

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

Job Number: 223498889

Documents (100)

1. News Summary

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"
Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

2. When Heroes Depart

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

3. Take tea in Tehran, Gordon...it will be as sweet as the welcome

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

4. Dying to be down and dirty

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

5. Review: The colours of Allah: Book of the week: Edward Mortimer welcomes an attempt to paint a picture of the Muslim world: Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Globalisation by Akbar Ahmed 323pp, Brookings Institution Press, £17.99

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

6. Is Tzipi Livni man enough to be prime minister?

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

7. Caption only: Missile threats

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

8. Israel 's Mrs Clean

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

9. The road back to Damascus; After decades of being closed to the West, Syria is showing glimmers of creaking open its borders. The country is friendly and largely crime free

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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10. Terrorist organizations fight dirty, says reader

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

11. chatroom

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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12. Speaking of consensus

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

13. Topple hate with hope

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

14. YOUR LETTERS Dredging up the past

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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15. Partners just as politic as chic

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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16. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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17._11-year-old radical is face of Hamas TV; In Gaza Strip, West Bank; Child Star Says She Would Be Proud To

Be A Martyr

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

18. Hard-line Hamas is the enemy of all moderate Palestinians, as well as Israelis

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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19. Push for ceasefire as Gaza toll soars

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

20. AID GROUPS LASH OUT AT ISRAEL U.N., RED CROSS AMONG CRITICS OF WARFARE IN GAZA

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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21. A city under the surgeon's knife

Client/Matter: -None-

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

22. Air attacks on a besieged Gaza have killed over 1,000 Palestinians POLITICS: Israeli Attacks on Gaza Escape Global Media Scrutiny

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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23. PAPERBACKS

Client/Matter: -None-

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24. Muslim youth, heavy metal music and a lot of idealism

Client/Matter: -None-

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25. Iran is greatest threat, Bush says in Mideast

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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26. Sarko to win Royal battle for president

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

27. The good fight, the long haul

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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28. Deal with U.S. would boost Iran 's status

Client/Matter: -None-

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29. Move to Lift a Ban on Head Scarves Gains in Turkey

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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30. Thousands flee Lebanese refugee camp

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"
Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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31. Column: Israeli violence takes innocent lives

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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32. Undercurrents of Hope In a Region of Turbulence

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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33. Bush gently touts democracy on undemocratic soil

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

34. BIOGRAPHY HARRY MOUNT ON THE ASCENT OF THE MOST POWERFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

35. Even if there is no common ground, U.S. must talk with Iran

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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36. Worldview | Why U.S. needs to sit down with Iran The issues at hand - nuclear and otherwise - require that we try again. And right now, the time could be ripe.



Client/Matter: -None-

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37. World must join battle with hate

Client/Matter: -None-

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38. Fanatical diatribe sets West grave challenge

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

39. <u>Lebanon sees worst internal fighting in decade More than 40 people dead and dozens injured as army grapples with militant group</u>

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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40. Bold leadership vital as UN fails its task

Client/Matter: -None-

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Jan 31, 2009

41. News Summary

Client/Matter: -None-

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42. Israelis bury eight terror victims; On high alert Gunman transfixed by Gaza violence, his family says

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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43. The grim word on 'moderates'

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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44. Political turmoil in 2008 hampers progress on human-rights issues

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

45. Canada strengthening its links with Israel; Tories abandon 'middle stance' of Liberals

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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46. Kuwaiti newspaper criticizes 'barbaric' Mercaz Harav attack

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

47. The prime minister against the state

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

48. Egypt Offers Humanitarian Aid but Is Criticized for Refusing to Open Gaza Border

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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49. Comment

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

50. Foreign residents flee Gaza amid continuing Israeli air assaults Mosque and Hamas activists' homes hit on

sixth day of attacks
Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

51. Hundreds killed in air assault on Gaza Strip

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

52. Why the Israeli people have finally had enough

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

53. Meade High students tackle homeland security issues

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"
Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

54. Turkish scholars prepare to reinterpret Islam

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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55. Dame Maeve Fort

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

56. Where Senility Is No Barrier to High Office THE HOUR

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

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57. Letters

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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58. Government of Laws, Not Men

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

59. US 's chance to step between Israel and Palestinians

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

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60. Israel likely to gain woman prime minister

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

61. International: Gaza: Analysis: For as long as both sides think they can win, blood will continue to be spilt

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

62. More fighting starts between Lebanese army and militants at Palestinian refugee camp



Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

63. A Southerner opines

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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64. Rock the Casbah

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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65. Hamas Fires Mortars After Palestinian Is Killed

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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66. Accept That the Regime in Iran Is Here To Stay The strategic Interest

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

67. A new 'road map' for Islam in Turkey; Reform-minded scholars to conduct modern reinterpretation of the words of the Prophet

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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68. What price for victory? Innocents, enemies indistinguishable in Iraq fighting

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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69. HAMAS BETRAYS THE PALESTINIANS

Client/Matter: -None-

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70. How many more?

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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71. ISRAELIS ARE JUST DEFENDING THEMSELVES

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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72. Israel bombs Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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73. Egyptians struggle over response Sympathy for their 'brothers' apparently goes only so far

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Jan 31, 2009

74. What will her opponents make of a dovish new woman leader?

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

75. The Wrap: 'It's like having a fire in a cinema'

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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76. Why Obama's wrong for our economy

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

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77. Despite Deeper Strikes, Israelis Vow to Soldier On

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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78. How many more?

Client/Matter: -None-

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Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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79. Year of superbabies and Chinese whales, but no showerheads

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

80. Amid Sorrow and Anger, Yeshiva's Dead Are Buried

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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81. <u>Tunnels, traps and martyrs: the Hamas strategy to defeat Israel The underground army says it is better</u> prepared than many expected. Report by Azmi Keshawi in Gaza City, Martin Fletcher and Sheera Frenkel

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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82. Your view

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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83. Bid to shame draft evaders divides Israelis

Client/Matter: -None-

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84. The Wrap: Clouds gather over economy

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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85. MUSLIMS, JEWS FORM POST-9 11FRIENDSHIPS

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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86. Land of hope, or gates of hell?

Client/Matter: -None-

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87. Muslim women test cultural boundaries

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

88. <u>SADR CHALLENGED AGAIN IRAQI TROOPS INVADE AMARA, A POLITICAL STRONGHOLD OF</u> RADICAL CLERIC

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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89. Battleground Gaza * Israeli troops in heavy fighting * UN fails to condemn attack

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90. Israeli assault on Hamas kills more than 200

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91. Clouds gather over economy

Client/Matter: -None-

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Jan 31, 2009

92. Israel buries its dead, and ponders Amid tears for 8 youths, an investigation and a 'deep breath'

Client/Matter: -None-

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

93. You don't mess with the formula



Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"
Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

94. Iranian Dissidents Gather To Discuss Regime Change

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

95. U.S. Now Reaching Out to Those It Shunned

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

96. Sideshow: Joe the Journalist, in Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" **Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

97. Saudi King's Visit To U.K. Draws Fire; Critics denounce poor human rights record

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah" Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

98. 'Rights are for individuals, not religions or beliefs'

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

99. There is no defence against these children of death

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

100. <u>'Enigmatic, intricate, unpredictable' Far from a dictatorship united in belligerence, Iran is a bubbling social</u> and political cauldron

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009



News Summary

The New York Times

August 3, 2007 Friday

Late Edition - Final

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

Length: 862 words

Body

INTERNATIONALA3-11

Russia's Symbolic Claim To Part of Ocean's Floor

A Russian expedition descended in a pair of submersible vessels more than two miles under the ice cap and deposited a Russian flag on the sea bed at the North Pole. It was a symbolic move to enhance the government's disputed claim to nearly half of the floor of the Arctic Ocean. A8

Bush Acts to Aid Lebanon

President Bush said that the United States would freeze the property and assets of anyone trying to undermine Lebanon's democratically elected government -- a move intended as a sharp warning to Syria and its ally **Hezbollah**.A3

Gates Troubled by Status of Iraq

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said that he was discouraged by the resignation of the Sunnis from Iraq's cabinet and that the Bush administration might have misjudged the difficulties involved with achieving reconciliation between Iraq's sectarian factions.A10

Driver in Glasgow Attack Dies

An Indian-born aeronautical engineer who the British authorities say drove a burning car into a terminal at the Glasgow Airport in a botched terrorism attack died in a hospital in Scotland, the police said.A8

Evacuees Return After Fires

Residents and officials in Spain's Canary Islands returning after evacuation surveyed the charred aftermath of forest fires that raged across the archipelago, burning homes and destroying thousands of acres of pine forest.A9

House Backs Leave for G.I.'s

The House voted 229 to 194 in favor of legislation requiring that active-duty members of the military get at least as much time at home as they served in Iraq before being sent back. A11

NATIONALA12-17

News Summary

Final Approval by Senate On New Lobbying Rules

The Senate gave final approval to a sweeping package of new ethics and lobbying rules, with Republicans and Democrats agreeing to better police the relationship between lawmakers and lobbyists. A1

Search Slowed in Bridge Failure

A day after the deadly collapse of the most heavily traveled bridge in Minnesota, river currents and unsteady shards of steel and concrete slowed divers in their search of the Mississippi River for as many as 30 people still believed missing. A1

The eight-lane bridge in Minneapolis that collapsed had been inspected diligently for years and had always passed, state officials said. It did not, however, get stellar grades. A15

Revisiting an Immigration Bill

When a broad immigration bill failed in the Senate in June after a national debate, many legislators said the issue was dead, perhaps until President Bush left office. But already some of the less contentious pieces of the bill are returning to life. A1

Senate Passes Health Bill

The Senate defied President Bush and passed a bipartisan bill that would provide health insurance for millions of children in low-income families. The vote was 68 to 31. The majority was more than enough to overcome the veto repeatedly threatened by Mr. Bush.A13

Judge Rules Out a Tell-All

A federal judge in New York ruled that Valerie Wilson may not say how long she worked for the Central Intelligence Agency in the memoir she plans to publish this fall. A12

Editor Killed in California

Chauncey Bailey, the editor of a prominent African-American newspaper in Oakland, Calif., was killed on a downtown street in an attack the police described as targeted. A12

NEW YORK/REGIONB1-5

Women Outearn Men In Nation's Largest Cities

Young <u>women</u> in New York and several of the nation's other largest cities who work full time have forged ahead of men in wages, according to an analysis of recent census data.A1

New York's Weak Bridges

More than 2,000 bridges in New York State meet the federal government's definition of "structurally deficient," although inspectors said a disaster on the order of the bridge collapse in Minneapolis is not likely in the metro New York area.B1

BUSINESS DAYC1-8

China's Investment Sours

The first purchase by the Chinese government's new overseas investment fund, a \$3 billion stake in the Blackstone Group, has lost a significant part of its value since Blackstone went public, drawing criticism from the public. C1

Another Mortgage Casualty

News Summary

American Home Mortgage Investment has stopped taking mortgage applications and told about 90 percent of its more than 7,000 employees that their jobs will end today.C1

Delay for Grand Theft Auto

Take Two Interactive said it was postponing the planned fall release of its latest Grand Theft Auto video game, a delay that has implications for the broader video game industry during its crucial holiday selling season. C1

Mixed Results for Viacom

The media company Viacom posted better-than-expected revenue for the second quarter as advertising income rose, despite ratings pressure at MTV. C2

Business DigestC2

OBITUARIESB7

Tommy Makem

A songwriter, balladeer and folk singer who with the Clancy Brothers and as a soloist introduced a raucous, revolutionary take on Irish folk music, he was 74.B7

EDITORIALA18-19

Editorials: Stampeding Congress, again; a first step to save Darfur; Lawrence Downes on the comfort of revisiting "Hawaii Five-O."

Columns: Paul Krugman and David Brooks.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTOS

Load-Date: July 16, 2008

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When Heroes Depart

New York Sun (Archive) June 28, 2007 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 11

Length: 851 words

Byline: DANIEL JOHNSON

Body

It is only when heroes depart that we miss them. The British thought they would be glad to see the back of Tony Blair. I miss him already. Mr. Blair's last day in office began, appropriately, with questions to the prime minister. As befitted the best parliamentary performer of his generation, Mr. Blair modestly declared that he had "never pretended to be a great House of Commons man." Yet it was he who crucially had persuaded that House to back his decision to go to war in 2003, defying two million demonstrators on the streets.

Yesterday there was little of the adversarial politics that usually makes the atmosphere so electric. However, while graciously acknowledging the congratulatory speeches, equally insincere on all sides, Mr. Blair managed to make the occasion memorable by a brief but spirited defense of his legacy in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He paid tribute to the latest British troops that have died, and told their comrades that he was "truly sorry about the dangers they face today." But he reminded the British public that their sacrifice was not in vain, and that their killers, whether backed by Iran or by Al Qaeda, are our enemies. His moral courage is a quality his countrymen soon will miss.

Then it was off to Buckingham Palace to tender his resignation to the Queen. This was a private meeting, the last of many hundreds over the past decade. When Winston Churchill, the first of Elizabeth II's prime ministers, resigned 52 years ago, he wore a frock coat and top hat.

In his time, Mr. Blair has abolished the last vestiges of Victorian tradition. The constitutional role of the monarchy, though, is not just a tradition. It means that no prime minister, however dominant, is above the law.

Mr. Blair may be the last prime minister to govern by the unwritten constitution that goes back at least 1,000 years. The European Union is already responsible for most of the legislation that governs Great Britain, and a new treaty marks another transfer of legislative, executive, and judicial powers to Brussels.

The flexibility that is the advantage of an unwritten constitution has, in practice, made it easier to erode the democratic rights of the British people. That is perhaps the worst of Mr. Blair's legacies, but his recent predecessors are all guilty, more or less, too.

What of his successor? Gordon Brown is the first prime minister to have one eye and no heart. He lost his eye in a school sports accident, but he was born heartless.

The only thing the British have to fear is fear itself - personified by Mr. Brown. He has reversed the old principle "No taxation without representation" to read: "No representation without overtaxation."

When Heroes Depart

The new prime minister is what Scots call a "son of the manse." His father, Reverend John Brown, was a "dominie" - a minister or teacher. The archetypal Scottish dominie was the great 16th-century reformer, John Knox, whose ferocious opposition to the idea of *women* ruling over men earned him the loathing of Elizabeth I.

Knox's "First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of <u>Women</u>" rails against the danger that "the foolishe, madde and phrenetike shal governe the discrete, and give counsel to such as be sober of mind."

Knox, of course, had <u>women</u> in mind. Remove the misogyny from this passage, however, and you might be listening to one of "Stalin" Brown's diatribes against his enemies, Mr. Blair included. Discretion and sobriety - these are the highest virtues in Brown's lexicon.

Brown would never echo his namesake Joe E. Brown's immortal line in the film "Some Like It Hot," "Nobody's perfect!" Britain's Brown is a perfectionist and something of a prohibitionist. No wonder he loves to vacation in New England - the pilgrim fathers would have been proud of him. Not that he is devout, though, his religion is politics.

At least the new prime minister won't have to worry about the old one peering over his shoulder. Mr. Blair, despite last-minute objections from the Kremlin, is off to the Middle East to be the quartet's new envoy.

This newspaper has voiced justifiable anxiety about this appointment. The last thing the Middle East needs is yet another meddlesome peace plan that will extract concessions from Israel and end by replenishing the arsenals of the terrorists.

But Mr. Blair gave a clue about his approach yesterday. He said that what the Palestinians needed, above all, is good governance. He has grasped one of the lessons of the Hamas coup in Gaza: that the Palestinians are not ready yet to run a state that can live in peace with its neighbors. He understands the impossibility of negotiating with Hamas, but he has no illusions about Fatah either. He is open to the idea that Egypt and Jordan might assume responsibility for Gaza and the West Bank.

The Middle East is a graveyard of reputations. But Mr. Blair has nothing more to lose. He stayed the course with President Bush. He did not think Israel's retaliation against <u>Hezbollah</u> was "disproportionate" and he said so. Those decisions cost him his job. If any envoy can be trusted not to do more harm than good to the people of Israel, it is this one.

Load-Date: June 28, 2007

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Take tea in Tehran, Gordon...it will be as sweet as the welcome

Mail on Sunday (London)
May 6, 2007 Sunday

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Section: FB 04; Pg. 28

Length: 790 words **Byline:** JON SNOW

Body

In North Tehran, apartment buildings clamber into the mountains at the city's edge; living rooms are dominated by plasma TV sets showing blackmarket DVDs of the latest Hollywood films; fabulously wealthy dealmakers shuttle across to London and America.

At parties, prohibited alcohol is served and <u>women</u> take off all head coverings on arrival. Last year I saw the daughter of former President Rafsanjani walk in to one as if direct from a Kate Moss bash in Chelsea.

In the student cafes of Tehran University, I shared over-sweetened Persian tea and conversation with students of both sexes who talked animatedly together.

The young <u>women</u> wore headscarves, as they are compelled to, but often at coquettish angles.

Last week I thought about the glamorous parties and the students when I heard of a new wave of raids by Iran's so-called morality police, who had been arresting **women** for wearing their he jabs at too rakish a pitch.

For anyone who has been to Tehran, the clampdown was a reminder that there are two Irans, ancient and modern, fundamentalist and secular, authoritarian and liberal.

But for most Westerners, it merely reinforced the simplistic view of Iran as a hot, dusty land of self-flagellating fundamentalists and fiery ayatollahs.

Iran is, indeed, a complex mix it kills, tortures and incarcerates some dissidents, while depending heavily on many others whose commercial acumen ensures the country's prosperity.

I called friends in North Tehran to check that the morality police had not raided them. They hadn't, I was told. And they won't.

Despite the hejabs and the morality police, Iran looks West.

Most people I met had an iPod and a laptop. Iran boasts a 6,000-year-old civilisation, but it is also a young country half of its people are under the age of 25.

Frequently, the Iranians I met told me how much they loved the British. They did not mention the war in Iraq, although they often reminded me that we overthrew their revered nationalist Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq back in 1953. Almost every time they asked me, 'Will we be bombed?' Everywhere you look in Iran you still see

Take tea in Tehran, Gordon...it will be as sweet as the welcome

faithful old Hillman Hunters belching exhaust, a symbol of the trade that existed before the 1979 revolution that deposed the Shah. The country has suffered sanctions now for nearly 30 years and it shows.

Young, thrusting Iran is burdened by urban pollution, power cuts and things that don't work.

But Western sanctions and political isolation serve only to rally the people around leaders they resent.

The people of Iran yearn for us to engage with them. The result of our refusal is an Iranian foreign policy that arms <u>Hezbollah</u> in Lebanon, issues rhetorical hatred against Israel and causes as much discomfort to American and Western interests as the Government can muster.

During last month's diplomatic row over the captured British sailors and marines, I called Ali Larijani, arguably the most powerful individual below the Spiritual Leader Ayatollah Khamenei.

A year ago, at the National Security Ministry he heads, he allowed me to talk in depth to the Iranian in charge of policy on Iraq and to many others.

They all stressed their desire for improved relations with the West. But they also rejected the notion that the nuclear controversy was the sole issue for such an engagement.

Larijani agreed to appear live on Channel 4 News and, to my astonishment, set out the low-key conditions for the troops' release.

It was 11 days into their captivity but nobody in the Foreign Office or anywhere else had called him before I did.

The next day, Tony Blair's foreign affairs man called him and within 24 hours the captives were on a plane. It seemed no way to run a chip shop, let alone diplomacy with a pivotal force in the Middle East.

AFEW months ago I mentioned to Blair's chief of staff, Jonathan Powell: 'If you want your man to go out with a splash send him to Iran.' 'Not a bad idea,' he responded, surprisingly.

But it was too late. Blair's Middle East envoy Lord Levy had already set up what was to prove a pointless, unsuccessful swansong to Israel and Lebanon.

But the departure of Tony Blair opens up possibilities. If Gordon Brown really wants to assert a more independent foreign policy he should go to Tehran in his first 100 days. He'd be the first Western leader of note to do so since the revolution.

The tea will be sweet, but so will the welcome, and the consequences for resolving Iraq and so much else in the region could be massive.

Even Condoleezza Rice has finally tentatively understood.

Jack Straw, when Foreign Secretary, went to Iran five times.

He, too, knows the time is ripe and he is increasingly influential in the Brown brigade. If Gordon is so decisively not Tony, then maybe, just maybe, he'll go.

Peter Dobbie is away

Load-Date: May 6, 2007



Dying to be down and dirty

The Irish Times

April 19, 2008 Saturday

Copyright 2008 The Irish Times All Rights Reserved **Section:** WEEKEND; Seen & Heard; Pg. 16

Length: 1399 words

Body

TV REVIEW: Livin' With Lucy RTÉ2, Monday; All-Star Mr and Mrs UTV and TV3, Saturday; Pushing Daisies UTV, Saturday; Waking the Dead BBC1, Monday and Tuesday.

IT'S OFFICIAL: BLACK men are "human tripods". Apologies if I'm upsetting your breakfast or casting a pall of envy over your weekend, but that's what the blithely unselfconscious Samantha Mumba and Lucy Kennedy concluded, and who am I to argue? Livin' With Lucy sees RTÉ's ballsy white hope, Lucy Kennedy, the glamour of Ballydung Manor, released from the sweaty grip of those irritating papier-mâché fiends, Podge and Rodge, and get out and about, living for 48 hours with B-list celebs (which, despite sounding about as appealing as having your hand sheathed in a one-gag ugly puppet, is probably not the worst way in the world to make a living).

Kennedy is guaranteed to upset your ulcers if you are still nostalgic for the dimpled Thelma Mansfield-esque school of sorority-sister TV presentation. Kennedy's scatological style doesn't leave an awful lot of room for a fresh dab of lip-gloss or a chat about her guests' spotted dick recipes.

