out the problem. Page A20

PROMISES OF REFORM DEFERRED

New York Democrats have been trumpeting the need for reform for decades. Now they have control in Albany, and instead of reform, they are promising something called the "path to reform." In other words, once again, the real thing is somewhere down the road, out of reach. Page A20

Inside the Times: January 13, 2009

Op-Ed

DAVID BROOKS

While most people might use the science of life to demystify death, the writer and theologian Richard John Neuhaus used death to mystify life. Page A21

BOB HERBERT

The economy is in a precipitous downturn, and at some point, someone is going to have to talk about raising revenue. The dreaded T-word is going to come up: taxes. Page A21

QUESTIONS FOR MRS. CLINTON

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee holds confirmation hearings for Hillary Rodham Clinton on Tuesday in her bid to become secretary of state. The Op-Ed editors asked 10 people with experience in foreign policy to pose questions for her. Page A21

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

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A3)

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Hezbollah's foundation is youth; Complex network builds deep loyalty

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November 21, 2008 Friday

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Byline: Robert F. Worth - The New York Times Media Group

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At a time of religious revival across the Islamic world, intense piety among the young is nothing unusual. But in Lebanon, Hezbollah - which means the party of God - has marshaled these ambient energies for a highly political project: educating a younger generation to continue its military struggle against Israel. Hezbollah's battlefield resilience has made it a model for other militant groups across the Middle East, including **Hamas**. And that success is due, in no small measure, to the party's extraordinarily comprehensive array of religion-themed youth and recruitment programs.

There is a network of schools largely shielded from outsiders. There is a nationwide network of clerics who provide weekly religious lessons to young people on a neighborhood basis. There is a group for students at unaffiliated schools and colleges that presents Hezbollah to a wider audience. The party organizes non-Scout-related summer camps and field trips, and during Muslim religious holidays it arranges events to encourage young people to express their devotion in public and to perform charity work.

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A few days later, relaxing over tea at her sister's house, Halawi expanded on the theme of the ceremony, still dressed in a black abaya. Religious education now begins much earlier than in her parents' time, she explained. Islamic schools, some run by Hezbollah, begin Koranic lessons at the age of 4, and it is common for girls to start fasting and donning the veil at 8. In all this, the mother's guidance is the key. "This is **women's** jihad," Halawi said.

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Hezbollah's foundation is youth Complex network builds deep loyalty

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Sayyed mentioned Rami Ollaik, a former Hezbollah firebrand who left the party and earlier this year published a book about his indoctrination and gradual disenchantment. The book recounts the author's struggle to reconcile sexual yearnings with party discipline, and his disgust at the way party members manipulated religious doctrine to justify their encounters with prostitutes.

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Load-Date: November 25, 2008

Hezbollah's foundation is youth; Complex network builds deep loyalty

The International Herald Tribune

November 21, 2008 Friday

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Byline: Robert F. Worth - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: RIYQA, Lebanon

Body

On a Bekaa Valley playing field gilded by late-afternoon sun, hundreds of young men wearing Boy Scout-like uniforms and kerchiefs stand rigidly at attention as a military band plays, its marchers bearing aloft the distinctive yellow banner of Hezbollah, the militant Shiite movement.

They are adolescents - 17- or 18-year-old - but they have the stern faces of adult men, lightly bearded, some of them with dark spots in the center of their foreheads from bowing down in prayer. Each wears a tiny picture of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Shiite cleric who led the Iranian revolution in 1979, on his chest.

"You are our leader!" the boys chant in unison, as a Hezbollah official walks to a podium and addresses them with a Koranic invocation. "We are your men!"

This is the vanguard of Hezbollah's youth movement, the Mahdi Scouts. Some of the graduates gathered at this ceremony will go on to join Hezbollah's guerrilla army, fighting Israel in the hills of southern Lebanon. Others will work in the party's bureaucracy. The rest will likely join the fast-growing and passionately loyal base of support that has made Hezbollah the most powerful political, military and social force in Lebanon.

At a time of religious revival across the Islamic world, intense piety among the young is nothing unusual. But in Lebanon, Hezbollah - which means the party of God - has marshaled these ambient energies for a highly political project: educating a younger generation to continue its military struggle against Israel. Hezbollah's battlefield resilience has made it a model for other militant groups across the Middle East, including **Hamas**. And that success is due, in no small measure, to the party's extraordinarily comprehensive array of religion-themed youth and recruitment programs.

There is a network of schools largely shielded from outsiders. There is a nationwide network of clerics who provide weekly religious lessons to young people on a neighborhood basis. There is a group for students at unaffiliated schools and colleges that presents Hezbollah to a wider audience. The party organizes non-Scout-related summer camps and field trips, and during Muslim religious holidays it arranges events to encourage young people to express their devotion in public and to perform charity work.

"It's like a complete system, from primary school to university," said Talal Atrissi, a political analyst at Lebanese University who has been studying Hezbollah for decades. "The goal is to prepare a generation that has deep religious faith and is also close to Hezbollah."

Hezbollah's foundation is youth Complex network builds deep loyalty

Much of this activity is fueled by a broader Shiite religious resurgence in Lebanon that began after the Iranian revolution in 1979. But Hezbollah has gone further than any other organization in using this to build its own support base and to immunize Shiite youth from the temptations of Lebanon's diverse and mostly secular society.

Hezbollah's influence on Lebanese youth is very difficult to quantify because of the party's extreme secrecy and the general absence of reliable statistics.

It is clear that the Shiite religious schools, in which Hezbollah exercises a dominant influence, have grown over the past two decades from a mere handful into a major national network.

Hezbollah and its allies have also adapted and expanded religious rituals involving children, starting at ever-earlier ages. Women, who play a more prominent role in Hezbollah than they do in most other radical Islamic groups, are especially important in creating what is often called "the jihad atmosphere" among children.

As night fell in the southern Lebanese town of Jibchit, a lone woman in a black gown strode purposefully into the spotlight on a makeshift stage. Before her sat hundreds of Mahdi Scout parents, who had come to a central event of their young daughters' lives.

"Welcome, welcome," their host said. "We appreciate your presence here tonight. Your daughters are now putting on this angelic costume for the first time."

Munira Halawi, a slim 23-year-old Hezbollah member with the direct gaze and passionate manner of an evangelist, was the master of ceremonies at a ritual known as a Takleef Shara'ee, or the holy responsibility, in which some 300 female Scouts aged 8 or 9 formally donned the hijab, or Islamic head scarf.

For the girls, the ritual was a moment of tremendous symbolic significance, marking the start of a deeper religious commitment and the approach of adulthood. These ceremonies, once rare, have become common in recent years.

It was a milestone as well for Halawi, who had been practicing with the girls for weeks: she was now a Qa'ida, a young female leader who helps supervise the education of younger girls.

Halawi is in some ways typical of the younger generation of female Hezbollah members. She grew up after Hezbollah and its allies had begun establishing what they called the hala islamiyya, or Islamic atmosphere, in Shiite Lebanon. She quickly became far more devout than her parents, who had grown up during an era when secular ideologies like pan-Arabism and Communism were popular. She married early and had the first of her two children before turning 17.

As Halawi finished her introduction, the girls began walking up the aisle toward the stage, dressed in silky white gowns with furry hoods. Bubbles descended from the wings. White smoke drifted up from a fog machine. A sound system played Hezbollah anthems sung by deep male voices. The parents applauded wildly.

The two-and-a-half hour ceremony that followed - in which the girls performed a play about the meaning of the hijab and a bearded Hezbollah cleric delivered a long political speech - was a concentrated dose of Hezbollah ideology, seamlessly blending millenarian Shiite doctrine with furious diatribes against Israel. Through it all, Halawi was the presiding figure on the stage, introducing each section of the evening and reciting Koranic verses and her own poetic homages to the veil.

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Load-Date: November 23, 2008

Scranton was at center of a wild election ride

The Times-Tribune (Scranton, Pennsylvania)

November 2, 2008 Sunday

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Length: 2039 words

Byline: Borys Krawczeniuk, The Times-Tribune, Scranton, Pa.

Body

Nov. 2--Sixteen years ago at the Democratic National Convention that crowned Bill Clinton as the party's nominee, a key Clinton strategist told former Mayor James McNulty that Scranton would one day be significant in national politics.

Mr. McNulty recalls the strategist, Paul Tully, saying because the city's voters swing between Democratic and Republican candidates, that some year Scranton would be a battleground.

"Now, this year it's become more personal because of Hillary (Clinton) coming from the area and her family roots, and with Joe (Biden)'s roots," Mr. McNulty said.

And how.

This year's historic, energized race for the White House seized the attention of a nation -- and then focused much of it on the Electric City.

To many, Scranton became the new "center of the political universe" -- the metaphorical microcosm of white working-class voters that everyone declared would be the tipping point of the election.

The presidential and vice presidential nominees made frequent stops in Scranton and the surrounding area, and the city's name lingered on their lips as they spoke to audiences elsewhere around the country.

As the election ends this week, the city of Scranton concludes a yearlong introduction to national politics.

The phenomenon started with New York Sen. Hillary Clinton.

When she won the Ohio and Texas primaries on March 4, the former first lady-turned-New York-senator guaranteed Pennsylvania would have its first seriously contested primary election since 1976. And for almost seven weeks, Pennsylvania became Iowa.

Mrs. Clinton felt like one of Scranton's own long before the nation knew her.

Years before Mrs. Clinton's husband was elected president, local newspapers chronicled her father's roots here. Hugh Rodham's Republican family lived here a long time before he moved to Illinois, where his famous daughter was born.

Scranton was at center of a wild election ride

The Rodhams built a cottage, which still stands, at Lake Winola where Hugh Rodham's family, including his daughter, regularly returned for vacations.

They also visited her grandparents on Diamond Avenue in Scranton, where next-door neighbor, Hazel Price, filmed a little bit of Mrs. Clinton as a child.

"This is me in Scranton," Mrs. Clinton said over a clip of her as a toddler in a television campaign ad that ran locally during the Pennsylvania primary, "Where my father was raised, and my grandfather worked in the lace mill. Every August, we'd pile into the car and head to our cottage on Lake Winola. There was no heat, or indoor shower, just the joy of family. I was raised on pinochle and the American dream."

Mrs. Clinton first appeared as a presidential candidate in Scranton on March 10, then marched in the St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 15 and returned twice more before the primary.

Her husband, former President Bill Clinton, told locals that visiting Scranton always raised her spirits.

It was easy to see why. Scranton treated her like royalty.

"We're glad she's back," Casey Kelly, 19, said at Mrs. Clinton's first, most raucous rally, at Scranton High School.

Mr. Obama played his own move designed to appeal to the large local Irish population.

Hoping to attract the few women who weren't flocking to Mrs. Clinton, he addressed the annual Irish women's dinner on St. Patrick's Day. His speech was short, and he didn't seem well prepared.

He didn't even bring anything green to wear.

Local stockbroker Joe Loughney noticed that while shaking hands with Mr. Obama at Whistle's Pub & Eatery, where the candidate recorded an MTV forum earlier in the day. He lent his green tie, which Mr. Obama later autographed and returned.

"Joe the Tieman," Mr. Loughney joked Friday. "I have really had an awful lot of fun with that story. It's a big-time memory."

History will probably record what happened later that evening as more memorable.

After leaving Scranton, Mr. Obama put the final touches on his eloquent speech on the state of race relations in America. He delivered it the next morning in Philadelphia as a response to the replayed rantings of his former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright.

Unquestionably, he wanted to keep alive his hopes of winning the Keystone State and his party's nomination, but Mr. Obama's speech was, in the words of former Gov. William Scranton "the best on the subject since the Emancipation Proclamation."

In a week's time, the two major-party Democratic candidates visited Scranton three times, but six weeks remained in the Pennsylvania primary.

Ten days after the speech, another Scranton guy shocked Pennsylvania's political world. At the outset of a six-day bus tour of the state, Mr. Obama's real introduction to Pennsylvania, U.S. Sen. Bob Casey endorsed Mr. Obama after saying he wouldn't endorse anyone. He cited the speech as a key reason he changed his mind.

It was a move so bold and so out of character for Mr. Casey that many scarcely could believe he did it.

It didn't work.

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Mr. Obama's hopes of winning Pennsylvania all but ended 11 days before the primary, with his clunky remarks in San Francisco about how bitter people in Pennsylvania and other states' small towns cling to guns and religion out of frustration because their economic needs have been ignored for years.

Mrs. Clinton returned to Scranton, naturally, to highlight the remarks.

"I do not believe, as Sen. Obama apparently does, that Americans in small towns and small cities and rural areas cling to religion or gun ownership out of frustration. They embrace them as a matter of faith and as a way of life," Mrs. Clinton said in West Scranton.

Later that week, the nation first heard the name William Ayers raised during a debate between Mrs. Clinton and Mr. Obama in Philadelphia.

Then, Mr. Obama ate a waffle at the Glider Diner.

Bidding on eBay for the leftover waffle and related items reached \$20,100 before bad publicity ended the auction.

When a reporter at the Glider asked the breakfasting Mr. Obama about President Jimmy Carter meeting with **Hamas** leaders, the senator replied, "Can I just have my waffles?"

The Republican National Committee said he "continued to dodge questions from the media."

Exit polls showed no mention of the waffles, but nonetheless Mrs. Clinton decisively won the state -- with 3-to-1 margins in Lackawanna and Luzerne counties -- allowing her to prolong her campaign another 2? months.

The lasting legacy of the Pennsylvania primary was its birth of some of the race's major catch phrases -- clinging to guns and religion, Bill Ayers and Jeremiah Wright.

It was April, and the region still hadn't seen John McCain.

The Republican nominee first visited the region July 23, stopping at the F.M. Kirby Center in Wilkes-Barre, where he ripped Mr. Obama for his stance on oil drilling, the war in Iraq and support for pork-barrel spending.

He didn't make his first Scranton stop until Sept. 22 at the Scranton Cultural Center, also appealing to the city's Irish heritage by addressing questions about U.S. relations with Ireland under a McCain administration. He'll make another stop here today at the University of Scranton.

By the time Mr. McCain hit Scranton for the first time, the city's political transformation had begun.

Local residents had long grown used to Mr. Biden's face. Maybe too used to it.

The guy from Green Ridge who moved to Delaware with his family when he was 10 came back more than 20 times after he was elected senator there.

His foreign policy experience, and perhaps his blue-collar Scranton roots, put him on the short list of possible running mates for Mr. Obama.

"I'm not the guy," he told a media horde Aug. 19 that gathered around his Delaware home.

Only he was the guy -- the guy from Scranton, the city that was about to step on to the world stage as a symbol of blue-collar, working-class America.

In his first appearance with Mr. Obama as the running mate, Mr. Biden introduced himself to the country as "an Irish-Catholic kid from Scranton."

He went on to say, "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm here for their future. I'm here for the future of your kids. I'm here for everyone I -- I'm here for everyone I grew up (with) in Scranton, Pennsylvania, who's been forgotten."

Scranton was at center of a wild election ride

The national and world media had paid a fair bit of attention to Scranton during the Pennsylvania primary, but that paled compared to what followed Mr. Biden's nomination.

Suddenly, every media outlet wanted to do a "What's-Scranton-like?" story, centered either on Mr. Biden or the city itself.

CNN, Fox News and the Biography Channel aired full-length documentaries on Mr. Biden. Numerous others followed with stories of their own. Two weeks ago, Mr. McNulty launched a Web site -- www.scrantonelectioncity.com -- to track all the publicity.

"First, Scranton got 'The Office,'" Mr. McNulty said, referring to the hit NBC sitcom. "And now we're going to get the office of vice president."

Not all the publicity reflected well.

One local man suggested to a New York Times reporter that the president's residence might become the "Black House" if Mr. Obama were elected.

A Saturday Night Live actor, parodying Mr. Biden, ripped the city as a "hellhole," "an absolute jerkwater of a town" and a "genetic cesspool."

Good publicity or bad, Scranton had arrived.

Tom Bell, Larry Orr and Magisterial District Judge James Kennedy, all childhood friends of Mr. Biden, became media stars.

"My 15 minutes of fame is over," Mr. Bell cracked Friday as the election grew nearer.

He lamented that it won't be as easy to talk to Mr. Biden if the Democratic ticket wins Tuesday night, because of the security and entourage that accompanies a vice president. He's already encountered the hoopla.

"With that, it's very awkward to be in his presence anymore. Every move is looked at and scrutinized," he said, adding that he doesn't think Mr. Biden himself will change.

"Joe Biden, the second baseman and outfielder for the New Car Dealers (Little League team) in Green Ridge, is about to become vice president," Mr. Bell marveled, perhaps prematurely.

Not to be outdone, the Republicans adopted the Scranton-as-middle-America metaphor, too.

Mr. McCain chose as a running mate someone almost as far geographically from Scranton as any American can be -- Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, the former mayor of Wasilla, Alaska.

But at the Republican convention, Mrs. Palin couldn't help but mention Scranton as she denounced Mr. Obama's "clinging" comment in her convention speech.

"We tend to prefer candidates who don't talk about us one way in Scranton and another way in San Francisco," she said.

Mr. McCain's campaign enlisted a Scranton connection, too.

It named Dunmore resident Jamie Brazil the head of its Citizens for McCain coalition, whose aim was wooing disenchanted backers of Mrs. Clinton. Mr. Brazil hosted a party at his home in August and Mrs. Clinton's brother Tony Rodham showed up, fueling speculation about her true feelings about Mr. Obama.

But Mr. and Mrs. Clinton delivered ringing endorsements of Mr. Obama at the Democratic convention and returned to Scranton to back him Oct. 12 when they also baptized their newest nephew.

Scranton was at center of a wild election ride

Some of her former backers feel differently.

A local "Democrats for McCain" office opened, made up largely of former Clinton supporters who feel she was a victim of sexism and feel Mr. Obama is less experienced than Mr. McCain.

Mrs. Price, 83, hasn't worked there, but she's leaning toward Mr. McCain.

Mr. Obama, she said, "kind of scares me a little bit. He seems to be too slick, so sure of himself. I don't know how he's going to do all he says he's going to do. I know if I worked hard for my money, I don't want anybody taking it and distributing it to somebody else."

On Tuesday, the nation will have either picked its first black president or its first woman vice president.

The circus will end, and a new chapter in American history will begin.

Scranton will probably go back to being Scranton, but the city might never be the same.

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Load-Date: November 3, 2008

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian

September 30, 2008 Tuesday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 15

Length: 2434 words

Body

Powerful nations must protect Israel from Tehran

MOST TALKED ABOUT

A NUCLEAR-ARMED IRAN

RESPECTED Middle East expert Michael Rubin's assessment of the threat from Iran ("A threat bigger than Wall St", 27-28/9) is pretty depressing but realistic.

After all, Iran is on the way to developing nuclear weapons; its President threatens to eventually use these weapons against Israel and Iran already supports Hezbollah and Hamas who are at war with Israel.

Why shouldn't Israel take all these threats against its existence seriously? President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad does not sound like he is bluffing.

Israel is all alone and must take whatever action is necessary to prevent or delay Iran's future nuclear aggression.

Israel over the years has been involved in numerous wars against overwhelming odds and has never used or even threatened to use its alleged nuclear weapons.

If the international community doesn't take Iran's belligerence seriously and act urgently, it will be its responsibility if Israel is forced to act alone.

Michael Burd

Toorak, Vic

RECENT articles on Iran ("A threat bigger than Wall St", 27-28/9, and "Iran tests candidates", 29/9) try to convince the public that Iran, by developing nuclear technology and consequently nuclear weapons, is a threat to the world.

Such an approach typifies the failed US view of the world particularly of Iran, where until the fall of the Shah, the US was the major supporter and supplier of military weapons.

Even if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, why would it use them? What possible advantage would it obtain by using nuclear weapons?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

If it attempted to destroy Israel, the consequence of the first strike would be devastating on Iran. It would suffer an immediate response from the US.

Why would Iranians want to do that?

Just because the Iranian President is full of rhetoric does not mean that the nation would sacrifice itself for it.

Most of the so-called experts on the region and advisers to the US offer no resolution and/or solution to the problem.

They just talk and threaten to go in and take them all out ... show them the beacon of democracy, and they will all fall behind and live happily ever after.

What we need to do is get out of the region, the Middle East, including Afghanistan, and leave these peoples alone.

Let them be what they want to be.

The failure of Western (and Eastern) interference is well documented throughout history.

Emil Sremchevich

Camden, NSW

YOUR support of John McCain's tough approach to Iran regarding its nuclear ambitions (Editorial, 29/9) is irresponsible, as it involves military action instead of direct talks.

Even George W. Bush's refusal to support Israel's recent proposed air strike on Iran's nuclear facilities ('`Bush `no' to strike by Israel on Iran", 27-28/9) is an indication that such actions are unlikely to bring the desired outcome.