This week a constipated Kennedy (don't blame me, I'm just providing the context) shared a short-term London rental with a benign Mumba, who was skittering around that city in a damp orgy of lacklustre self-promotion. The singer's schedule included a spot on Nuts TV to mull over Rebecca Loos' skill at masturbating a boar (the kind with trotters), a photo-shoot in cerise underwear and purple high heels, and a couple of giggly chats with unidentified radio DJs, while a determinedly grim stylist teased her locks.

Kennedy and Mumba got on like a blazing wheelie-bag, bouncing around on twin beds with furry throws, cheap champagne corks popping to the beat of their camera confessionals, and girlie chats about Mumba's well-endowed LA cop boyfriend (who comes complete with his very own handcuffs).

Sharing the 30 minutes of their omigod-e-mail-me love-in was a bit like being locked in a dormitory with two yapping, toothless puppy dogs, but despite the dangerously high toxic-innocuous levels, Kennedy is a sharp presenter, and is to be congratulated for bringing a douche-bag of confidence and refreshing naturalness to the table of bland broadcasting.

"She's a Milf!" agreed Kennedy and Mumba, looking at a framed snap of Mumba's "omigod-she's-amaaazing" mother, near the end of their sleepover. And the acronym Milf (Mother I'd Like to F***) more or less acted as a cultural dipstick in the proceedings, the phrase indicative of a boom generation, with Ugg boots and velour tracksuits, designer handbags and well-moisturised, tight-butted boyfriends, and mothers who look like, well . . .

Dying to be down and dirty

Milfs. (Word of advice while we're speaking the lingo - if your partner is a Dilf, best not let him drive the babysitter home.)

DARE TO BREATHE near UTV during the weekend and you're in danger of inhaling a lungful of the aforementioned toxic-innocuousness. Sure, the BBC is silting up the schedule with wannabe Nancys and dewyeyed Olivers (not to mention Graham Norton in a lime-green suit and a ruched, frilly Andrew Lloyd Webber on a frothy throne) in I'd Do Anything (a feast of occasionally tuneless and teary West Endery), but nothing could be as screamingly mundane as UTV and TV3's spanking new All Star Mr and Mrs, an aberration which shares its Saturday-night perch with Britain's Got Talent (oh yeah?) and the kooky (I really hate that word) American drama import, Pushing Daisies.

Now, I was under the reassuring illusion that Mr and Mrs, a programme that haunted my childhood with brittle, back-combed wives in paisley frocks and their chirpily dull husbands, reciting the colour of each other's toothbrushes, was as dead as the former participants' libido. But no, just when you thought it was safe to jettison the his-and-hers towels, up pops mumsy Fern Britton and the equally mumsy Phillip Schofield, clutching a bunch of questions designed to test the intimate nuptial knowledge of a bunch of barely-heard-of celebrities who should have had something far more pressing to do on a Saturday night than wash their grubby linen in public.

Ex-Boyzone-ite Shane Lynch and his backing singer wife, Sheena, discussed his obsessive underwear behaviour (if you must know, he washes his 30 pairs of kacks every 30 days - it's really not worth going into). Cricketing bloke Phil Tufnell (cue teeth-watering gags about bowling the maiden over), with his polo shirt and professionally blonde wife, Dawnie, eventually won the game, although I can't remember why . . . oh yes, Phil was able to identify that the band played La Cucaracha rather than La Bamba at his beachside wedding. Edge-of-the-seat stuff.

The most interesting couple to fail under Schofield and Britton's marshmallow scrutiny, however, was Eastenders long-termer Wendy Richard and her somewhat tense ex-builder husband, John, whom she predates by a good 20 years. You could have licked the couple's antipathy off the screen. John is now his wife's manager, and with the formidable Wendy, who is about as sunny as January, cracking the whip over John's recalcitrant back, their relationship looked in need of arbitration.

Although the prize money goes to charity, I assume most B-listers get involved because they are looking for a gig, or because their embossed wallpaper needs changing and they've run out of credit. They're not the only ones who'd need some financial inducements to tune into this rehash of dodo TV again.

FORMER SOAP STARS were 10 a penny this week, the sauciest and loveliest being Brookie's Anna Friel, who stars as Chuck in the US hit, Pushing Daisies, now sprouting on this side of the pond. Stylistically, the series is reminiscent of Desperate Housewives: ironic voiceover, witty one-liners, and looking like a David Lynch film, a preternatural palette of pinks and blues and yellows underscoring a heightened suburbia.

The premise of Pushing Daisies is satisfyingly dark (the central character, pie-maker Ned, played by Field Cate, can revive the dead for 60 seconds before bystanders start popping their clogs) and the script, like Ned's pastry, is appealingly flaky ("I thought masturbation meant chewing your food," chirped the obligatory ditsy waitress). But it is difficult to tell whether this series is going to send one up the wall with its sugary coating and the will-they-won't-they (in a necrophiliac kind of way) game that Chuck (who is technically dead) and Ned (who is possibly virginal) indulge in.

Still, if you are stuck at home washing your 30 pairs of underwear next Saturday, tune in. It's not often you get wilting strawberries, cling-film kisses and wrinkled synchronised swimmers with personality disorders in one wittily assured confection.

SUE JOHNSTON, ANOTHER former Brookside resident, also returned to the screen this week as psychological profiler Foley, along with her intense, goateed mate, Boyd (Trevor Eve), for the seventh series of Waking the Dead.

It took two long nights for the cold-case unit to unfurl a script of such arch complexity that I feared for my sanity. Bottom line was that Col Muammar Gadafy had trained *female* Basques, Palestinians and a few from Northern

Dying to be down and dirty

Ireland in the cruel arts of terrorism in the 1980s, resulting in a cabal of armed, ideological sisters (representing the INLA, *Hizbullah*, Eta and Clinique - oh sorry, that's just their face cream) shooting guns at each other in a disused metal storage tank in a bit of murky London wasteland, witnessed by the archetypal 15-year-old runaway prostitute with the denim mini-skirt and the blue legs.

I think Waking the Dead might have actually been quite good, despite the ludicrously improbable ending (here, just hold my gun while I stand with my back to you and turn that infant in her crib into a suicide bomber - oh look, you shot me, you meanie!), a reflection I could verify if I hadn't been blighted with the attention span of a gnat.

"How can you hate your enemy more than you love your child?" shrieked the representative from Eta. Indeed, and how come it took three hours of mind-bending script-doctoring to unearth that little nugget.

I just have to say that a psychological balm to trite television, and an antidote to wandering attention spans, is Mad Men, which continues on BBC2 and BBC4 and really is the coolest kid on the block. Ditch the reality and watch it; it just gets better and better.

Load-Date: April 19, 2008

End of Document



Review: The colours of Allah: Book of the week: Edward Mortimer welcomes an attempt to paint a picture of the Muslim world: Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Globalisation by Akbar Ahmed 323pp, Brookings Institution Press, £17.99

The Guardian - Final Edition
June 23, 2007 Saturday

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Section: GUARDIAN REVIEW PAGES; Pg. 8

Length: 1492 words

Byline: Edward Mortimer

Body

Once upon a time, in the mid-1980s, a young Pakistani civil servant wanted to carry on the best traditions of the British-created Indian Civil Service. He was a devout but thoroughly modern-minded Muslim and a fervent admirer of Pakistan's founder, Mohammed Ali Jinnah.

Like many of his British predecessors, Akbar Ahmed combined his role as the government's political agent in a remote hill district with anthropological fieldwork, seeking to analyse and understand the unruly tribesmen whom his day job required him to pacify and subdue. A little pretentiously perhaps, he called the resulting book Religion and Politics in Muslim Society . I remember being slightly disappointed, when I first came across it, to find that it dealt almost exclusively with the manners and customs of one particular Pukhtun tribe, which could hardly claim to be representative of the worldwide Muslim community.

Yet, as it turns out, young Ahmed was in the right place. The province where he was stationed was South Waziristan, the wild area on the Afghan border where Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants are now believed to be hiding out. It may not be representative of the Islamic world as a whole, but it does represent an aspect of it that is now playing a larger role in world history than almost anyone could have predicted 30 years ago. So in this new book the mature Ahmed can shake his head sadly over the clumsy handling of the Pukhtun tribes by both US and Pakistani governments. Commenting on "Operation Mountain Storm", the joint operation aimed at flushing out Bin Laden and the remnants of the Taliban in the spring of 2004, he is able to remark - patronisingly perhaps, but pardonably so - that "neither the Americans nor city-dwelling Pakistanis like Musharraf and his generals appeared to have done their homework".

But the theme of Ahmed's Journey into Islam is much broader. In part, it is an account of a literal journey - an "anthropological excursion" - that Ahmed, now a professor at the American University in Washington, undertook in various countries (Turkey, Qatar, Syria, Jordan, Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Indonesia) in 2005-06, accompanied by two of his non-Muslim American students (one male, one *female*) and one *female* Arab-American Muslim research assistant. Yet it is not a travel book in any conventional sense. Particular episodes are vividly described - some by Ahmed himself, some by other members of the team - but not as part of a continuous narrative. Rather, they are woven into a sustained and passionate argument, which by the end becomes an almost desperate plea for better mutual understanding between the west and the Islamic world.

Review: The colours of Allah: Book of the week: Edward Mortimer welcomes an attempt to paint a picture of the Muslim world: Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Gl....

Inevitably, the phrase "clash of civilisations" appears. Indeed, it appears as a chapter heading, though followed by a question mark - as it was in its first incarnation as the title of Samuel P Huntington's famous Foreign Affairs article in 1993. Needless to say, Ahmed, who is proud to be both Muslim and western, is anxious to avert this clash as far as possible. Yet to a surprising extent he accepts Huntington's premise that Islam and the west are still distinct civilisations. Only once does he abandon this construct and refer to "a world civilisation", in which "people are now too close to and dependent on each other to afford the luxury of ignoring and excluding others". The rest of the time he treats western and Muslim cultures as discrete entities, which need to be brought closer together.

With that in view, his argument is carefully addressed to "both sides", in terms that sometimes seem to imply not only moral equivalence between western and Muslim societies but the equal complicity of both in particular acts of violence, such as "the shooting of an entire Haditha family (in Iraq) by American soldiers and the beheading of Nick Berg in Iraq and of Daniel Pearl in Pakistan". This is slippery terrain, and Ahmed must expect some angry reactions. But he is used to that, and will take comfort from his success in establishing friendly relations with people ranging from, on one side, Judea Pearl (Daniel's father) to, on the other, Aijaz Qasmi, whose chilling words, "the actions of Osama bin Laden, *Hizbullah*, Hamas, and the Taliban, even if they kill *women* and children, are perfectly justified in Islam", he uses to open the book.

"But hold on," you are probably thinking, "what kind of symmetry is that? Judea Pearl is obviously a man of peace, willing to strive for understanding and reconciliation even with the faith and culture that produced his son's murderers, while Qasmi is going around inciting Muslims to more indiscriminate violence." Yes, but Qasmi turns out to be the ace up Ahmed's sleeve. By the end of the book he has become general secretary of an Islamic peace foundation, an enthusiastic supporter of Ahmed's irenic message, and thus a showcase for the healing power of dialogue, "at last able to put a human face to what he had earlier called 'American barbarians'".

So the journey turns out to be not only a voyage of discovery, but also a kind of mission. The American students are brought along not only so that they can learn about Muslim attitudes at first hand, but also so that the Muslims they meet will see a different face of the west: "These Americans were actually listening to (Qasmi's) opinions and willing to discuss them seriously, in contrast to the stereotypical media commentators who labelled people like him 'Islamic extremists' without any engagement or acknowledgment of their common humanity."

And this analysis is borne out by the answers Muslims give when asked to name the most important problem facing Islam. "The expected answers - Israel, the plight of the Palestinians, the situation in Iraq - were all overshadowed by the idea that Islam was being maligned in the west."

The main purpose of the book, therefore, is to give western readers a more three-dimensional picture of the Islamic world, enabling them to engage with real-life Muslims and acknowledge "their common humanity". Ahmed's device for doing this is to introduce us to three "models" of contemporary Islam, which he associates with three rival centres - all in India, as it happens - that he and his team visit.

Aligarh, seat of the university founded on the Oxbridge model by the great 19th-century Muslim reformer in British-ruled India, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, stands for strengthening Islam by learning from the west. Deoband, a major madrasa in India, also founded in reaction to Islam's 19th-century crisis, stands for an almost opposite philosophy, one of asserting mainstream or orthodox beliefs and traditions. (Ahmed more or less equates this with the austere Wahhabi trend promoted by Saudi Arabia.) And finally Ajmer, shrine of the 12th-century Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishti, stands for a more quietist, mystical Islam, stressing inner calm, transcendence of earthly passion through direct apprehension of the divine, and openness to other forms of spirituality such as Hinduism and Buddhism.

Again and again Ahmed confronts the crisis of the Aligarh model on which he himself was brought up. Its leaders seem to have lost all conviction, or become little more than corrupt dictators manoeuvring, sometimes adroitly, between American power and an ever more stridently anti-American public opinion. At Aligarh itself his American companions find the students insecure, defensive and unfriendly, whereas at Deoband, once they break through an initial barrier of suspicion and reserve, they find great courtesy, hospitality and willingness to engage in dialogue.

Review: The colours of Allah: Book of the week: Edward Mortimer welcomes an attempt to paint a picture of the Muslim world: Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Gl....

Their host and guide at Deoband is in fact the fire-breathing Aijaz Qasmi, who later morphs into an advocate of peace and a respectful Ahmed disciple.

Crudely summarised, Ahmed's message to western leaders is to rely less on Aligarh products like his younger self, and to engage in more direct dialogue with the Deobandis - those in the Muslim world who at first sight seem most fanatically hostile. (No doubt, if asked, he would also have advised the UK government not to fan an almost-extinct controversy back into flames by giving a knighthood to Salman Rushdie.) But on the personal level he discovers a mystic streak within himself and a strong affinity with the Ajmer model. In the end, his advice to Muslims is to seek a synthesis of all three: "The accepting nature of the Ajmer model must be buttressed by the commitment and fervour that Deoband can provide, along with the skill and dexterity to negotiate with governments, organisations and political parties that is characteristic of Aligarh." Perhaps his next book should be a Journey into the West, on which his fellow travellers will be students from the Islamic world.

Edward Mortimer is senior vice-president and chief programme officer of the Salzburg Seminar, and author of Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam . To order Journey into Islam for £16.99 with free UK p&p call Guardian book service on 0870 836 0875.

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Is Tzipi Livni man enough to be prime minister?

The Jerusalem Post
May 14, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 1311 words

Byline: CALEV BEN-DAVID

Highlight: The foreign minister would do well to draw on the inspiration of Golda Meir when it comes to playing

party politics. Analyze this...

Body

In Golda, a new biography of Golda Meir, author Elinor Burkett writes of her fiesty subject's frustration when confronting the sexism that at times kept her from receiving major leadership positions, including when she was stopped from becoming head of the Jewish Agency in 1946, when most of the other Zionist movement leadership had been arrested by the British.

"The religious Zionists, a key part of he coalition that enabled Labor to govern, balked. 'Kudos to a smart and energetic woman,' read an article in Hatzofeh, an Orthodox newspaper. 'But it is impossible to put Golda at the head of the most important thing of the Jewish people. This is not a position for a woman.'" Similar objections kept her off the government's first proto-cabinet in 1948, and defeated a plan to install her as Tel Aviv mayor in the 1950s.

Golda got the last laugh, of course. The tough broad hailed by David Ben-Gurion as "the only man in my cabinet" (or words to that effect, as the reputed original quote can't be reprinted here) outlasted and out-persevered her detractors, finally ascending to the Prime Minister's Office in 1969 thanks to the sudden death of Levi Eshkol and her emergence as an elder stateswoman compromise- candidate between warring factions of the Labor Party.

Golda was hailed as a feminist pioneer, one of the very first <u>female</u> leaders of any modern government to ascend to the top without benefit of a family or marital connection. In retrospect, though, her tenure in the Prime Minister's Office seems far more of a happenstance aberration in local politics than a forerunner of things to come.

More than three decades later, no other woman has ever come close to Golda's prominence in Israeli public life - until now. As Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's legal and political hurdles keep growing, so do the odds that in the coming months he will be succeeded, at least temporarily, by Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

And maybe not just for an interim period, if Olmert should resign in the event of an indictment being issued as a result of the latest corruption allegations against him. The FM surely had to be pleased with poll results published this week that showed her as not only the preferred choice both within and without Kadima, but surprisingly even leading the party to victory in a general election over a Binyamin Netanyahu-led Likud and an Ehud Barak-led Labor.

Still, Livni's succession will not go unchallenged within Kadima, where Interior Minister Meir Sheetrit has already declared his determination to push for a party primary in which he will compete with her for the leadership spot. Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz and Public Security Minister Avi Dichter are also seen as likely contenders.

What role, if any, would her gender play in Livni's chances to follow Golda's path to the top slot? Would she even be facing an internal party challenge if she wasn't a woman?

Times have changed since Golda's day, in ways that favor Livni's prospects. Although the haredi Shas faction, a key to the current coalition, may not tolerate any <u>females</u> among its own MKs, sources in the party have told the press they are prepared to serve in a government headed by a woman (unofficially, the party does have influential <u>female</u> voices in its ranks, although it helps to be a daughter or a daughter-in-law of Shas spiritual leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef).

Most of the major secular parties boast senior <u>female</u> representation, such as Education Minister Yuli Tamir of Labor, and her Likud predecessor Limor Livnat, another change for the better since Golda's day.

But in the intervening years, Israel has actually slid backwards in comparison with other Western democracies. *Female* representation on the parliamentary and ministerial levels has definitely fallen below the standards set by North America and Europe; for example, more than half of Spain's new cabinet is *female*, including the defense minister.

Livni, like Golda, would only attain the top spot at first by default, filling a sudden vacancy without having to a win a general election. In contrast, leaders such as the UK's Margaret Thatcher and Germany's Angela Merkel triumphed in clear-cut electoral victories, while Hillary Clinton has proved herself a serious contender for the US presidency in a way that no woman has done so for the Israel premiership since Golda. Even such developing societies as Liberia and Chile have now elected <u>female</u> leaders untainted by the type of dynastic connections that have previously aided such <u>women</u> as Indira Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto to gain power.

Livni had her own advantageous familial connections, starting out in Likud politics as a "Herut princess," the daughter of Revisionist movement hero Eitan Livni. But her relatively swift rise to the top is credited more to her own smarts, toughness, and most of all a loyalty to Ariel Sharon that paid off big time when the Kadima split from Likud enabled her to leapfrog a few political stations.

Livni's recent rise in the polls can likely be credited to a reputation for avoiding the kind of borderline wheeling-and-dealing that has made trouble in the past (and present) for Olmert, Barak and Netanyahu, and the fact that she emerged relatively unscathed from the Winograd Committee's report on the Second Lebanon War.

By itself, though, that hardly qualifies one to become prime minister, and it is not without justification that the more experienced Sheetrit, Mofaz and Barak view themselves as more appropriate replacements for Olmert than their younger colleague.

The latter two especially, if and when the time comes when they find themselves in contention with Livni, will surely draw on their extensive military resumes to argue they make more suitable candidates for prime minister than the FM.

And here, in a nutshell, is why Livni's gender is going to matter at some point, if Olmert's political situation further deteriorates. Security credentials still matter greatly in this society, and not without reason, especially as Israel finds itself having to contend with the growing challenges of Hamas, *Hizbullah* and Iran. Indeed, the failures during the Second Lebanon War are widely blamed in part on the fact that no one among the senior political leadership had the kind of top-level security background that might have enabled them to knowledgeably challenge the battle strategy pursed by then- IDF chief Dan Halutz.

Unfortunately, no Israeli woman is going to get the chance to earn those kind of stripes until the military takes even greater feminist strides forward than the political establishment, which isn't going to happen until there are more

Is Tzipi Livni man enough to be prime minister?

<u>women</u> in top governmental posts to lobby for those changes - the kind of circular-reasoning trap, all too common in military thinking, that Joseph Heller memorably dubbed as a "Catch-22."

Livni does in fact have her own security background to draw on; unfortunately, this being some kind of classified service in the Mossad, it's a little difficult for her or anyone else to draw on it as a political advantage.

So, how her candidacy as Olmert's most likely replacement is judged in the public arena during the coming weeks and months will prove an interesting test of just where the status of <u>women</u>, at the very highest of leadership, stands in the Israel of today.

Regardless of that, and however else one judges her performance in the offices she has held, there is no question the foreign minister will now have to demonstrate better skills of a purely political nature than Livni has thus far shown herself capable of, if she is to take advantage of her coming moment in the sun.

At least in this, if nothing else, Tzipi Livni would be wise to look back on the example of Golda Meir - a woman who played the game of Israeli party politics with a hand no less shrewd, and no less tough, than any man in these parts before or since.

calev@jpost.com

Graphic

2 photos: In retrospect, Golda Meir's tenure inthe Prime Minister's Office seems far more of a happenstance aberration in local politics that a forerunner of things to come. (Credit: Archives photo. Ariel Jerozolimski/The Jerusalem Post)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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Caption only: Missile threats

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

July 24, 2007 Tuesday

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Length: 39 words

Body

<u>Hezbollah</u> women hold mock rocket launchers during a rally in Saksakkiyeh, Lebanon, Sunday. <u>Hezbollah</u> leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah said Monday his group possesses an arsenal of rockets that can reach "any corner" of the state of Israel.

Load-Date: July 24, 2007



Israel's Mrs Clean

Sunday Business Post January 4, 2009

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Section: PROFILE
Length: 1977 words

Body

Tzipi Livni	
AGE:	
50	
APPEARANCE:	
tall, stylish, usually unsmiling	
NEWSWORTHINESS:	

Israel's acting prime minister has staked her political future on the military action in the Gaza Strip

Shortly before Eitan Livni died in 1991, he brought his family together and showed them the design he wanted for his gravestone. It depicted a map of the Biblical land of Israel, complete with the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with a gun and bayonet carved through the centre. The words that accompanied it underlined the former guerrilla's straightforward attitude to the demands of his Palestinian enemies: "Only Thus!"

Although he was a strict and undemonstrative father, Eitan would presumably be very proud of his daughter, Tzipi, today. As the carnage in Gaza continues, Israel's foreign minister and acting prime minister has adopted an uncompromising approach that belies her old image as a peace-seeking moderate. In Paris last Thursday, she dismissed global calls for a ceasefire with icy coldness: "There is no humanitarian crisis and therefore no need for a humanitarian truce."

Behind the bravado, however, Livni is in a perilous political position. Although she is the newly-elected leader of Kadima, the largest party in Israel's ruling coalition, her inability to forma new government means that a general election is scheduled for February 10. According to the opinion polls, the favourite to win that election is Benjamin Netanyahu, the hardline Likud leader who believes that the current air strikes against Hamas don't go far enough. All this means that Livni's future effectively depends on her performance as a de facto war leader over the next few weeks.

Israel 's Mrs Clean

Success would mean becoming Israel's first <u>female</u> prime minister since Golda Meir, the original Iron Lady, who ruled from 1969 to 1973.

Failure would mean being cast into the wilderness of opposition, not to mention the painful likelihood that her year-long peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority would have proved to be in vain.

Livni's dilemma is familiar to <u>female</u> politicians worldwide. Despite her pedigree, many Israelis suspect the 50-yearold vegetarian cat-lover simply doesn't have the mental toughness to lead the nation in a time of conflict. Like Hillary Clinton, she has had to get used to having every aspect of her public performances carefully scrutinised for signs of emotional fragility - and any crack in the perfectly groomed facade is likely to prove politically fatal.

Although Livni is officially Israel's acting prime minister, she is just one of a trio of politicians with direct responsibility for the military campaign. Despite serving in the same government, all three are known to dislike and distrust each other, leading to intense speculation over who's really calling the shots when they meet behind closed doors.

Outgoing premier Ehud Olmert may yet be indicted on corruption charges, but still wants to use the Gaza offensive to restore a reputation that was tarnished by his failure to defeat the Lebanese <u>Hezbollah</u> movement in 2006. Ehud Barak, the defence minister and Labour leader, meanwhile, is a wily ex-commando who served as prime minister from 1999 to 2001 and has not given up hope of returning to that position.

Livni's biggest asset is her reputation as a politician of absolute integrity, reflected in her nickname, Mrs Clean. As a woman in the notoriously macho world of Israeli politics, she has a wholesome image that stands in contrast to the slick, wheelerdealer style that has brought many of her rivals into disrepute. But she is still dogged by speculation that she is too soft-hearted for the bare-fisted realities of Middle Eastern politics.

Asked once by a reporter to discuss her private life, Livni reportedly snapped:

"Feelings I discuss with my children." Given her family background, however, it's impossible not to wonder how much her ultra-nationalist upbringing will weigh on her mind in the crucial weeks ahead. Eitan Livni and Sarah Rosenberg were Polish Jews who married in Tel Aviv in May 1948, one day after the foundation of the State of Israel. They were also senior members of Irgun, the Zionist guerrilla group that fought both British soldiers and Arab civilians during the country's fight for independence.

The youngest of their three children, Tzipi (her name means 'bird' in Hebrew) grew up listening to exciting stories of the Livnis' heroic exploits, such as the time her father led a mass escape from the Acre fortress, or her mother pretended to be pregnant and robbed a train carrying the salaries of British bureaucrats. Less romanticised accounts have focused on Eitan's role in planning the bombing of British headquarters at Jerusalem's King David Hotel in 1946, an attack that killed 91 people, including 58 civilians.

The young Tzipi was an outgoing tomboy who excelled at soccer and basketball. She was also an intensely serious child, acutely aware that her family's underground service made them relative outsiders in a country still dominated by the old Labour aristocracy .At the age of 12, her teacher wrote to her mother complaining that Tzipi had disrupted a history class with loud claims that Irgun was not receiving the credit it deserved for securing Israeli independence.

Like all Israelis, Livni joined the army when she turned 18.By the time she was discharged in 1979, she had reached the rank of lieutenant. In the same year, she was admitted to law school, where she was recruited by talent-spotters from the country's intelligence agency, Mossad.

Her four years with Mossad are shrouded in secrecy, with Livni only willing to confirm that she spent most of the time stationed in Paris. Some of the wilder rumours claim that she was a frontline hunter of Arab terrorists operating across Europe. The agency insists her role was simply to occupy and pay utility bills for a safe-house in the French capital in order to give it the semblance of a normal apartment.

Israel 's Mrs Clean

Although Livni has never explained why she abandoned her spying career, it seems likely that it had something to do with meeting Naftali Shpitzer, an advertising executive seven years her senior. The couple became engaged within three weeks and are now married with two adult sons, one in the navy and the other a paratrooper. They are said to enjoy an exceptionally close relationship, with Shpitzer acting as her chief strategist during the recent Kadima leadership election.

For the next few years, Livni worked as a corporate lawyer in Tel Aviv and steered clear of politics. According to her husband, the event that rekindled her interest in public life was the signing of the Oslo Accords, the land-for-peace deal negotiated under the Labour prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, in 1993. After applying a close legal analysis to the agreement, Livni concluded that Rabin had made too many concessions - and decided that the best way to honour her parents' memory was to enter politics herself.

She was first elected to the Knesset as a member of the right-wing Likud party in 1999. However, her political career really took off in 2001 when she became part of then prime minister Ariel Sharon's inner circle. During Sharon's tenure, she served in a number of ministerial posts and rapidly became the country's most visible *female* politician.

Once an uncompromising hardliner nicknamed Mr Settlement because of his insistence that Israelis had the right to build on land occupied during the 1967 war, Sharon experienced something of a Damascene conversion while in office. As the 2001 Palestinian intifada escalated with a campaign of terror bombings against Israeli civilians - and with demographic trends pointing towards an Arab majority in an Israel that included the West Bank and Gaza - he and his colleagues, including Livni, began to rethink the assumptions they had held since childhood.

By 2004, Sharon was ready to abandon his historic Greater Israel idea (a Jewish state stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to Jordan) in favour of a two-state solution. After Livni was persuaded to endorse his new policy of unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip, she spent days locked away in private rooms in the Knesset encouraging MPs to accept the plan.

When Sharon left Likud to form the more centrist Kadima (Forward) party in November 2005, she followed him. Just over a month later, Sharon suffered a massive stroke and was effectively removed from the political scene. Although Livni was touted by some people as a possible successor, she did not feel ready for the job and transferred her support to the more experienced figure of Olmert instead.

As foreign minister, her chief responsibility was to lead the US-backed negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. In March 2006, she extended an olive branch by becoming the first Israeli cabinet minister to explicitly differentiate Palestinian guerrilla attacks against military targets from terrorist attacks against civilians.

"Somebody who is fighting against Israeli soldiers is an enemy and we will fight back," she declared in an interview on US television. "But I believe that this is not under the definition of terrorism, if the target is a soldier."

The peace talks were based on the so called 'Clinton parameters', which envisage Israel keeping three big blocks of settlements close to the West Bank border and compensating the Palestinians with land near the Gaza Strip and a corridor between Gaza and the West Bank.

The Bush administration has taken a close interest in the negotiations, with Condoleezza Rice reportedly talking to Livni at least twice a week. However, any hope of a deal before Bush leaves office belongs in the realm of fantasy.

Livni's relationship with Olmert, always uneasy, was damaged beyond repair by his handling of the 2006 war against Lebanon's <u>Hezbollah</u> guerrillas. She openly called for his resignation and indicated that she wanted to succeed him, but reluctantly remained by his side in cabinet after he refused to quit.

After revelations that he had accepted more than \$150,000 in cash from an American businessman made Olmert's position untenable, Livni hammered home the message that "values and norms must be upheld in Israeli politics". She also positioned herself for an inevitable leadership race against the former general and security hawk, Shaul Mofaz.

Israel 's Mrs Clean

Although the pre-election polls suggested that Livni would win with a comfortable majority, she ended up just squeezing through. Of the 72,000 registered members of Kadima, just over half turned up and she eventually defeated Mofaz by just 431 votes.

After the initial euphoria had worn off, it became clear that this shaky mandate would damage her chances of forming a new coalition and becoming prime minister in her own right. Smaller parties such as the ultra-orthodox Shas faction demanded huge increases in social welfare in order to secure their support, demands that Livni had already publicly declared that she could not accept.

Following several weeks of fruitless negotiations, she called a general election instead, indicating that she would fight it as a woman of principle devoid of personal vanity and only prepared to govern on her own terms.

The resumption of Hamas's rocket fire in mid-December, after a six-month truce, inevitably put huge pressure on her to opt for a military response. Even so, her precise role within the temporary government triumvirate of Livni, Olmert and Barak remains unclear.

The reality is that for all the personal details she occasionally lets slip in interviews (including her love of the beach, drumming and the music of the Animals), Livni is essentially an unknown quantity on the world stage. That state of affairs is unlikely to last much longer.

With the tension in Gaza now greater than at any time since 1967, the hand of history is firmly on Livni's shoulder. The only certainty this weekend is that Israel's Mrs Clean is

Load-Date: January 7, 2009



The road back to Damascus; After decades of being closed to the West, Syria is showing glimmers of creaking open its borders. The country is friendly and largely crime free

The Gazette (Montreal)
July 7, 2007 Saturday
Final Edition

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Byline: SETH SHERWOOD, New York Times

Body

I felt someone staring at me. As I discreetly tried to photograph a Damascus sidewalk stand of militant Islamic religious posters - including the <u>Hezbollah</u> leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah and his Kalashnikov-toting guerrillas - I looked around and realized that the young, rough-shaven salesman had spotted my camera.

"Where you from?" he said, in English, as <u>women</u> in headscarves battled for plastic shoes from an adjacent sidewalk dealer.

"New York," I answered, lowering my lens and awaiting a tirade against my country - or worse. Instead, he broke into a smile.

"New York, great city!" he said. "Ahlan wa sahlan bi Sham."

Ahlan wa sahlan bi Sham: Welcome to Damascus. During a weeklong visit in May - during which I explored the Old City of Damascus (including its proliferating nightclubs), the Silk Road bazaars of Aleppo and the ruins of ancient Palmyra - unexpected welcomes seemed to erupt from every corner of this ancient nation of Bronze Age, Classical, Biblical and Islamic history. No matter where I was or whom I encountered, local greetings were never long in coming.

Though most North Americans might be wary of sojourning in a country whose authoritarian government stands accused of some serious charges - financing <u>Hezbollah</u>, allowing foreign fighters into neighbouring Iraq and assassinating the former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri - a week among the regular citizens of Syria and its cultural riches is eye-opening.

When I boarded Syrian Air in Paris, I knew only that Damascus claimed to be the oldest inhabited city on Earth and that some of my favourite writers - Mark Twain, Gustave Flaubert, Agatha Christie - had been swept away by the country's lore-filled past and landscapes.

The country I discovered, in addition to being friendly and largely free of crime and related hassles, even showed glimmers of creaking open to the West after decades of sealed borders. A Four Seasons hotel opened in Damascus with great fanfare in 2005; a five-star Inter-Continental is under construction.

The road back to Damascus; After decades of being closed to the West, Syria is showing glimmers of creaking open its borders. The country is friendly and largel....

A huge two-panel billboard in central Damascus embodied the changes afoot. One side trumpeted the "3rd Annual Tourism Investment Market Forum." On the other, the avuncular white-bearded face of Colonel Sanders, ringed in red Arabic script, heralded the arrival of Kentucky Fried Chicken in Syria.

"Go back as far as you will into the vague past, there was always a Damascus," wrote Twain, who visited in the 1860s. "To Damascus years are only flitting trifles of time. She measures time not by days and months and years, but by the empires she has seen rise and crumble to ruin. She is a type of immortality."

He was scarcely embellishing. The Babylonians blasted through under Nebuchadnezzar, before the Persians did likewise under Darius and Xerxes. The Romans captured the country in 63 BC, and Mark Antony campaigned there against the Parthians. It was on the road to Damascus, most famously, that the Jewish traveller Saul was blinded by the light, initiating his conversion to Christianity and a new identity as the Apostle Paul. And it was on the road to Damascus, six centuries later, that the Prophet Muhammad stopped in his tracks and refused to enter the city, saying that "man should only enter paradise once." In succeeding centuries, the Egyptians, Ottomans and French all took their turns as occupiers before Syria became independent in 1946.

Today, the route to the inner sanctum of the 8th-century Umayyad Mosque - the spiritual and historical heart of Damascus's Old City - seems culled from some time-worn star map. First you cross under the Roman archway, just south of the tomb of the fabled Islamic warrior Saladin, who defeated Richard the Lionheart during the Crusades. Then you enter the vast gates of the mosque, whose stony expanses rest atop a former Byzantine church, which overlays a mostly vanished Roman temple to Jupiter, itself erected on the former site of a disappeared Aramaean shrine. Finally, you make a quick jog across the courtyard, past the mausoleum of John the Baptist and into the tomb of Hussein, a grandson of Muhammad and a martyr venerated by Shiite Muslims. The afternoon I visited, the stone room echoed with clicking prayer beads, muttered Quranic verses and sobs.

Places of powerful faith fill every corner of Damascus. In a small, silent street in the Christian Quarter of the Old City, I tracked down the Church of Ananias, the man who cured St. Paul of his blindness and baptized him into Christianity. Though entirely empty of worshippers, some handwritten notes and trinkets from visitors were stuck between the stones. "Clean and serene for 60 days," read a green keychain, in English.

Utterly different again, and equally haunting, was the reconstructed ancient Jewish synagogue in the National Museum, an evocative time capsule of relics from forgotten Bronze Age cities, vanished Roman outposts and other Ozymandian monuments pulled from Syria's sands.

Found at the city-state of Dora Europos, a trade centre decimated by the Persians in the 3rd century, the towering stone walls of the synagogue glowed with painted panels of temple priests, strange animals, sad-eyed <u>women</u>, scrolls, menorahs, winged angels, horse dancers and serene-faced desert wanderers.

"It's astonishing to find a synagogue that has paintings," said Michel al-Maqdissi, the museum's director of archaeological excavations, speaking in French. A small radio filled his office with an opera aria. "The Jewish religion forbids painted representation, just like in Islam. It accepts decorative elements, but not the human form. That's why it's such a unique piece."

Nearby, the lanes of the Old City brimmed with energy. Black-veiled <u>women</u> led teenage girls - some in loose robes, others in punishingly tight jeans - into fabric stalls. With chiming bells, bicyclists parted the crowds to deliver loaves of bread, while old men rolled Sisyphean pushcarts of pastries and bottles of deep blue bilberry juice.

I set out at dawn to see the most famous of Syria's crumbled cities, Palmyra. The bus rolled across the arid emptiness, past loping camels, past goatherds in checkered headdresses, past tents of Bedouin nomads. Finally, three hours later, the majestic, blocky ruins emerged. Corinthian columns, eroded archways, theatres, ornate hillside tombs and temples to forgotten gods - Bel, Nebo, Arsu, Baalshamin - spread across the landscape.

Here, in Syria's largest oasis, an ancient Silk Road trade centre flourished two millenniums ago. Someone surveying the landscape then would have seen a thriving market city, echoing with talk in Aramaic and filled with

The road back to Damascus; After decades of being closed to the West, Syria is showing glimmers of creaking open its borders. The country is friendly and largel....

arriving camel trains bearing ebony, dried foods, spices, perfume, ivory and silk from as far away as India and China. From Palmyra the goods would be shipped westward to Rome - which for a time controlled Palmyra - where they fetched up to 100 times their original cost.

Dodging mule carts and moustached men chewing pistachios - a local specialty - I flowed with the thick crowds past ornate Ottoman-era stone warehouses and the 8th-century Great Mosque, resting place of the head of Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist. Time seemed barely to exist. The stone arches, massive wooden portals and iron-barred windows appeared unchanged since their construction in the Middle Ages. Today, the only signs of 21st-century life were schoolgirls in Barbie backpacks milling about the battlements of the storybook medieval citadel and schoolboys battling unseen invaders.

A kind of phantom world lurks among the time-worn stones of Aleppo, another Silk Road stop that's now Syria's second-largest city. The stony passages and thousands of shops in the souks briskly destroy flimsy descriptors like "diverse" or "eclectic." Such hollow words splinter under the tonnage of caftans, coffee beans, lutes, Teletubbies, silk cushions, mosaics, perfumes, gold, carpets, gumdrops and olive-oil soaps.

Back in the Old City of Damascus, midnight settled on the Christian Quarter and a slow-moving line of black SUVs and silver Audi sedans cruised slowly down the Roman-era Straight St., depositing the well-heeled and the high-heeled at trendy new resto-lounges tucked in the surrounding labyrinthine lanes.

Famous as the place where Saul received his baptism and was christened Paul, "the street called Straight" (as it's called in the Bible) and its environs are once again witnessing some astonishing conversions, as young, enterprising Syrians transform Old World buildings into 21st-century DJ bars, clothing shops and stylish small hotels.

"You can see renovation everywhere," said Amjad Malki, a co-owner of the jet-set Villa Moda fashion boutique. In what was a 17th-century stone stable, Malki's shop has swapped hay and oats for expensive handbags, shoes, leopard-skin bikinis and more. "People are buying, and prices have tripled," Malki said, ticking off a list of hot spots like Leila's restaurant and the Talisman hotel - "the place to be."

Inside the Marmar nightclub, a Damascus favourite of expatriates and the Syrian upper crust, evidence of the city's elevating style quotient was all around - DJ-remixed club beats, madly dancing bodies, low necklines, high hemlines, clinking bottles of German beer, a haze of Gauloise cigarettes, T-shirts reading "rock star" and "tequila lounge." Even a few gay Middle Eastern men discreetly mingled in the global crowd, which showed no signs of flagging even as 4 a.m. approached.

"Five years ago, night life was not really a socially acceptable thing," said Omar Barakat, an extremely tall Syrian electrical equipment importer, battling with the loud remix of Sweet Dreams Are Made of This shaking the dance floor. Now, he said, "the scene is improving so much."

Surveying the blissful tumult, Firas Salem, a 20-something Syrian corporate lawyer, couldn't suppress a grin. "Damascus is becoming a cool place," he said as throbbing electronica and chatter in a half-dozen languages spilled into the ancient streets. "Something strange is happening."

IF YOU GO

Getting there.

There are no direct flights from Canada to Damascus. The potentially cheapest option is to fly to Europe independently and then use Syrian Air (<u>www.syriaair</u>.

com) from any of several European capitals. Flights from London Heathrow to Damascus start around \$600.

The road back to Damascus; After decades of being closed to the West, Syria is showing glimmers of creaking open its borders. The country is friendly and largel....

A visa is required for Canadians entering Syria. A visa application is available in PDF format at: http://www.syrianembassy.ca/ConsularSection.htm#Visa%20Requirements or call 613-569-5556, Local 235. Fees range from \$73 for one entry valid in a three-month period to \$141 for multiple entries over six months.

Getting around.

Travelling around Syria is extremely cheap. The Kadmous Transport company (963-11-331-1901; www.alkadmous.

com) provides comfortable modern intercity buses all over the country. A trip from the Damascus bus station (called Mahata al-Pullman) to Palmyra costs 120 lira (as Syrian pounds are commonly called; about \$2.50) and takes two to three hours. A trip to Aleppo, four to five hours away, costs around \$5 for the extra-comfy "VIP" bus. There are several buses a day to and from each destination. Buy your ticket at the bus station about 30 minutes ahead. Within Damascus and Aleppo, the abundant yellow taxis can be hailed on the street any time of day or night.

Safety, security.

Syria remains a tightly controlled society that is largely devoid of street and organized crime. For travellers, the risk of theft, attack or even harassment remains small. In my own travels, I never felt threatened and never once heard of any other tourists being accosted.

Ottawa has no official travel warning for Syria, though the Foreign Affairs website (<u>www.voyage.gc.ca</u>) suggests that Canadians "should exercise appropriate caution in large gatherings and crowded places, including pedestrian promenades, shopping malls, open markets, and restaurants."

Graphic

Colour Photo: istockphoto.com; With its Corinthian columns, eroded archways, theatres and temples, Palmyra is the most famous of Syria's crumbled cities. On the hilltop in the distance is the Arab castle of Qalat Ibn Maan.;

Colour Photo: SIMON GURNEY istockphoto.com; Aleppo's gloriously ruined medieval citadel in the Old City offers sublime views from its crenellated ramparts.

Colour Photo: istockphoto.com; "Damascus is becoming a cool place," says one resident, as old coffee houses (above) compete with new resto-lounges. MAP: THE GAZETTE; SYRIA;

Load-Date: July 9, 2007



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, <u>Hezbollah</u>, 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, <u>women</u> 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 <u>Hezbollah</u> 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



chatroom

The Gold Coast Bulletin (Australia)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

B - Main Edition

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Section: Pg. 20

Length: 832 words

Body

CAN anybody tell me . . . when the American- backed Jews return home after their slaughter of Palestinian <u>women</u> and children in Gaza will they be awarded medals of dishonour?

COME on hot tomato bring back luke & mel early need a good laugh. - tony

ONCE again idiot, I mean Elliot, you have proved you don't have to have a long neck to be a goose. - Col

JUST come back from Toowoomba fuel 85 cents a litre.

GO back to sydney bye bye reg. xxx

TO southern bel most drivers up here dont have a right hand.

TO keen local golfer try looking out over the jungle everyday that was once the parkwood international it is a very sad sight on course resident

BEAUTIFUL gold coast I took my family to the spit on sunday after the summerfieldayze music event all clean and nice wouldnt even know + there was an event on. Goon on them too for cleanin up so well.