An attack on Iran would lead to devastating consequences around the world, including severe damage to Australia's economy from increased oil prices.

Israel already has more than 300 nuclear weapons and delivery rockets. It has continually threatened Iran with bombing raids.

If the West wants the Middle East to be a nuclear-free zone, the disarmament must start with Israel.

Bill Mathew

Parkville, Vic

TO say Iran is a bigger threat to the world than Wall St (read US imperial capitalism) is like saying Fiji is a bigger threat to whales than Japan. Iran is a stable, sovereign state which does not kowtow to the US administration.

It is pursuing a civilian nuclear agenda which may or may not develop into a weapons program.

Pakistan is an unstable state, which covertly supports terrorism in both Afghanistan and India but which does kowtow to the US and has an operational and expanding nuclear weapons program which has been financially and militarily propped up the US.

Meanwhile the US, while demanding other states do not develop nuclear weapons, continues to expand and upgrade its nuclear weapons and missile capabilities as well as (if John McCain wins the presidential elections) expanding its civilian nuclear generation capacity by at least 200 more nuclear power stations.

Greg Sheridan does not mention that Israel has had a secret and significant nuclear weapons program and capability for at least 30 years, clandestinely supported by the US.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The US is by far and away the biggest threat to the world on a number of fronts including environmental (the biggest polluter), economic (the biggest mess) and militarily both in terms of nuclear capability, conventional weapons production and military activity.

Greg Jefferys

Woodbridge, Tas

Heritage worth more than cash on gas pipeline route

NOT all West Australians nor all Kimberley Aborigines are mourning the decision of Inpex to pipe its gas from the Browse Basin to the Northern Territory ("Top End snatches \$24bn gas plant from under the West's nose", 27-28/9).

Many are applauding the decision not to bring the gas ashore at the Maret Islands for processing and exporting from the Kimberley coast.

Piping the gas to the NT will, at least for now, ensure that one of the great wilderness areas of the world will be kept intact.

The Kimberley Land Council has been stating that this decision is a huge loss for Kimberley indigenous people.

This is sad and wrong for a number of reasons.

First, that acceptable education and health services for Aboriginal people should depend on mining company royalties to the KLC; second, that the KLC is prepared to allow destruction of the most culturally significant and ancient rock art galleries in the world which are at the core of indigenous heritage and Australian pre-history; and third, that this beautiful Kimberley environment with its unique biodiversity, pristine rivers and coastline, so few people, no towns, virtually no access, can be bought for the airy promise of jobs and wads of money from multinational mining companies.

All Australians should be pressuring the federal and state governments for the Browse Basin gas to be piped from offshore to a southern industrial hub within Western Australia and with minimal environmental damage, and that governments should meet their responsibility of providing health services and education to some of Australia's most deprived people.

These services, taken for granted by other Australians, should not be reliant on the KLC being promised royalties and other hand-outs for selling off their treasured country.

There are some things in this world that should not be measured in dollars; the far northwest Kimberley is one of them.

Susan Bradley

North Kimberley, WA

On law, Bryce is right

CHRISTOPHER Pearson's attack on Quentin Bryce ("Conservatives under siege", Inquirer, 27-28/9) is mistaken and unwarranted. He describes as a "howler" Bryce's suggestion that the reserve powers entrusted to her to, for example, dismiss the government of the day should be "written down in the Constitution".

Pearson is wrong to say that this would be "virtually impossible as well as pointless".

Constitutional lawyers have for many years argued for exactly this reform on the basis that the vague and uncertain nature of the powers vested in the governor-general is a flaw in our system of government.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

There are also examples already in Australia of aspects of the reserve powers being codified, such as in the NSW Constitution and the ACT Self-Government Act. Rather than having a ``grasp of constitutional law in recent years (that) has left a lot to be desired'', our new Governor-General has in fact expressed views that demonstrate a clear understanding of the subject.

George Williams

The University of NSW, Sydney

Base cuts on population

SCIENTISTS who have called on Kevin Rudd to cut carbon emissions by 25 per cent by 2020 also urge the Government to reject Ross Garnaut's call for a 10 per cent reduction in absolute terms. If this is the case, then these scientists may not have understood Professor Garnaut's Targets And Trajectories report.

Two-thirds of emissions come from the energy sector and energy consumption is related to population. So Garnaut's approach of considering emissions reduction per head of population rather than absolute reduction is the only realistic way of measuring.

On current trends, the Australian Bureau of Statistics projects that Australia's population will grow to around 25 million by 2020 from 21 million today, almost a 20 per cent increase. The climate scientists want a 25 per cent emissions reduction by 2020. Garnaut is offering a 30 per cent reduction, taking this population growth into account.

Considering only absolute cuts in emissions without regard to changes in population seems somewhat unscientific when the population is growing largely from migration.

Martin Nicholson

The Pocket, NSW

AFTER an unprecedented economic boom, with high prosperity and low unemployment, after one of the worst droughts in modern history, and after the best efforts of climate change alarmists Al Gore, Tim Flannery and James Lovelock to steer the debate their way, 21 per cent of respondents to the 2008 Lowy Institute Poll are still not prepared to pay anything to slow down climate change.

It is for the alarmists and for those who condemned the Howard government's stance on climate change, not for the so-called denialists or realists such as me, to demonstrate how climate change via consumer restraint rather than via technical fixes can possibly work in democratic states.

Chris Oliver

Bondi Junction, NSW

Parents made bad choices

WALTER Bass (Letters, 29/09) is adamant that Philip Ruddock and the Howard government were primarily responsible for the long-term detention of children as asylum-seekers.

But the parents and guardians of these children elected to keep their family behind wire indefinitely while they fought deportation orders through appeal after appeal.

Greg Jones

Kogarah, NSW

SOMEHOW, Jane Hansen's article ``Ruddock gave detainees Bucklies'', (27-28/9), doesn't quite tally with Janet Albrechtsen's piece of the previous week, ``True reformer rose above the hysteria'', (17/9).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The only hysteria Ruddock rose above was that of people driven to it by his own actions.

David Blake

Lake Barrine, Qld

Discretion his better part

PAUL Newman's philanthropy will surely leave a greater legacy than his movies.

From the sale of his range of salad dressings and pasta sauces over the past 25 years he kept not one cent of his royalties or profits, donating more than \$12million in more than 800 individual grants to Australian and New Zealand charities. His donations to charity around the world now exceed \$300 million.

Statistics don't tell the real story. Newman championed the little guy and many charities he chose were little known.

He helped fledgling groups become established. His grants often gave credibility to organisations previously ignored by our governments.

He helped thousands of sick kids by putting on camps and outings and providing mobility equipment.

The charity spectrum is wide: rural fire brigades and emergency services, dance and musical performances for isolated kids, drought relief, aged care, medical research.

Before his death he ensured that his foundation would continue in the spirit which he intended. I have worked for Paul Newman for 25 years and admire him as one of the world's truly remarkable human beings.

Sue Home

Red Hill South, Vic

Unisex at the urinal

LORD Curzon's excursions (Letters, 29/9) reminded me of an occasion when I was caught short in the French countryside. Approaching a urinal, I was amused by noises coming from one of the adjacent cubicles. Amused that is until, standing at the urinal, I was frozen with embarrassment when the lady author of such noises came to wash her hands at the bowl right alongside me, without batting an eyelid.

David Evans

Taree, NSW

Stories bring the past to life

PETER Cochrane is on the right track ("Historians neglecting role as story-tellers", 29/9). Story-telling is how many cultures have preserved vital knowledge.

I was impelled to pursue history and become a teacher through at least one good storyteller at school.

There is a history of everything; let's share in the telling and in as interesting a way as is reasonable.

Phil Pryor

Turrumurra, NSW

FIRST BYTE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Anna Bligh wants more money for hospitals ("Bligh to demand federal funding boost for hospitals", 29/9). Perhaps it would help her cause if she abandoned the name of her mission statement -- Q2 -- as we are all aware that Queenslanders have to queue to get a hospital bed and queue to even get into a line to queue to see a specialist. Q2? Come to Queensland and you can Q too.

Judi Cox

Springfield, Qld

The Athenaeum Club should allow women if it is a club for civic and business leaders, because women are civic and business leaders too. But why would any woman actually want to join anyway? It sounds pretty crusty to me.

Shane Beazley

South Yarra, Vic

Now that the US Congress has agreed to a massive welfare handout to Wall Street's truly greedy, when will the conservative commentariat and right wing think tanks re-commence sneering at middle class welfare?

Thos Puckett

Ashgrove, Qld

It's great that the Chinese astronauts have returned safely to Earth. No doubt their mission will have confirmed the accuracy of their costings and they will now be able to build a space station at a tenth of the cost of any international projects. Is it just possible that Chinese ingenuity will see the prefabricated bird's nest dismantled and set aloft to orbit the Earth?

Crispin Walters

Chapel Hill, Qld

If the Government really is concerned about the effect that financing maternity leave will have on the budget, why doesn't it instead stop the baby bonus and spend that money on paid maternity leave?

Ben Williams

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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To Fuel Quest, Hezbollah Harnesses Youth Piety

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Byline: By ROBERT F. WORTH; Hwaida Saad contributed reporting from Beirut, Lebanon.

Body

RIYAQ, Lebanon -- On a Bekaa Valley playing field gilded by late-afternoon sun, hundreds of young men wearing Boy Scout-style uniforms and kerchiefs stand rigidly at attention as a military band plays, its marchers bearing aloft the distinctive yellow banner of Hezbollah, the militant Shiite movement.

They are adolescents -- 17 or 18 years old -- but they have the stern faces of adult men, lightly bearded, some of them with dark spots in the center of their foreheads from bowing down in prayer. Each of them wears a tiny picture of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Shiite cleric who led the Iranian revolution, on his chest.

"You are our leader!" the boys chant in unison, as a Hezbollah official walks to a podium and addresses them with a Koranic invocation. "We are your men!"

This is the vanguard of Hezbollah's youth movement, the Mahdi Scouts. Some of the graduates gathered at this ceremony will go on to join Hezbollah's guerrilla army, fighting Israel in the hills of southern Lebanon. Others will work in the party's bureaucracy. The rest will probably join the fast-growing and passionately loyal base of support that has made Hezbollah the most powerful political, military and social force in Lebanon.

At a time of religious revival across the Islamic world, intense piety among the young is nothing unusual. But in Lebanon, Hezbollah -- the name means the party of God -- has marshaled these ambient energies for a highly political project: educating a younger generation to continue its military struggle against Israel. Hezbollah's battlefield resilience has made it a model for other militant groups across the Middle East, including **Hamas**. And that success is due, in no small measure, to the party's extraordinarily comprehensive array of religion-themed youth and recruitment programs.

There is a network of schools-- some of them run by Hezbollah, others affiliated with or controlled by it -- largely shielded from outsiders. There is a nationwide network of clerics who provide weekly religious lessons to young people on a neighborhood basis. There is a group for students at unaffiliated schools and colleges that presents Hezbollah to a wider audience. The party organizes non-Scout-related summer camps and field trips, and during Muslim religious holidays it arranges events to encourage young people to express their devotion in public and to perform charity work.

"It's like a complete system, from primary school to university," said Talal Atrissi, a political analyst at Lebanese University who has been studying Hezbollah for decades. "The goal is to prepare a generation that has deep religious faith and is also close to Hezbollah."

To Fuel Quest, Hezbollah Harnesses Youth Piety

Much of this activity is fueled by a broader Shiite religious resurgence in Lebanon that began after the Iranian revolution in 1979. But Hezbollah has gone further than any other organization in mobilizing this force, both to build its own support base and to immunize Shiite youths from the temptations of Lebanon's diverse and mostly secular society.

Hezbollah's influence on Lebanese youth is very difficult to quantify because of the party's extreme secrecy and the general absence of reliable statistics in the country. It is clear that the Shiite religious schools, in which Hezbollah exercises a dominant influence, have grown over the past two decades from a mere handful into a major national network. Other, less visible avenues may be equally important, like the growing number of clerics associated with the movement.

Hezbollah and its allies have also adapted and expanded religious rituals involving children, starting at ever-earlier ages. Women, who play a more prominent role in Hezbollah than they do in most other radical Islamic groups, are especially important in creating what is often called "the jihad atmosphere" among children.

'This Is Women's Jihad'

As night fell in the southern Lebanese town of Jibchit, a lone woman in a black gown strode purposefully into the spotlight on a makeshift stage. Before her sat hundreds of Mahdi Scout parents, who had come to watch one of the central events of their young daughters' lives.

"Welcome, welcome," their host said. "We appreciate your presence here tonight. Your daughters are now putting on this angelic costume for the first time."

Munira Halawi, a slim, 23-year-old Hezbollah member with the direct gaze and passionate manner of an evangelist, was the master of ceremonies at a ritual known as a Takleef Shara'ee, or the holy responsibility, in which some 300 female scouts ages 8 or 9 formally donned the hijab, or Islamic head scarf.

For the girls, the ritual was a moment of tremendous symbolic significance, marking the start of a deeper religious commitment and the approach of adulthood. These ceremonies, once rare, have become common in recent years.

It was a milestone as well for Ms. Halawi, who had been practicing with the girls for weeks: she was now a qa'ida, a young female leader who helps supervise the education of younger girls.

Born in 1985, Ms. Halawi is in some ways typical of the younger generation of female Hezbollah members. She grew up after Hezbollah and its allies had begun establishing what they called the hala islamiyya, or Islamic atmosphere, in Shiite Lebanon. She quickly became far more devout than her parents, who had grown up during an era when secular ideologies like pan-Arabism and Communism were popular in Lebanon. She married early and had the first of her two children before turning 17.

As Ms. Halawi finished her introduction, the girls began walking up the aisle toward the stage, dressed in silky white gowns with furry hoods. Bubbles descended from the wings. White smoke drifted up from a fog machine. A sound system played Hezbollah anthems -- deep male voices booming to a marching band's rhythm. The parents applauded wildly, the mothers ululating.

The two-and-a-half hour ceremony that followed -- in which the girls performed a play about the meaning of the hijab and a bearded Hezbollah cleric delivered a long political speech -- was a concentrated dose of Hezbollah ideology, seamlessly blending millenarian Shiite doctrine with furious diatribes against Israel.

Again and again, the girls were told that the hijab was an all-important emblem of Islamic virtue and that it was the secret power that allowed Hezbollah to liberate southern Lebanon. The struggle with Israel, they were told, is the same as the struggle of Shiite Islam's founding figures, Ali and Hussein, against unjust rulers in their time.

Through it all, Ms. Halawi was the presiding figure on the stage, introducing each section of the evening and reciting Koranic verses and her own poetic homages to the veil.

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"Our veil is a jewel-encrusted crown, dignified and lofty, that God made to make us blossom," she said at one point, gazing out into the darkness with a look of passionate intensity. "He opened the door of obedience and contentment for us."

A few days later, relaxing over tea at her sister's house, Ms. Halawi, still dressed in a black abaya, an Islamic gown, expanded on the theme of the ceremony. Religious education now begins much earlier than it did in her parents' time, she explained. Islamic schools, some run by Hezbollah, begin Koranic lessons at the age of 4, and it is common for girls to start fasting and wearing a hijab at 8. In all this, the mother's guidance is the key.

"This is women's jihad," Ms. Halawi said.

Camp, With a Moral Portion

From a distance, it resembles any other Boy Scout camp in the world. Two rows of canvas tents face each other on the banks of the Litani River, the powder-blue stream that runs across southern Lebanon not far from the Israeli border. A hand-built wooden jungle gym stands near the camp entrance, where pine trees sway in the breeze and dry, brown hills are visible in the distance.

Then, planted on sticks in the river, two huge posters bearing the faces of Ayatollah Khomeini and Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, come into view.

"Since 1985 we have managed to raise a good generation," said Muhammad al-Akhdar, 25, a scout leader, as he showed a visitor around the grounds. "We had 850 kids here this summer, ages 9 to 15."

This camp is called Tyr fil Say, one of the sites in south Lebanon where the Mahdi Scouts train. Much of what they do is similar to the activities of scouts the world over: learning to swim, to build campfires, to tie knots and to play sports. Mr. Akhdar described some of the games the young scouts play, including one where they divide into two teams -- Americans and the Resistance -- and try to throw one another into the river.

The Mahdi Scouts also get visits from Hezbollah fighters, wearing camouflage and toting AK-47s, who talk about fighting Israel.

Mr. Akhdar led a visitor around the tents, where boys had been spelling out Koranic phrases like "the promise" and "the owner of time" using stones. There was also a meticulously arranged grave, complete with lettering and decoration. In place of the headstone was a small photograph of Imad Mugniyah, the Hezbollah commander who was killed in February and who was widely viewed in the West as the mastermind of decades of bombings, kidnappings and hijackings.

The Mahdi Scouts were founded in 1985, shortly after Hezbollah itself. Officially, the group is like any of the other 29 different scout groups in Lebanon, many of which belong to political parties and serve as feeders for them.

But the Mahdi Scouts are different. They are much larger; with an estimated 60,000 children and Scout leaders, they are six times the size of any other Lebanese scout group. Even their marching movements are more militaristic than the others, according to Mustafa Muhammad Abdel Rasoul, the head of the Lebanese Scouts' Union. While the Mahdi Scouts fall under the umbrella of the Lebanese union, they have no direct affiliation with the international scouting body based in Switzerland. Because of the Scouts' reputation as a feeder for Hezbollah's armed force, the party has become extremely protective and rarely grants outsiders access to them.

Still, Hezbollah officials often casually mention the link between the Scouts and the guerrilla force.

"After age 16 the boys mostly go to resistance or military activities," said Bilal Naim, who served as Hezbollah's director for the Mahdi Scouts until last year.

Another difference from most scout groups lies in the program. Religious and moral instruction -- rather than physical activity -- occupy the vast bulk of the Mahdi Scouts' curriculum, and the scout leaders adhere strictly to lessons outlined in books for each age group.

To Fuel Quest, Hezbollah Harnesses Youth Piety

Those books, copies of which were provided to this reporter by a Hezbollah official, show an extraordinary focus on religious themes and a full-time preoccupation with Hezbollah's military struggle against Israel. The chapter titles, for the 12- to 14-year-old age group, include "Love and Hate in God," "Know Your Enemy," "Loyalty to the Leader" and "Facts About Jews." Jews are described as cruel, corrupt, cowardly and deceitful, and they are called the killers of prophets. The chapter on Jews states that "their Talmud says those outside the Jewish religion are animals."

In every chapter, the children are required to write down or recite Koranic verses that illustrate the theme in question. They are taught to venerate Ayatollah Khomeini -- Iran has been a longtime supporter of Hezbollah, providing it with money, weapons and training -- and the leaders of Hezbollah. They are told to hate Israel and to avoid people who are not devout. Questions at the ends of chapters encourage the children to "watch your heart" and "assess your heart" to check wrong impulses and encourage virtuous ones. One note to the instructors reminds them that young scouts are in a sensitive phase of development that should be considered "a launching toward commitment."

Secular Influences

In the West, the image of Hezbollah is often that of its bearded, young guerrilla fighters, dressed in military camouflage and clutching AK-47s. But Hezbollah's inner core of fighters and employees -- its full-time members -- is a far smaller group than its supporters. This broader category, covering the better part of Lebanon's roughly one million Shiites, includes reservists, who will fight if needed; doctors and engineers, who contribute their skills; and mere sympathizers.

In that sense, a more representative figure of the party's young following might be someone like Ali al-Sayyed. A quiet, clean-cut 24-year-old, Mr. Sayyed grew up in south Lebanon and now works as an accountant in Beirut. Hezbollah has offered him jobs, but he prefers to maintain his independence.

But his entire life has been lived in the shadow of Hezbollah. He attended a Mustafa high school, one of a national network of schools affiliated with the party, where he spent at least five class hours every week studying religion and listening to his teachers pray for Hezbollah's fighters and Ayatollah Khomeini. After school and during the summers, he was with the Mahdi Scouts. Later he became a Scout leader.

He is extremely devout -- he will not shake hands with women -- and mentions his willingness to fight and die for Hezbollah as though it were a matter of course.

"They made us, so of course I would sacrifice my life for them," he said as he sat gazing through the glass wall of a Beirut cafe on an autumn evening. "Before, the Shiites were in a wretched condition."

Yet Mr. Sayyed's generation is also in many ways more exposed to the temptations of Lebanon's secular and often decadent society than its predecessors.

That shift is apparent even in the Dahiya, or Suburb, the vast enclave on the southern edge of Beirut where most of Lebanon's Shiites live and where Hezbollah has its headquarters.