CAN someone tell me where a father can find free legal advice regarding a physically and verbally abusive, drug-addicted wife threatening to take away my children and moving 1000km away. Seems to be a heap of resources 4 **women** but not a lot for men. Why so? - Distressed

THERE is nothing wrong with dropping explosives into a rabbit warren. - BR

POOR pounamu u sound like your typical kiwi big shoulders with a big chip on them. - Hawkman

I PARK my car outside my house 150mm on 3 metre wide grass strip 70 dollar fine dozens of cars parked on footpaths at bmx track for 2 days not 1 ticket. I want my money back council. - uncle festa

JUST came back from sydney holiday. shocked to hear g.c girls look tarty in their race wear when it comes to the races. so glam up girls and show sydney we are even more classier than them on saturday! and boys-no jeans! u can help our great city image too! - g.c born

WHAT a pack of filthy obnoxious rot! Do any of you fools actually know paris hilton? How much do you give to charity deni? Pull ya heads in and grow up. - Glenn

chatroom

TO the putz supporting hamas and *hezbollah* go home. we dont want u radicals here in Aust.

FORGIVE me. Just fell out of a tree . Is jane mc grath the first person to die from cancer. - Gavo

WHAT do the palestinian protesters want aussies to go palestine and fight their battles for them? Maybe if they went back there and joined the war they could help their countrymen or is it too dangerous for them. What a load of freeloading whimps. If it

was my old country i would go and fight, but that wouldnt happen where i come from coz it is a civilized country not a country that thrives on violence.

TAKE note lebo blow-ins on holidays its ok to not wear a shirt on the beach but at night through surfers is a joke. - Surfer adz

CUTE kids who had photo in bully with paris didn't recognise her but loved all the cameras and gifts she gave. - nan

SUPERHUMAN: some of the lies began in 310 ad. the council of nicae and church father Clement, removed nearly 35 gospels from the old testament. They r not in the bible at all. They r in the vatican and r never 2 b released 2 either priests or christians. There is a letter from Clement, 2 a young priest, advising him 2 deny the gospels existence 2 anyone who asked of them; because they didn't like wot they read, no one can read them. How can anyone, even a priest, claim 2 know or teach Jesus's story? No one knows the whole story 2 begin with! The vatican wont release them, i have asked. - Kb1

POOR kiwis they drug up n stuff k up so much ova there they gotta come here n start again n pretend the life they had ova there was better, oh evthns betta ova there hey bro? Wot u doin here? U 4got 2 mention our sportsmanship in surfing, swimming, lifesaving, track and field, diving, snowboardin, aerial skiing, boxing, judo, rowing, rodeo, sailing, i cld keep goin and fil whole page. u bros make me laugh u r pathetic. - NATOR

TO reg (MR yeah right!!) fancy you calling someone a sook you should have called the dude a know it all and been the complete hypocrite. We're lol at you. - Azza

U ALL ask why did paris hilton get paid 2 cum here why coz she generates publicity and judging by the amount of texts in paper she was successful get ova ya selves. - bj. nerang

FORGET 1947, drag yourself into 2009, who fired 1st rockets. without provocation? was it Israel or Hamas?

HEY pounamu why stay with a bunch of losing pussies should go home. Sorry forgot gotta put dole form in. - Daze

PARIS Hilton only took a handful of gifts to GC Hospital with her enormous wealth she could have bought every child a gift anyone with half a brain can tell it was only just a PR stunt come in suckers. - Julie

HI it was a bit frivolous 2 send the Clint-Eastwood txt wasnt it! How's Skye doing + wen r u likely 2 go 2 the library next?1

TO the texters complaining about free 2 air TV running over timeslots and ads being synchronised - fair comment. If I want to record a free 2 air prog through cable I have to program in the following show just to catch the ending. Hey, and what about all the endless repeats on cable nowadays? Still paying the same amount every month. - Narked

Load-Date: January 8, 2009



The Jerusalem Post May 7, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 13

Length: 2863 words

Byline: DAVID HOROVITZ and REBECCA ANNA STOIL

Highlight: The public is fed up with narrow political bickering, says Knesset Speaker Dalia Itzik, lamenting the failure of her bid to get rival leaders to work together to confront Israel's key challenges. In a rare interview to mark Independence Day, she says she hopes for the country's sake that the latest accusations against the prime minister prove baseless, because 'I want a prime minister who can function. You can't function like this.'

Body

As we sit with Dalia Itzik in her Knesset Speaker's office on Sunday morning, her Kadima party leader, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, is opening the cabinet meeting a short walk away. A note summarizing what Olmert now says in response to the latest police investigation in which he is embroiled - his declaration that "wicked and malicious rumors" are sweeping the country, and that they will be laid to rest when the facts become clear - is quickly brought into Itzik's office. She reads it aloud, sorrowfully.

Unsurprisingly, Itzik has little to say about the specifics of the new Olmert crisis, other than that she hopes it will indeed prove baseless. But she has plenty to say about Olmert the prime minister, all of it positive. He doesn't overreact, she says. He knows how to make up his mind. He's got strong nerves. He can take criticism. He supports his ministers effectively.

Nonetheless, she says, the prime minister's job is nightmarish in the best of times - trying to protect the country from relentless external threats and enable it to flourish from within. Combine that with perennial coalition crises and, in Olmert's case, a seemingly endless succession of police probes, and you reach a situation in which, she says, it's almost impossible to function.

A former teacher who rose to the national stage via the Jerusalem City Council before entering the Knesset in 1992, Itzik, 55, has achieved much that does her credit in her two years as Knesset Speaker. She's introduced reforms designed to make ministers more accountable to parliament, and promoted greater accountability among Knesset members.

She's drastically reduced the amount of money allocated to special interest groups through the Arrangements Law, which had made such a mockery of the state budget in years past. She has refurbished the Knesset building and introduced a dress code that may help elevate its own sense of its status. And she's boosted her own popularity quite healthily in the process.

A poll this spring found Itzik to be by far the country's most popular <u>female</u> politician, with a satisfaction rating among prominent public figures bettered only by President Shimon Peres, Chief of General Staff Gabi Ashkenazi and Bank of Israel Governor Stanley Fischer.

In two key areas, however, Itzik has proven less successful, by her own admission. She says considerable headway has been made in the Knesset Constitution Committee headed by Menahem Ben-Sasson on an electoral process that would make Israel more governable. But there's been no substantive agreement among the parties, and there is no current prospect of a majority for the necessary radical change.

And her bid to encourage the establishment of a national unity government has foundered, although she insists there was a brief moment not all that long ago when she thought it might succeed. Her conviction, she says, is that Israel's most senior rival political leaders need to put aside their differences for an agreed period, and together grapple with the key challenges facing Israel - notably the parameters for an accord with the Palestinians, and a strategy for ensuring that Iran does not go nuclear. Now any notion of a "prime minister's club" heading a crossparty coalition, she acknowledges, has likely been dealt a death-blow by the new Olmert probe, since rival politicians see ever-less reason to enter into a partnership with a man they soon hope to replace.

In a relatively rare interview ahead of Independence Day, Itzik is healthily realistic about Israel. As the sixth of eight children of Iraqi immigrants, married with three children to the emphatically non-political Danny, she highlights the way her mother "fought like a lioness" to ensure a good education and says she sees her own and her siblings' absorption and success here as reflective of Israel's rise and the potential it offers. But she also expresses concerns over what she says are Israelis' intolerance of each other, and the worrying trend to violence in Israeli society.

Understandably, given the timing of our interview, she is also particularly passionate in criticizing what she considers the over-ready resort to criminal investigation of public figures, arguing that their good name is too casually sacrificed in probes that frequently come to nothing. She insists that she doesn't want to see the police or the judiciary weakened, and that she acts to marginalize legislative attempts to achieve this.

But she does not even endorse some cases in which convictions were achieved, reminding us that she opposed the lifting of Naomi Blumenthal's parliamentary immunity which led to the Likud MK's conviction for corruption. As for Kadima colleague Haim Ramon's conviction for the indecent assault of a young <u>female</u> soldier, Itzik asserts it should never have gone to court. He should, rather, have been subject merely to a disciplinary hearing for what she calls extremely inappropriate behavior.

Itzik also robustly defends the politician's right to change his or her mind, and suggests the public is sometimes short-sighted in regarding reassessment and compromise, centerpieces of politics, as opportunism and horse-trading. "I don't want to relinquish the Golan," she says at one point. "But if the Syrians agreed to lease it back to Israel for 30 years, and to stay out of Lebanon, and so on -- you can't say I won't move from positions."

Itzik is plainly reveling in the post of Speaker. She has given the Knesset greater centrality in the visits of leading overseas politicians, the vast majority of whom now make a call on the Speaker and the House part of their visit. And she has been prepared to drastically reduce her partisan political activity in order to invest the role with what she considers the necessary "above the fray" sensibility. The circumstances may have been dismal, but she also clearly flourished in the six-month period during which she served as acting president in the ignominious twilight of Moshe Katsav's tenure.

Itzik did not mention that our interview happened to take place on the second anniversary of her taking office as Speaker. She did tell us, twice, unbidden, in the course of a near two-hour conversation that she has absolutely no desire ever to become prime minister. But whenever her time in the Speaker's office is over, she certainly isn't ruling herself out from other senior positions.

Excerpts:

What's your sense of the nation at 60?

If the founders were asked whether they approved of how the state had turned out, they'd say there's no country like this in the world, trailblazing in every field - technology, medicine, agriculture. But they'd lament the intolerance of our society, particularly given the need for internal unity to meet external threats.

We have very unsympathetic neighbors. We've made peace with two of them. Cold and frustrating peace, though I'd sign agreements like that with all of [our neighbors] if I could.

But the Palestinians today are in a whole other place. There are two entities [Fatah and Hamas], and it is starting to become clear which of the two is prevailing. There is no reason for them to fire Kassams [from Gaza]. If they were wise, they'd not have fired and so encouraged us [to relinquish more territory]. But Israelis ask, "Why should we pull out [of further territory], if we'll be fired on?" Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said this week that the Arabs have to promise security. Israelis say, "Ok, so they promise. Can we trust that promise?"

I wouldn't switch places with the prime minister for a second. There's no country harder than this to run. We're fighting for our survival. It's not a cliche. It's the reality.

Given the latest investigation of the prime minister, is someone going to have to switch places with him soon?

I don't know the details of the case. I don't want to know. But I greatly want to believe that, as in other cases, nothing will come of it. I want this first of all for Israel and the people of Israel. I want a prime minister who can function. You can't function like this.

You've been urging the establishment of a national unity government, unsuccessfully, to better grapple with the external threats.

The egos need to be set aside.

I take [Iran's President] Ahmadinejad totally seriouslyÉl'm not convinced anyone else will do the job [of thwarting Iran] for us. That requires serious thinking. The most experienced people need to put their heads together.

I initiated meetings and it nearly happened a few months ago. I thought the prime minister needed to call for a national unity government. It is his responsibility, and the opposition's tooÉThe opposition did demonstrate considerable responsibility during the [Second Lebanon] War. We're great when there's an immediate threat. There's no one like us in an emergency. But we shouldn't only be united during wars.

Isn't the call for a unity government an expression of no confidence in the prime minister?

It's not a question of absent faith in this or any other prime minister. The instability of the political system is shocking. The system is impossible. But we can't change it because there's no majority to do so. So I wanted a government that would agree on a date down the road for elections and in the meantime take on the key two or three issues.

Essentially the Palestinian issue and Iran?

Yes, and maybe Syria. There may be a not bad chance for [progress with Syria]. But that also involves risks. They need to be carefully weighed. If the prime minister is spending all his time in interrogations and keeping his coalition safe from left and right, how can he run the business? Now the unity idea is hopeless, because there are people in the Knesset who think they'll be replacing the government at any moment. And there may be people in the coalition who say, "Why bring in the opposition?"

You argue that there aren't major differences among the main parties.

I saw [the Likud's Binyamin] Netanyahu return Hebron. He didn't have to meet with Arafat. [If he were prime minister], of course he'd have to talk [to the Palestinians]. The right wants peace too.

The public doesn't want to hear about narrow political rivalries. People say they're sick of it all. They're not stupid. We all want peace. The question is how we do it. We've never sat down [as a nation] and decided what borders we want. Is that reasonable?

In this job, you go to a lot of sad places. On Holocaust Remembrance Day and Memorial Day you go to the memorials and see the lined faces of the bereaved mothers. It heightens your sense of responsibility. The problems we face require more seriousness in leadership.

You've defended the prime minister, but the public does not see the war as having been successful, and it sees all these investigations against him.

A lot of mistakes were made in the war, but <u>Hizbullah</u> was very badly hurt. Modern warfare is fought in the media too, and there we failed terribly. If the public isn't appreciative that we kicked <u>Hizbullah</u> off the border, then that's our faultÉ If our enemies feel they can beat us, we're in trouble. If we feel that inside, that's also terrible.

This was a totally justified war. And when some of the Europeans lecture us about "proportionality," there's terrible hypocrisy. We weren't merely responding to a kidnapping of soldiers, but to a six-year build-up, under our noses, of astronomical quantities of weaponry intended to destroy us.

When the Winograd Committee speaks of the [way the] decision-making process [ought to work], it describes a utopian state. "The State of Winograd." It's not realistic.

But we do lack effective decision-making forums, and effective interface between the top military and political echelons. There is the security cabinet, and a smaller forum.

But is there a body that weighs long-term options?

The army has undergone a real process of reformÉ. The Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee has more tools, more advisersÉ. Look, these are some of the best people in Israel [at the top of Israeli politics]É. Israel Prize winners, the ex-head of the Shin Bet, former chiefs of staff, ex-prime ministersÉ. The political echelon realizes it needs to supervise the military more effectively.

We're dealing with increasingly sophisticated enemies, making increasingly sophisticated efforts to destroy us and to delegitimize us. The consequence in EuropeÉ

Europe was always hostile to Israel, and even a little traitorous. It always responded too little, too late. But today there are some very positive trends - the rise of Angela Merkel, Sarkozy, Berlusconi. Europe is starting to understand that our dispute with our enemies is not territorial. What territorial dispute did we have with Iraq, or with Lebanon, where we relinquished every inch? After the Madrid bombings, and the twin towers, and London, and AmmanÉ where's the territorial dispute?

Not all Islam is terrorist. But all the terror is Islamic. The free world has to understand that this is not just Israel's problem. It's everyone's. Europe is starting to open its eyes.

In this region, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia - behind the scenes, they acknowledge that they are in the same boat.

I have no doubt that Israel's case is strong and just. The Israeli public has not moved to the right; it has become skeptical, because it tried and look what it got. It wants security guarantees. That's not an unjustified obsession. If you make peace with someone, you have to ensure that a day won't come when a crazy leader comes along and throws missiles at usÉ. So if the prime minister does reach a deal with the Palestinians, he'll have a hard time convincing the public that it's more than a piece of paper.

Even so, the prime minister is managing the conflict by negotiating. Why do we need to be in dispute with moderate Palestinians? So he negotiates with them. I don't know what'll come out of it. But if we weren't negotiating, there'd be terrorism.

You speak about Ahmadinejad as though he's the threat, rather than representing a regime.

Individual leaders do make a difference. But no, he's not alone. There's a regime that supports him. And by the time the Iranian people stand up against him, it may be too late.

To date, Israel has taken action to prevent certain states attaining a nuclear capabilityÉBut I don't think [international pressure on Iran] is a lost cause. The sanctions are having an impact. They need to be intensified. Israel was reluctant to lead the struggle. But it has realized it needs to speak out loudly and clearly because we may be the ones who will pay the price.

How do you see Kadima's future?

It's unique for a party to arise one day and immediately be in power. So people want to knock it down. But the party is alive, vibrant, and these are people who left their political homes. When I went to see [Ariel] Sharon to tell him I'd decided to leave the Labor party, my legs were shaking.

I think Kadima has helped make the climate of political debate a little less fierce. It has defused some of the tribal aspect of Israeli politics. Some came to it from the left, some from the right, and that has shown that the political rifts aren't that wide.

Yes, Kadima is going through another crisis now, but I firmly believe that Israel needs a strong center party. I am sure it has a future.

So what of Labor?

Several parties will have to ask where this leaves them. That's why some parties have an interest in Kadima breaking up. Yet during this crisis, and previous crises, Kadima leaders haven't turned on the prime minister.

But the crises keep coming.

Not every matter should merit the resort to legal action. It's gotten out of hand. Eighty percent of the local council heads who were investigated have been cleared. The sense is being created that Israel is corrupt and that's not true. Believe me, the system is not corrupt. I was the trade minister, a deputy mayor, I allocated millions. Nobody tried to bribe me.

Look at the Ya'akov Edri case [involving allegations of breach of trust against the minister]. Huge headlines when it erupted. Then the case was closed with half a sentenceÉ. Everywhere [Edri] goes, people still say, "You're under investigation. He says "no, the case was closed." They say, "Oh, we didn't know that."

The media gets carried away, too. Editors will tell you it sells more papers.

No one can accuse me of being Avigdor Lieberman's biggest supporter. But 10 years under investigation. Is that reasonable?

Haim Ramon? This is the only place in the world where a government minister has been prosecuted for a kissÉ Give me another example and I'll resign my post.

The public doesn't believe the media that much. But sadly, when it comes to politicians, it does believe. And [the sense of corruption] risks alienating people from politics, dissuading them from voting.

But I don't want to end an Independence Day interview on this note. I also don't want to claim that everything is great. There's plenty to make better. But I am a great believer in Israel. I'm proud to belong to this people. We do have so much more history than geography, but in this little geography we have so much talent. When you look back 60 years, we've made it, against all odds. We are truly a remarkable nation.

Graphic

2 photos: DALIA ITZIK: In this job, you go to a lot of sad places. On Holocaust Remembrance Day and on Memorial Day you go to the memorials and see the lined faces of the bereaved mothers. It heightens your sense of responsibility. The problems we face require more seriousness in leadership. THE ISRAELI public has not moved to the right; it has become skeptical, because it tried and look what it got... So if the prime minister does reach a deal with the Palestinians, he'll have a hard time convincing the public that it's more than a piece of paper. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Topple hate with hope

Herald Sun (Australia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

1 - FIRST Edition

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Section: ED; Pg. 18 Length: 889 words Byline: ALAN HOWE

Body

THE self-loathing of so many Arabs in the Middle East regularly erupts in incidents of unthinkable dread. It's what has picked away at the scab of Gaza.

Gaza will end in tears. Arab tears. Secretly, it's what more than a few of them want.

It's instructive to look at recent chapters of Arab self-flagellation.

Only a people who hate themselves could set about killing whole communities with which they live, in the manner that Iraq sought to exterminate that country's Marsh Arabs.

Following the first Gulf War in 1991, the Iraqi government flew bombing missions against the Marsh Arabs, who had lived in the wetland region of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers for perhaps 5000 years, killing up to 60,000. It was reported they had also been napalmed.

The watercourses, in which the Marsh people grew rice, caught fish and raised buffalo, were then mined, and sometimes poisoned, before a massive program of water diversion and drainage ruined most of them and the ancient people who survived fled in fear.

Many sought refuge in Iran. How desperate were they?

Only a people who truly think themselves and their countrymen and <u>women</u> worthless could think of attaching remote-controlled explosives to the mentally retarded and sending them to work as suicide bombers.

Last February, bombs were strapped to two Down syndrome <u>women</u> who were then sent to busy pet bazaars in Baghdad. The bombs were remotely detonated, killing at least 73 innocents.

The <u>women</u>'s afterlife benefits in paradise were not recorded. And in any case, as presumably unwilling participants, perhaps they were not granted martyr status, with its Koranic promises.

Only a people who despise themselves could dispatch their <u>women</u> in so-called ``honour killings" -- these are popular across the Middle East, and especially in Pakistan -- where relatives murder their daughters, sisters and cousins because they refuse an arranged marriage, fall in love with men from other tribes, have pre-marital sex and, in some cases, ``allow" themselves to be raped.

Topple hate with hope

These killings have been thoughtfully caught on camera to be shared over the internet with those locals unlucky enough not to have seen the live show.

Some of these poor <u>women</u> may even have been educated. But many will not have been. Just last month the Taliban in northern Pakistan -- a member of the Commonwealth, a Test cricket nation, an ally of Australia -- ordered closed all girls' schools in the Swat district.

The demand was announced in mosques and broadcast on radio. The deadline is this Thursday, after which they will blow up the schools and kill the children. They have deadly form, and have reportedly destroyed 125 girls' schools already.

"Female education is against Islamic teachings and spreads vulgarity in society," said the bloke who leads the local Taliban. Shah Dauran.

The noble Dauran will doubtless conduct the public executions of the teachers who ignore his threats.

And how much would you have to hate yourself and your people to encourage your children to die while murdering the blameless offspring of people you have never met?

Raising self-loathing almost to an artform is Mariam Farhat, who is much loved by the others like her in Gaza whose sole wish is the obliteration of Israel.

Farhat's brain squirms with hatred. She proudly sends her sons on suicide missions against Israel's more loved children, unfortunately with some success. Her 17-year-old, Muhammad, opened fire on and threw grenades at Jewish students, killing five and injuring 23 before being shot dead.

On hearing the news, his proud mum uttered ``Allahu akbar" and gave chocolates out to neighbours. Before his mission, she did a touching home video of them together.

Since then two other sons have been killed while preparing deadly attacks. Unfortunately, she has three more boys.

The people of Gaza, so inspired by their mum of the year, voted her as one of Hamas's celebrity parliamentarians.

And I would keep that in mind as the debate of the bombing of allegedly "civilian" targets in Gaza gains momentum.

The last time Israel was wearily forced to defend itself by military action was when it was attacked from the north in 2006, after which the UN accused Israel's enemies of ``cowardly blending . . . among **women** and children".

The Herald Sun published exclusive pictures of <u>Hezbollah</u> launching rockets from high-density residential areas, all of which these liars denied. Hamas has

spent much of the past two years slinging its homemade rockets without warning, and without any reason, on to the schools and houses of innocent citizens of Israel. So many -- about 10 a day -- they seldom made our news pages.

Hamas now admits to having "surprises" for Israel, almost certainly rockets that can reach Tel Aviv.

Israel had to act, and it has. It can't destroy all of Hamas, but it may be able to exterminate some of its leadership.