Once an austere ghetto where bearded men would chastise women who dared to appear in public without an Islamic head scarf, the Dahiya is now a far more open place. There are Internet cafes, music and DVD shops, Chinese restaurants and an amusement park called Fantasy World. There is no public consumption of alcohol, but the streets are thick with satellite dishes and open-air television sets. Lingerie shops display posters of scantily-clad models in their windows, and young women walk past in tight jeans, their hair uncovered.

The cafe where Mr. Sayyed was sitting, on the outskirts of Dahiya, was typical. Hezbollah banners were visible on the street outside, but on the inside young people sat at aluminum tables sipping cappuccinos, eating doughnuts and listening to their iPods.

"Hezbollah tries to keep the youth living in a religious atmosphere, but they can't force them," he said, gazing uneasily at the street outside.

To Fuel Quest, Hezbollah Harnesses Youth Piety

Mr. Sayyed mentioned Rami Olaik, a former Hezbollah firebrand who left the party and this year published a book about his indoctrination and gradual disenchantment. The book recounts Mr. Olaik's struggle to reconcile his sexual yearnings with the party's discipline, and his disgust at the way party members manipulated religious doctrine to justify their encounters with prostitutes. Some unmarried Hezbollah members engage in "temporary marriage" to have sexual relationships, an arrangement allowed by some Shiite religious authorities.

Hezbollah officials say they cannot coerce young people, because it would only create rebels like Mr. Olaik. Instead, they leave them largely free in Lebanon's pluralistic maze, trusting in the power of their religious training.

But there is a limit to Hezbollah's flexibility. All young members and supporters are encouraged to develop a hiss amni, or security sense, and are warned to beware of curious outsiders, who may be spies.

After Mr. Sayyed had been talking to a foreign journalist in the coffee shop for more than an hour, a hard-looking young man at a neighboring table began staring at him. Suddenly looking nervous, Mr. Sayyed agreed to continue the conversation on the cafe's second floor. But he seemed agitated, and later he repeatedly postponed another meeting planned for the next week.

Finally, he sent an apologetic e-mail message explaining that he would not be able to meet again.

"As you know, we live in a war with Israel and America," he wrote in stumbling English, "and they want to war us (destroy) in all the way."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: Younger Mahdi Scouts waiting to march at a graduation ceremony for older scouts. The group is estimated to have 60,000 children and Scout leaders.

A scout gave a three-finger salute, known around the world. The group, though, has no direct affiliation with the international scouting body.

A portrait of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini at the camp Tyr fil Say. This summer the camp had 850 children, ages 9 to 15, a Scout leader said.(PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRYAN DENTON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)(pg. A16) MAP: The camp Tyr fil Say is one of the sites where the Mahdi Scouts train. Area of Jibchit is detailed. (pg. A16)

Load-Date: April 14, 2011

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

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Byline: Ghaith Abdul-Ahad

Body

The Iranian army officer was short, chubby and had a thick moustache. Unlike his fellow officers of the Islamic Republic, he had a flash watch on his wrist, a clean-shaven chin and a glass of red wine in his hand. His wife had filled his plate with lamb stew, a chicken leg and saffron rice. The three of us were guests at a supper in a well-to-do district of Tehran.

In clipped, matter-of-fact sentences, the officer gave me his analysis of the Iran-Iraq conflict in the 80s, in which his country had been at war with mine. "From 1980 until 1982, Saddam had the upper hand, and he occupied bits of south-western Iran," he said. "Then, from 1982 until 1986, we had the upper hand, after taking back Khorramshahr (the Iranian border town that Iraq occupied in the first months of the war), but we wasted lots of men and energy trying to invade Basra and the marches. After 1986, Saddam, with help from the west, started pushing us back." With his fork he drew a line on his plate, moving from the chicken leg on one side to the stew on the other. "When the war ended, Saddam was very strong, but his stupidity led him to invade Kuwait and waste his power."

"And now?" I asked.

He handed the plate to his wife without even looking at her and sipped from his glass, sucking on his wine-dipped moustache with his lower lip. "Now we could capture Baghdad in three days. But we never wanted Baghdad - Basra is part of our sphere of influence." He turned to me: "Have you been there?"

"Yes, what about you?"

He ignored my question and said, "You see how much Iranian merchandise and food there is in the market (in Baghdad)?" I had indeed: almost everything - from milk and fizzy drinks to motorbikes and air coolers - comes from Iran.

Weekend: BROTHERS IN ARMS: As a boy in Baghdad, Ghaith Abdul-Ahad was taught that Iranians were the 'worms of the earth'. Now, 20 years after the Iran - Iraq wa....

"If you send food, you can send weapons," the officer said. "And you don't need arms to control a city. You let the others do it for you." By "others" I took him to mean Iraqi Shia militias in the Basra area.

His wife handed him his topped-up plate as he summed up. "In the 80s war, 27 nations supported Saddam - the whole world supported Saddam. Now they are trying to unite against us again, because we are a superpower."

"You shouldn't talk to him - he fought your country," his wife called from across the room.

My first encounter with Iran took place when I was five. I remember standing on my parents' bed, next to my father, looking out through the window. It must have been early in the morning - my mother was still sleeping. I didn't know what was going on. I then remember crouching for hours under a table in the stairwell, with a radio, tea, my grandmother and aunt. Later, my father, with me on his shoulders, stood on the roof with my uncle, pointing at frail white lines in the sky. "Phantoms," (Iranian F4 jet fighters) he said.

It was September 1980 and the first days of an eight-year war that began with air raids and an Iraqi invasion of south-west Iran. But the way I understood it for over a decade, it was we Iraqis who were "defending ourselves against an Iranian invasion". That's what they taught us at school, anyway.

More memories followed. One day I stood with my father in downtown Baghdad, watching a parade of Iraqi military trucks packed with Iranian prisoners of war pass by. I didn't feel sorry for the defeated men in tattered, khaki uniforms and shaved heads. I was just scared of them. A few years later, the TV broadcast similar images of broken, khaki-clad soldiers, squatting in the desert with their hands tied behind them - this time, however, they were the defeated Iraqi armies.

Our state propaganda machine portrayed the Iranians as cowards, evil creatures, "the worms of the earth". The Iraqis, we were told, were fighting another glorious battle against the Persians, just as the early Muslims had done in the seventh century.

It was this religious imagery, and those pictures of defeated men, that filled my head when I went to Tehran this autumn, some 20 years after that war, and I soon came to realise that the same religious symbols, sometimes even the same verses of the Qur'an, were used in the same way on the other side of the border.

We were walking in the big bazaar in Tehran. A young man, tall and whippy, stopped us: "Carpets, mister? You want carpets? I have tribal kelims."

I gave him a very dismissive no.

He was undeterred. "Where are you from?" he asked with a smile.

Still unsure how Iranians would treat an Iraqi, I hesitated, then said, "My companion is Italian" and, in a much lower voice, "And I am Iraqi."

The carpet seller's face changed. "Why?" he asked urgently. "Why did it happen? My mother's uncle was killed in the war, so many people died. Why did we fight?"

"It's stupid," I replied. "No one I knew wanted to fight." My father, two uncles, my aunt's husband and my cousin had all been conscripted in the war.

"But in Iraq people are educated. Why didn't they try to stop Saddam?" He was half-pleading now.

Because we were scared, I wanted to reply, because people were shot dead if they tried to dodge military service. Instead, I gave him my standard reply: "Saddam was very brutal."

"When the governments hate each other, the people pay the price," the carpet seller said. "Here in Iran, the mullahs said we must fight until we reach Karbala (a holy city) and then all the way until we liberate Jerusalem." He paused, then added sarcastically, "And what's next - New York?"

Weekend: BROTHERS IN ARMS: As a boy in Baghdad, Ghaith Abdul-Ahad was taught that Iranians were the 'worms of the earth'. Now, 20 years after the Iran - Iraq wa....

"That was stupidity," he said, "and now Mr Bush is doing the same stupidity."

Tehran is a true megalopolis: it has a population of 17 million, 30km-long avenues that run from the nouveau riche north to the poor south, and hundreds of flyovers that sandwich thousands of ugly, concrete buildings. It's also a megalopolis where the revolutionary rhetoric of the Islamic Republic competes with the commercial banality of everyday life. Billboards and posters emblazoned with the leaders' sayings are juxtaposed with adverts for flatscreen TVs, laptops and mobile phones.

The martyrs and the living coexist here. Millions of people jostle, push, honk and drive suicidally in streets named after the dead. The grander martyrs, the founders of the republic, get the big highways; commanders and ayatollahs the avenues; low-level fighters small, potholed alleyways. From street corners and the sides of buildings, the fallen heroes stare down from huge murals, inviting a sense of guilt that you're alive down in the street and not up there, alongside them.

We took the new metro to the outskirts of the city, where the martyrs lie in peace in their own city, Behesht Zahra cemetery, where row upon row of men killed in the war are buried. The graves are decorated with little aluminium and glass altars that hold the martyrs' memorabilia: a copy of the Qur'an, plastic flowers, a bottle of rose water, a piece of blood-soaked cloth imprinted with a picture of the dead soldier. Names of battlefields - Ahwaz, Kurdistan, Ailam, Shalamgah; places in the marches of southern Iraq, Kurdish mountains and small Iranian border towns - are inscribed on the graves. They have become household names for Iraqis and Iranians alike.

After every offensive, our TV screen in Baghdad would flicker with images of the mangled dead. On the 8pm news, the anchor with the thick, Saddam-like moustache would tell us about the thousands of aggressors slaughtered by our heroes. Meanwhile, the alleyways of my city were curtained on both sides with thousands of black notices announcing the deaths of our young, "In the name of Allah, the most merciful, the most compassionate."

When I went last year to Amara province on the border with Iran, the scene of many battles, there was nothing left but coils of razor wire, rusty helmets half-buried in the sand and the odd turret of a sunken tank. I could feel the ghosts of the "martyrs"; their blood had long since dried, but their memories still haunted us on both sides of the border.

In the middle of the sea of pictures in Behesht Zahra, we came across a plot where the Qassim family is buried. The father was 40, the mother 27, the children, Sumaiya, three, Mariam, two, and Abbass, one, when they were killed by an Iraqi aerial attack, part of what was known as the "War of Cities". I remember this war very well. Or, rather, I remember the Iraqi version of it: the mustachioed TV anchor declaring that our brave pilots had inflicted the heaviest losses on the "wicked Persian enemy". I remember, too, our house shaking when an Iranian rocket fell less than a mile away in Karrada, killing a family.

With tears in our eyes, we left the cemetery and went back to jostle in the city of the living.

When I arrived in Tehran, my years of Iran-demonisation under the Ba'athist educational system had been supplemented by the Bush administration's anti-Iranian rhetoric and sabre rattling. "Shia revivalism spearheaded by Iran" has become the new mantra. Iran is perceived as a menacing and shadowy power, backing Shia militias in Iraq, supporting Hamas in Gaza and acting as patron of Hizbullah in Lebanon. Paranoia has swept through neighbouring Sunni Arab countries - also known by the US as the "moderate Arab countries". All of them are now in a de facto alliance with Israel, trying to find ways to counter "Iranian influence" in the region. "The first thing to look for after a car accident in Beirut is the Iranian agents behind it," a journalist friend told me, only half-joking. It is reminiscent of the post-second world war, post-colonial days, when people thought British agents were behind everything that happened in the Middle East.

Another journalist in Qatar had a different take on the dilemma for Arab countries. "Iran is a big problem either way. If the Americans hit Iran, it's a huge problem - the Iranians might retaliate by hitting their interests in the Gulf. But if they have peace with Iran, we have a bigger problem." That is, Iran would become even more dominant in the region.

Weekend: BROTHERS IN ARMS: As a boy in Baghdad, Ghaith Abdul-Ahad was taught that Iranians were the 'worms of the earth'. Now, 20 years after the Iran - Iraq wa....

Iran's image as evildoer has also been enhanced by the alleged apocalyptic prophecies of its president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Under the threat of US and Israeli strikes, the atmosphere in Tehran and other Iranian cities has become similar to that in Baghdad in the 90s, during the long years of sanctions that preceded the toppling of Saddam: there are anxieties about a looming war, concerns about the next UN resolution and a question lodged permanently in the back of your mind - "Will they attack?"

The similarities and differences between Iraq and Iran are striking. Sometimes, Iran felt to me like my aunt's cooking - much like my mum's, but with more spices. An Iraqi friend, recently returned from Tehran, was amazed by how much the mullahs' theocracy in Iran resembled the Ba'athist regime in Iraq. "It's like Ba'athists in turbans: the same lies, the same oppression and the same corruption."

As in many other places in the Middle East, a particular kind of claustrophobic repression hangs over the city. Young people are arrested for having "unIslamic" haircuts, "bad hijab" or indecent clothes. Every writer, musician and film-maker has to navigate around taboos and dogma to create a "morally acceptable art". When I asked a prominent musician if the restrictions actually helped him "create", he said, "No, I wish I had all the freedom I want."

Freedom is a very relative idea in the Middle East. With its oppressiveness and religious police, Iran is still a safer and a more organised place than the new post-US invasion Iraq, let alone than the Iraq of Saddam Hussein.

Ali came to visit me at the flat where I was staying in Tehran. He was short, energetic and very fit. We drank tea and devoured the little pink and pistachio cakes he had brought with him. He talked softly and politely about Iran, Iraq and the Americans.

It was hard to imagine Ali as a prisoner, yet he had spent several weeks in Tehran's notorious Evin prison after he had taken part in a student demonstration. "In my last days in prison, I was hitting my head against the wall," he told me. "I was thinking of committing suicide. I was asking myself, 'Will I ever be out again?'"

Ali was beaten and insulted during three days of interrogation and, to intimidate him further, was put in a small cell with three prisoners on death row. Even after his release, Ali said, he was harassed and followed. But he remains level-headed. "We don't need another revolution. I mean, we need change, but the change should come through reform, not violence. It took us 30 years to kind of settle down. Another revolution will destroy society."

The need now, Ali said, was to educate the people about their rights. "It will take time," he said. "I know this regime will change, but unfortunately my youth will be taken with it. I have to leave; I have to spend some time abroad. When you are here, you are isolated. But maybe, when I see freedom, maybe I will love it so much I'll want to stay."

I later met another student who had been active in the students' political organisation and who, like Ali, spoke of hard times. "The authorities are much harder on organised student movements than before," he said. "Under (Ayatollah) Khatami, they were half tolerated; now they expel them from university or send them to jail." As in Iraq under sanctions, the more pressure that is put on the government, the more it can justify internal oppression as a means of "solidifying the internal front".

As we sat drinking tea, I asked the student if he was scared. With a big smile, he replied, "We are not scared - we have hope and I am still young. I have lots of time to spend in prison."

To many Iranians, the revolution has taken a very Orwellian turn. A revolution that began by overthrowing a corrupt, tyrant king has produced a regime whose chief interest is picking over the dress code while the drums of war sound louder and louder, and while inflation runs into double digits.

I went with Ali, who has a passion for history, to the palace of the old shah, where the 19th-century grandeur could not have been more different from the bare mosque where Ayatollah Khomeini lived, preached and conducted state affairs after the revolution. "In the beginning, they were puritanical," Ali said. "They said electricity will be free, fuel will be free. They were very simple - that's why people loved them. Now, if you say anything against this government, you're against Allah and the Qur'an."

Weekend: BROTHERS IN ARMS: As a boy in Baghdad, Ghaith Abdul-Ahad was taught that Iranians were the 'worms of the earth'. Now, 20 years after the Iran - Iraq wa....

"When I look at old video clips of Farah (the shah's wife) visiting a village, people act the same now with Khamani, jumping and chanting. We should stop worshipping people in power."

In my time in Iran, I also met Kamal, Reza and Sultan, who had all been young men when the revolution started. Their fate, like that of most Iranians, was shaped by the events of that spring in 1978.

On a mountain overlooking the city of Shiraz, where the great Iranian poet Hafez is buried, is a small restaurant set inside a big Turkmen tent. It was here that I met Kamal. With his big white moustache, black trousers, black shirt and black, knee-length jacket, he looked like some Russian bureaucrat from a Pushkin novel. He was mourning the death of a cousin, he explained.

In the mid-70s, Kamal had been studying in Perugia, Italy. As a leftist, he was active in the Iranian opposition, demonstrating outside the Iranian embassy and heckling visiting government officials. "The shah was a killer," he said. "It was a bad, bad government."

So why did he come back? "Because my country needed me. There was a lot to be done, the revolution was starting. When the revolution happened, we Iranian students in Italy were starving, there was no money coming from Iran, we used to eat birds - we chased pigeons and ate them. But I knew I had to come back."

I asked how it was back then - there must have been real chaos with the upsurge of Islamists, leftists, communists, nationalists and democrats? Had he been a follower of Khomeini? "In the beginning there were no Islamists - they came later and took over the country. They started throwing us in jail and did to us what the shah had been doing."

Like other disillusioned idealists, Kamal watched the revolution drift away. After spending two years fighting in the Iran-Iraq war in the southern Iraqi marches, he left to take a job as a construction worker in Japan, fleeing a crackdown on leftists. "I like Allah, but I like beer, too," he told me cheerily. "If you want to pray standing, stand; if you want to pray sitting, then sit. You should have your freedom as long as you don't affect me. Here the revolution became all about religion. I saw people who were far less educated than me overtaking me because they were religious."

Reza, meanwhile, was dressed in the official Iranian revolutionary dress code - a cheap grey suit, a white shirt with no tie, short, cropped hair and a thin, trimmed beard. He had a charming smile, but suffered from a severe cough. I asked how life was in Tehran. "Khob neest (not good)," he said. "This government is not good."

This was unexpected - someone who clearly looked religious and pro-government criticising the government. Reza continued, "Look at the hijab in the streets - it's not good, it's too relaxed; women forgetting Islamic values and this government not doing anything. And the economy is not good - prices are too high and there are too many mustazafin (the Arabic word that means the weak, the oppressed, and which was appropriated by the revolution to signify the poor)."

Was it better under Khatami? "No, no, Khatami was not good - under him, hijab was very bad, the revolution was lost - but the economy was better. Now Ahmadinejad is trying to fix the situation. He is making laws that help the workers and will give more money to mustazafin ."

He tapped his chest and said, "Chemical, Halbjah." Reza had been gassed when the Iraqis used chemical weapons against Kurdish and Iranian forces in the town of Halbjah in 1988. He then tapped his right leg: there was a metallic ting - he had lost his limb in the same battle.

Reza's story is typical of the first generation of the Iranian revolution. He joined the Islamic militia in 1978; at the age of 17 he was roaming the streets and imposing order; two years later, he volunteered to go to the front line in the war against Iraq. "I spent 63 months in the war," he said. In Iran, men served for 24 months only, unless they volunteered for extra service, unlike in Iraq, where people were conscripted for the whole duration of the war.

"The most important thing is Twakul ala Allah ," he said. "To put your faith in God and the imams."

Weekend: BROTHERS IN ARMS: As a boy in Baghdad, Ghaith Abdul-Ahad was taught that Iranians were the 'worms of the earth'. Now, 20 years after the Iran - Iraq wa....

I told him this is exactly what Hizbullah fighters in Lebanon say. "I know," Reza said with a big smile. "I was there, in 1982. We volunteered to go to Lebanon and fight Israel. We trained Hizbullah and I stayed two years in the Beqaa. And then, when our brothers were strong, we left and came to Iran to continue the fight against Saddam."

He became more reflective. "You know, after the war I went to Iraq for a pilgrimage, visiting the shrines in Karbala and Najaf. Iraqis are like Iranians - there is no difference - but wars make a difference. The war was very bad, but life in Iran was better during the war. The religion was strong, everyone prayed and there was iethar (self-sacrifice)."

Sultan stopped to give us a lift in his beat-up old Renault when we were walking back from a park in northern Tehran. "You can't find taxis here," he explained. "I'll drop you at the main intersection." He was in his late 60s and had about him an Einstein look, with a bush of fussy white hair; he was as scruffy as his car. He clenched the steering wheel, his face close to the cracked windshield.

Had he lived in Tehran when Imam Khomeini lived here? The house and mosque where Khomeini spent his days after the revolution were just a couple of streets away. "Imam, pah, what Imam?" Sultan said scornfully as he pulled his car to the kerb.

I was stunned - I hadn't heard anyone saying anything bad about the revered Imam; not even Kamal, the leftist, had dared criticise him.

"The Imam killed my life, my family and my job." We had reached the main intersection, but Sultan kept talking. "I worked in the Iranian airlines office in the UK. Twice I lived there - in London and in Eastbourne."

Sultan's mother was a relative of the Queen, he told me, and his grandfather an old aristocrat. For a long time the family had lived a comfortable life, with several houses scattered around the north of the city, with good jobs and good connections. When the revolution happened, all that disappeared. "After the revolution, they took all our property and said that is for the mustazafin," Sultan said. "And now I am mustazafin, but they don't give me anything. They forced me to go to war. At the very end of the war, in Kurdistan - in Halbjah - a bomb fell and a piece of metal entered here," he pointed to his hip. His leg was horribly twisted. "I can't walk and I can't sleep."

I thought of Reza and how democratic wars can be in their choice of victim: the son of the revolution and the enemy of the revolution, both hit in the leg in the same battle. Had they known each other? Had they lain next to each other in the hospital? Had they talked about the revolution and the Imam?

"After the war, they fired me from my job," Sultan continued. "They said, 'You shah people, go.' And now Mr Ahmadinejad comes, and prices go up by 200%, 300%. What do I do? I am tired of this life."

Before the revolution, Sultan said, girls would walk "with skirts this long" and he pointed to the middle of his thigh. "They walked in the streets and no one said a thing. You'd walk a hundred metres and there would be a nightclub or a bar. Tehran was like Paris. Then the mullahs came, and life finished." He spoke as if it were only yesterday.

"You are from where?" he asked.

I hesitated, wishing for the first time in my life that I could say I was English, or anything. I mumbled the name of the country that had mangled his leg.

"Iraq?" He pushed himself to the back of his seat, a big smile on his face. "Really? Iraq? Oh my God, what's happening to your country is bad. I am sorry. Saddam went and now hundreds more Saddams come. Now Shia like me take over the government and make it like Iran. I am sorry. I am really sorry."

There is something to be said for how polite the Iranians are.

Weekend: BROTHERS IN ARMS: As a boy in Baghdad, Ghaith Abdul-Ahad was taught that Iranians were the 'worms of the earth'. Now, 20 years after the Iran - Iraq wa....

In the war cemetery of Behesht Zahra, I stood in front of one of the graves, writing in my notebook. When I lifted my head, I saw in the small, altar-like box a picture of the bearded martyr. He was looking straight at me. I moved, and he moved with me. I went back a few steps and my heart stopped - I was looking at my own reflection in a mirror. *

Load-Date: November 29, 2008

End of Document

Hamas to blame for deaths of innocents

Windsor Star (Ontario)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL/OPINION; Pg. A7

Length: 136 words

Byline: Bob Harper, Windsor Star

Body

As demonstrations continue against Israel's fight against the Hamas terrorist group, very little mention is made of the last seven years, including the last six months of a supposed truce during which Hamas rockets have rained down on the civilian population of Israel. Israel has not killed Palestinians, and I am not just talking about the two young girls killed in Gaza by a stray Hamas rocket.

Hamas terrorists have killed their wives and children by firing rockets and mortars from the tops of their homes and schools.

Hamas has killed innocent Palestinians by storing rockets and explosives in mosques. Hamas has killed innocent Palestinians by strapping bombs on women and children and blowing them up. It's time for all Palestinians to demonstrate against the only killers of the innocent -- Hamas.

Bob Harper

Windsor

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

HAMAS SPURNS TRUCE Four Gaza children killed

The Gold Coast Bulletin (Australia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

B - Main Edition

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Section: WORLD BRIEFING; Pg. 13

Length: 164 words

Body

SIX Palestinian civilians, including four children, were killed yesterday in an Israeli strike in the north of the Gaza Strip, while 10 bodies were discovered in Gaza City.

The strike hit a house in Beit Lahiya, killing two women and four children, said medics

Ten bodies, including five of Hamas fighters, were found in the rubble of houses in Gaza City, where clashes raged throughout Saturday night.

In Jerusalem, Israel is nearing the goals it had set for its war in the Gaza Strip, said Prime Minister Ehud Olmert yesterday, but it would continue the offensive on Hamas 'for the time being'.

With the body count spiralling, Hamas remained defiant in the face of Egyptian-led efforts for a ceasefire.

Top Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal said they would not accept any truce without the withdrawal of all Israeli forces and the lifting of the blockade slapped on the territory when the Islamists seized power 18 months ago.

``We will not accept negotiations on a truce under fire," he said.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

**GAZA JOURNAL: FOR WAR WIDOWS, HAMAS RECRUITS ARMY OF
HUSBANDS**

NEW YORK TIMES

October 31, 2008 Friday

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Information Bank Abstracts

Section: Section A; Column 3; Pg. 8

Length: 72 words

Byline: By Taghreed El-Khodary

Body

Hamas leaders take advantage of pause in fighting in Gaza by turning to matchmaking, bringing together single fathers and **women** widowed as result of violence and providing dowries and wedding parties for many who cannot afford trappings of matrimony; thousands of Palestinians--300 newly married couples and relatives and friends--gather at sports stadium for mass wedding celebration, 10th. this year courtesy of militant group; photo.

Graphic

Photograph

Load-Date: April 25, 2009

**GAZA JOURNAL: FOR WAR WIDOWS, HAMAS RECRUITS ARMY OF
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Graphic

Photograph

Load-Date: April 25, 2009

Gaza air strikes: Israel's targets

The Guardian - Final Edition

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

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theguardian

Section: GUARDIAN HOME PAGES; Pg. 6

Length: 127 words

Body

Israel's deputy chief of staff, Brigadier General Dan Harel, said yesterday that after Israel's operation was finished "no Hamas building will be left standing in Gaza". He added: "We are hitting government buildings, production factories, security wings and more."

Among the targets so far are:

- * Gaza interior ministry
- * Hamas police stations and academy
- * Mosques
- * al-Aqsa TV station
- * Prison
- * Home of Maher Zaqout, commander of the Iz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades
- * Hamas training camps
- * Guest home used by Hamas government
- * House next to the home of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh
- * Five-storey building in the women's wing at the Islamic University
- * Compound of Preventive Security, a Hamas security organisation
- * More than 40 smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border

Load-Date: December 30, 2008

Gaza air strikes: Israel 's targets

End of Document

Claims aren't facts

The Gazette (Montreal)
January 10, 2009 Saturday
Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL / OP-ED; Pg. B6

Length: 79 words

Byline: The Gazette

Body

Re: "**Hamas** hides there" (letters, Jan. 7).

Howard Damie's comments reflect the same rhetoric that is used by Israel and Israeli supporters. He states uncorroborated claims and passes them off as facts.

How does Damie know that **Hamas** stores weapons in schools? Does he live in the occupied territories? Does he also expect us to believe that all the **women** and children dying in this conflict are members of the **Hamas** military and firing rockets into Israel?

Naved Bakali

Montreal

Load-Date: January 10, 2009

GAZA CEASEFIRE HOPES

Daily Record

December 31, 2008, Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 191 words

Body

HOPES were raised last night for an end to Israel's devastating aerial bombardment of Gaza.

PM Ehud Olmert will today discuss suspending air strikes to give Hamas an opening to halt their rocket fire.

But sources said if the militants failed to stop their attacks, Israel would launch a full-scale ground invasion of the Palestinian territory.

Hamas responded by saying they would only agree to a ceasefire if Gaza's borders were opened.

A separate deal to stop military operations to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza was also being discussed. Interior minister Meir Sheetrit had earlier vowed the strikes would carry on until Israel "breaks the will" of the Palestinians.

The moves came as a UN human rights monitor accused Israel of carrying out "shocking atrocities" against Palestinians.

Almost 400 have been killed since Israel launched their operation against Hamas, with two young sisters among yesterday's toll of 15.

Hamas responded by firing more rockets into southern Israel, killing a soldier near the border and a female motorist in the city of Ashdod.

Israel estimated a tenth of their population of seven million were now within rocket range.

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

**THE RIGHT TO HIT BACK; MATTHEW BERLOW, 38, IS A JEWISH LAWYER
IN GLASGOW AND A STRONG SUPPORTER OF ISRAEL AND PALESTINE.
HE SAYS ISRAEL WAS RIGHT TO ATTACK.**

Sunday Mail

January 11, 2009, Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 183 words

Byline: Matthew Berlow

Body

WHY do so many people protest against Israel's right to defend itself? Because they are ignorant of the facts.

So let me put the record straight. Hamas are the true enemies of the Palestinian people - not Israel. They are a terrorist organisation and the biggest obstacle to peace in the region.

They are against the twostate solution with Jews and Arabs living in harmony.

Prior to the war in Gaza, Israel was the closest it has ever been to a lasting and fair peace deal with moderate Palestinians.

This is something Hamas fear and have set out to destroy. Hamas stand for war, misery and bloodshed.

They are responsible for the murder of more than 500 men, women and children by sending suicide bombers to blow themselves to pieces on buses and in restaurants.

Israel has tried to avoid war, even ignoring the 3500 Hamas rockets fired at its population in the last year.

But if it doesn't act now, the terrorist organisations on its doorstep will become more sophisticated and dangerous.

The worldwide security implications do not bear thinking about about.

In a way, Israel is protecting all our own futures.

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

Terrorist organizations fight dirty, says reader

Windsor Star (Ontario)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL/OPINION; Pg. A7

Length: 166 words

Byline: Joanne Ulch, Windsor Star

Body

Islamic terrorist organizations such as **Hamas**, Hezbollah, al-Qaida and the Taliban, etc., won't engage in combative roles in battlefields, like real military personnel do with valour and dignity. Instead, they wage cowardly acts such as suicide bombings or hide IEDs along roads, fire rockets from residential areas.

Then as always when the counterattacks take place, it's the innocent bloodshed of the elderly, **women** and children that inevitably occurs. Of course, the media is there to capture the unfortunate tragedy that unfolds because of the cowardly aggression by these so-called martyrs. As for **Hamas** and Hezbollah wanting real peace with Israel, the truth be known, all they want is Israel, piece by piece.

A peaceful solution to the dismal conditions in Gaza would be that their wealthy neighbours, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Iran, etc., would start financing the citizens of Gaza, instead of known terrorists organizations such as **Hamas** and Hezbollah.

Joanne Ulch

Windsor

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

DEATH TOLL NEARS 450

Sunday Herald Sun (Australia)

January 4, 2009 Sunday

1 - FIRST Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 26

Length: 183 words

Body

THE Israeli military has carried out more than 700 strikes on Gaza since it launched a massive offensive on Hamas a week ago, killing at least 435 Palestinians.

“There have been approximately 750 strikes,” a military spokesman said.

At least 75 Palestinian children and 21 women have been killed during the offensive on one of the world's most densely populated areas, according to Gaza medics.

The offensive -- one of Israel's deadliest against Gaza -- has wounded 2285 people, the medics said.

The raids by warplanes and naval vessels have targeted Hamas government buildings, the homes of Hamas officials, mosques alleged to have stored weapons and tunnels used to smuggle arms and goods into the territory that Israel has kept virtually sealed since mid-2007.

Israel unleashed “Operation Cast Lead” on December 27 in a bid to halt persistent rocket fire from the territory, but it has failed to stop the attacks. Militants in Gaza have fired about 500 rockets and mortar rounds into Israel in the past week, the army said, killing three civilians and one soldier and wounding several dozen people.

Load-Date: January 3, 2009

ISRAEL BATTERS GAZA AS TROOPS ENTER SUBURBS

Metro (UK)

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

Dublin Edition

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Section: Pg. 9

Length: 107 words

Body

ISRAELI forces advanced into the suburbs of Gaza City yesterday as the offensive against **Hamas** entered its 18th day. Overnight, Israeli jets attacked more than 60 targets. Explosions and heavy machine-gun fire could be heard across the city, home to 500,000 people. Medical workers said three civilians and 18 Palestinian gunmen, most of them members of **Hamas**, were killed. Two rockets hit Beersheba in southern Israel, causing no casualties. To date, more than 900 Palestinians many of them **women** and children and 13 Israelis, including three civilians hit by rockets, have died. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: The fighting must stop.

Load-Date: February 5, 2009

LETTER: THE BIG ISSUE - STOP ISRAELI ATROCITIES

The Mirror

January 2, 2009 Friday

3 Star Edition

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 44

Length: 130 words

Byline: STEVEN CALROW

Body

HUNDREDS of people have been killed, including more than 30 children, in bombing raids on Gaza. Israel struck after Hamas - the Palestinian leaders - launched rocket attacks at Israel. The US has called on Hamas to stop. You condemn Israel's actions and hope President-elect Barack Obama will resolve the crisis...

THE massacre of women and children in Gaza is the latest in a long line of outrageous acts by the Israelis against the Palestinians.

In what can only be seen as a callous and calculated act, the Israelis opened the border to allow aid through to an almost starving population then unleashed their warplanes on defenceless people.

I hope US President-elect Barack Obama has the moral courage to bring Israel to account for these acts of cowardice.

Steven Calrow, Liverpool

Load-Date: January 2, 2009

So yet again we see the bloodshed

The Sentinel (Stoke)

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: Pg. 8

Length: 138 words

Body

Casualties: During the season in which we hear the motto "peace and goodwill to all men" unfortunately we see death and destruction in the Holy Land.

Israel claims the target is the **Hamas** infrastructure, an organisation that was democratically elected by the Palestinians, but by all accounts we see that the casualties include the elderly, **women** and children.

Israel holds parliamentary elections in a month's time. The Israeli public has a generally low opinion about how their government has handled **Hamas**-controlled Gaza.

So yet again we see the bloodshed of innocent civilians for political gain. What kind of civilised society perpetrates or allows its military to carry out such action?

What would we do if we were in there shoes?

How would we cope in such difficult living conditions such as in Gaza?

PARVAZ AKHTAR

Hanley

Load-Date: January 10, 2009

So yet again we see the bloodshed

The Sentinel (Stoke)

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: Pg. 8

Length: 138 words

Body

Casualties: During the season in which we hear the motto "peace and goodwill to all men" unfortunately we see death and destruction in the Holy Land.

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Hanley

Load-Date: June 11, 2009

So yet again we see the bloodshed

The Sentinel (Stoke)
January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: Pg. 8

Length: 138 words

Body

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PARVAZ AKHTAR

Hanley

Load-Date: August 21, 2009

Gaza: any killing at all is wrong

The Leader-Post (Regina, Saskatchewan)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. B8

Length: 147 words

Byline: June Mitchell, The Leader-Post

Body

I wish to publicly disassociate myself from the view of my government that Israel has the right to massacre hundreds of men, women and children in Gaza in order to stop Hamas rockets from being fired into Israel.

No one has the right to massacre even one man, woman or child. Not Israel. Not Hamas. Not any government. Not any rebel. No government has a right to rubberstamp such evil.

I am enraged by the abomination I see before my eyes each day. It is not necessary to study philosophy or political science or international law or tribalism to decide whether this slaughter is right or wrong. Have you children? Have you others whom you love? Have you felt loss? Pain?

As to the usefulness of violence, look around. How many years or centuries will it take for us to see that violence invariably causes more violence.

When will we ever learn?

When will we ever learn?

June Mitchell

Regina

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

In defence of Israel's actions

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

January 2, 2009 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. A10

Length: 153 words

Byline: Pat Bischoff, Vancouver Sun

Body

Re: Israel's air strikes on Gaza, Letters, Dec. 30

Letter writer Daria El-Dib should keep in mind that more than 600 rockets have been fired into Israel since Gaza was handed over to the Palestinians in 2005. Israel did nothing for a very long time except warn **Hamas** and the Palestinian Authority to stop firing rockets. When the Israeli government handed Gaza over to the Palestinians, it invested money in trying to assist them and has received nothing in return for this generosity but rockets and threats.

El-Dib should also note that the government the Palestinians voted for is a terrorist organization that threatens to wipe the Jewish state off the map and offers courses at its university on how to manufacture and launch rockets into Israel. Lastly, the Palestinians are not being bombed like rats. Members of **Hamas** are hiding behind **women** and children because they are murderers and cowards.

Pat Bischoff

Richmond

Load-Date: March 20, 2009

Israeli approach doomed to fail

Times Colonist (Victoria, British Columbia)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: COMMENT; Pg. A11

Length: 170 words

Byline: John Gibson, Times Colonist

Body

Your paper has recently reported that, from the years 2001 to 2008, twenty Israelis were killed by missiles fired from Gaza by Hamas. it also reported that, since Dec. 27, almost 800 Palestinians have been killed during the Israeli strike, 40 per cent of them women and children.

The Israeli administration explains this by saying that Hamas gathers civilians to known Israeli target sites, so the ensuing carnage can be used to inspire world sympathy.

If the administration actually believes this, why do they do it? If every Palestinian death at Israeli hands provides greater incentive to the Palestinian independence movement, why does the Israeli military persist in killing Palestinian civilians?

Domestic terrorism, used as a technique to control, fails if it does not frighten.

I accept that Israel needs to defend itself, and vigorously, but I doubt they will ever accomplish that purpose in this way. I believe the military strike at Gaza will succeed only in the creation of more terrorists.

John Gibson

Brentwood Bay

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

IN DENSE GAZA, CIVILIANS SUFFER

NEW YORK TIMES

January 1, 2009 Thursday

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Information Bank Abstracts

Section: Section A; Column 5; Pg. 1

Length: 181 words

Byline: By Taghreed El- Khodary

Body

Five days of airstrikes surpass previous military operations Israel has launched in Gaza, with long-distance bombardment of **Hamas**-controlled territory, however well aimed at suspected militants, splintering families and shattering homes in one of earth's most densely populated places; Palestinian medical officials say that 38 children and 25 **women** are among 320 to 390 people that United Nations estimates have been killed; UN says 25 percent of. Palestinians killed have been civilians; Israeli officials are coming under increasing pressure to ease conditions for civilians, with tight restrictions on essential supplies worsening shortages in area already largely seal off from outside world; Israel refuses proposed 48-hour cease-fire but yields enough to ever-louder complaints to say that it will do all it can to allow in supplies; Israeli officials maintain that they do not target civilians and do everything they can to. avoid striking them, saying such incidents only undermine their primary mission of stopping **Hamas** from firing rockets into Israel's civilian areas; photo.

Graphic

Photograph

Load-Date: June 26, 2009

Gaza

The Northern Echo (Newsquest Regional Press)

January 5, 2009 Monday

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Section: LETTERS (NORTHERNECHO LETTERS)

Length: 71 words

Body

THE Bishops who recently accused Labour of being morally bankrupt would have been better to condemn the latest Israeli barbaric onslaught on Gaza, killing many women and children and leaving so many injured that the hospitals simply cannot cope.

The Israelis have said Hamas rockets have killed 14 of its people in seven years.

Anyone who thinks the Israeli bombing is justified is certainly morally corrupt.

Hugh Pender, Darlington

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

Letters - Ian Knox insults the victims of the Holocaust

Irish News

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: Pg. 23

Length: 81 words

Body

I found Ian Knox's political cartoon (Tuesday, January 6) absolutely appalling and inappropriate.

It was reminiscent of Nazi einsatzgruppen gunning down Jewish women and children in ditches during the Second World War. Perhaps that was his intention?

If so, then perhaps his next cartoon will be of terrified Israeli women and children with a spare 15 seconds to find and cower in any shelter they can find while Hamas rockets rain down on their villages and towns.

UNA MARRON, Saul, Co Down.

Load-Date: January 9, 2009

Peace not possible

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: OPINION; Pg. A18

Length: 90 words

Byline: N.A. Abbas, The Edmonton Journal

Body

Having heard the news from other sources the night before, I was surprised to read the Dec. 26 headline, "Israel hammers Hamas."

Israel hammered Gaza, killing 230 people in one day, including 15 police cadets and many women and children.

The article stated, "Still, there was a shocking quality to Saturday's attack, which began in broad daylight as police cadets were graduating, women were shopping at an outdoor market and children were emerging from schools."

How can such an attack be described against terrorists only?

N.A. Abbas, Edmonton

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

Why they hate them

The Gazette (Montreal)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL / OP-ED; Pg. A12

Length: 97 words

Byline: The Gazette

Body

Americans always seem puzzled why people in the Arab world - and elsewhere - hate them so much. But consider if you were an Arab today watching Israel kill hundreds of Palestinian women and children in Gaza who have nothing to do with Hamas and you knew that all this was only made possible by U.S. financial support (more than \$3 billion per year), military aid (where do you think all those jets and helicopters come from?) and diplomatic support (America has consistently scuttled any attempts so far at a ceasefire), how would you feel about the Americans?

Pierre Home-Douglas

Dorval

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

LETTER: THE BIG ISSUE - STOP CARNAGE IN GAZA

The Mirror

January 8, 2009 Thursday

3 Star Edition

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 40

Length: 106 words

Byline: MARILYN THOMSON

Body

ANOTHER 40 people, including many children, have been killed in Gaza after Israeli tanks hit a UN school. The death toll has risen to more than 600 since Israel began its offensive 13 days ago. You want the carnage to stop...

ISRAEL'S attack on Gaza and the Palestinian people is absolutely shocking. The Israelis are terrorists just as much as Hamas. In fact, they are as bad as each other.