Israel's actions in Gaza may make it more apparent to locals that supporting Hamas comes at a price.

Only a people who hate themselves could support Hamas and allow the children of Gaza to be killed as some have -- and more will be.

No one in the West hated those girls and boys, but hate surely killed them.

The sort of hate Mariam Farhat can tell Gazans about with a certain Neanderthal relish.

Topple hate with hope

heraldsun.com.au > Do you agree with Alan or are you angry? Speak your mind with blogs and comment

Load-Date: January 11, 2009



YOUR LETTERS; Dredging up the past

Newcastle Herald (Australia)
January 3, 2009 Saturday
Late Edition

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Section: NEWS; Letters; Pg. 20

Length: 861 words **Byline:** LETTERS

Body

Dredging up the past

I READ with interest the article about the possible dredging of Swansea Channel ("Dredging for Money" Herald 24/12).

It was mentioned that a Lake Macquarie estuary management plan says dredging could have adverse impacts elsewhere in the channel.

I commend the writer for including these comments.

I strongly suggest that the whole question be approached from a well-researched scientific perspective, embracing the long-term wellbeing of the whole channel ecosystem.

It seems to me that the current discussion has a biased focus on navigability for yachts.

I am concerned about the idea of inviting a private contractor to dredge the channel.

This initially looks like a win-win scenario, but I fear it may be too easily abused, without clear accountability, and the environment may be the silent loser.

I urge the Government to retain responsibility for the channel with a broad and long-sighted plan for it.

If funding is not available for dredging, perhaps dredging is not the right answer.

Suzanne Rosenberg

Cooranbong

January 2

Parents will pass or fail schools

I REFER to the article "Excellent start, by virtue of public schools" Herald 1/1).

I am a teacher in the independent system at Bishop Tyrrell Anglican College in Newcastle.

YOUR LETTERS Dredging up the past

I was educated at Cessnock Public School and Cessnock High School, so I can concur with many of the positives the writer highlights about the public education sector.

I can't express how fortunate I was to have such caring and enthusiastic teachers.

But I do take issue with the article. It was claimed that state schools handsomely out-performed the private sector in the HSC.

This is like saying the US, with a population of 300 million, out-performed Australia with only 20 million at the Beijing Olympics.

My point is that it's unnecessary to compare one with the other.

I think today's parents are more aware than ever when it comes to their children's education and ultimately they will make the decision that's right for them.

Paul Lynch

Arcadia Vale

January 1

Peace fading in Middle East

OWEN Keegan (Short takes 1/1) feels sure that nearly everyone is sick of hearing about the bloodshed in the Middle East.

I think that well-meaning peace negotiators have little chance of encouraging either Hamas or <u>Hezbollah</u> to accept Israel as a legitimate neighbour, so I'm afraid we are going to hear a lot more about violence in that region for some time.

Support for Israel by Western nations has probably been the catalyst for some of the senseless international terrorism which has wreaked havoc in a number of countries in recent years.

I reckon I have heard just about every angle on the Newcastle rail line and the proposed Tillegra Dam but I think we will be reading about hostilities in the Middle East long after those matters have been resolved.

David Stuart

Merewether

January 1

More questions to inspire republic

THE ALP policy to have a two-stage plebiscite about a republic invites unnecessary failure in my view. Greens leader Senator Bob Brown has just launched a draft bill to generate the first plebiscite, asking just one question: "Are you in favour of Australia becoming a Republic?"

Chances are that, as research demonstrates, only 50 per cent would say yes.

Why not ask two or three questions to gauge what the public wants, then base a referendum on that?

To Senator Brown's question voters will naturally wonder what kind of republic is meant.

If a president was to be elected directly by the people, I think support for a republic would shoot up to 80 per cent.

YOUR LETTERS Dredging up the past

Other questions could be if we want a directly or indirectly elected president, and if we want an executive-type president or a president with only symbolic powers.

Reportedly, it was the Queen herself who asked at the time of the 2006 Commonwealth Games what was taking Australia so long to get on with it.

A very progressive lady.

Klaas Woldring

Pearl Beach

January 1

Knight coach to save cricket

IT was interesting to hear Ricky Ponting's comments after his team's loss in Melbourne about how the young blokes need to step up a bit.

In the game I saw it looked like the senior players were the ones who needed to step up a lot.

In my opinion there seems to be a policy of jobs for the boys, or should I say jobs for the pensioners.

Put Brian Smith in charge to remove the dead wood.

Grahame Perkins

Cooks Hill

December 31

Playing for the love of it

I WAS in Perth to watch the W-League Jets last weeked, a game that has put them into the inaugural semi-final.

Past euphoria with the Knights and Jets men in the finals will hopefully be duplicated for this talented but modest group of champions.

Unlike most other elite players, these women play for the love of the game and the city.

There are no big pay packets here.

The likes of Gill, Peters, Smith, Frostevall, Neilson and Salisbury, all national team players, are playing for free, unheard of by others of the same calibre in any sport.

The Hunter should get behind this great team.

Sharon Cashen

Adamstown

January 2

Letter of the week

This week's double pass to a Jets game, courtesy of The Herald, goes to George Porter, of Tighes Hill, for his Short take on the proposal for a "Newcastle card". The tickets are in the mail.

Graphic		
ONE PHOTO:		
Load-Date: January 4, 2009		



Partners just as politic as chic

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

July 19, 2008 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; International News; Pg. 21

Length: 837 words

Byline: Jason Koutsoukis.

Body

Syria's first lady is the more glamorous, modern face of the nation, writes Jason Koutsoukis.

What would it take to distract the international paparazzi from France's first lady, Carla Bruni, at an international leaders' summit in Paris?

The answer, quite simply, was Asma al-Assad, the British-born wife of the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, whose chic haute couture made quite the impression at this week's Union for the Mediterranean conference.

Given Syria's pariah status in the West as the shelter of radical movements such as Hamas, <u>Hezbollah</u> and Islamic Jihad, Asma al-Assad's striking pose seemed almost at odds with her adopted nation's rather unsettling reputation.

Yet the 32-year-old former investment banker seems to have slid easily into the role of Middle Eastern consort, while at the same time becoming a more friendly face of the single-party regime.

The daughter of a prominent Harley Street cardiologist, Fawaz Akhras, who founded the British Syrian Society, Asma grew up in Acton, west of London, and went to Church of England school before attending King's College, graduating with first-class honours in computer science.

Enjoying a successful career as an analyst at the financial houses Deutsche Bank and J.P.Morgan in London, Asma met her future husband when he was brought to London by her father to complete his training as an eye surgeon at the Western Eye Hospital.

"It was actually her father's idea to get Bashar al-Assad, then in line to succeed his father as the Syrian president, to come to London," Professor Eyal Zisser told the Herald.

The author of the acclaimed biography Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Assad And The First Years In Power, Zisser believes the courtship had all the signs of a natural romance.

"This is an unusual marriage in many ways," Zisser says.

"Asma is Sunni Muslim, whereas Bashar is Alawite [a sect of Shiite Islam], and I think there were people in Syria would have expected him to marry into the family of a prominent military commander for example," he says. "But they say they fell in love, so who are we to disagree with this?"

Partners just as politic as chic

With their secretive December 2000 marriage taking place just months after Bashar al-Assad had succeeded his father, Hafez al-Assad, as President, Asma has since emerged as a highly visible member of the ruling family, choosing to shun the veil common to a more conservative style of Muslim dress.

She has borne three children to Assad and involved herself in Syrian charities and economic and rural development organisations. But with her above-the-knee skirts and often strapless evening gowns, Asma stands in contrast to her mother-in-law, Anisah Makhlouf.

"There are reported to be tensions between Asma and Anisah, and also between Asma and Bashar's sister Bushra who had a very a strong influence on their father," Zisser says.

"I hear this has not yet been resolved fully and that it is related to the sort of first lady that Asma wants to be."

Asma's inclination to continue a business career in Syria was stymied, says Zisser, and she has settled down to charity work. "This is the traditional role of the wives of Arab leaders. Her place is not [to] involve herself in the affairs of state."

Asma is not the first Western consort to accompany some of the Middle East leaders of the past half-century. King Hussein, the late Jordanian monarch, married two glamorous Western <u>women</u>. His second wife, Toni Gardiner, known as Princess Muna and the mother of Jordan's reigning monarch, King Abdullah, was the daughter of a British Army officer. His fourth wife, Lisa Halaby, was the daughter of a former chief executive of Pan-Am Airways and one-time US deputy assistant secretary of defence.

Keeping Asma al-Assad company at the Union for the Mediterranean conference in Paris was Suzanne Mubarak, the wife of the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak. She is the daughter of an Egyptian doctor and a Welsh nurse.

"We have become used to this in the Middle East. But these regimes are secular in nature, so it is perhaps not so surprising," Zisser says.

Asma is a strong role model for <u>women</u> in Syria - in 2004 she attended a conference in Beirut on Arab <u>women</u> and war, and she remains the head of Mawred, a Syrian non-profit group set up under her patronage in 2003, to enhance the role of <u>women</u> in Syria's economic development.

But is her status as first lady likely to help create a more open and possibly democratic Syria?

"Primarily, I do not believe that Bashar is much interested in genuine reform," Zisser says.

"We have seen some steps toward a more modern society, but on the whole I think he has shown that he does not want to make Syria a more open society. This remains a very tightly controlled dictatorship and on her own Asma is not able to do change these things.

"Syria has been for many years a country not dissimilar to North Korea. It is ideology, party, the leader, the dynasty and the state all wrapped into the figurehead of the ruling family. It is a more open society, but it is a long way from being an integrated country."

Graphic

PHOTO: Power couple ... the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad and his wife, Asma, in Paris. Photo: AP/Thibault Camus

Load-Date: July 18, 2008



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hobart Mercury (Australia)
January 12, 2009 Monday
1 - Edition

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Section: Pg. 14

Length: 887 words

Body

Nurses need extra help, not cutbacks

SHEILA Allison (Letters, January 8) is right in some respects. Nurses in Tasmania have been asking for assistance (especially during non-business hours) for many years.

Nurses want allocated to the ward team members who can answer phones, clean areas and equipment, run messages, transport items and help nursing staff.

But nurses do not want those individuals to be replacing nurses for there is a considerable body of international and national research which indicates that worse patient outcomes occur when there is a low ratio of qualified nursing staff to patients.

The type of patient admitted to our hospital system is very different in 2009 than in 1960.

Many surgical procedures in the 1960s saw individuals convalesce for weeks in the hospital system (requiring little assistance after the first days) but these are now undertaken as short-stay procedures with the patient quickly discharged. During the time they are in hospital they often require intensive support.

Nurses do need and do want help to do the non-nursing work they have to do while also seeking to attend to their nursing duties but nurses do not believe that 30 per cent of all nurses should be replaced with non-nurses as appears to be the proposal of Health Minister Lara Giddings.

Tasmania still has Enrolled Nurses who could be better employed in the health system. So give the nurses the help they need but don't risk patient care by reducing nurse numbers and introducing, unnecessarily, another level of worker to do nursing care.

Neroli Ellis

Branch secretary, Australian

Nursing Federation

Housing left empty

MY partner and I have been in category one on the Housing Tasmania waiting list for some time.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We are trying to get everything organised for our baby as I am 20 weeks pregnant but we are finding it hard as we are living in our car.

We know of and see many empty homes in the Bridgewater, Gagebrook community and instead of people in need like ourselves being offered a house they are being left empty, which leads to them being either severely damaged or destroyed by vandalism. I'd like to know why this keeps happening.

Y. Cleaver

Bridgewater

War on free societies

ISRAEL'S campaign to secure its borders and to ensure that its people can live in peace from daily rocket barrages from Hamas has resulted in the deaths of civilians.

The tragic fact is that civilians do die in war but it is also a fact that the Israeli Defence Forces have never targeted civilians. The war is, after all, about stopping the deliberate targeting of Israeli civilians by Hamas.

Israel unilaterally left Gaza and was repaid with thousands of rockets being fired into civilian areas by Hamas. Casualties have been limited, not because of any failure of the rockets, but because of a conscious decision by Israel to build shelters to protect its people.

Gaza has no such civil defence in place. It is not as though Hamas is unable to build shelters. We see the tunnels, so well constructed by Hamas, in order to smuggle weapons into Gaza, but it seems that the civil population is expendable if it can provide propaganda against Israel. Hamas is clear in its ambitions. Its Charter has the stated aim of the destruction of Israel and elimination of the Jewish people.

Israel is fighting, as it has for decades, for survival. Iran supports, funds, arms and trains the terrorists of Hamas, *Hezbollah* and the other factions who fight a proxy war on Iran's behalf. Israel remains a free and democratic society and, as such, is despised by those who fear free societies. Israel remains on the front line of this war on free societies everywhere.

William Briggs

Kingston Beach

Boycott Israel

HAVE we forgotten that Hamas was democratically elected as the legitimate government of the whole of Palestine? Do we not care that the population survives under intolerable conditions including starvation and denial of medicine due to Israeli blockades? Hamas is the only organisation that offers the population any kind of dignity or capacity for resistance at this time.

Given the balance of forces and dense population on the Gaza strip, the latest assault is little more than a massacre of **women** and children.

The conditions for peace in Palestine are well known, comprising the dismantling of Israeli settlements, a return to the 1967 borders, and the creation of a viable Palestinian state. Israel's entire policy is to prevent this occurring. Israel is therefore empirically anti-peace.

Since the ALP doesn't care, anything Australia does is up to the Australian people. Let's talk to our super funds and ensure we are not investing in Israel until Israel renounces violence and a two-state solution is achieved.

Adam Peacock

New Norfolk

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please tell us more about Choir of Hard Knocks

IT was good to see that uplifting television repeat The Choir of Hard Knocks on ABC 1 last week but what of the singers now?

How have they progressed since or have they fallen back even further by having experienced the euphoria of success? The really interesting program that the ABC could produce is ``Where are they now?" tracing the ongoing success of the singers. Now that would be worth seeing.

I truly hope that what we saw was not just an emotionally charged reputation-building event for the program producers and a grab for audience.

Geoff Fader

Mt Nelson

Load-Date: January 11, 2009



11-year-old radical is face of Hamas TV; In Gaza Strip, West Bank; Child Star Says She Would Be Proud To Be A Martyr

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

August 15, 2007 Wednesday

National Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A3

Length: 850 words

Byline: Dion Nissenbaum, McClatchy Newspapers

Dateline: GAZA CITY, GAZA STRIP

Body

GAZA CITY, GAZA STRIP - Saraa Barhoum picked at the buttons on her pink bell-bottom jeans as she twisted on a chair inside the bustling new Hamas television headquarters. The afternoon light bounced off the sparkly outlines of butterflies on her frilly top, and a colourful hijab framed her 11-year-old face.

Saraa wants to be a doctor. If she can't, the young star of Hamas television's best-known children's show said, she'd be proud to become a martyr. Saraa says little Jewish girls should be forced from their homes in Israel so that Palestinians can return to their land.

With the show's producer helpfully offering written tips during an interview, Saraa didn't get into how she hopes to die for her cause, be it suicide bombing, fighting the Israeli military or some other way. She carefully sidestepped any suggestion that she's subtly calling for the destruction of Israel.

"Israel says that we are terrorists," Saraa said minutes before an interview with her was interrupted by an errant Israeli air strike that slammed into an apartment building on the adjacent block. "But they are the ones that must stop their attacks against us and our kids."

Saraa is the sweet face of Tomorrow's Pioneers, a weekly, hour-long Hamas television children's show best known for bringing the world a militant Mickey Mouse look-alike and then having him killed off by an Israeli interrogator.

With her jarring mix of innocent charm and militant rhetoric, Saraa is at the centre of the Islamist group's increasingly sophisticated campaign to become the dominant force in Palestinian politics.

Since it went on the air last year in the Gaza Strip, the Hamas-funded al-Aqsa television has gained momentum and expanded its audience to include the West Bank.

Taking a lead from <u>Hezbollah</u>'s al-Manar television station in Beirut, Hamas is using al-Aqsa to promote its agenda and challenge its rivals, in this case Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and his fractured Fatah allies.

11-year-old radical is face of Hamas TV; In Gaza Strip, West Bank; Child Star Says She Would Be Proud To Be A Martyr

During its decisive June military showdown with Fatah in Gaza, Hamas used its television station to broadcast footage of Fatah leaders joking with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other Bush administration officials. The message was clear: Fatah is in bed with the United States.

The station, which operates with a licence from the Palestinian Authority, also features religious lessons, cartoons, advice shows and music videos. One video hailed a **female** suicide bomber whose young daughter vows to follow her mother's example.

Tomorrow's Pioneers sparked an international furor in April when it began featuring Farfour, the Mickey Mouse look-alike who sounded more like Iran's firebrand President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad than a Disney character.

Mustafa Barghouti, then serving as the Palestinian Authority's information minister, called the show a "mistaken approach" to helping Palestinians and tried unsuccessfully to force the show off the year.

The Israeli government and activists who monitor Palestinian programming accused Hamas of poisoning the minds of young children with the show.

After two months, Farfour was beaten to death on the show by an Israeli interrogator. Nahoul, a larger-than-life bee, is now carrying his message.

"A lot of people in Palestine have died as martyrs, and lots of Palestinians hope to be martyrs," Saraa said of Farfour's demise. "This is one of the ends."

Asked if she hoped one day to be a martyr, Saraa instinctively nodded her head.

"Of course," Saraa said. "It's something to be proud of. Every Palestinian citizen hopes to be a martyr."

The show has provided new fodder for Israeli activists, who say that Saraa is the true face of Hamas, an extremist group that's using an innocent front to conceal its real agenda.

Hamas television officials defend the show, saying it's designed to help young children connect with their country and their God.

On the show, Saraa offers moral lessons to viewers and urges them to do what they can to fight Israeli occupation. After some prodding in an interview, Saraa offered a personal message for Israeli girls her age.

"They have to leave," she said. "This is our country. They kicked us out and stole our happiness. This is a natural result."

Within minutes, an explosion hit the building, rattling windows and sending Saraa and the staff rushing outside. At first, no one was sure whether it was an accident or an Israeli air strike. Then, it became clear that the blast was caused by an Israeli missile that slammed into an empty bedroom on the top floor of a three-storey apartment building.

Standing outside the Hamas building with her producer protectively putting his arm around her shoulders, Saraa looked pensive and anxious. Hamas camera crews and an ambulance rushed down the block. Saraa kept quiet and gazed down the street. The coached revolutionary rhetoric disappeared. Instead, she looked like any frightened young girl caught up in events beyond her control.

Then, after it was clear that no one had been killed in the air strike, Saraa and her producer headed back upstairs to prepare for the next episode of Tomorrow's Pioneers.

Graphic

11-year-old radical is face of Hamas TV; In Gaza Strip, West Bank; Child Star Says She Would Be Proud To Be A Martyr

Color Photo: Dion Nissenbaum, McT; Saraa Barhoum is the star of the Hamas station's children's show.;

Load-Date: August 15, 2007



Hard-line Hamas is the enemy of all moderate Palestinians, as well as Israelis

Cape Times (South Africa)
January 09, 2009 Friday
e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 9

Length: 901 words

Byline: Dov Segev Steinberg

Body

The world was shocked as terrorists caused explosions in European cities and turned New York skyscrapers into piles of rubble. Everyone agreed that there should be strong international co-operation to confront terrorist attacks perpetrated by Islamist fanatics.

Israel's operation in Gaza is part of this global fight against terror. Israelis have the same basic right as the citizens of the world, to live in safety without being exposed to the danger of rockets and bombs that might rain upon them at any given moment.

Fifteen seconds is all the time that hundreds of Israelis have, wherever they are, from the moment the alarm sounds, signalling that a rocket has been launched at them by Hamas, to run to the nearest bomb shelter and save their lives. For eight years the residents of Sderot have been living this way. A quarter of the town's population has already deserted it. Would you be willing to live as veritable human sitting ducks in the crossfire of a Hamas projectile?

The Palestinians as a people are not our enemy; we truly want to build bridges of dialogue and hope for a better future with them. Our enemy is Hamas, a violent Islamic terror organisation, a member of the radical Tehran-Hezbollah axis. With its hardline adherence to a particularly extremist religious doctrine, Hamas is unwilling to compromise or respect any agreements. Its declared aim is to eliminate the State of Israel and murder all its lcitizens.

Hamas has blown up buses in Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem, and sent suicide bombers to murder Israeli teenagers in discotheques. They have perpetrated horrendous massacres in restaurants, killing hundreds of Israelis. How would you act if a brutal terrorist organisation were to send its murderers to kill men, <u>women</u> and children in your restaurants, supermarkets and trains?

Hamas is not the enemy of Israel alone, but the enemy of all moderate Palestinians. When Hamas took over Gaza by force, they thought nothing of throwing their political opponents, supporters of President Mahmoud Abbas, off buildings. Scores of Palestinians were killed by Hamas gunfire, as Hamas wrestled control of Gaza from the hands of President Abbas.

Hamas is the incarnation of the Middle East's worst nightmare. It does not represent the Palestinian national desire for independence, because it objects to the two-state solution; that is, Israel and a Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security. Rather, it espouses the idea of one fanatical Islamist state that would be established on top of the ruins of the Jewish state. This is the most important message which the media fails time and again to impart.

In the summer of 2005, Israel pulled out of the Gaza Strip completely. Anyone speaking today of the "Israeli occupation of Gaza" simply does not know what he's talking about. The Palestinians were given a historical opportunity to change their fate and turn Gaza into an economic, national and cultural miracle.

Instead, Hamas seized control and made Gaza into a den of terrorism and oppression. It methodically violated all ceasefire agreements with Israel, smuggled Iranian-made weapons and rockets through tunnels dug under the border, and consistently ignored the basic human needs of Gaza's civilian population.

Hamas deliberately fires at our civilians from its hideouts among its own civilian population. It deliberately holes up among <u>women</u> and children, in mosques and hospitals, while hoping Israel will respond so that it can portray itself as the victim in the world press. This is a tremendous moral dilemma, which Israel handles far better than other armies in the world, who have found themselves in less difficult |circumstances.