It seems Israel won't stop until they have killed all Palestinians, whether they are men, women or children. It is about time they all stopped fighting and started talking instead. Killing doesn't solve anything.

Marilyn Thomson Stourbridge, W Mids

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

TO FUEL QUEST, HEZBOLLAH HARNESSSES YOUTH PIETY

NEW YORK TIMES

November 21, 2008 Friday

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Information Bank Abstracts

Section: Section A; Column 4; Pg. 1

Length: 140 words

Byline: By Robert F Worth

Body

Eighth article in series Generation Faithful examining lives of young across Muslim world at time of religious revival; Hezbollah is marshaling energies of young men in Lebanon to continue military struggle against Israel; it has become model for other militant groups, including Hamas; success is largely due to Hezbollah's comprehensive array of religion-themed youth and recruitment programs; it runs or controls. network of schools shielded from outsiders where religious lessons are large part of curriculum; it organizes outings and arranges events to encourage young people to express devotion in public and to perform charity work, all in effort to mobilize and build support and immunize young from secular temptations; women are integral part of effort in creating what is often called 'jihad atmosphere' among children; photos; map.

Graphic

Combination

Load-Date: November 22, 2008

TO FUEL QUEST, HEZBOLLAH HARNESSSES YOUTH PIETY

NEW YORK TIMES

November 21, 2008 Friday

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Information Bank Abstracts

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Graphic

Combination

Load-Date: November 22, 2008

A reign of terror

The Nation (AsiaNet)

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

Copyright 2008 The Nation
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Length: 169 words

Body

WHILE people throughout the world are in a state of shock at Israel's murderous attacks in Gaza that have killed 374 civilians, including women and children, Israel's announcement that the military operation would continue for an indefinite period reflects its disregard of Palestinian life. The US categorical backing of Israel is a sad commentary on its commitments for a just Middle East solution and obligation to prevent human rights violations. Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak intends to launch a ground offensive as well.

The firing of rockets by Hamas that most of the times land in the buffer territory fades into insignificance when compared with the past three days' massacre. Israel is providing grist to the mill of those who accuse it of state terrorism. In the face of culpable indifference by powerful states that have only made feeble pronouncements condemning the attacks, the only ray of hope is the public conscious around the globe, which has brought large crowds to the streets in protest.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR; When governments fail

The International Herald Tribune

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 7

Length: 180 words

Body

David Brooks's analysis ("The confidence war," Views, Dec. 7) is missing the fact that the very strategies of successive Israeli governments, the Palestinian Authority and now Hamas have been based on the utter disregard of the value of the lives of individual Palestinians.

This has been true especially in the last decade or so. One side casually bombs crowded residential areas from afar only to release increasingly hypocritical apologetic press releases afterward. The other side sends youths on suicide missions or unleashes them armed with stones to throw at armored tanks - while proclaiming that thousands and thousands of dead women and children are a price worth paying for victory against "the Zionists."

As shown repeatedly during the last century, it should be the job of international institutions to push hard for the safeguarding of lives, especially when the local governments are clearly unable or unwilling to do so. But I am afraid that with the way things are going, we can only expect a future made of innumerable deaths.

*

Maurizio Morabito

Orpington, England

Load-Date: February 3, 2009

IRISH PEOPLE TRAPPED INSIDE WAR-TORN GAZA

Metro (UK)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

Dublin Edition

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Section: Pg. 9

Length: 173 words

Body

THE Department of Foreign Affairs has contacted the Israeli, Jordanian and Egyptian authorities in an attempt to secure the safe transfer of Irish citizens trapped in Gaza.

A spokesperson for the department refused to confirm how many Irish people are currently trying to flee the area but said a number of Irish citizens have been receiving constant consular assistance.

As soon as its safe for them to leave, they will do so, she added. Meanwhile, Amnesty International Ireland has written to Taoiseach Brian Cowen urging him to summon the Israeli Ambassador Dr Zion Evrony, to stress Irish opposition to the attacks by his countrys forces in Gaza.

Over 1.5million Palestinians are now living in a humanitarian disaster zone. Even before Israels offensive began, almost two weeks ago, supplies of food, water, power and medicine were completely inadequate, said the organisations executive director Colm OGorman. Amnesty has repeatedly condemned indiscriminate attacks by **Hamas** on Israeli civilians and would continue to do, Mr OGorman added.

Graphic

Israeli soldiers mourn Staff Sgt. Alex Mashavisky killed on Tuesday, while Palestinian **women** from the El Deeb family, who had ten relatives killed near a UN school, weep during their funeral Pictures: AP

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

No Headline In Original

The Bismarck Tribune

October 19, 2008 Sunday

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Section: WIRE

Length: 1231 words

Byline: KARIN LAUB Associated Press Writer

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip **Hamas**' control of the Gaza Strip is now virtually complete.

Since the summer, the Islamic militants have silenced and disarmed their remaining opponents, filled the bureaucracy with their supporters, and kept Gaza's economy afloat, even if just barely, despite a 16-month-old international embargo and border blockades by Israel and Egypt.

With nothing in sight to weaken **Hamas**' grip, the political split between Gaza and the West Bank - the two territories meant to make up a future Palestinian state - looks increasingly irreversible.

That conclusion was also reached by the International Crisis Group, an independent think tank, in a September report describing **Hamas**' ascendancy, and the split is one of the main obstacles to U.S. efforts to forge an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal.

It weakens moderate President Mahmoud Abbas in the negotiations because he isn't seen as speaking for Gaza. Israel, Abbas and the international community don't want a deal that leaves out the 140-square mile Gaza Strip's and its 1.4 million Palestinians. And it's unlikely Israel would give up the West Bank as long as **Hamas** is in charge in Gaza.

Undisputed rule has also improved **Hamas**' leverage ahead of power-sharing talks with Abbas' Fatah movement in Cairo later this month.

Ahmed Yousef, a **Hamas** leader, said his movement is eager to reconcile with Abbas. "If there is no pressure from the United States and Israel (on Abbas), we can build a good national unity government," Yousef said.

However, in previous negotiations, the militants showed little willingness to give up any of their power and are unlikely to do so now.

Instead, the failure of this round of talks could set the stage for a new round in the Palestinian power struggle.

Compounding Abbas' troubles is a dispute with **Hamas** over whether Palestinian law allows him to remain in office after Jan. 8, when **Hamas** says his term officially ends. Abbas, relying on an amendment that was never fully ratified, claims he can stay on another year. **Hamas**, citing Palestinian law, is set to appoint its own man, Deputy Parliament Speaker Ahmed Bahar, as president in January.

Abbas would be hard put to portray the Islamists as usurpers of power when his own legal status is in question.

No Headline In Original

"Starting in January, no one is legitimate," said analyst Ghassan Khatib, a former Cabinet minister in the West Bank. "And when everyone is equal in being illegitimate, the advantaged party is the one that has the strength on the ground."

That party is **Hamas**, which defeated thousands of forces loyal to Abbas in a five-day blitz in June 2007.

"We believe that **Hamas** is going ahead with its plan to sever Gaza from the West Bank and to build its own regime," said former Deputy Prime Minister Azzam Ahmed of Fatah. "We believe they are succeeding."

One reason they are succeeding is the situation on the ground. Gaza City's streets are cleaner and safer than before the takeover. Despite budget shortages, **Hamas** has fixed traffic lights, paved some streets and opened a new children's hospital, and claims to have imposed law and order after the chaos that often dogged Fatah rule.

It has also been careful not to push an overtly Islamic social agenda. For example, officials have suggested to **female** reporters covering Gaza's parliament that they wear head scarves, but those who don't are not shunned.

Still, one-party rule has made dissenters reluctant to talk openly, especially after hundreds of Fatah activists were rounded up over the summer.

Hamas now controls every aspect of daily life, from screening visitors at a new border checkpoint to running what the International Crisis Group described as a network of paid and volunteer informers.

Hamas has seized opportunities to neutralize opponents.

A July bombing blamed on Fatah gave **Hamas** a pretext for shutting dozens of offices of Fatah and related associations. **Hamas** policemen guard the now empty former Fatah headquarters.

"Everything has been taken over and there is nothing left for Fatah in the Gaza Strip," said Hazem Abu Shanab, a Fatah spokesman who spent nearly two months in **Hamas** custody after the July blast.

The bombing also provided the grounds to go after one of **Hamas**' last armed rivals, the Fatah-allied Hilles clan. In August, **Hamas** defeated Hilles fighters in a clash, sending dozens into exile and arresting others.

Ahmed Hilles, 24, a mechanic, said he was ridiculed in **Hamas** custody. "They told us we were defeated," said Hilles, adding that he believes **Hamas** is now too powerful to fight.

Strikes by teachers and health workers, called by West Bank union leaders in August in an apparent attempt to pressure **Hamas**, have backfired. **Hamas** fired thousands of the teachers, replacing them with university graduates, and forced most doctors back to work.

Not all the new teachers are necessarily **Hamas** loyalists, but even those without political ties feel increasingly indebted to the Islamists.

"I am not a **Hamas** member, but I think they have done many good things since they took over," said Abu Khaled, 35, a newly hired math teacher.

Economically, **Hamas** is surviving.

International sanctions can't block the inflow of money from Iran and donations from Muslims worldwide. At the same time, Abbas, Israel and the international community don't want to push Gaza over the brink by fully enforcing the embargo.

"The embargo is working, but not to the extent that we want it to work, and not to the extent that everybody is keeping up the pressure on **Hamas**," said Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Aviv Shiron.

No Headline In Original

Abbas, for example, continues to pay the salaries of some 70,000 civil servants in Gaza, in exchange for staying loyal and refusing to work for the **Hamas** government. Such loyalty, and with that Abbas' main link to Gaza, would likely disappear if the money stopped coming.

Yet the salaries help prop up Gaza's economy, and thus **Hamas** rule.

In addition, **Hamas** has about 20,000 people on its payroll, and Gaza Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh last month cited a monthly operating budget of \$20 million. The money is scraped together by smuggling cash, laundering money and stepping up tax collection. There's even enough left over for occasional unemployment payments.

Gazans are also feeling safer these days because of a cease-fire that has stopped Israel's attacks on wanted militants in Gaza and salvoes of Palestinian rockets on Israeli border towns. Israel agreed to the truce in June despite concerns that **Hamas** would use it to bring in more weapons, and has eased the blockade, allowing in more trucks carrying food and humanitarian supplies.

Life is also made more bearable by the unhindered influx of goods, from weapons to food and medicines, through dozens of **Hamas**-supervised smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border.

For example, the underground trade has brought down the price of a pack of Marlboro cigarettes to \$3, down from \$8.30 a year ago.

Politically, through, the future looks gloomy, the International Crisis Group said.

"Reversing the drift toward greater Palestinian separation, both political and geographic, will be a difficult and, at this point, almost hopeless task," said the think tank, which specializes in areas of conflict and has been monitoring the rise of **Hamas** in Gaza.

"In Gaza, new realities are taking hold," it added. "Prospects for reconciliation, reunification and a credible peace process seem as distant and illusory as ever."

Load-Date: October 20, 2008

No Headline In Original

The Bismarck Tribune
December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS

Length: 1390 words

Byline: IBRAHIM BARZAK and KARIN LAUB Associated Press Writers

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Israel widened its deadliest-ever air offensive against Gaza's **Hamas** rulers Sunday, pounding smuggling tunnels and a central prison, sending more tanks and artillery toward the Gaza border and approving a reserves callup for a possible ground invasion.

Israeli leaders said they would press ahead with the Gaza campaign, despite enraged protests across the Arab world and Syria's decision to break off indirect peace talks with the Jewish state. Israel's foreign minister said the goal was to halt Gaza rocket fire on Israel for good, but not to reoccupy the territory.

With the two-day death toll nearing 300 Sunday, crowds of Gazans breached the border wall with Egypt to escape the chaos. Egyptian forces, some firing in the air, tried to push them back into Gaza and an official said one border guard was killed.

Hamas, in turn, fired rockets deeper than ever into Israel, near the Israeli port city of Ashdod.

Yet **Hamas** leaders were forced into hiding, most of the dead were from the **Hamas** security forces, and Israel's military intelligence chief said **Hamas**' ability to fire rockets had been reduced by 50 percent. Indeed, **Hamas** rockets fire dropped off sharply, from more than 130 on Saturday to just over 20 on Sunday. Still, **Hamas** continues to command some 20,000 fighters.

Israel's intense bombings - some 300 air strikes since midday Saturday - wreaked unprecedented destruction in Gaza, reducing entire buildings to rubble.

After nightfall, Israeli aircraft attacked a building in the Jebaliya refugee camp next to Gaza City, killing a 14-month-old baby, a man and two **women**, Gaza Health Ministry official Dr. Moaiya Hassanain said. In the southern town of Rafah, Palestinian residents said a toddler and his two teenage brothers were killed in an airstrike aimed at a **Hamas** commander.

Israeli aircraft also bombed the Islamic University and government compound in Gaza City, centers of **Hamas** power, and the house next to the residence of **Hamas** Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh in a Gaza City refugee camp. Haniyeh, in hiding, was not home.

Shlomo Brom, a former senior Israeli military official, said it was the deadliest force ever used in decades of Israeli-Palestinian fighting. "Since **Hamas** took over Gaza (in June 2007), it has become a war between two states, and in war between states, more force is used," he said.

No Headline In Original

European leaders called on both Israel and Hamas to end the bloodshed.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy spoke Sunday with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who leads a rival government to Hamas in the West Bank, and condemned "the provocations that led to this situation as well as the disproportionate use of force."

The White House was mum about the situation in Gaza on Sunday after speaking out expansively on Saturday, blaming Hamas for provoking Israel's retaliatory strikes.

In the most dramatic attacks Sunday, warplanes struck dozens of smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, cutting off a lifeline that had supplied Hamas with weapons and Gaza with commercial goods. The influx of goods had helped Hamas defy an 18-month blockade of Gaza by Israel and Egypt, and was key to propping up its rule.

Sunday's blasts shook the ground several miles away and sent black smoke high into the sky. Earlier, war planes dropped three bombs on one of Hamas' main security compounds in Gaza City, including a prison. Moments after the blasts, frantic inmates, their faces dusty and bloodied, scrambled down the rubble. One man, still half buried, raised a hand to alert rescuers.

Gaza's nine hospitals were overwhelmed. Hassanain, who keeps a record for the Gaza Health Ministry, said more than 290 people were killed over two days and more than 800 wounded.

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights, which keeps researchers at all hospitals, said it had counted 251 dead by midday Sunday, and that among them were 20 children under the age of 16 and nine women.

Across Gaza, families pitched traditional mourning tents of green tarp outside homes. Yet the rows of chairs inside these tents remained largely empty, as residents covered indoors for fear of new Israeli strikes.

Israeli leaders gave interviews to foreign television networks to try win international support.

Public Security Minister Avi Dichter, speaking Arabic, spoke on Arab satellite TV stations, denouncing Hamas rule in Gaza. And Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told NBC that the assault came because Hamas, an Islamic group backed by Syria and Iran, is smuggling weapons and building a "small army."

In Jerusalem, Israel's Cabinet approved a callup of 6,500 reserve soldiers, raising fears of an impending ground offensive. Israel has doubled the number of troops on the Gaza border since Saturday and also deployed an artillery battery. It was not clear, though, whether the deployment was meant to pressure Hamas or whether Israel is determined to send ground troops.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said it was unclear when the operation would end but told his Cabinet was "liable to last longer than we are able to foresee at this time."

Since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, after 38 years of full military occupation, Israeli forces have repeatedly returned to the territory to hunt militants. However, Israel has shied away from retaking the entire strip, for fear of getting bogged down in urban warfare.

The diplomatic fallout, meanwhile, was swift.

Syria decided to suspend indirect peace talks with Israel, begun earlier this year, and the U.N. Security Council called on both sides to halt the fighting and asked Israel to allow humanitarian supplies into Gaza; 30 trucks were let in Sunday.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on Israel to open its crossings "for the continuous provision of humanitarian supplies." In a statement, he said one Palestinian U.N. employee, and eight trainees, were among the dead.

No Headline In Original

The prime minister of Turkey, one of the few Muslim countries to have relations with Israel, called the air assault a "crime against humanity."

The carnage inflamed Arab and Muslim public opinion, setting off street protests across the West Bank, in an Arab community in Israel, in several Middle Eastern cities and in Paris.

Some of the protests turned violent. Israeli troops quelling a West Bank march killed one Palestinian and seriously wounded another. A crowd of anti-Israel protesters in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul became a target for a suicide bomber on a bicycle. In Lebanon, police fired tear gas to stop demonstrators from reaching the Egyptian Embassy.

Egypt, which has served as a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians as well as between Hamas and its rival Fatah, has been criticized for joining Israel in closing its borders with Gaza. The blockade was imposed after the Hamas takeover in June 2007.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed About Gheit called on Hamas to renew its truce with Israel. The cease-fire began unraveling last month, and formally ended more than a week ago. Since then, Gaza militants had stepped up rocket fire on Israel.

A Hamas leader in exile, Osama Hamdan, said the movement would not relent. "We have one alternative, which is to be steadfast and resist and then we will be victorious," Hamdan said in Beirut.

Also in Beirut, Hassan Nasrallah, leader of the Hezbollah militia, said he would not abandon Hamas, but did not threaten to attack Israel. During the Israel-Hezbollah war of 2006, the militia fired thousands of rockets into Israel.

Hundreds of thousands of Israelis live in cities and towns in Gaza rocket range, and life slowed in some of the communities. Schools in communities in a 12-mile radius from Gaza were ordered to remain closed beyond the weeklong Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, which ends Monday.

In the southern city of Ashkelon, home to some 120,000 people, streets were relatively busy, despite the military's recommendations against being out in the open.

Several times throughout the day, however, that routine was briefly interrupted by the sounds of wailing sirens warning of an imminent attack. Pedestrians scurried for cover in buildings. After a number of rocket landed in the distance, a woman taking cover nearby briefly fainted. She refused water and food from bystanders, instead shivering in a corner, apparently in shock.

Additional reporting by Aron Heller in Ashkelon, Israel. Karin Laub reported from Jerusalem.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

No Headline In Original

The Advertiser (Australia)

January 9, 2009 Friday

1 - State Edition

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 17

Length: 567 words

Body

Inhumanity

Readers' letters keep streaming in on the Israeli-**Hamas** conflict but the tide of letters has turned against Israel.

LIKE most people of goodwill, I am appalled at the murder and mayhem being conducted by people of my race in Israel and, especially, Gaza.

I understand why people would want to stop rockets terrorising their neighbourhood. I understand why people would be sick of being restricted, humiliated, deprived of food, electricity, piped water and proper medical facilities, let alone subject to bombing and ``collateral damage".

So I understand why people can turn to hating the other tribe. But I have difficulty with these peoples learning nothing from the history of conflict - that there are no long-term winners, that innocents are being killed and maimed in the name of some power's ``just cause".

My problem is understanding how our Government can justify its overt support for one side. Once again, I am ashamed to be Australian. Oh, and my race? The human race - or is it?

DON STACY, Hawthorndene.

UN mistake

HAMAS a terrorist organisation? No worse than Israel itself. The United Nations needs to stand up and admit it made a mistake back in 1948 when it stole Palestinian land and declared it Israeli.

HOJ FERWERK, Eden Hills.

Gazans chose **Hamas**

THERE has been some considerable opinion condemning the Israeli self-preservation attacks in Gaza.

While it is true that civilian deaths are an unavoidable outcome of war, the question is why Israel finds it necessary to bring **Hamas** to heel. Also, many are unaware that before Israel begins an aerial or artillery operation in Gaza, it sends up to 9000 automated telephone calls to local residents who live in the vicinity of **Hamas** operatives who hide among the civilian population.

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Hamas has brought about the Israeli attack through continual rocket attack on purely civilian targets.

The UN confirms that Israel targets only known **Hamas** operatives and the bomb factories which produce the rockets that rain down on Israeli citizens: old men, **women** and children.

The Gazans chose **Hamas** in a democratic fashion. If you consider the choice of either Fatah or **Hamas**, both committed to destroying Israel, a democratic choice.

Israel agrees to the existence of a Palestinian state. This is a matter of record. It does not agree to being wiped off the face of the map. So it retaliates.

ALAN MEYER, Athelstone.

Vicious circle

AS diplomatic pressure comes into play and peace talks begin, there will once again be a temporary halt to this conflict between **Hamas** and Israel.

But this cycle of violence will not end until there is a genuine political solution.

Hamas must recognise Israel's right to exist and Israel must change its intransigence to achieving Palestinian autonomy.

BRIAN COOMBES, Para Hills.

Simple answer

TO T. GECZY-PERRY (The Advertiser, 8/1/09), who asked us, writers critical of Israel, how long we would tolerate our neighbours throwing rocks into our backyard before we retaliated with full force.

Simple answer: If the neighbours were throwing rocks into my backyard, I doubt I would go in with a warplane and blow up their house, killing mum, dad and all of their children.

However, if the stone-throwing was a retaliation for me locking them inside their property and starving them of food and the means to survive, they might well have had good reason to throw those stones at me in the first place.

DAVID SOMERFIELD, Strathalbyn.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

No Headline In Original

The Bismarck Tribune
December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS

Length: 1239 words

Byline: IBRAHIM BARZAK and KARIN LAUB Associated Press Writers

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Israel widened its deadliest-ever air offensive against Gaza's **Hamas** rulers Sunday, pounding smuggling tunnels and a central prison, sending more tanks and artillery toward the Gaza border and approving a reserves callup for a possible ground invasion.

Israeli leaders said they would press ahead with the Gaza campaign, despite enraged protests across the Arab world and Syria's decision to break off indirect peace talks with the Jewish state. Israel's foreign minister said the goal was to halt Gaza rocket fire on Israel for good, but not to reoccupy the territory.

With the two-day death toll climbing above 290 Sunday, crowds of Gazans breached the border wall with Egypt to escape the chaos. Egyptian forces, some firing in the air, tried to push them back into Gaza and an official said one border guard was killed.

Hamas, in turn, fired missiles deeper than ever into Israel, near the Israeli port city of Ashdod, and continues to command some 20,000 fighters.

Yet **Hamas** leaders were forced into hiding, most of the dead were from the **Hamas** security forces, and Israel's military intelligence chief said **Hamas**' ability to fire rockets had been reduced by 50 percent. Indeed, **Hamas** rockets fire dropped off sharply, from more than 130 on Saturday to just over 20 on Sunday.

Israel's intense bombings - some 300 air strikes since midday Saturday - wreaked unprecedented destruction in Gaza, reducing entire buildings to rubble.

Shlomo Brom, a former senior Israeli military official, said it was the deadliest force ever used in decades of Israeli-Palestinian fighting. "Since **Hamas** took over Gaza (in June 2007), it has become a war between two states, and in war between states, more force is used," he said.

European leaders called on both Israel and **Hamas** to end the bloodshed.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy spoke Sunday with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who has set up a rival government to **Hamas** in the West Bank, and condemned "the provocations that led to this situation as well as the disproportionate use of force."

The White House was mum about the situation in Gaza on Sunday after speaking out expansively on Saturday, blaming Israel's retaliatory strikes on **Hamas**.

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In the most dramatic attacks Sunday, warplanes struck dozens of smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, cutting off a lifeline that had supplied Hamas with weapons and Gaza with commercial goods. The influx of goods had helped Hamas defy an 18-month blockade of Gaza by Israel and Egypt, and was key to propping up its rule.

Sunday's blasts shook the ground several miles away and sent black smoke high into the sky.

Earlier, warplanes dropped three bombs on one of Hamas' main security compounds in Gaza City, including a prison. Moments after the blasts, frantic inmates scrambled down the rubble. One man, still half buried, raised a hand to alert rescuers.

Gaza's nine hospitals were overwhelmed. Dr. Moawiya Hassanain, who keeps a record for the Gaza Health Ministry, said more than 290 people were killed over two days and more than 800 wounded.

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights, which keeps researchers at all hospitals, said it had counted 251 dead by midday Sunday, and that among them were 20 children under the age of 16 and nine women.

Israeli leaders gave interviews to foreign television networks to try win international support.

Public Security Minister Avi Dichter, speaking Arabic, spoke on Arab satellite TV stations, denouncing Hamas rule in Gaza. And Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told NBC that the assault came because Hamas is smuggling weapons and building a "small army."

In Jerusalem, Israel's Cabinet approved a callup of 6,500 reserve soldiers, in apparent preparation for a ground offensive. Israel has doubled the number of troops on the Gaza border since Saturday and also deployed an artillery battery. It was not clear, though, whether the deployment was meant to pressure Hamas or whether Israel is determined to send ground troops.

Since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, after 38 years of full military occupation, Israeli forces have repeatedly returned to the territory to hunt militants. However, Israel has shied away from retaking the entire strip, for fear of getting bogged down on urban warfare.

Military experts said Israel would need at least 10,000 soldiers for a full-scale invasion.

The diplomatic fallout, meanwhile, was swift.

Syria decided to suspend indirect peace talks with Israel, begun earlier this year. "Israel's aggression closes all the doors" to any move toward a settlement in the region, said a Syrian announcement.

The U.N. Security Council called on both sides to halt the fighting and asked Israel to allow humanitarian supplies into Gaza; 30 trucks were let in Sunday. The prime minister of Turkey, one of the few Muslim countries to have relations with Israel, called the air assault a "crime against humanity."

The carnage inflamed Arab and Muslim public opinion, setting off street protests across the West Bank, in an Arab community in Israel, in several Middle Eastern cities and in Paris.

Some of the protests turned violent. Israeli troops quelling a West Bank march killed one Palestinian and seriously wounded another. A crowd of anti-Israel protesters in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul became a target for a suicide bomber on a bicycle. In Lebanon, police fired tear gas to stop demonstrators from reaching the Egyptian Embassy.

Egypt, which has served as a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians as well as between Hamas and its rival Fatah, has been criticized for joining Israel in closing its borders with Gaza. The blockade was imposed immediately after the Hamas takeover in June 2007.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed About Gheit called on Hamas to renew its truce with Israel. The cease-fire began unraveling last month, and formally ended more than a week ago. Since then, Gaza militants have stepped up rocket fire on Israel.

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A **Hamas** leader in exile, Osama Hamdan, said the movement would not relent. "We have one alternative which is to be steadfast and resist and then we will be victorious," Hamdan said in Beirut.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said it was unclear when the operation would end but told his Cabinet was "liable to last longer than we are able to foresee at this time."

Hundreds of thousands of Israelis live in cities and towns in Gaza rocket range, and life slowed in some of the communities. Schools in communities in a 20-kilometer (12-mile) radius from Gaza were ordered to remain closed beyond the weeklong Jewish holiday of Hanukkah which ends Monday.

In the southern city of Ashkelon, home to some 120,000 people, streets were relatively busy, despite the military's recommendations against being out in the open.

Several times throughout the day, however, that routine was briefly interrupted by the sounds of wailing sirens warning of an imminent attack. Pedestrians scurried for cover in buildings. After a number of rocket landed in the distance, a woman taking cover nearby briefly fainted. She refused water and food from bystanders, instead shivering in a corner, apparently in shock.

Gil Feiler, a regional economics experts, said it was too early to assess the economic impact on Israel, but that a monthlong operation could cost Israel \$200 million (143 euros) in lost wages, trade and other business.

Additional reporting by Aron Heller in Ashkelon, Israel. Karin Laub reported from Jerusalem.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

No Headline In Original

The Bismarck Tribune

January 2, 2009 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1A

Length: 334 words

Byline: IBRAHIM BARZAK Associated Press Writer

Body

BEIT HANOUN, Gaza Strip - Samar Hamdan ran weeping through the street, trying to touch the body of her dead 11-year-old brother during a funeral procession in this northern Gaza town.

Just a day before, the 15-year-old girl's two sisters were also buried, victims of the same strike from an Israeli missile.

As Israel steps up its attacks on the Hamas rulers of the Gaza Strip, one of the most densely populated spots on Earth, children are paying the price.

"In this crowded strip, everything is beside everything else," said Karen Abu Zayd, a top U.N. official in Gaza.

Israel says it is only targeting Hamas militants and the rockets they send streaking into southern Israel. More than 400 Palestinians have been killed in the strikes, many of them members of the Islamic militant group's security forces.

But at least 37 children and 17 women have died, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry. The United Nations has said the death toll includes 34 children.

With some 1.4 million Gazans crammed into a sliver of land 25 miles long and just 3 to 7 miles wide, military targets and civilians tend to exist side by side.

Israel says Hamas militants fire rockets from residential areas and schools, aware that the Israeli military response may cause civilian casualties.

"Hamas uses civilians as human shields," said an Israeli military spokeswoman, Maj. Avital Leibovich. "The targets we picked are military."

But the broad range of Israel's targets - police compounds, fire stations, homes of militants, Hamas-run mosques and university buildings - means most shelling is occurring in residential areas.

Israel's strike Thursday on the home of top Hamas leader Nizar Rayan was a typical case.

The bomb flattened the house and killed Rayan - as well as 18 other people, including nine of his children, ages 2 to 19, and all four of his wives. Television footage showed medics clutching the bodies of children dug from the rubble of the house and neighboring buildings.

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Fighting in dense Gaza brings child casualties

Load-Date: January 2, 2009

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No Headline In Original

The Bismarck Tribune

January 11, 2009 Sunday

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Section: WIRE; Pg. 2A

Length: 543 words

Byline: IBRAHIM BARZAK and CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA Associated Press Writers

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Israel dropped bombs and leaflets on Gaza on Saturday, pounding suspected rocket sites and tunnels used by **Hamas** militants and warning of a wider offensive despite frantic diplomacy to end the bloodshed.

Egypt hosted talks aimed at defusing the crisis, but war had the momentum on a bloody day on which more than 30 Palestinians, many of them noncombatants, were killed, Gaza medics said.

At hospitals, distraught relatives - men in jeans and jackets and **women** in black Islamic robes - sobbed and shrieked at the loss of family. Flames and smoke rose over Gaza City amid heavy fighting.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas predicted a "waterfall of blood" unless all parties adhere to a United Nations call for a cease-fire. But Israel has said the Security Council resolution passed Thursday was unworkable and **Hamas**, the Islamic group whose government controls Gaza but is not recognized internationally, was angry that it was not consulted.

Damascus-based **Hamas** leader Khaled Mashaal made a fiery speech on Arab news channel Al-Jazeera, describing the Israeli assault as a "holocaust." Still, **Hamas** teams were in Cairo to discuss a cease-fire proposed by Egypt.

Weary Palestinians watched from apartment windows as thousands of leaflets fluttered from aircraft with a blunt warning: Israeli forces will step up operations against Islamic militants who have unleashed a daily barrage of rocket fire on southern Israeli towns.

"The IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) is not working against the people of Gaza, but against **Hamas** and the terrorists only," the leaflets said in Arabic. "Stay safe by following our orders."

The leaflets urged Gaza residents not to help **Hamas** and to stay away from its members. There was no immediate sign of an escalation, though earlier in the day, witnesses said Israeli troops moved to within one mile of Gaza City before pulling back slightly.

Israeli defense officials say they are prepared for a third stage of their offensive, in which ground troops would push further into Gaza, but are waiting for approval from the government. Early today, Israeli tanks were heard moving near the central Gaza border as Israeli artillery pounded the area, indicating the possibility of a larger operation.

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Palestinian witnesses said Israeli forces fired phosphorus shells at Khouza, a village near the border, setting a row of houses on fire. Hospital official Dr. Yusuf Abu Rish said a woman was killed and more than 100 injured, most suffering from gas inhalation and burns. Israeli military spokesman Capt. Guy Spigelman categorically denied the claims.

The Israeli military said it did not know of such an incident. Also, **Hamas** security officials said fierce battles were in progress early today in eastern Gaza City and northern Gaza.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were discussing classified information, said the army also has a fourth stage planned that calls for a full reoccupation of Gaza and toppling of **Hamas**.

The leaflets reflected Israeli efforts to cast **Hamas** as the source of the conflict that has brought additional misery to Gaza's 1.4 million people, who live in poverty in the densely inhabited shard of land along the Mediterranean.

Israel tells Gazans to brace for war escalation

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

End of Document

No Headline In Original

The Bismarck Tribune

January 1, 2009 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1A

Length: 844 words

Byline: IBRAHIM BARZAK and JASON KEYSER, Associated Press Writers

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Israel sent more troops to the Gaza border Wednesday, rapidly moving forward with preparations for a possible ground offensive as the next stage of its military assault on the coastal territory's **Hamas** rulers.

Israel rebuffed calls by world leaders for a truce, and **Hamas** also was cold to a cease-fire.

Instead, both intensified their fire. Israel bombed a mosque that it said was used to store rockets as well as vital smuggling tunnels along the Egyptian border, and the Islamic militants hammered southern Israeli cities with about 60 rockets.

Israeli troops trudged between dozens of tanks in muddy, rain-sodden fields outside Gaza, assembling equipment, cleaning weapons and scrubbing out tank barrels. Their commanders moved forward with preparations for a ground operation, said an Israeli defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the information.

The U.N. Security Council scheduled emergency consultations Wednesday night to discuss an Arab request for a legally binding and enforceable resolution to ensure an immediate cease-fire in Gaza. Egyptian Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz said he was on instructions from Arab League foreign ministers who met in Cairo.

Diplomatic efforts by U.S., European and Middle Eastern leaders appeared to be having little effect. A French proposal for a 48-hour cease-fire to allow humanitarian supplies into Gaza failed to gain traction. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the time was not ripe to consider it.

A separate proposal by Turkey and Egypt, two of Israel's few allies in the Muslim world, also seemed to be attracting little serious study in Israel or Gaza, where **Hamas** leaders dismissed talk of a truce.

With a shrinking number of targets to hit from the air and top **Hamas** leaders deep in hiding, a ground operation seemed all the more likely. In five days of raids, Israeli warplanes carried out about 500 sorties against **Hamas** targets, and helicopters flew hundreds more combat missions, a senior Israeli military officer said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with military regulations.

The government has approved the call-up of more than 9,000 reserve soldiers. Heavy rain clouds that could hinder ground forces were expected to lift today.

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U.N. humanitarian chief John Holmes said the death toll was estimated at 320-390 and the number of injured at 1,500-1,900. Between 20 percent and 25 percent of the dead are either women or children, said Karen Abu Zayd, U.N. Relief and Works Agency commissioner.

Hamas says some 200 uniformed members of its security forces have been killed, and the U.N. says at least 60 Palestinian civilians have died.

In Israel, three civilians and a soldier have been killed by rocket fire, which has reached deeper into Israel than ever. The sites of the missile hits have drawn curious crowds.

In the Negev desert city of Beersheba, people visited a school where a rocket made a direct hit Tuesday evening, slamming through the ceiling and showering debris on students' desks. A visitor illuminated by a shaft of light through the hole in the roof said with some astonishment, "This is my daughter's seat."

In Gaza, the sites of airstrikes have also attracted the curious and the defiant, including a Palestinian man who planted a green Hamas flag atop a mound of debris at a flattened mosque, its minaret still thrusting toward a stormy sky.

The Israeli military, which leveled the mosque Wednesday, said that it was being used as a missile storage site and that the bombs dropped on it set off secondary explosions. It was the fifth mosque hit in the campaign.

The chief of Israel's internal security services, Yuval Diskin, told a government meeting that Hamas members had hidden inside mosques, believing they would be safe from airstrikes and using them as command centers, according to an Israeli security official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to share the information.

Other militants were hiding in hospitals, some disguised as doctors and nurses, Diskin said, according to the official.

Echoing Israel's cool response to truce proposals, a senior Hamas leader with ties to its military wing said that now was not the right time to call off the fight. Hamas was unhappy with the six-month truce that ended just before the fighting began because it didn't result in an easing of Israel's crippling economic blockade of Gaza.

Hamas spokesman Taher Nunu said that although Hamas leaders had been driven underground, the Gaza government was functioning and had met in the past few days.

"What our people want is clear: an immediate stop to all kinds of aggression, the end of the siege by all means, the opening of all border crossings, and international guarantees that the occupation will not renew this terrorist war again," Nunu said.

Israel's latest airstrikes concentrated on crushing the many smuggling tunnels under Gaza's southern border with Egypt. They provide a crucial lifeline, not just for Hamas rulers, but also for bringing in food and fuel for Gaza's people.

Load-Date: January 1, 2009

No Headline In Original

Argus Weekend (South Africa)

December 28, 2008

e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 675 words

Byline: Associated Press and Sapa

Body

Said Masri sat in a Gaza City street slapping his face and covering his head with dust from a building pounded in an unprecedented wave of Israeli airstrikes in **Hamas**-controlled Gaza yesterday - the bloodiest day there in decades.

"My son is gone," wailed Masri.

The shopkeeper said he had sent his 9-year-old son out to buy cigarettes minutes before the airstrikes began and now could not find him. "May I burn like the cigarettes, may Israel burn."

His was but one of hundreds of tragedies as Israeli warplanes, retaliating for rocket fire from Gaza, pounded over a hundred security compounds across the **Hamas**-ruled territory, killing at least 195 and wounding more than 310 yesterday.

The strikes, which targeted security compounds and rocket-launching pads, caused wide-spread panic. Some of the Israeli missiles struck in densely populated areas as children were leaving school and **women** rushed into the streets frantically looking for their children.

The bombardment was met with shock and fury in the Arab world but the United States stopped short of condemnation.

South African Islamic groups, meanwhile, called for a change in the country's "balanced" approach to Israel and the Palestinian issue.

Arab foreign ministers are rushing to Cairo for an emergency meeting of the Arab League today.

Those killed in the bombing included Gaza's police chief, while on the other side of the border one Israeli was killed and at least four were wounded when **Hamas** retaliated with rocket attacks.

Hospitals were crowded and civilians rushed in wounded people in cars, vans and ambulances.

"We are treating people on the floor, in the corridors. We have no more space," said one doctor at Shifa Hospital, Gaza's main treatment centre.

Dr Moawiya Hassanain, a Gaza health ministry official, said at least 195 people were killed and more than 310 wounded.

No Headline In Original

The offensive began eight days after a six-month truce with Israel expired. During these days, the Israeli military says rocket and mortar squads have fired 200 projectiles at Israeli targets.

Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak said "the operation will last as long as necessary", but it was not clear if it would be coupled with a ground offensive. Asked if Hamas political leaders might be targeted next, military spokeswoman Major Avital Leibovich said: "Any Hamas target is a target."

Defiant Hamas leaders threatened revenge, including suicide attacks. Hamas "will continue the resistance until the last drop of blood", vowed spokesman Fawzi Barhoum.

Israel told its civilians near Gaza to take cover as Hamas militants began retaliating with rockets and Israel declared a state of emergency in Israeli communities within a 20km range of Gaza, putting the area on a war footing.

The Arab world reacted in shock with protests erupting in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Moderate Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas called for restraint. Egypt summoned the Israeli ambassador to express condemnation and opened its border with Gaza to allow ambulances to drive out some of the wounded. Egypt's closure of that border has been condemned by many in the Arab world for abetting Israel's siege of the Gaza Strip.

The visit of Israel's foreign minister Tzipi Livni to Cairo on Thursday, just two days before the attack, has also given rise to accusations that Cairo is complicit.

Even Israel's allies in the region expressed dismay. Turkish prime minister Recep Erdogan called the attacks a blow to peace.

SA Islamic groups strongly condemned the Israeli air raids.

"We find it deplorable and evil that the last remaining colonial-settler state could unleash murderous destruction upon an impoverished people," said a statement which was signed by the chairman of the Media Review Network Iqbal Jassat and the president of the Muslim Judicial Council Ighsan Hendricks.

"South Africa needs to heed lessons of the struggle against apartheid in order to drastically review its policies.

"It's untenable to proclaim support for Palestinian rights while the Israeli flag flutters in the capital, Pretoria," said Hendricks and Jassat.

Load-Date: December 28, 2008

Protestan en Anaheim por ataque en Gaza

La Opinion

29 diciembre 2008 lunes

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Section: NOTICIAS

Length: 626 words

Byline: Jorge Morales Almada

Body

Las banderas de triángulo rojo y franjas negra, blanca y verde ondearon ayer en la ciudad de Anaheim, donde radica un gran comunidad de palestinos, para manifestarse contra la ofensiva militar que a partir del sábado lleva a cabo Israel en la franja de Gaza, y donde murieron alrededor de 300 personas.

"Detengan la masacre", gritaban los manifestantes apostados en las aceras de la calle Brookhurst.

"Estamos aquí para apoyar a la gente de Palestina que está sufriendo de ocupación ilegal, a la gente que está siendo atacada indiscriminadamente por Israel", comentó Shaheen Nassar mientras sostenía una manta en la que se leía: "Liberen a Palestina".

La protesta fue organizada por varios grupos antibélicos, encabezados por la Coalición ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism).

Marilú Cabral, portavoz de esa agrupación, comentó que el movimiento de protesta era en respuesta a los ataques que recibieron los palestinos, a los que considera como uno de los más intensos de los últimos 60 años.

"Israel funciona gracias a los fondos de Estados Unidos, si Israel no tuviera las armas y el poder militar no podría hacer los actos que ha estado haciendo en contra de los palestinos", dijo Cabral. "Aquí en Estados Unidos tenemos que hacer el trabajo de resistencia contra este gobierno, porque es la razón por lo que allá está pasando eso".