There are those among the world media who fall easily into the traps of deceptive photos. I ask you not to be taken in.

Israel endeavours to enable the transfer of humanitarian aid to Gaza despite ongoing fighting. The Israeli Air Force invests huge efforts to avoid hitting civilians who are not involved in terror. Israeli aircraft distribute leaflets calling on residents to leave areas that are about to be bombed. Do you know of any other air force in the world that takes such measures, in the midst of war?

Our people actually make telephone calls to homes in Gaza, warning innocent civilians of what may happen to a building that houses a Hamas HQ office or a stockpile of rockets.

Despite all our efforts, we are not always successful. Civilian casualties are deeply regretted. Mistakes happen even in times of peace, let alone in the turmoil of war.

Our war against Hamas is aimed at protecting the lives of citizens of Israel's south, but it is far more than that. It also can protect the political process and the chance for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, a chance that is persistently torpedoed by Hamas. It comes also to rescue this region from slipping into an abyss of fanaticism and from Iranian hegemony. It is part of the world's legitimate struggle against terrorism and murderous |extremism.

When talking about the southern Israeli towns and cities, I ask you to engage in a mental exercise. Just for a moment, imagine your lovely city under a sudden barrage of Grad and Qassam rockets. Only if you put yourself for a moment in our place and realise the hardships that Israel's residents cope with, will you be able to see the true picture.

I Steinberg is the ambassador of Israel in South Africa.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009



Push for ceasefire as Gaza toll soars

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

Third Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1 Length: 897 words

Byline: JASON KOUTSOUKIS, MIDDLE EAST CORRESPONDENT, GAZA-ISRAEL BORDER with AGENCIES

Body

INTERNATIONAL efforts to impose a ceasefire in Gaza were underway last night as Israeli forces advanced deeper into Gaza City and the Palestinian death toll from the offensive soared towards 550.

Hopes for a ceasefire rose after Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip, announced it had accepted an invitation from Egypt to send a delegation to Cairo for negotiations.

Egypt was expected to pressure Hamas to accept a ceasefire deal that would involve European monitoring of Gaza's border with Egypt, Israeli Army radio reported late last night.

The monitoring would aim to stop the smuggling of weapons to Hamas through tunnels from Egypt. Israel has previously demanded such monitoring arrangements as a precondition to lifting its blockade of Gaza.

European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana was quoted last night saying the EU would be happy to send a monitoring force to the border if asked.

Any hopes of an immediate truce were snuffed out by Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who rejected such calls from the EU, saying Israel was aiming to change the "equation in this region".

French President Nicolas Sarkozy was due to meet Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Jerusalem overnight, Melbourne time, in a separate move to try to negotiate a halt to the fighting.

Mr Sarkozy was also to meet president of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak in Cairo, while an EU delegation was to hold talks with Ms Livni.

But as the diplomatic initiatives were stepped up, Israeli leaders continued to reject international demands for a ceasefire, saying they would press ahead until the goal of destroying Hamas' military capabilities had been achieved.

Defence Minister Ehud Barak said that while Hamas had sustained a "hard blow", the offensive in Gaza would continue. "We still haven't reached our objectives," he told Israeli MPs.

The main goals of Israel's ground operation in Gaza are to stop the launch of rockets into Israel, to destroy Hamas' ammunition stores and to apprehend or kill as many Hamas fighters as possible.

Push for ceasefire as Gaza toll soars

The United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which has a significant presence in Gaza, said 20 per cent of those killed and 40 per cent of the 2400 injured since the start of the operation 11 days ago were **women** and children.

Hamas fighters continued to launch rockets and mortar shells into Israel yesterday, hitting several populated areas but causing no further deaths. Another 14 Palestinians, including five children, were reported to have been killed in Israeli strikes yesterday.

With Gaza's dwindling fuel supplies almost at an end, the UN agency believes that almost all of the 1.5 million residents are now living without electricity, while 70 per cent have no access to running water.

The UN also fears that fighting in northern Gaza could lead to the city of Beit Lahiya being flooded by 3 million cubic metres of sewage if the main waste water pond is broken.

All hospitals in northern Gaza have been without mains electricity for 48 hours, and are now dependent on back-up generators, which hospital authorities warn are close to collapse. The loss of power means that Gaza's telephone network is also near collapse.

Israeli defence officials appear pleased with the progress of the operation, believing the large bombardment that accompanied the troops as they entered Gaza had severely diminished Hamas' ability to return fire.

A military official told The Age that the operation - the deepest Israeli thrust into Gaza since it withdrew from the coastal territory in 2005 - was progressing "cautiously and according to plan".

The official said the forces were moving slowly in order to minimise the chances of soldiers being kidnapped or killed in ambushes.

"This is a very dangerous type of warfare. Many of the buildings we have entered have various traps installed, so we must not be in a hurry," the official said. "Hamas is still putting up a fight."

According to reports in the Israeli media, the defence force was putting into practice painful lessons learned from Israel's 2006 war in Lebanon.

"The IDF has no intention of staying in one spot, but rather plans to keep in constant movement with manoeuvres around Jabaliya, Sajaiya, as well as the launching areas of Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya, without necessarily entering the built-up area as the terrorists want them to," one security source told the newspaper Maariv. "We will not make ourselves sitting ducks and we will continue hitting the terrorists."

According to the newspaper Ha'aretz, some deserted houses had been turned into fortresses.

"In one case, troops stormed a Palestinian house from where shots had been fired at them," the newspaper reported.

Military officials are also encouraged that they have not encountered sophisticated weaponry that Hamas was believed to have smuggled into Gaza, possibly indicating that its arms stockpiles had been severely reduced. But Mahmud Zahar, a senior Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, vowed last night that the Islamists were heading to victory over Israel.

"Victory is coming, God willing," he said in an address on Hamas' Al-Aqsa television.

Israel's Director of Military Intelligence, Major-General Amos Yadlin, also warned that the Lebanese paramilitary force <u>Hezbollah</u> could open a second front against Israel, firing rockets into the country within days. -- With AGENCIES

Graphic

FOUR PHOTOS: A man carries his wounded child into a Gaza hospital as Israeli soldiers bear a comrade to his grave and others grieve. PICTURES: AFP, AP; The EU's Javier Solana.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



AID GROUPS LASH OUT AT ISRAEL; U.N., RED CROSS AMONG CRITICS OF WARFARE IN GAZA

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

January 9, 2009 Friday

SOONER EDITION

Copyright 2009 P.G. Publishing Co.

Section: WORLD; Pg. A-1

Length: 874 words

Byline: Ethan Bronner, The New York Times

Body

JERUSALEM -- International aid groups yesterday lashed out at Israel over the war in Gaza, saying access to civilians in need is poor, relief workers are being hurt and killed, and Israel is woefully neglecting its obligations to Palestinians who are trapped -- some among rotting corpses in a nightmarish landscape of deprivation.

The United Nations declared a suspension of its aid operations after one of its drivers was killed and two others were wounded, despite driving U.N.-flagged vehicles and coordinating their movements with the Israeli military. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for an investigation by Israel for a second time in a week following the more than 40 deaths near a U.N. school from Israeli tank fire Tuesday.

The International Committee of the Red Cross reported finding what it called shocking scenes Wednesday, including four emaciated children next to the bodies of their dead mothers. In a sharply critical statement, it said it believed that "the Israeli military failed to meet its obligation under international humanitarian law to care for and evacuate the wounded."

Israeli officials said they were examining all allegations, that they did not aim at civilians and were not certain that the source of fire that killed and wounded the U.N. drivers was Israeli.

"We do our utmost to avoid hitting civilians, and many times we don't fire because we see civilians nearby," said Maj. Avital Leibovich, chief army spokeswoman for the foreign media. "We are holding meetings with U.N. officials to try to work out a mechanism so that their work can go forward."

She said the army learned of the Red Cross allegations in a media report, and that the Geneva-based committee had not yet presented to the army evidence of what she called "these very serious allegations."

Red Cross spokeswoman Anne-Sophie Bonefeld added that when the children and others were rescued Wednesday, workers had to leave behind a number of bodies. Yesterday, she said, 100 civilians were rescued from the same Gaza City neighborhood. They were not wounded but were weakened because of being without food or water for two days.

At the end of the 13th day of the war aimed at stopping Hamas rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, Gaza authorities said the death toll passed 750, with *women* and children making up about 40 percent of the dead.

For the second day in a row, Israel held its fire for three hours in the afternoon to allow in aid. During that pause, local ambulance crews and the Red Crescent found dozens of bodies under a collapsed building.

Three Israeli soldiers were killed in combat; seven other soldiers have died during the military campaign, and three civilians have been killed by rocket fire.

More rockets flew into Israel and -- for the first time since the operation against Hamas began -- three Katyusha rockets were shot from Lebanon into northern Israel. But <u>Hezbollah</u>, which fought a war with Israel in 2006 that included thousands of rockets, said it was not responsible.

Efforts to negotiate a cease-fire continued. At the United Nations, Security Council members agreed on the text of a resolution calling for "an immediate, durable and fully respected cease-fire" that would lead to the "full withdrawal" of Israeli forces from Gaza, the passage of humanitarian aid to the Palestinians and an end to the trafficking of arms and ammunition into the territory. But the resolution left murky how such a cease-fire would be enforced. Two Israeli officials went to Cairo, Egypt, for talks.

But attention was increasingly focused on the growing humanitarian crisis and on the increasing anger abroad. Israel condemned a high-ranking Vatican official for comparing Gaza to "a concentration camp."

"Look at the conditions in Gaza: more and more, it resembles a big concentration camp," Cardinal Renato Martino, head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said in an interview Wednesday in an online publication. Yesterday, he defended his comments in the center-left Italian daily La Repubblica. While noting that Hamas rockets into Israel were "certainly not sugared almonds," he called the situation in Gaza "horrific" and said conditions there went "against human dignity."

Israel sharply condemned the cardinal's use of World War II imagery. "We are astounded that a spiritual dignitary would have such words that are so far removed from truth and dignity," Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor said.

U.N. emergency relief coordinator John Holmes said in New York that the three-hour daily pause in Gaza fighting permitted by Israel was insufficient. He said Gaza authorities counted 758 fatalities, among them 257 children and 56 **women**.

Antoine Grand, head of Red Cross operations in Gaza, said his organization's workers came under Israeli fire yesterday. He said a convoy of two trucks, one marked as Red Cross and the other from the Health Ministry, were taking medical equipment to the city of Khan Yunis, followed by 13 ambulances heading to the Egyptian border.

He said the convoy's movement was "fully coordinated with Israel. I did it myself." It was during the three-hour lull, at 3:30 p.m., he said, when they stopped in front of the checkpoint that the Red Cross vehicle was shot at from a tank.

Graphic

PHOTO: Agence France-Presse/Getty Images: In a photo released by the Israeli Army, blindfolded Palestinian prisoners are detained by Israeli troops during a military operation yesterday in northern Gaza.

Load-Date: January 9, 2009



A city under the surgeon's knife

Financial Times (London, England)

May 10, 2008 Saturday

London Edition 1

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Section: FT WEEKEND SUPPLEMENT - LIFE & ARTS; Pg. 26

Length: 871 words

Byline: Tyler Brule **Highlight:** Tyler Brule

The Fast Lane

Body

Reinvention is a dangerous business. For many people the solution comes in an overpriced bottle or at the end of a sharp surgical instrument. Companies find it through a new corporate identity or new organic- shaped furniture in the canteen. But what do you do if you're a country that needs a total overhaul?

In less critical cases you call in the branding experts, they give you a snappy presentation and you pay dearly for a new slogan. Portugal recently attempted to fashion itself as "Europe's West Coast". I'm not sure what the Irish and Norwegians made of this claim, but it left me wondering whether Portugal was selling itself as the potential home of a Euro-Google/Nike/Microsoft or a land that might soon be filled with malls and washed-up celebrities. The ad campaign never delivered much of an answer.

Cosmetic makeovers on sovereign states tend to have the same effect as a bit too much plastic surgery on people they all start to look the same. Been down Madison Avenue between 65th and 85th recently? There's an entire subspecies of pained, stretched-looking <u>women</u> and men who all look vaguely related due to their bubble lips and wide, manga-style eyes. A lot of countries that adopt a new slogan and logo feel equally samey. Is Croatia Europe's west coast in the east? And why is everyone smiling about Bahrain?

In more extreme cases a nation might find itself surrounded by a team of powerful consultants bent on advancing their own interests and not too concerned about what actually happens to the patient on the table. Lebanon comes to mind.

I have just returned from Beirut after a five-day refresher tour. In many ways it was much as I'd left it 11 years ago-chaotic, a little edgy but oddly relaxed. The last time I was in Beirut I was on something of a mercy mission. Having spent time covering the country from 1991, I made a trip in spring 1997 with photographer Matthew Hranek to document buildings that were on the brink of vanishing.

At the time, the hot topic was architectural preservation. Developers wanted to bulldoze anything that was pockmarked and throw up glittering offices, apartments and hotels. Their opponents wanted to restore Beirut to a city of parks, greenery and more classical architecture. Oddly, little attention was paid to the architecture that had come to define the city - its collection of modernist apartment blocks, Verner Panton-inspired shop interiors and cliff-hugging villas. For a week we crawled through the city in our driver Abed's faded Mercedes and documented as much as we

A city under the surgeon's knife

could: crumbling Ottoman villas, 1930s French deco apartments, 1960s travel agencies filled with Knoll furniture and cafés from the early 1970s.

Beirut has been in and out of the operating theatre more than any city in modern history. Indeed, many of its residents have started to look like that peculiar tribe on the Upper East side - all shelf-like boobs and bums. Sadly, much of the good has been stripped away in the process. On arrival, the first thing I wanted to do was take a coffee at Modca in Hamra - only to find that the modernist gem had been replaced by a Danish fashion store that clearly got off lightly following the Mohammed cartoon protests.

Around the corner, the Beirut Express travel agency was shuttered but at least its jet-age logo peeked out along the top. Down the hill at the Mies-like Gefinor Centre, the campy Sudan Airways ticket bureau was gone but thankfully the rest of the centre was much as I remembered it - save for the ugly branch of Sbarro pizza that, I believe, replaced Aeroflot.

Beirutis wonder whether visitors will return this summer and help steer the economy in the right direction or if the current lack of leadership is paving the way for a factional free-for-all. Many seem to think it'll be more of the latter, and the violent events of the past few days seem to be proving them right.

With their road blocks and gun battles, <u>Hezbollah</u> has done an excellent job of turning business away from the newly renovated downtown with their ragged, dusty camp in the middle of what should be the most buzzy city centre in the Middle East.

For reasons right and wrong, "brand Beirut" remains one of the most powerful in the world. Conjuring up images of destruction, glamour, human suffering and of an alluring capital adrift at far end of the Mediterranean, it manages to hold as much tourism appeal as any of the Gulf upstarts. Where other cities and countries have to manufacture the excitement and pre-package the history, Beirut has it all from the moment you emerge from the airport.

The biggest plus is that you can indulge in all those things that are now banned elsewhere in the world - drive as fast as you like, ride a motorbike without a helmet, drink as late as you want, run traffic lights and dance in dingy 1970s bars that would be condemned in other cities.

Lebanon is not in need of a tourism campaign just yet as it needs to get many other rooms in its house in order first (a president perhaps?) but one day a "Liberal Lebanon" initiative could be just the slogan to bring back millions of tourists who are tired of being nannied in their home markets.

Tyler Brûlé is editor-in-chief of Monocle

www.monocle.com

Load-Date: May 9, 2008



Air attacks on a besieged Gaza have killed over 1,000 Palestinians; POLITICS: Israeli Attacks on Gaza Escape Global Media Scrutiny

IPS (Latin America)
January 26, 2009 Monday

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Length: 926 words **Byline:** Thalif Deen

Body

A country that claims to be the only multi-party democracy in the Middle East, Israel has barred all foreign journalists from entering Gaza, triggering strong protests not only from the United Nations but also from human rights groups and media organisations.

Speaking from Beirut, Mohamad Bazzi, a journalism professor at New York University, told IPS there are hundreds of journalists from around the world who have gathered in Israel trying to get access into Gaza.

Without access to the battlefield, they are having a difficult time verifying the claims by either side, he said.

'As the fighting continues and the civilian death toll rises in Gaza, the United Nations has warned of a humanitarian catastrophe and the world still does not have a full picture of the extent of that crisis,' said Bazzi, who is also a board member of the Arab and Middle Eastern Journalists Association (AMEJA).

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) fired off a strong letter of protest last week to Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak criticising the restrictions on the international media.

'By preventing journalists from covering its military offensive in Gaza, Israel is betraying its own democratic principles. It is also denying the world access to fact-based reporting,' says CPJ Executive Director Joel Simon.

He said Israel has a long history of allowing international journalists to cover conflicts.

'Why is it now restricting all access to a conflict zone? What is the legal basis for this restriction on the free movement of journalists?' he asked.

According to the CPJ, the Foreign Press Association in Israel appealed the ban to the Supreme Court, which suggested a compromise that would allow a small group of international journalists to file pool reports from Gaza.

The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) apparently agreed to allow eight journalists in through the Erez crossing in northern Gaza, but later scrapped the plan, 'supposedly for security reasons, even as relief workers and others were admitted into Gaza'.

'Although crossings have been opened more than once since the Israeli offensive on Gaza started, no journalists have been allowed to enter,' Simon complained in his letter to Barak.

Air attacks on a besieged Gaza have killed over 1,000 Palestinians POLITICS: Israeli Attacks on Gaza Escape Global Media Scrutiny

The letter also said there were more than 900 media personnel, mostly working for international news outlets, already in Israel who have been barred from crossing into Gaza for safety reasons.

'Israel has barred its own citizens from entering Gaza for the past two years, citing security fears. But the ban on international journalists is less than two months old and had been enforced sporadically until the latest military offensive,' said Simon.

Meanwhile, the only 24-hour reporting has come from the Al-Jazeera satellite channel, whose reporters were present in Gaza long before the fighting began.

Bazzi told IPS that Israel has a history of a free and vibrant press, with news outlets that often challenge their government.

'Israel also has a history of allowing journalists to cover conflicts,' he added.

During the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon from 1982 to 2000, the IDF took international journalists into the occupied zone.

And during the 2006 war between Israel and *Hezbollah*, journalists had access to the battlefield.

'This is the first time that Israel has banned all access to a conflict zone. Israel has not provided a legal basis or an adequate explanation for this ban on journalists,' Bazzi added.

U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information Kiyo Akasaka has urged the Israeli government to provide 'immediate access for international media into Gaza' and reminded the Israelis of the right to information enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

An equally strong protest has come from the director-general of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Koichiro Matsuura, who also condemned the killing of a journalist on the first day of the Israeli offensive against Gaza.

Basel Faraj, a cameraman for the Algerian TV network ENTV and the Palestine Broadcasting Production Company, died from wounds following an Israeli air strike.

Matsuura called on Israel 'to allow local and international media professionals to report on events' in Gaza.

But these protests have had no positive response from Israel, which has continued with its devastation of Gaza minus international media scrutiny.

On Thursday, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he was 'outraged' that another artillery shell had landed in a U.N. compound in Gaza even as he was on a visit to Israel.

Following his protest, Barak admitted it was 'a grave mistake' and assured the secretary-general that 'extra attention' would be paid to U.N. facilities, a frequent target of Israeli attacks, in the future.

Besides the rising death toll, mostly <u>women</u> and children, the casualties also include some 4,000 injured in the 19-day fighting between Israel and Hamas.

'I am sorry to report that the tragic horror continues, and will continue until the guns fall silent,' John Ging, director of the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Gaza, told reporters early this week.

Ging said his U.N. agency would continue to call for a media presence in Gaza 'not only because the truth must be told, but also because those making important decisions must be able to base their information on the facts.'

Both the United Nations and the humanitarian community in Gaza regretted the absence of a 'vibrant and impartial press corps on the ground', Ging added.</ © 2009 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

Air attacks on a besieged Gaza have killed over 1,000 Palestinians POLITICS: Israeli Attacks on Gaza Escape Global Media Scrutiny

Load-Date: January 26, 2009



PAPERBACKS

Arts & Book Review
August 1, 2008
First Edition

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Section: ARTS; Pg. 26

Length: 877 words

Byline: Reviewed by Emma Hagestadt, Boyd Tonkin & Katy Guest

Body

THE TAXI QUEUE By Janet Davey VINTAGE £7.99 (202pp)

On a snowy night in January two strangers decide to share a taxi outside Paddington Station. Richard is in his midforties, married with two small children. Abe is young, attractive and gay. When the cab arrives at Richard's front door, Abe accepts Richard's offer to stay the night.