Casi inmediatamente después de los ataques con misiles del sábado, el American Jewish Committee (AJC) manifestó por su lado su respaldo al gobierno de Israel.

"Repetidamente Israel ha advertido al régimen de Hamas en Gaza que deje de disparar cohetes y ataques de morteros contra Israel o se enfrentará a la consecuencias, pero en vez de prestar atención a esas advertencias los líderes de Hamas han continuado sus ataques, insultos y represalias... Hamas creyó que podía atacar al pueblo de Israel impunemente", declaró David Harris, director del AJC.

Harris culpó a Hamas de estar utilizando escudos humanos, ubicando sus posiciones en focos residenciales, lo cual ha sido la consecuencia de las muertes de civiles.

"Israel", dijo Harris, dejó Gaza en 2005, retirándose a la frontera internacional. Dio a sus residentes la primera oportunidad en su historia de determinar su propio destino. En lugar de ello eligieron a los líderes de Hamas, dedicados a la destrucción de Israel".

Protestan en Anaheim por ataque en Gaza

Para Joseph Dibsy, quien tiene cinco hermanos en la región de Palestina y participó en la protesta a la que sumaron alrededor de mil personas, es triste saber por lo que están pasando.

"La casa de mis padres fue destruida por un ataque de Israel hace muchos años, yo tenía nueve años en ese entonces y ahora estamos viendo lo mismo", dijo este hombre que llevaba las banderas de Estados Unidos y la entidad palestina.

Acusó al gobierno estadounidense de apoyar los ataques militares contra la población civil: "Estados Unidos no ha sido justo, está apoyando al cien por ciento a Israel, pero Israel está haciendo todo mal, está destruyendo las casas de la gente de Palestina".

Reconoció que la organización **Hamas** no es de su agrado, pero que fue elegida democráticamente por los habitantes.

"Si la democracia es lo que promulga el señor Bush, pues eso es democracia", mencionó.

Los organizadores de la protesta anunciaron otra movilización para mañana a las 4:30 de la tarde fuera Consulado de Israel en Los Ángeles.

Joanne Abu'Qartoumy, representante de la Union of Palestinian American **Women**, dijo que la protesta es una llamado para que el presidente electo Barack Obama cambie esa política a favor de Israel que está provocando un genocidio.

La comunidad árabe en Anaheim llevó a cabo una protesta en esa ciudad contra los bombardeos aéreos de Israel en la franja de Gaza; un líder de la comunidad judía local defiende la acción.

Load-Date: September 12, 2014

No Headline In Original

Aberdeen Press and Journal

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: FEATURES; GENERAL; Letters; Pg. 15

Length: 667 words

Byline: Tom Forsyth

Body

Vandalised minibus

SIR, - How could anyone do such a thing as damage a minibus used by an organisation like Clan (Cancer Link Aberdeen and North), which uses the bus for taking cancer patients to hospital for radiotherapy (the Press and Journal, January 3)?

My wife has just spent four weeks staying with Clan, and the staff, including the voluntary bus drivers, couldn't have been kinder.

The place was so peaceful.

I just hope that those who did the damage will realise what they did and hopefully pay for repairs, and that none of their relatives gets cancer and needs the help of Clan.

George Innes,

3 Bridge Street,

Portknockie.

Rocket attacks by **Hamas**

SIR, - Having spent a few months in southern England in the early 1940s as "feeble" (according to Dennis Grattan in his letter of January 2) buzz bombs and silent rockets delivered their unguided destruction around us, I can assure him that it is an unpleasant and deadly experience.

But we were at war.

Hamas and Israel are not at war.

Israel asked **Hamas** to stop its rocket attacks and warned them of the consequences if they failed to do so.

Charles W. Brown,

3 Netherwood Cottages,

No Headline In Original

Banff.

Homosexual lifestyle

SIR, - With reference to the letter from Lesley Findlay headed "Medical research on homosexuals" (December 31) and the one headed "Homosexual lifestyle" from the Rev A. Murray (January 5), I could hardly believe my eyes reading the ignorant and thinly-disguised venom from the authors.

What utter nonsense this pair are spouting.

Where, I would like to know, does Lesley Findlay get the information regarding the amount of diseases that can be passed only between men engaging in homosexual practices?

Yes, many diseases and conditions can be passed between one human and another, but they are not exclusive between two men, or two women, for that matter.

Where is the medical documentation that says actively-homosexual men do not reach old age?

I am an out and proud gay man who has been with the same partner for the last 13 years. I have reached the grand old age of 34 and, yes, I may not see my 70th birthday, but that will be down to my high blood pressure, diabetes, or high cholesterol, or whatever other reason, and NOT because of my sexual orientation.

The only thing the Bible proves (you know, the book that is well known for its vast wealth of medical health information) is that men have been having sex with men since the dawn of time.

I respectfully suggest that our two letter-writers get a life, and keep there noses out of mine and others like me.

Calum M. McLean,

Address supplied.

Guantanamo Bay detainees

SIR, - One can only suspect that our weak government under Gordon Brown will roll over and accommodate new US President Barack Obama and accept the prisoners ejected by the US military from the Guantanamo Bay detention centre.

Do we have one British MP who will stand up against this decision should it happen, and even resign in principle? Also, do we have a Scottish Government, or even one politician, or politically-minded person of standing, who would initiate an injunction that would ban any acceptance of the US detainees to Scottish soil?

D.R. Davidson,

6 Woodend Road,

Aberdeen.

Noise from fireworks

SIR, - Once again, those of us who choose to remain at home for a quiet New Year celebration have been subjected to the noise of fireworks from the ill-mannered minority.

Why don't they go to a public display instead of causing a nuisance in the middle of a housing estate?

For various reasons, some of us need our sleep.

The sooner the private use of fireworks is banned the better.

No Headline In Original

A.E. McKenzie,
Earlspark Crescent,
Bielside, Aberdeen.

Undersoil heating at a golf course

SIR, - Reading your story (December 30) about undersoil heating being installed at a golf course, I realised how lucky we are in this country to have people intelligent enough to think of something really important to do with the energy being saved by the public fitting energy-efficient bulbs and cutting back on heating.

James Lovie,
62 Low Street,
New Pitsligo.

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

End of Document

No Headline In Original

Cape Argus (South Africa)

January 08, 2009 Thursday

e2 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 662 words

Body

By LEILA SAMODIEN

Staff Reporter

Cape Town's city centre was almost at a standstill today as around 10 000 people marched on Parliament to protest against the Israeli attack on Gaza.

This comes as the Palestinian death toll in Gaza reached 704 today, with more than 3 100 injured since Israel launched Operation Cast Lead on December 27.

Seven Israeli soldiers and three Israeli civilians have been killed in combat.

Today's march, which was joined by Western Cape Premier Lynne Brown, was monitored by a heavy police contingent as the protesters wound their way from Kaizersgracht in District Six to Parliament shortly before 11am.

Police said they believed that around 10 000 people, most of them Muslims, took part in the march.

These figures could not be independently confirmed at the time of going to press.

The protesters marched down Darling Street into Plein Street towards Parliament chanting religious slogans and reciting Islamic prayers.

"Free, Palestine, free!" they chanted in unison.

Brown, who pledged the provincial government's support, said the situation in Palestine needed to be raised as an issue and that the community needed to engage the government on the issue.

Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) president Moulana Ighsaan |Hendricks said protesters had the right to demonstrate their anger and "show our wrath" towards Israel.

Islamic Unity Convention chairman Moeghamat de Vries said the Palestinian struggle was also a struggle of Muslims in Cape Town.

Comparing Israel's actions to the apartheid regime, De Vries said collective action was necessary in order to act against Israel's "imperialism".

No Headline In Original

Also at the march were members of Pagad, who handed out pamphlets calling on Muslims not to support certain retailers, supermarkets and fast food chains which they claimed supported Israel's actions.

"By not supporting business that support Zionist, racist Israel, surely with the help of Allah, fewer bombs will be funded with our money", the pamphlet said.

Many in the crowd, which included women with babies, carried posters that read: "The Zionists are murderers. They kill innocent Palestinians" and "With our souls, with our blood, we sacrifice for you ... the people of Palestine".

Meanwhile, the SA Jewish Community has come out in support of Israel's attack on Hamas, but has urged local Muslims to work with them to ensure the conflict was not "imported" here.

They said they shared with "the citizens of Israel the heavy heart with which they have embarked upon this operation".

In a statement today, issued by the SA Zionist Federation, the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and the Office of the Chief Rabbi, they declared that Israel had done "everything in its power" to avoid the situation.

It had dismantled and evacuated all Jewish settlements in Gaza more than three-and-a-half years ago, but this "gesture of peace" was met "by a barrage of thousands of missiles which have rained down upon the villages, towns and cities of southern Israel".

"Hamas's decision to fire,|without provocation, approximately 80 rockets per day into Israel after the expiry of the recent ceasefire forced the government of Israel to take the necessary steps which every civilised state is required to do in order to protect its own citizens from further terror and attacks," they said in the statement.

The Jewish community also called on the South African government and the ANC to respond to the Gaza conflict in a "balanced and constructive manner".

"We hope that the government and the ANC use their special|relationship with the Palestinian|leadership to persuade them once and for all to enter into peaceful negotiations with Israel."

Recognising the strong ties many South Africans had to those involved in the Gaza conflict, the statement urged those communities not to allow that conflict to spill over into this country.

The existing "excellent" relationship between all communities in South Africa should not be disrupted by what was happening in Gaza, the statement said.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

No Headline In Original

Kalgoorlie Miner (Western Australia)

November 26, 2008 Wednesday

First Edition

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Section: KAL; Pg. 9

Length: 579 words

Body

LONDON: Australian revisionist historian Fredrick Toben fled Britain as German authorities vowed to press on with their attempts to extradite him to face charges of Holocaust denial.

Toben's solicitor Kevin Lowry-Mullins said his client left the UK as a precaution.

But Andreas Grossmann, a prosecutor in the German jurisdiction of Mannheim which tried unsuccessfully last month to extradite Toben from Britain for alleged racism and anti-Semitism, said the Australian was still a wanted man.

"England will not extradite him, but we will continue to attempt to have him arrested in other countries," Grossmann said.

ST JOHN'S: A man who was thought to have taken his own life two years ago after a suicide note was found in his truck, was arrested in Newfoundland, Canada while living under a different name.

Bruce Leyte, 57, was picked up early Sunday after a person read a newspaper story on his disappearance and called police.

In April 2006, Leyte was sentenced to pay a \$92,000 fine after being found guilty of tax evasion. He was last seen on August 18, 2006 when his abandoned truck was found near a river with a suicide note.

PHOENIX: An Arizona prosecutor has asked to drop one of two murder charges against an eight-year-old boy suspected of shooting his father and another man, court records showed.

"The State believes the interest of justice will be served by such a dismissal," Apache County Attorney Criss Candelaria said in a single-paragraph motion filed on Friday afternoon.

No explanation was given and officials from the county attorney's office had no comment, citing a gag order imposed by a judge.

DALLAS: The leaders of what was once the largest Muslim charity in the United States were found guilty of acting as a front for Palestinian militants in the largest terrorism financing prosecution in American history.

No Headline In Original

It was a major victory in the White House's legal "war on terror" and comes after a mistrial was declared last year in the case involving the now defunct Texas-based Holy Land Foundation, charged with funneling \$US12 million to Hamas.

Holy Land was one of several Muslim organisations the Bush administration closed in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks for allegedly raising money for overseas Islamic extremists.

PORT MORESBY: Women in Papua New Guinea suffer some of the worst violence in the world, a new report has found.

The AusAID Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor report ranked PNG 124th out of 136 countries on a gender related development index. The report also highlighted PNG's maternal mortality rate as more than double that of any other Pacific country.

"Education enrolment rates for girls relative to boys were among the lowest in the Pacific, which led to disadvantages in the formal economy," the report found.

Alarming levels of PNG women were turning to informal prostitution, exchanging sex for food or money.

WELLINGTON: A 6.0 magnitude earthquake struck the remote Kermadec islands north of New Zealand yesterday, the US Geological Survey reported.

The epicentre of the quake was 131km from Raoul Island and at a depth of 35km.

There was no immediate alert from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre.

Earthquakes and volcanic activity are common in the area, which is part of the Ring of Fire where the Pacific plate of the earth's crust meets other continental plates.

In the past two months, tremors of 7.3, 6.5 and 6.0 have been recorded in the area, 1000km north of New Zealand.

Load-Date: November 25, 2008

La colère dans les camps de réfugiés palestiniens de Sabra et Chatila; Jour après jour, ils vont manifester contre Israël, mais respectent les appels à la retenue d'Hassan Nasrallah.

Le Figaro

Vendredi 2 Janvier 2009

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LE FIGARO

Section: INTERNATIONAL; Pg. 5; N° 20039

Length: 670 words

Byline: Minoui, Delphine

Body

ASSIS derrière son stand de falafels, l'oreille collée au transistor, Abdul Latif Abel s'empresse de nourrir ses clients de passage des dernières informations sur Gaza, avant de baisser son rideau de fer. Cinq jours, déjà, que ce réfugié palestinien de 40 ans ferme, juste après l'heure du déjeuner, les portes de son petit restaurant, au coeur de la rue principale du camp de Chatila, pour aller manifester contre Israël.

« On a beau brûler des pneus, on a beau aller protester... Mais dans le fond, on se sent impuissant », concède-t-il.

De la Palestine, sa « *terre d'origine* », Abdul Latif Abed ne connaît que les images qui passent en boucle sur son téléviseur. Comme la plupart des quelque 400 000 réfugiés palestiniens qui vivent au Liban, il fait partie de la deuxième génération, qui est née ici, dans un des douze camps répartis à travers le pays. Mais il ne peut s'empêcher de vivre « *par procuration* », dit-il, « *la tragédie des habitants de Gaza* » aux airs de « *déjà-vu* ». « *Ces gens-là partagent notre sang. Quand ils souffrent, nous souffrons aussi* », insiste-t-il.

Avec ses airs de modeste cité-dortoir où s'entassent de petites bâtisses en ciment, le camp de Chatila ressemble aujourd'hui à n'importe quelle banlieue pauvre du Moyen-Orient. Ouvert en 1949, lors la première guerre israélo-palestinienne, il s'est transformé, au fil des années, en une véritable ville dans la ville, avec ses commerces, ses mosquées, sa vie de quartier. Impossible, pourtant, d'effacer les tragiques souvenirs du massacre de 1982, perpétré par une milice chrétienne libanaise, soutenue par l'armée israélienne, qui occupait à l'époque Beyrouth.

« **Je n'oublierai jamais** »

« *J'étais jeune, mais je n'oublierai jamais ce qui s'est passé* », s'enflamme Abdul Latif Abel. « *J'ai vu mes cousins et mes oncles mourir. J'ai vu notre maison se faire écraser. Comment ne pas en vouloir aux Israéliens ?* » poursuit-il. Un essaim de badauds vient de se former autour de lui. « *Mort à Israël !* », hurle un homme, en passant. « *Avec notre sang, avec notre âme, nous nous sacrifierons pour toi, Gaza !* », rétorque un autre. Un peu plus loin, Ahmad Najjar, un jeune réfugié tire nerveusement quelques bouffées sur sa chicha. « *J'enrage, je brûle à l'intérieur quand je vois ce qui se passe en Palestine* », dit-il.

La colère dans les camps de réfugiés palestiniens de Sabra et Chatila Jour après jour, ils vont manifester contre Israël, mais respectent les appels à la retenue....

Derrière lui, la plupart des boutiques ont accroché des tissus noirs sur leurs vitrines. Ça et là, des drapeaux du mouvement palestinien **Hamas** et du Hezbollah libanais flottent au vent. La milice chiite libanaise a été une des premières organisations à dénoncer les raids israéliens sur Gaza. Son leader, Hassan Nasrallah, véritable figure de la résistance à travers le monde arabo-musulman, a déjà prononcé deux discours de soutien au peuple palestinien, en se gardant néanmoins de suggérer l'ouverture d'un « *second front* ». Au pays du Cèdre, le parallèle avec la guerre de 2006 est dans tous les esprits. « *Mais où sont les autres pays arabes ?* », s'interroge, déçu, Ahmad Najjar, en pointant du doigt l'Égypte, accusée, par de nombreux Palestiniens, de connivence avec Israël.

Pour l'heure, les instructions données par les différentes organisations palestiniennes présentes dans les camps, font écho aux propos de Nasrallah et prônent la retenue. « *Nous manifestons par solidarité, mais la réponse armée aux tirs de Tsahal doit se faire du territoire palestinien, pas du Liban* », précise Abu Wassim, du parti Fatah Intifada. En 1975, c'est à partir d'opérations commandos lancées contre Israël, depuis le Liban, par des réfugiés palestiniens qu'avait commencé la guerre civile libanaise.

Mais entre les défenseurs d'une mobilisation pacifique, les partisans d'un engagement armé, et ceux qui s'efforcent de faire abstraction de la crise, une fracture est aujourd'hui en train de prendre forme. Ce jour-là, à Chatila, c'est sous la contrainte que certains commerçants se sont résignés à fermer leur boutique. « *Je veux travailler, je ne veux pas aller manifester !* », se plaignait l'un d'entre eux, encerclé par des hommes armés.

Graphic

Palestinian **women** and children in Chatila refugee camp in Beirut shout slogans during a protest against Israel's attack on the Gaza strip which killed over 150 people

Load-Date: July 21, 2009

La colère dans les camps de réfugiés palestiniens de Sabra et Chatila

Le Figaro Économie

Vendredi 2 Janvier 2009

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Section: INTERNATIONAL; Pg. 5; N° 20039

Length: 670 words

Byline: Minoui, Delphine

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La colère dans les camps de réfugiés palestiniens de Sabra et Chatila

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Graphic

Palestinian women and children in Chatila refugee camp in Beirut shout slogans during a protest against Israel's attack on the Gaza strip which killed over 150 people

Load-Date: February 13, 2011

End of Document

No Headline In Original

The Bismarck Tribune

October 5, 2008 Sunday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 6C

Length: 701 words

Body

BOSTON - So this is what they mean by the soft bigotry of low expectations. The long drumbeat that led to the vice presidential debate suggested it would be a matchup between an airhead and a gaffe machine.

If you added up the two cents from every adviser, you could pay off the national debt. For a week we'd seen the air of confidence come out of the balloon of Sarah Palin. She flunked the interview with Katie Couric, a woman who had once been trashed as not having the gravitas to anchor the evening news. What Palin "needed to do," in the language of the cablemeisters, was to complete a sentence and come up with a fact. Or even a factoid.

On the other hand, Joe Biden had been given some advice that sounded like an inversion of the 1950s. Back then, it was the smart woman who was told to play dumb. Now it was the smart man who was warned to keep his IQ under control. And to avoid being patronizing like the plague.

Well, blessedly this turned out not to be Bobby Riggs versus Billie Jean King. Biden and Palin were more surrogates for their candidates than their gender. The idea that Biden would pat her pretty little head in public was laid to rest. The idea that Palin would ratchet up a female sympathy vote died with it.

Sarah was Positively Sarah, as they used to say when she ran for mayor of Wasilla. Folksy, breezy, full of anecdotes, sidestepping the questions and staying on the message. If this is what cramming looks like, she'd pulled the all-nighters and learned what Hamas was and to keep her sentences (mostly) in order. If every question didn't lead to an answer, it led to an anecdote. Never mind the "shout-out to all those third-graders" back home. Never mind the bizarre comment that nuclear weapons would be the "be-all, end-all of just too many people in too many parts of our planet." She was quick to link herself to a team of mavericks. "Oh yeah, it's so obvious I'm a Washington outsider."

Joe was positively Joe. A few statistics too many, a rush of words and ideas against the 90-second deadline, but he kept his tongue pointing in the right direction. He even kept it under control. McCain's not a maverick on "virtually anything that genuinely affects the things people really talk about around their kitchen table. ... Maverick he is not." And when Sarah suggested that being a "mom" was one of the qualifications she brought to the office, this one-time single father fought back against the implication that because he's a man, he wouldn't understand how to raise children.

In the end, Biden was able to run against McCain, while Palin had to run against her own image. In the psychodrama that is this election, the big question was whether she could wipe out the data that had been put in the voters' hard drive over the last week. In fact, the governor of Alaska has looked woefully unready for the job. She was like the perky, self-confident valedictorian of her small high school who got into MIT before she realized that her school had never taught physics.

No Headline In Original

Mom, mayor, governor, she'd be given a social promotion all the way to the vice presidential nomination. Politically brunette? It was as if she were playing Elle Woods, but wasn't going to make law review.