The next morning the two men return to their normal lives: Richard back to organising children's tennis lessons and church socials, and Abe to the house he shares with his sister in Kensal Rise. Bringing together a cast of suburban north Londoners, all vaguely dissatisfied with their lot, Davey traces the destabilising consequences of this chance encounter. Richard's wife, Vivienne, alerted by her husband's distracted state, finds a business card in his wallet. The contact number scribbled on the back turns out to be Abe's sister's - a casual piece of deception that enables Vivienne to continue family life in a state of semi-blissful ignorance. In a novel that feels more like real life than any other book you will read this year, Davey's inconclusive narrative elegantly encapsulates the way in which major crises are routinely absorbed into everyday lives without fanfare or resolution. As wistful and anti-romantic as her previous novels, Davey's unassuming third book gets under the skin, leaving the admiring reader depressed and undone, but wanting more. EH

TRESPASS By Valerie Martin PHOENIX £6.99 (288pp)

At the centre of Valerie Martin's new novel is the kind of character that many of her readers will find it easy to identify with. Chloe Dale is a successful book illustrator, liberal in outlook but privately judgemental. As the novel opens, she's being introduced to her only son's new girlfriend, Salome, a Croatian refugee. Chloe suspects her of being a gold-digger and her worst fears are confirmed when, not long after, Salome becomes pregnant. In a novel that keeps shifting the moral ground - there's a secondary narrative describing life during the Bosnian genocide - Martin asks Chloe, and her readers, to reassess some more covert prejudices. EH

AWAY By Amy Bloom GRANTA £7.99 (240pp)

Short-story writer Amy Bloom comes into her own with a highly entertaining, and snappily told, saga of Jewish immigration. At 22, Lillian Leyb's family is butchered in a Russian pogrom. Starting over in Manhattan, Lillian is taken under the wing of a family of famous Yiddish impresarios. Not long into her new city life, Lillian learns that that her young daughter, Sophie, may have survived the massacre. What makes this historical saga so compelling is not

PAPERBACKS

only the dramatic story of Lillian's reverse transcontinental schlep, but the fact that Bloom endows her heroine with a personality as fully nuanced as any character in a novel with a more contemporary setting. EH

THREE VICTORIES AND A DEFEAT By Brendan Simms PENGUIN £12.99 (802pp)

On the upper decks, this history of the 18th-century "rise and fall of the first British empire", from the Hanoverian takeover to the loss of America, delivers a barnstorming narrative of the battles, voyages and plots that led Britannia to rule the waves. Down below, a lively quarrel unfolds. Against historians who view the wide oceans as the key to British destiny, Simms steers towards Europe. There the Georges had their roots; there alliances were made and marred; there a "Eurocentric" policy in London secured a home base. When the elite rashly "turned its back on Europe", isolation and disaster followed fast. We have been warned. BT

CLARA'S TALE By Pierre Péju trans. Euan Cameron VINTAGE £7.99 (314pp)

The original title of Peju's novel, The Ogre's Laugh, is more indicative of what's to come. It's 1963, and French schoolboy Paul has just arrived in the Bavarian village of Kehlstein to stay with his pen-friend, Thomas. Rather than mix with the village's heartier inhabitants, he's drawn to Clara, a photographer who keeps herself to herself. Running in tandem with Paul's account are wartime flashbacks involving the murder of a group of Jewish children. The Teutonic high spirits of the sum-mering teens take on a more sinister aspect. This chilling novel of post-war guilt will leave readers feeling they've just exchanged the heat of the sun for the sudden cool of the woods. EH

THE MAKING OF MUSIC By James Naughtie JOHN MURRAY £7.99 (390pp)

More than other book adaptations of successful Radio 4 series, James Naughtie's "Journey with Notes" is handicapped by the lack of sound. A point that hits home when accompanied by Wagnerian overtures is much harder to illustrate in words. Still, if Naughtie's intelligent account of the history of music does anything it is to make the reader want to hear more, which can't be all bad. KG

WHAT WILL SURVIVE By Joan Smith ARCADIA £7.99 (278pp)

It's a brave woman who raises <u>female</u> genital mutilation on page three and goes on to tackle the complexities of <u>Hezbollah</u> and Lebanon's relationship with Israel alongside <u>women</u>'s role in the media. But tackle them Joan Smith does, in a novel that is part thriller, part travelogue and wholly original. Beginning in 1997 with model-turned-landmine crusader Aisha, and continuing as a young journalist investigates her strange death, this is a bold take on some tough material. KG

Load-Date: August 1, 2008



Muslim youth, heavy metal music and a lot of idealism

The International Herald Tribune
July 19, 2008 Saturday

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Section: FEATURE; Pg. 9

Length: 918 words

Byline: Howard Hampton - The New York Times Media Group

Body

Heavy Metal Islam Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam

By Mark LeVine

296 pages. Paper, \$13.95. Three Rivers Press.

*

This professor of Middle Eastern history walks into a bar in Fez, Morocco - right from the get-go, Mark LeVine's "Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam" is not your typical dry academic slog.

(Did I mention he's also a longhaired Jewish rock guitarist whose bio lists gigs with Mick Jagger and Dr. John?) So when somebody in that hotel bar starts talking up the local punk and metal scenes, an incredulous LeVine is hooked. "There are Muslim punks? In Morocco?" Quicker than you can whistle "Rock the Casbah," he's on the trail of Western-influenced underground music movements that have blossomed under authoritarian regimes across the Middle East and North Africa.

Going to meet the seven-string guitarist Marz of Hate Suffocation, a Cairo band, LeVine confesses, "I still couldn't tell the difference between death, doom, black, melodic, symphonic, grind-core, hard-core, thrash and half a dozen other styles." (Marz explains that his group plays a cross between death and black metal: "But it's not blackened death metal!") Despite a certain amount of scholarly dogma that goes with the territory - here any combination of "neo-liberal" and "globalization" is as ominous an epithet as Black Sabbath's "War Pigs" - "Heavy Metal Islam" offers the hit-and-run (as well as hit-and-miss) pleasures of a lively road trip.

Practicing a first-person brand of shuttle diplomacy as he moves between countries and cultures, musicians and Islamic activists, LeVine manages to unpack enough cross-cultural incongruities to mount his own mosh pit follow-up to "You Don't Mess With the Zohan." An ex-Mossad hairdresser is scarcely more anomalous than disheveled Moroccan riot grrrls, virtuoso Egyptian metalheads, Lebanese "muhajababes" (young <u>women</u> wearing full head scarves, army fatigues, tight black T-shirts and <u>Hezbollah</u> wristbands), Tupac-influenced Palestinian M.C.'s, "the Israeli Oriental death-doom metal band Orphaned Land" (complete with a devoted Arab following) and rapt Iranian Iron Maiden acolytes. LeVine not only meets and eats with Muslim headbangers, he jams with them in apartments, studios and outdoor festivals, taking in the food and the noise and the people as if it were all a movable metal feast.

Eagerly seizing on the stereotype-busting possibilities of "an 18-year-old from Casablanca with spiked hair, or a 20-year-old from Dubai wearing goth makeup," LeVine would like us to see them as the faces of an emerging Muslim

Muslim youth, heavy metal music and a lot of idealism

world, potentially a much less monochromatic place than the one represented on TV by the usual "Death to America" brigades. "Heavy Metal Islam" turns the notion of irreconcilable differences between Islam and the West on its head, appealing to the universality of youth culture as "a model for communication and cooperation" in the Internet age. LeVine reckons the likes of Metallica and Slayer provide a brute lingua franca that knows no borders, opening up breathing room in cloistered societies, gradually undermining rigid belief systems - a benign, bottom-up brand of globalization as opposed to the ruthless corporate- or state-sponsored kind.

It's that old-time Lennon/Bono rock idealism reimagined for a post-Cannibal Corpse world, and that's winning on a case-by-case basis. In lands where playing "satanic" music or even attending semi-clandestine concerts can get you thrown in jail (actually charged with things like "shaking the foundations of Islam"), there's something truly heartening about the Moroccan thrash girls Mystik Moods striving to break through sexist taboos, or Hate Suffocation trying to carve out a niche to play music and "be left alone by both the government and society." In theocratic Iran, when Ar-thimoth's leader wears a T-shirt reading "Your God Is Dead," he's risking a fate much worse than being suspended from school.

"Heavy Metal Islam" gets trapped by its good intentions whenever it attempts to shoehorn the headbangers' intransigence into preconceived political slots. Metal music, however you parse it, is dystopian in the extreme: hyper-aggressively embracing the death instinct, regimented chaos, deliriously fetishized morbidity. Call it cathartic, sure, even a way of keeping sane in an insane world, but don't confuse it with "If I Had a Hammer." Unless it's a hammer of the nihilist gods aimed at your forehead - not to hammer out justice or a warning or "the common struggle for democracy and economic equality," but to crack your skull open, scrape out your pulverized brains and feed them to the wolverines.

Even though these antisocial bands want no part of hard-liners like the mystical Justice and Spirituality Association in Morocco or the spooky Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (and the disdain is often mutual), LeVine thinks if they could all put aside their petty differences and work together, they could start a domino effect in the Middle East like the one that toppled the Eastern bloc. The punch line of LeVine's informative, valuable and moderately mad book is twofold: this conscientious anti-imperialist has written a swell tract in favor of large-scale cultural imperialism and his program is undoubtedly the first to enlist death metal as the spearhead of a new Peace Corps(e).

Howard Hampton is the author of "Born in Flames: Termite Dreams, Dialectical Fairy Tales, and Pop Apocalypses."

Load-Date: July 23, 2008



Iran is greatest threat, Bush says in Mideast

Charleston Gazette (West Virginia)

January 14, 2008, Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. P1A

Length: 947 words

Byline: Terence Hunt, The Associated Press

Body

Editorial, 4A

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates - President Bush gently nudged authoritarian Arab allies Sunday to satisfy frustrated desires for democracy in the Mideast and saved his harshest criticism for Iran, branding it "the world's leading state-sponsor of terror."

Speaking in this Persian Gulf country, about 150 miles from the shores of Iran, Bush said Tehran threatens nations everywhere and that the United States was "rallying friends around the world to confront this danger before it is too late."

The warning about Iran was much tougher than Bush's admonition about spreading democracy in the Middle East, which had been billed as the central theme of his speech.

In a region of autocratic rulers, Bush did not single out any other country for criticism. He spoke about democracy in a deeply undemocratic country, the United Arab Emirates, where an elite of royal rulers makes virtually all the decisions. Large numbers of foreign resident workers have few legal or human rights, including no right to protest working conditions.

"To the people of the Middle East: We hear your cries for justice," Bush said. "We share your desire for a free and prosperous future. And as you struggle to find your voice and make your way in this world, the United States will stand with you."

Usually averse to sightseeing, Bush rode out into the sand dunes to the desert encampment of Abu Dhabi's crown prince, Sheik Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. He let Bush hold one of his prize falcons. Later, Bush returned to his suite in the opulent Emirates Palace Hotel, constructed at a cost of more than \$3 billion and reputed to be the most expensive hotel ever built.

The next stop scheduled on Bush's eight-day Mideast journey was Saudi Arabia. Its ruler, King Abdullah, has tried to push some reforms on education and <u>women</u>'s rights, and there have been limited municipal council elections. But he has been cautious and limited in his efforts, apparently hampered by others in the royal family worried that fast changes could upset the country's conservative clerics and citizens.

In Egypt, the last country Bush planned to visit, the democracy effort has stalled badly. The opposition candidate, Ayman Nour, who ran against longtime President Hosni Mubarak in the first multiparty elections, remains jailed on what many critics view as trumped-up criminal fraud charges.

Iran is greatest threat, Bush says in Mideast

Apparently referring to Egypt, Bush said, "Unfortunately, amid some steps forward in this region we've also seen some setbacks. You cannot build trust when you hold an election where opposition candidates find themselves harassed or in prison."

Bush cast the broader campaign for democracy in terms of the battle against terrorism, saying there was a desire for freedom from terrorism, oppression and injustice. "We see this desire in the ordinary people across the Middle East, who are sick of violence, who are sick of corruption, sick of empty promises - and who choose a free future whenever they are given a chance."

Bush praised some democratic reforms in Arab countries. He urged leaders to show support for the fragile Iraqi government, open their societies and provide backing, and possible money, to help make an Israeli-Palestinian agreement stick.

"Leaders on both sides still have many tough decisions ahead, and they will need to back these decisions with real commitments," Bush said. "But the time has come for a holy land where Palestinians and Israelis live together in peace."

Bush's blistering words about Iran appeared intended to reassure Arab allies about U.S. readiness to confront Tehran. There have been doubts about Washington's intentions because of a new U.S. intelligence report that said Iran had stopped pursuing nuclear weapons in 2003.

Bush appeared to put the danger posed by Iran on par with that from al-Qaida, which the U.S. national intelligence director, Mike McConnell has said is America's greatest threat.

"One cause of instability is the extremists supported and embodied by the regime that sits in Tehran," Bush said.
"Iran is today the world's leading state sponsor of terror."

Bush said Iran funds militant groups such as Hamas, <u>Hezbollah</u> and Islamic Jihad and sends arms to the Taliban in Afghanistan and Shiite extremists in Iraq. "The other major cause of instability is the extremists embodied by al-Qaida and its affiliates." he said.

His words brought a stern response from Iran's foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, to end what he called U.S. meddling.

"Mr. Bush has tried unsuccessfully to undermine our relations with the countries of the region. We believe his mission has totally failed. We have been making strides in building ties with the region, politically, economically and even in security," Mottaki told the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera television. "It is much better if the Americans had stopped intervening in the region's affair."

Also Sunday, the U.S. focused new attention on the Jan. 6 confrontation between American and Iranian naval vessels in the Strait of Hormuz.

U.S. Vice Adm. Kevin Cosgriff, commander of the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, which patrols the Gulf, briefed Bush on the incident before the president left Bahrain on Sunday morning.

Cosgriff told Bush that he took it "deadly seriously" when an Iranian fleet of high-speed boats charged at and threatened to blow up a three-ship U.S. Navy convoy passing near Iranian waters. The Iranian naval forces vanished as the American ship commanders were preparing to open fire.

White House press secretary Dana Perino said that "all the military people remember what happened in the past, such as the USS Cole." Seventeen American sailors were killed in a terrorist attack on the USS Cole in Yemen in October 2000.

Load-Date: January 16, 2008



Sarko to win Royal battle for president

Sunday Independent (Ireland)
May 6, 2007

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Independent.ie

Section: POLITICS **Length:** 922 words

Body

IN France, you are either one or the other.

You are either a Sarkozet - a follower of the right-wing, zero tolerance, tough-talking, confrontational Nicolas Sarkozy. Or else you are a Royaliste - a supporter of the socialist, soft-spoken yet steely (and yes, sexy) Segolene Royal.

The centrist candidate, Francois Bayrou, is simply too uninspiring to stir up any kind of real interest.

With two such chalk and cheese candidates battling it out for the French presidency, it has been one of the most interesting elections the country has ever seen.

After months of debate, opinion, controversy, mud-slinging and backstabbing, after all the tension of an election that has been the most hotly contested in France's history, the French finally go to the polls today to vote in their next leader.

And the philosophy, personalities, psychology and politics of the two are so at odds, that whomever they choose will radically change the country's future.

It will certainly be historic should Segolene Royal win the day. It would make her France's first <u>female</u> head of state - one of only a few such powerful <u>women</u> in the world.

Sophisticated, chic, slim and much younger-looking than her 53 years, the fact that she is a woman means Royal automatically has a good portion of the <u>female</u> vote on her side. Her emphasis is on education, the family and the environment, believing this will foster a more humane atmosphere for growth.

And though she may look like a poster-girl for French living, there is no doubting that she has a steely will and a sharp tongue - and she is not afraid to disagree with her own party when they come out with particularly ridiculous lefty-liberalism.

But the anti-Royal brigade says she is not experienced enough to lead the country, and a series of political gaffes have also left the French public wondering.

Sarko to win Royal battle for president

She was forced to deny interfering in the affairs of Canada after she was quoted saying she supports freedom for Quebec.

On a visit to the Middle East she was accused of condoning remarks by the Lebanese <u>Hezbollah</u> leader in which he compared Israel to Nazi Germany, and in Beijing she made controversial comments in praise of the Chinese system of justice. She recently made a remark that suggested she believed the Taliban are still in power in Afghanistan.

Nudging out in front after the first-round vote last month is Nicolas Sarkozy, the French interior minister whose supporters worship him - and whose detractors revile him.

After polling 30 per cent of the vote to Royal's 25 per cent, all bets are on Sarko, as he is nicknamed in France, to become the next president.

But his five per cent edge is not the only reason why a Sarko victory is practically a dead cert.

No, Sarkozy will take it because he is regarded by the French as the only man that can make France the economic superpower it should be, the person to bring her kicking and screaming into the 21st Century.

He has pledged to cut taxes, free up the labour market, encourage people to work longer and harder and earn more money.

A self-described "political tsunami", Sarko is a politician focused on cutting out delinquency in crime-obsessed country, a figure who has no tolerance for the culture of blame. He is fiercely intelligent, hugely experienced - he has led both the finance and interior ministries - talented, hard-working and energetic.

And, particularly fitting as the head of l'hexagone (as metropolitan France is nicknamed), he is also remarkably attractive and just as sexy as the chic Ms Royal.

He is, as Newsweek described him in its latest edition, a hard man for a tough job. He is also, say Royal supporters, something of a madman and a dictator in waiting, a fiery-tempered, volatile loose cannon.

Former Minister Azouz Begag told recently how Sarkozy called him an "arsehole" and threatened to "smash his face in" after a row.

He has himself admitted that he once was "an egotist, devoid of humanity, brutal - but I've changed!"

His infamous, controversial "racaille" comment after the French riots in 2005 has dogged him ever since.

Sarkozy described those in the tough suburbs of Paris, as the "racaille" or "the scum of the earth" and pledged to "hose them out".

Accusations that the comment was an incitement to hatred were not unfounded.

Neither was the opinion that both the Begag and the racaille incidents would only increase Sarkozy's status as a right-wing hero.

The son of a Hungarian immigrant, his detractors accuse him of trying to drive the immigrant population out of France and create a super-French race. Despite all this, the French clearly trust him.

He ranked far ahead of Royal in a poll which asked "who has the stature of a president?" and 43 per cent of the French consider Sarkozy the best to protect them. Royal scored 15 per cent in this poll.

But Benoit Bringer, a 29-year-old native of Paris now living in Dublin, explained why he is voting for Royal.

"I am not voting for Segolene, I am voting against Sarkozy. To be honest, I am scared of him - I fear what would happen to France under his presidency.

Sarko to win Royal battle for president

"His views on security, immigration and personal information are very scary and unpleasant."

Perhaps the difference between Sarkozy and Royal is best illustrated during a spat on French TV last week.

Discussing the rape of a policewoman while she was walking home in Paris, Royal said the solution was to accompany every *female* public servant home at night.

"No," said Sarkozy. "The solution is to do away with delinquency."

Larissa Nolan

Load-Date: May 6, 2007



The good fight, the long haul

University Wire
November 1, 2007 Thursday

Copyright 2007 Massachusetts Daily Collegian via U-Wire

Section: COLUMN Length: 888 words

Byline: By Spc Felicia Whatley, Massachusetts Daily Collegian; SOURCE: U. Massachusetts

Dateline: AMHERST, Mass.

Body

Every suicide bomber is a weapon of mass destruction. Why the United States decided to go to war with Iraq no longer matters. What does matter now and for the future was the focus of U.S. Army General David Petraeus's congressional speech on Sept. 10 in which he stressed a need for a gradual reduction in U.S. troops in Iraq. Petraeus said that approach would be conducive to achieving military success and stabilization in the region.

President George W. Bush backs Petraeus's plan to remove five of 20 military brigades currently in place. "Because of the measure of success we are seeing in Iraq, we can begin seeing troops come home," stated Bush.

Troops are being withdrawn. That is a fact not to be debated or accepted. But with orders in my pocket to go to Iraq, given the opportunity to serve my country, I'd be pretty upset if the plane turned around because some Democrat decided we weren't supposed to be there in the first place.

Since last spring, the surge involving over 20,000 volunteer troops has deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Substantial progress has been made. The increased presence of U.S. Forces over the past several months has contributed to the decline of insurgent attacks. Currently the attacks are at their lowest since Dec. 2006.

Civilian deaths are still unacceptably high, but they have declined significantly by 45 percent. At the same time, ethno-sectarian attacks have decreased. Any civilian death is tragic, but unfortunately, differentiating between friend and foe during a time of war is difficult when children and <u>women</u> are making themselves human bombs and driving through security check points.

We have gone on the offensive. Coalition forces recovered more than 4,409 ordinance, arms and munitions from January to September of this year. Unfortunately, more weapons are being supplied by Iran and Syria, making the fight on terrorism even more difficult.

Though the death of a civilian is tragic, the deaths of hundreds of thousands would be a crime. If we withdraw too many troops too quickly, Iraq's security would be at stake at the cost of innocent lives, not to mention what would happen to the United Nations forces, including our own troops, who would be overwhelmed and slaughtered by a greater insurgency threat.

There are currently about 169,000 U.S. troops in Iraq. Petraeus's plan will pull out 2,200 Marines this month and an Army brigade of 5,700 soldiers by Christmas.

The good fight, the long haul

This is a realistic plan for withdrawal. The surge has been successful in winning over local tribes. Local rejection of Al-Qaeda has contributed to the drop in violence over the past couple of months, most visible in Anbar Province.

The number of car bombings and suicide bombings has declined. Coalition Forces continue to work to destroy terrorist networks that claim responsibility for these heinous attacks.

Despite the drop in violent actions, Sunni insurgents in Baghdad remind us that we are at war, and in war people die. These insurgents push a campaign to kill police chiefs, police officers and other Interior Ministry officials and tribal leaders in the wake of Petraeus's report.

"The main reason behind all these attacks are the signs of improvement of the security situation mentioned in the Crocker-Petraeus report," Tahseen al-Sheikhly, the Iraqi spokesman for the security plan said. "The terrorist groups are just trying to say to the world that the report did not reflect the reality of the security situation in Iraq," as quoted in the New York Times' "Sunni Insurgents in New Campaign to Kill Officials."

We have accomplished so much since toppling Saddam's regime. Our forces have detained or captured over 100 Al-Qaeda leaders. Surveillance and intelligence has been a good contributor.

Some of the problems we face involve Shia militia extremists from Iran who target our troops. These Arab extremist groups train and fund terrorists in Iran. Improvised explosive devices provided by Iran spur a "<u>Hezbollah</u> type force," stated Petraeus.

The locals have started to take democratic responsibility. Twenty thousand tribes and locals in Anbar Providence rejected Al-Qaeda and showed how they opposed the extremists by adding to the ranks of Iraqi forces with minimal U.S. assistance. Forty thousand more Multi-National Iraqi troops will be in position by the end of the month.

"This war is not only fought on the ground in Iraq, but in cyberspace as well," said Petraeus. This is a war of information. As Osama bin Laden continues to communicate through video, transferred all over the Internet, to rally his cause and spread his terrorist ideals, the United States works to spread the ideal of democracy.