As for those women, especially the Hillary voters that McCain was wooing when he picked Sarah Barracuda? Sen. Clinton had broken through stereotypes, especially the tenacious idea that a woman wasn't up to the job of commander in chief. Increasingly, women who cheered Palin's initial appearance have drifted away. How many of these independents cringing at Palin's performance were dismayed to see her single-handedly revive the old prejudices. Still, not even the most committed Obama fan looked forward to watching the first woman on the Republican national ticket fall on her face.

So, Palinphobes and Palinphiles alike can breath a sigh of relief. This wasn't the battle of the sexes, and it wasn't a full-scale gender disaster. It's just that Tina Fey still looks more qualified.

(Ellen Goodman writes for the Boston Globe. Her syndicated column normally appears on Fridays. This is an extra Goodman effort written following the vice presidential debate.) Not really an epic battle of the sexes

Load-Date: October 6, 2008

End of Document

No Headline In Original

Wyoming Tribune-Eagle (Cheyenne)

October 31, 2008 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Letters to Editor; Pg. A12

Length: 877 words

Byline: Staff

Body

It's time to retire out-of-control watchdog Councilman Pete Laybourn to the doghouse

From Mary Neese

Cheyenne

In reply to Mr. Ammon's letter on Oct. 28:

How dare you speak for me? I am a Ward 1 voter, and I am not at all secure with Pete Laybourn as my representative on the City Council.

He is a bully and an embarrassment to me. I voted for him once, thinking that a watchdog on the council would not be a bad thing.

But Mr. Laybourn is rabid and needs to be confined to the doghouse. He won't fool me again.

Trustee incumbents list what they've done to implement their vision for LCSD1 schools

From Bob Farwell

Jeff Meena

Jan Stalcup

Cheyenne

One only needs to watch the League of **Women** Voters Forum (6 p.m., Sunday, Channel 19) or the WTE interviews (www.WyomingNews.com) of Laramie County School District 1 school board candidates to know that the incumbents have a vision for greatness that includes our mission of guaranteeing every student a high-quality education and increasing student achievement.

A vision is important, but implementation is critical. We offer the following as examples of what we as trustees have done to implement this vision for improvement:

- Implementation of district-wide math and language arts.

No Headline In Original

- Focusing on reading and writing across all content areas.
- Increased salaries, allowing LCSD1 to hire the best and brightest.
- Implementation of pre-K, enrichment and remedial summer school.
- Hired a visionary, knowledgeable superintendent.
- Implemented district-wide all-day kindergarten.
- Opened three new elementary schools, constructing four more, remodeling many.
- Implementation and training for district-wide professional learning communities.
- Academic interventions at all levels.
- Improved graduation rate now over 80 percent.
- Improving instruction with instructional facilitators and technical support staff.
- One of few districts nationwide to complete North Central Accreditation process to keep all of district aligned and moving forward.
- Raising the No Child Left Behind bar and closing the achievement gap in all sub-groups.
- All juniors will take ACT and Work Keys in preparation for senior year and post-high school.
- Five secondary resource officers helping to maintain a safe and orderly environment.

These are just a few. For more, see www.laramie1.org, click on district then on the mission icon.

As a district "of learners for learners" we use data, best practices and educational advice to guide our decisions. We know that any vision is a marathon, not a sprint. And of course there is always room for improvement with 13,000 students and over 2,500 employees. We look to our 2008-2009 District Strategic Plan to help us move this district from good to great. We'd appreciate your vote on Nov. 4.

America is a nation of many nationalities and races, so why fear election of Obama?

From Phillipa K. Lack

Cheyenne

It would seem that the WTE is only adding to the scare tactics put forward by the Republican Party.

Who says that if Barack Obama is elected, he will give preference to minorities? Who says that it will be the end of life as we know it?

By that, would you mean that we would have a different life than the last miserable years under President Bush? Surely this would be a change for the better.

America is a nation of immigrants of all races, creeds and colors. That is what makes this country great. We would do well to remember that.

There are many questions that still need to be answered about Democrat Obama's past

From Rose Burrows

Cheyenne

No Headline In Original

Why is it that Mickey Mouse, the Dallas Cowboys, Princess the Cat and John Q. Public's name counted 18 times over all voted for Barack Obama?

If Mr. Obama says he supports Israel, why did the Palestinian Hamas and Iran endorse him?

Why hasn't Mr. Obama's natural-born citizenship been vetted the press? Only one of his parents was U.S. citizen at the time of his birth.

If Mr. Obama converted to Christianity under the counsel of Rev. Jeremiah Wright, what kind of Christianity does he espouse? Rev. Wright believes in "black liberation" theology that teaches to "accept only the love of God which participates in the destruction of the white enemy," with commitment to black Africa, not America.

Why didn't the women on "The View" delve into Michelle Obama's senior thesis' conclusion that she could never be a full participant in the white culture?

Why hasn't Mr. Obama publicly recognized his Kenyan family? His tribal relatives have led opposition campaigns against the government for years, causing displacement and murders by the thousands and burning hundreds of Christian churches but not one mosque.

Why does Mr. Obama deny his Muslim childhood schooling in Indonesia, his training given by someone who didn't know he may run for president some day?

What exactly did Mr. Obama do as a community organizer? Was he dispensing Socialist pamphlets to Chicago public schools under the auspices of Bill Ayres' government grant?

Where did Mr. Obama get all his money? How did he manage an around-the-world trip while in college, tuitions at Columbia and Harvard Law School and finally afford a \$1.6 million house in 2005 in an exclusive Chicago district, all on \$12,000 wage of community service and eight years of state Senate pay?

Last questions: Who can answer? Do we care?

Load-Date: October 31, 2008

De paarse tuinboerka; Q & A Islamitisch feminisme

de Volkskrant

January 3, 2009

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de Volkskrant

Section: HET VERVOLG; Blz. 32-33

Length: 2128 words

Byline: Rob Vreeken

Body

SAMENVATTING:

Hoe staat het islamitisch feminisme er aan het begin van dit gloednieuwe jaar voor? Rob Vreeken, die al enige tijd voor het Vervolg de wereld rondreist om over de positie van vrouwen in islamitische landen te schrijven, maakt de stand van zaken op in een Q & A-special.

VOLLEDIGE TEKST:

Islamitisch feminisme? Is dat hetzelfde als moslimfeminisme?

Het is een beetje een woordenspel. In de beweging maken sommigen een onderscheid tussen 'moslimfeministen' - feministische vrouwen die toevallig ook moslim zijn - en 'islamitisch feministen' - feministen die volop moslim zijn en de idee van gelijke rechten bevestigd zien in de koran.

Beweging? Is daar sprake van dan?

Dat is inderdaad nog maar de vraag. In ieder geval was Q&A begin november in Barcelona op wat het Derde Internationale Congres over Islamitisch Feminisme heette. Er waren denkers en activisten op afgekomen uit Marokko, Senegal, Egypte, Libanon, Engeland, Pakistan, Duitsland, Indonesië, Maleisië. Arabische vrouwen uit de diaspora, verbonden aan universiteiten in Europa en de VS. Doodgewone vrouwen uit Zuid-India die in hun dorp een vrouwenmoskee oprichten. Studentes uit Dubai. De Afro-Amerikaanse Amina Wadud was er, een indrukwekkende dame die zich een beetje gedraagt als de hogepriesteres van het islamitisch feminisme.

Diverse vrouwen had Q&A eerder ontmoet, op reportage in moslimlanden. Het had iets van ons-kent-ons, een klein wereldje van intellectuelen. Maar zo'n beeld doet ze onrecht. Eerder is het een uitdijend netwerk van vrouwen die, elk in eigen land, strijden voor vrouwenrechten in de context van de islam.

Maar dus wel allemaal feministen?

Tsja. Het zit ze zelf soms ook een beetje dwars, dat woord: feminisme. In het Westen klinkt dat naar paarse tuinbroeken en afkeer van mannen, en in de islam is het niet anders: de paarse tuinboerka, zeg maar. De gewone

De paarse tuinboerka Q & A Islamitisch feminisme

vrouw, laat staan de gewone man, bereik je er sowieso niet mee - brr, eng, feminisme. Asma Barlas, een intellectueel van Pakistaanse komaf, zei: 'Ik verzet me tegen zulke etiketten. Ik heb het liever gewoon over vrouwenrechten.'

Paarse tuinboerka, leuk. Maar ze dragen hopelijk toch geen boerka's?

Geen sprake van, alles wat het gezicht bedekt vinden ze vreselijk.

En hoofddoekjes?

Dat is een ander verhaal. Q&A heeft her en der heel wat vrouwen ontmoet die op de feministische meetlat hoog zouden scoren, en vol overtuiging een sluier dragen. In Barcelona waren vrouwen mét en vrouwen zónder. Eigenlijk valt er geen peil op te trekken. De algemene opvatting is dat alles moet kunnen, zolang er maar geen dwang is. Ze beseffen heel goed dat het hoofddoekje het symbool is geworden van een cultuurstrijd. Daarom maken ze er liever geen punt van. Vanuit de zaal stelde iemand een vraag over de sluier. Toen antwoordde Amina Wadud, met haar Afrikaanse hoofdsjaal, een beetje streng: 'Nee hoor, dáár zijn we onderhand wel over uitgepraat. Geen verbod, geen verplichting - verder bekijkt iedereen het maar.' Kijk, zie je dit fotootje? De vrouw met de groene hoofddoek, ken je haar?

Staat ze niet achter de kassa bij Toko Gembira aan de Rozengracht?

Nee, uil. Het is Musdah Mulia, misschien wel 's werelds belangrijkste feministische moslim. Een door en door religieuze vrouw, hoogleraar koranstudies. Ze discussieerde mee in Barcelona, maar in haar woonplaats Jakarta, waar Q&A haar eerder sprak, staat ze met de laarzen in het bluswater. Een bijna meisjesachtige manier van praten en giechelen, maar voor niets en niemand bang. Ze is voorzitter van Fatayat, een Indonesische massaorganisatie van moslimvrouwen. Adviseur van de minister van Godsdienstzaken. Opsteller van een op de sharia gebaseerde concept-huwelijkswet waarin de vrouw in niets de mindere is van de man. Een revolutionair stuk.

Maar wie buiten Indonesië kent Musdah Mulia? Niemand, zeker niet in het Midden-Oosten. De Arabieren - nog geen 20 procent van de moslims in de wereld - hebben toch al het idee dat zij de echte islam vertegenwoordigen, maar op vrouwengebied is het er armoe troef. 'Het enige deel van de wereld waar nauwelijks iets gebeurt is het Midden-Oosten', zei Dima Dabbous-Sensenig, directeur van het Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World in Beiroet. 'Waar is de vrouwenbeweging? Ik zie het niet. Ja, in Iran, in Indonesië. Niet in de Arabische wereld.'

Foute regeringen misschien?

Het gekke is dat, áls er verandering is in een Arabisch land, het van boven komt. Zoals in Marokko, waar de koning een progressieve familiewet heeft doorgevoerd, de mudawana. Op het vorige congres in Barcelona, in 2006, werd de op de sharia gebaseerde familiewetgeving aangewezen als grootste strijdpunt. In veel moslimlanden is de ongelijkheid van man en vrouw vastgelegd in wetten over zaken als huwelijk, voogdij en erfrecht. 'Het komt allemaal aan op de familiewet', zei Ziba Mir-Hosseini, misschien wel de scherpste geest in de beweging. 'Het laatste bastion van de sharia.' Margot Badran, een Egyptisch-Amerikaanse, noemde hervorming van sharia-achtige familiewetten 'de urgente, brandende kwestie' voor het islamitisch feminisme.

Daarom is Musdah Mulia zo belangrijk. Haar modeltekst bulkt van de verwijzingen naar de heilige geschriften, maar nergens doet ze concessies aan de gelijkheid van man en vrouw. Polygamie bijvoorbeeld wijst ze vierkant af.

Hoe staan de islamitisch feministen tegenover het westers feminisme?

Er valt wel wat wrevel te bespeuren. Ze hebben zich vaak miskend gevoeld. Saidiyya Shaikh uit Zuid-Afrika zei: 'Het seculier feminisme had oog voor allerlei groepen: zwarten, seksuele minderheden, de onderklasse. Behalve voor de islam. Dat blijf ik ze kwalijk nemen.' En Ziba Mir-Hosseini, nu verbonden aan de London School of Economics, beklagde zich dat ze in het feminisme aanvankelijk niet serieus werd genomen. 'Het is inmiddels anders', zei ze, 'maar toen ik me begin jaren negentig als een van de eersten 'moslimfeminist' ging noemen, kreeg ik in academische kring geen poot aan de grond. Mijn artikelen werden niet gepubliceerd. De seculieren zeiden: als je feminist wil zijn, moet je je identiteit als moslim opgeven.'

Zo. Dat riekt naar verlichtingsfundamentalisme.

Precies. Dat zei Ziba ook. Ze schaarde de verlichtingsfundamentalisten zelfs in haar rijtje tegenstanders, omdat zij álle religie als vrouwvijandig zien. 'Sinds 9/11', zei Norani Othman van de Sisters of Islam uit Maleisië, 'moeten we tegen twee krachten vechten: het fundamentalisme en de islamofobie.' Daar zit wel iets in. Het zijn twee handen op één buik: beide zeggen in feite dat er maar één ware islam bestaat - de orthodoxe.

Wie zijn de andere tegenstanders?

In het algemeen 'het patriarchaat'. De problemen van vrouwen zijn kolossaal, zoals Musdah Mulia zei: geweld, discriminatie, polygamie, kindhuwelijken. Maar het is toch vooral de politieke islam. Dat zien de islamitische feministen echt als hun hoofdvijand. Een grote stap terug ook, de afgelopen dertig jaar. 'In de Arabische wereld gaat de boel achteruit door de fundamentalisten', zei Fatma Khafagy van de Alliantie voor Arabische Vrouwen in Caïro. 'De staat doet hun, om ze koest te houden, concessies over zaken die vrouwen aangaan.' De islamisten bijten zich vast in het bewaken van de vrouwelijke zedigheid. Oumaima Abu Bakr, ook uit Egypte, zei: 'Vrouwen zijn in deze tijden van globalisering het laatste bastion van de islamisten. Ze denken: je kunt ons vernederen, maar blijf van onze vrouwen af.'

Ziba Mir-Hosseini vatte het vorig jaar tijdens een symposium in Berlijn mooi samen. 'Het streven van de politieke islam naar de shariastaat heeft het islamitisch feminisme geschapen', zei ze. 'Wij zijn het kind van de politieke islam.' Toen zei Oumaima Abu Bakr, ad rem vanonder haar groene hoofddoek: 'Het ongewenste of het buitenechtelijke kind?' Iedereen lachen.

De meeste islamistische organisaties hebben grote vrouwenafdelingen. Wat moeten we daarvan vinden?

Interessant, en verwarrend. In de politieke islam is het tegenwoordig al abc dat vrouwen studeren, werken, politiek actief zijn. Elke keer als Q&A ze tegenkwam, verbaasde hij zich erover dat het zulke zelfbewuste types zijn. Oumaima Abu-Bakr uit Egypte zei: 'Ik ben niet geneigd de politieke islam als duivel te zien. Een van de voordelen van de islamitische revival is de betrokkenheid van vrouwen. De vrouwen van organisaties als Hamas en de Moslimbroederschap spelen een erg actieve, publieke rol.'

Maar is dat dan ook een vorm van feminisme? Margot Badran was daar heel stellig over: nee. Zo ver moet het begrip niet worden opgerekt. 'Waar het om gaat is: ben je voor de volledige gelijkheid van man en vrouw? Alleen dan kun je jezelf feminist noemen.'

De lakmoesproef is: wie is in het huwelijk de baas? 'In het privé domein houden de islamistische vrouwen vast aan de patriarchale orde', zei Margot. 'Dat is voor mij de ondergrens.' Let op: als iemand zegt: 'Man en vrouw zijn niet gelijk, maar gelijkwaardig', zou het best eens een aanhanger van de politieke islam kunnen zijn. Of Andreas Kinneging.

Stoten de vrouwen in de islam binnenkort ook hun hoofd tegen het glazen plafond?

Dat moeten we maar afwachten. De feministische moslims hebben, vergeleken met hun westerse zusters, minstens één handicap: zij hebben niet alleen een glazen plafond, ze moeten zij ook een compleet theologisch debat voeren - en winnen. De uitleg van de koran moet grondig op de schop.

Doormidden scheuren!

Ho, ho, weet je dat het met de koran zelf nog best meevalt? Auteurs als Amina Wadud en Asma Barlas zijn het allemaal gaan herlezen om het opnieuw te interpreteren. Zij toonden aan dat de koran in zijn tijd eigenlijk een grote stap vooruit betekende voor vrouwen. Maar daarna zijn het altijd mannen geweest die, in patriarchale samenlevingen, met het niet altijd even heldere woord van de Profeet aan de haal zijn gegaan.

Eigenlijk staan er maar een paar verzen in die écht problematisch zijn, zoals aya 3:34, waarin over vrouwen staat dat God mannen boven vrouwen 'heeft doen uitmunten' en: 'Degenen, van wie gij ongehoorzaamheid vreest, wijst haar terecht en laat haar in haar bedden alleen en tuchtigt haar.' Maar zelfs daar weten ze met het nodige

taalkundige goochelwerk wel een mouw aan te passen. Bovendien zeggen ze: je moet de hele koran zien in zijn historische context.

Veel meer moeite hebben ze met de hadith, de overlevering van de daden en uitspraken van de Profeet zoals die naderhand - door mannen! - zijn opgeschreven. 'Het voorbeeld van de Profeet', heet dat. Dima Dabbous zei: 'De meeste problemen in de islam komen niet van de koran, maar van de hadith. Die gebruiken ze om al die vreselijke praktijken goed te praten. Maar in de Arabische wereld kun je niet zeggen: ik wil het alleen over de koran hebben. Als je met de gewone vrouwen gaat praten, zullen ze vragen: wat zegt de hadith erover?' Daarom herlezen mensen als Musdah Mulia nu ook de hadith.

Overigens zei Saidiyya Shaikh: 'We kunnen de problematische delen van de koran niet eenvoudig weg-wensen.' En Margot Badran: 'Er zijn mensen die zeggen dat Mohammed een feminist was. Zo ver wil ik niet gaan.'

Dus tot dat theologisch debat is beslecht, gebeurt er niks?

Nee, nee, wees niet bang. Een belangrijk deel van de emancipatie van moslimvrouwen vindt plaats los van welk religieus debat dan ook, en ook niet onder de clubvlag van het feminisme. Vrouwen studeren, nemen banen, zitten op MySpace, slikken de pil en weten meer dan hun moeders weten wat er te koop is in de wereld. Vrouwenorganisaties doen heel praktisch werk, tegen discriminatie, tegen geweld. Kijk eens wat er in Indonesië gebeurt, in Bangladesh. Of neem die Indiase dorpsvrouwen met hun vrouwenmoskee.

Overall boeken vrouwen vooruitgang, óók in de Arabische wereld. Ze krijgen minder kinderen, gaan naar school, studeren, betreden de arbeidsmarkt en het publieke domein, wat niet zelden - o, ironie - mogelijk is dankzij het dragen van een hoofddoek.

Ziba Mir-Hosseini zei: 'Als ze dat eenmaal bereikt hebben, kun je ze niet meer onderwerpen aan het gezag van de man. Vrouwen eisen in hun dagelijks leven rechten op, of ze dat nu zelf feminisme noemen of niet.' Laat die twee zinnen maar goed tot je doordringen, dat is de essentie.

Maar ook die 'rechten' kunnen ingewikkeld zijn. Waar het allemaal op uitdraait, zei Fatma Khafagy, is de bepaling dat de man de plicht heeft zijn gezin te onderhouden, en dat de vrouw het geld dat ze verdient voor zichzelf mag gebruiken. 'Dat is uiteindelijk wat de vrouwen in hun ondergeschikte positie houdt', zei ze.

Bepaling?

In de familiewet, de sharia. Bij Mohammed in de tent ging het ook zo.

Ah! Het voorbeeld van de Profeet.

Ja. Norani Othman, van de Sisters of Islam, schamperde: 'Het voorbeeld van de Profeet, het zou wat. Dat halen de guys alleen maar aan als het ze goed uitkomt. De Profeet reed op een ezel. Maar die mannen willen allemaal een Mercedes.'

Notes

'Vrouwen eisen in hun dagelijks leven rechten op, of ze dat nu zelf feminisme noemen of niet.'; 17VeBo--; VeBoL--

Graphic

03VV4open_ph01, Vrouwen staan in de rij bij een kiesbureau in Koeweit-stad om voor het eerst hun stem uit te brengen in parlementsverkiezingen, 29 juni 2006., Foto AFP

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