Iran and Syria have impeded this process and continue to be a threat. Iraq's long-term security as well as the security of our nation depends on stability in the region and proper security for their people.

The problems can't be fixed overnight and though many Americans want their sons and daughters home from war, there is more at stake. The fallen U.S. veterans died helping a nation that couldn't help itself from an evil dictator who murdered hundreds of thousands of his own people. Petreaus wants us to stay the course with a plan to gradually reduce troop levels. This is good diplomacy and a cause worth fighting for.

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Load-Date: November 2, 2007



Deal with U.S. would boost Iran's status

The Record (Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario)

June 2, 2007 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: INSIGHT; Pg. A15

Length: 882 words

Byline: ASHOK KAPUR, FOR THE RECORD

Body

The United States and Iran are on the verge of consolidating a significant deal that will affect the future of Iraq as well as their bilateral relationship. If consummated, it will be a victory for American and Iranian diplomacy, a path paved by costly military interventions by both sides. It will also be an important step to change the mental and the diplomatic map of a new Middle East.

It's important for us now to separate the media accounts of daily killings in Iraq from the quiet backdoor contacts that reveal common ground between the U.S. and Iran.

Until recently, George W. Bush wanted a military victory in Iraq and Iran's president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad wanted to keep the Middle East pot boiling. Now the signals show a desire to find a negotiated settlement where both sides can claim a victory of sorts by giving Iraq some normalcy, by making Iran a stakeholder in Middle East peacemaking, and by recognizing Iran as a regional power with rights and responsibilities. This approach has the fingerprints of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the moderates in Tehran, which include the supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khameini. Ahmadinejad is still making the speeches, but the moderates are calling the shots because they find confrontation with America counter-productive.

In modern conflict, unless one side wins militarily, an area of negotiation usually emerges over time as practitioners despair of killings that are not based on an realistic endgame. After 27 years of animosity and a diplomatic row over Iran's nuclear program, on May 28 both sides met face to face in a meeting chaired by the Iraqi president to settle Iraq's future. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the meeting and agreed to meet again.

Behind the positive optics lies a story of a major bargain in the making -- which will produce a deal, as well as winners and losers.

The present deal comes four years after Washington double-crossed Tehran. Then -- despite the Iranian slogan "down with U.S. imperialism" -- there was an understanding between the two to form a Shia oriented, pro-Iran regime in Iraq in return for Iranian co-operation to bring down Saddam Hussein. This was the intended followup to the politically inconclusive Persian Gulf war that began in 1991, when the senior George Bush defeated Saddam, freed Kuwait, and deliberately left Saddam weak but in power -- presumably as an asset with future use if necessary.

When Washington moved against the Taliban in Afghanistan after 2001, and then against Saddam in 2003, Iran knew it had to act alone to manage the expansion of U.S. influence around Iran - in Iraq on its west, in Afghanistan

on its east, in Central Asia on its north and in the Persian Gulf in its south. Tehran acted by unleashing the *Hezbollah* in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine and Shia militias in Iraq.

But Iran was also thinking of a diplomatic opening with the United States, and made a proposal for a deal to U.S. ambassador Ryan Crocker at the brief meeting at Sharm-el-Sheikh early in May. It wanted an orderly U.S. military withdrawal and relocation of its forces in bases in Iraq, rejection of Iraq's partition, a split of political power in Iraq on the basis of the 60 per cent Shia and 40 per cent Sunni population, and a smaller voice for the Kurds. Tehran would rein in the Shia militias, Sunni participation would be increased and the Sunnis would also gain more oil revenues -- while the Kurds would lose oil revenue as well as political power.

Iran would also assume responsibility in relation to Lebanon, Syria and Palestine.

The big local losers in this proposed arrangement would be the Kurds, who are trapped within the politics of Iran, Turkey and Iraq. They are political orphans in the Middle East, along with Palestinians, as no one of consequence in the world community listens to their demand for independence. The Washington-Tehran deal implies a double cross of the Kurds and an affirmation of a traditional diplomatic principle that expediency trumps justice in world politics, a principle which advocates of universal values and peace research have not been able to change.

Another big loser is Russia. The U.S.-Iran confrontation gave it leverage in the region and it has been used by Russian President Vladimir Putin to advance Moscow's image as a friend of Iran and a builder of its nuclear program, a challenger of American expansionism, and a defender of Russia's strategic interests and prestige in its southern periphery.

By accepting that Washington will not pressure Iran on the nuclear issue in exchange for its co-operation in Iraq and the region, Tehran will find it useful to rely more on Washington and less on Moscow and Beijing on the nuclear question.

By negotiating directly, both Washington and Tehran have come up with a new rule set that is meant to marginalize the spoilers in the Middle East and bring to prominence those who can actually deliver results on the ground. The power to hurt is the power to bargain and the practitioners have recognized that they have reached the limits of their ability to hurt and being hurt and the time is now to effect a negotiated settlement.

Dr. Ashok Kapur is distinguished professor emeritus, of the University of Waterloo and a specialist in Middle Eastern and Asian strategic affairs.

Graphic

Photo: ASSOCIATED PRESS, Iranian <u>women</u> demonstrate against the United States in Tehran's Azadi Square on the 28th anniversary of the country's Islamic Revolution in February.

Load-Date: June 2, 2007



Move to Lift a Ban on Head Scarves Gains in Turkey

The New York Times
February 10, 2008 Sunday
Late Edition - Final

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Length: 898 words

Byline: By SABRINA TAVERNISE; Sebnem Arsu contributed reporting.

Dateline: ISTANBUL

Body

Parliament took a major step on Saturday toward lifting a ban against <u>women</u>'s head scarves at universities, setting the stage for a final showdown with Turkey's secular elite over where Islam fits in the building of an open society.

Lawmakers voted overwhelmingly in favor of a measure supported by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to change the Constitution in a way they say will guarantee all citizens the right to go to college regardless of how they dress.

The authorities imposed the ban in the late 1990s, arguing that the growing number of covered <u>women</u> in colleges threatened secularism, one of the founding principles of modern Turkey.

Secular opposition lawmakers voted against the change, with about a fifth of all ballots cast. Crowds of secular Turks backed them on the streets of the capital, Ankara, chanting that secularism -- and <u>women</u>'s right to resist being forced to wear head scarves by an increasingly conservative society -- was under threat.

"This decision will bring further pressure on <u>women</u>," said Nesrin Baytok, a member of Parliament from the opposition secular party, during the debate in Parliament. "It will ultimately bring us <u>Hezbollah</u> terror, Al Qaeda terror and fundamentalism."

Another member from that party, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, said the group would take the amendments to the Constitutional Court, a pro-secular institution that is likely to rule against Mr. Erdogan. That process must wait until the changes are approved by the president and published in the official state newspaper.

The head scarf ban, and the push to repeal it by Mr. Erdogan's governing party, has become one of the most emotional issues in Turkey. It pits a rising, increasingly wealthy middle class of observant Turks, on one side, against a secular elite, backed by the military and the judiciary, on the other.

"It's all about power," said Jenny B. White, an anthropologist at Boston University who has been studying Turkey since the 1970s. "It's about who gets to decide what Turkey's image and emblematic lifestyle will be. Islam is the lightning rod for all the fears and concerns."

Move to Lift a Ban on Head Scarves Gains in Turkey

Many secular Turks are concerned that the Justice and Development Party led by Mr. Erdogan has such significant power, controlling Parliament, the presidency and the prime ministry, that it will impose its own conservative values on Turkey.

"It's been presented as a liberty to cover the head, but in practice, it is going to evolve into a ban on uncovered hair," said Hikmet Sami Turk, a former justice minister, speaking on NTV television.

Turkey's current tensions are rooted in its recent past, when migrants from the country's more observant heartland moved to cities, starting in the 1950s, in a process that changed Turkey into an urban society.

But it remained divided by class, and when many covered <u>women</u> began entering universities and taking public sector jobs, the secular elite banned head scarves.

Now, Mr. Erdogan is trying to lift the ban, and the debate, which began in Parliament on Wednesday, has been emotional.

"I will entrust liver to a cat, but won't entrust secularism to you," Deniz Baykal, the head of the secular opposition party, said Wednesday, according to Today's Zaman, an English-language daily newspaper.

Cemil Cicek, a conservative member of Mr. Erdogan's party, countered, "We are not trying to bring a ban; we are trying to lift a ban."

"Why aren't you willing to reach consensus, but spread radioactive fear and horror across the country like the Chernobyl power station?" he asked in Wednesday's debate. "What is this?"

Turkey is groping toward a new understanding of itself. Observant Turks, the underclass for years, are now firmly part of the elite, and hard questions have emerged about how to share public space, like college campuses and public buildings.

Those who argue for retaining the ban say they do not oppose the head scarf worn in times past by grandmothers, tied babushka-style under the chin.

Nilufer Gole, a Turkish sociologist who wrote "The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling," argues that the past generation was mostly working class, and therefore not threatening, while today's wealthier covered <u>women</u> are.

"We liked our grandmothers because they were just knitting," she said by telephone from Paris. "They were never trying to go to university."

Turkey's booming economy is a great equalizer. On the streets of Istanbul, young <u>women</u> in jeans, stylish T-shirts and Keds wear head scarves of all colors. Young observant <u>women</u> are more integrated than ever.

"For me it's a good sign," Ms. Gole said. "It means they are participating."

Still, Turkey is entering uncharted waters in its attempts to balance liberal democracy, Islam and secularism, and Western models do not show the way.

"It's not like a Sikh policeman wearing a turban under his helmet in England," said Murat Belge, a professor at Bilgi University in Istanbul. In Britain, Sikhs are a tiny minority. In Turkey, he said, those asking to have their way are a majority.

That majority, many secularists believe, is using the veil as a first step toward a repressive Islamic state.

But Ms. White, writing in a Turkish newspaper on Friday, said the veil's political meaning is in the eye of the beholder. "Meaning," she wrote, "is in our heads, not on our heads."

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTO: Secular Turks seeking to keep a head scarf ban protested Saturday in Ankara, some with photos of the republic's founder, Ataturk. (PHOTOGRAPH BY UMIT BEKTAS/REUTERS)

Load-Date: February 10, 2008



Thousands flee Lebanese refugee camp

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

May 23, 2007 Wednesday

Copyright 2007 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 931 words

Byline: Liz Sly Chicago Tribune

Body

TRIPOLI, Lebanon -- Bodies lie unattended on the street, the injured are bleeding to death for want of medical care, and water and food are dangerously short in the besieged Nahr el-Bared Palestinian refugee camp after three days of fierce battles between the Lebanese army and Islamic extremists holed up inside the camp, residents and relief workers said Tuesday.

Amid signs that the resistance put up by the Fatah al-Islam organization may be starting to wane, the intensity of the fighting eased, enabling some residents to flee for the first time since the battle erupted Sunday between the army and the hitherto little-known Palestinian group.

According to The Associated Press, thousands began streaming out of the camp late Tuesday night, on foot and in cars, waving white flags, towels and sheets in their desperation to escape the worst internal violence witnessed in Lebanon since the civil war ended in 1990.

No formal cease-fire agreement was announced and there was no immediate indication that an end was in sight to the confrontation, which initially flared Sunday when Lebanese security forces pursued a group of bank robbers affiliated with the radical group.

Fatah al-Islam's spokesman announced a unilateral cease-fire starting at 2:30 p.m. local time, and though the sound of explosions and machine-gun fire shattered the lull just 40 minutes later, the intensity of the previous two days of fighting subsided.

Among those who escaped during the lull was Ali Sayed Marbani, 64, a Lebanese who lives just outside the camp's perimeter and who had spent two terrifying days trapped in his basement while Fatah al-Islam fighters used his house as a combat position.

His account offers an insight into the previously unknown organization, believed to number several hundred, that surfaced in the Nahr el-Bared camp last November and declared it had taken control of the camp. The group has proclaimed an ideological affinity with al-Qaida and reportedly includes Arab fighters from across the region.

As the battles erupted Sunday, four Fatah al-Islam fighters knocked on Marbani's door and politely informed him that they needed to use his house. They spoke accented Arabic and were not Lebanese, he said. The fighters took up positions on the roof and began firing at the army. Marbani, his wife, mother, three daughters, daughter-in-law and grandson huddled in the basement as the battle raged above them.

Thousands flee Lebanese refugee camp

At one point, he said, the <u>women</u> went upstairs and begged the fighters to leave, saying they risked killing everyone. The fighters refused, telling the <u>women</u>: "We won't leave until we are dead. Our fate could be the same as yours."

But on Tuesday morning, the fighting eased, and the family emerged to find that the fighters had vanished.

Marbani called a friend in the Lebanese army for help, and the army sent a vehicle to pick up him and his family. As Marbani walked the 100 yards or so from his house to the main road, he passed about 10 dead bodies, he said. Though he said he couldn't be sure, he believed they were fighters, not civilians. Reports from inside the camp suggest many civilians are also among the dead and wounded. Dr. Omar Kenaan told the Al Jazeera television network from inside the camp that ill-equipped clinics in the camp have no supplies of blood or medicine, and that dead and injured civilians lie under the rubble of destroyed houses.

"Many dead bodies are lying on the streets they are bloated and reeking with the possibility of a breakout of epidemics," he said.

The New York-based Human Rights Watch said it had received many reports of civilian casualties inside the camp, and urged the Lebanese army to curb its bombardment.

The shelling of a densely populated refugee camp can result in a bloodbath, said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. Lebanese authorities need to restore order in a way that minimizes civilian casualties, he said.

The first UN convoy carrying relief supplies came under artillery fire when it reached the camp, and three of its vehicles were damaged, UN officials said.

The army now appears to control all the territory beyond the camp's perimeter, and conducted only a sporadic bombardment of the camp from artillery positioned in pine groves overlooking the densely populated cluster of flimsily constructed homes.

The question of how to deal with the fighters still inside the camp is a politically sensitive one for Lebanon, which fought a 17- year civil war triggered by clashes with armed Palestinian groups. Under a 1969 agreement, the Lebanese army does not have the right to enter the Palestinian refugee camps, and though the army could argue that the Islamists violated their side of the agreement by breaking out of the camp, any attempt to storm the camp could trigger a Palestinian revolt in camps elsewhere.

There were reports of demonstrations in at least two other camps, the nearby Bedawi camp and the radical Ain al-Hilweh camp near Sidon, to the south.

In Washington, the State Department said it was studying a request from the Lebanese army for \$280 million in military assistance to help quell the radicals, a significant increase over the \$40 million provided last year.

The U.S. backs the Lebanese government of Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, which is engaged in a tense political standoff with the Syrian- and Iranian-backed Shiite <u>Hezbollah</u> movement over how to distribute political power. Despite fears that the latest violence risks further dividing the country, so far all of Lebanon's factions have expressed support for the army in its bid to rout the militants.

Load-Date: May 23, 2007



Column: Israeli violence takes innocent lives

University Wire

January 12, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 Daily Bruin via U-Wire

Length: 928 words

Byline: By Saif Ansari, Daily Bruin; SOURCE: UCLA

Dateline: LOS ANGELES

Body

Israel is not interested in peace.

On Dec. 27, Israel launched

a massive military assault on the people of Gaza, resulting in the deaths of over 870 Palestinians. Israel has argued that it has acted in self-defense in response to the rockets fired into Southern Israel by Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups in the last month.

But

on Nov. 4, while the rest of the world eagerly awaited the results of the U.S. presidential election, Israeli troops raided Gaza in clear violation of a six-month cease-fire brokered by Egypt back in June. Before the raid, Hamas had not fired a single rocket into Israel for nearly five months.

Israel failed to observe the cease-fire
altogether by refusing to lift the brutal blockade it has placed on
Gaza since 2007. The blockade has produced the worst humanitarian
crisis since the Six-Day War in 1947, leaving over a million

Palestinians without food, water, electricity and medical supplies.

In

contrast to reports by the United Nations, the American Red Cross,

Column: Israeli violence takes innocent lives

Amnesty International and local aid agencies, Israel's foreign minister Tzipi Livni contends that there is "no humanitarian crisis" whatsoever. Israel officials appear to be confident that the Gazans are living comfortable lives free from daily power outages and food shortages, violence and death: they apparently find international news coverage unnecessary and have barred foreign journalists from entering Gaza.

Israel

never seemed to be committed to a durable cease-fire in the first place. Defense Minister Ehud Barak gave orders to the Israeli Defense Force six months ago to prepare for a military operation in Gaza at the very same time that Israel was involved in negotiations related to the June cease-fire. A country that both agrees to a cease-fire and plans on breaking it promises not a lasting peace but rather further conflict.

Israel

is interested only in the continued oppression of the Palestinian people. Of the hundreds killed, 375 have been civilians, out of which 270 have been children.

Hamas, Israel argues, is responsible for the Gazan's suffering and uses civilians as human shields.

But

by tightening the blockade and attacking military and civilian targets alike, Israel is responsible for hurting not only Hamas but, and in large part, Gaza's civilian population as well. A person who voted for Hamas, is affiliated with Hamas or simply lives amongst Hamas operatives is not necessarily a Hamas operative and is therefore not a combatant. In other words, merely supporting Hamas does not make a person equal to an actual Hamas fighter. Any action that collectively punishes the entirety of Gaza for the acts of a few is inhumane and is prohibited by international law.

The usage of human shields also does not justify Israeli attacks against civilians. A bombing on Jan.

Column: Israeli violence takes innocent lives

6, for example, killed 40 civilians, including <u>women</u> and children, who had taken refuge in a U.N. elementary school. In addition, the United Nations regularly gives the coordinates of its facilities and buildings to the Israeli military in order to protect them from attack.

Israel

claims that two Hamas militants were firing at IDF soldiers from inside the school, but the proper response was not to go ahead and attack the school - the proper response was not to attack the school at all. Mass civilian casualties are always unacceptable and are prohibited, again, by international law.

Furthermore, the allegation of the usage of human shields cannot possibly account for each, or even the majority, of the hundreds of civilian deaths incurred so far in the conflict.

Indeed, a U.N. investigation of the school bombing verified that there is, in fact, no evidence that there even were any militants at the school.

According to a recent EU report, Israel's offensive constitutes a severely "disproportionate use of force." The conflict has claimed the lives of 870 Palestinians compared to only 13 Israelis. Out of a population of 305 million, 870 deaths is proportional to over 170,000 Americans. Israel's sole rationale for the enormous number of casualties is self-defense.

It is difficult to understand the

justification that Israel acts only in order to defend itself when its own actions have provoked the attacks on its citizens. By placing a stranglehold on Gaza, restricting access in and out and reducing its economy to shambles, Israel has obliterated the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, leaving over 60 percent of Gaza residents below the poverty line and generating complaints that Gaza has become "the world's largest open-air prison." It is in desperation that some

Page 4 of 4

Column: Israeli violence takes innocent lives

Palestinians have turned to violence in order to inflict the same

amount of harm on Israeli civilians in a feeble attempt to oppose

Israeli aggression.

The slaughter of innocents is never

justified, and steps must be taken to protect Israeli citizens from

harm. But the people of Gaza have a right to live as well, and anything

short of an equal respect for the life and liberty of both Israelis and

Palestinians is nothing but bigotry and prejudice.

Israel will

fail in Gaza. It executed a similar military operation in the summer of

2006, but failed to eradicate and only increased public support for the

political and military group *Hezbollah*.

A lasting genuine peace

will be ensured only when Israel acknowledges the claims of the

Palestinian people. Peace cannot be achieved, however, without the

proper implementation of justice. Without justice for all there will be

no cessation in hostilities, and Israelis and Palestinians alike will

continue to suffer from a conflict that has consumed both communities

for decades.

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Load-Date: January 12, 2009



Undercurrents of Hope In a Region of Turbulence

The New York Times
February 28, 2008 Thursday
Late Edition - Final

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Length: 877 words

Byline: By ETHAN BRONNER

Body

DREAMS AND SHADOWS

The Future of the Middle East

By Robin Wright

464 pages. Penguin Press. \$26.95.

Few American journalists are as familiar with the Middle East as Robin Wright. Having first visited Iran in 1973, lived in Beirut in the 1980s and chronicled the region on repeated trips since then, she has a deep mix of on-the-ground knowledge, awareness of the historical background and step-back policy perspective. She wrote one of the first books on militant Islam ("Sacred Rage") and two others on Iran.

Like many who follow the Middle East closely, Ms. Wright, currently a diplomatic correspondent for The Washington Post, has known its violent turmoil and numbing cruelty. She witnessed the 1979 Iranian revolution consume itself with blood. (In four months in 1981 more than 1,000 government officials were killed.) In 1983 she watched rescuers remove bodies from the American Embassy in Beirut (some of the dead had been her friends) and months later from the United States Marines barracks there. She covered the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, when hundreds of thousands were killed. She was back in Iraq in 2003 after Saddam Hussein was toppled.

But also like many who care about the region, she has been waiting impatiently for change. Having interviewed and befriended some enormously brave people there who have been pushing for liberty and democracy, Ms. Wright decided a few years ago that enough signs of progress were emerging to merit a deeper look at the phenomenon.

As she puts it early in "Dreams and Shadows": "This is a book about disparate experiments with empowerment in the world's most troubled region. My goal was to probe deep inside societies of the Middle East for the emerging ideas and players that are changing the political environment in ways that will unfold for decades to come."

And so she has done. She went to the West Bank for the 2006 Palestinian elections, spent time with liberal opponents of the government in Egypt, interviewed the key Lebanese who helped eject Syrian troops and occupiers, and profiled Moroccan feminists and democracy activists who have helped bring about new laws.

Undercurrents of Hope In a Region of Turbulence

Along for the ride, readers are treated to clear and well-rendered accounts of Kefaya, the fledgling Egyptian dissident movement; the history of Iran's quest for nuclear power; the beginnings of <u>Hezbollah</u>; and fascinating tidbits like an early mention of the Kurds as a nation and how the Katyusha rocket, got its name. While this is an engaging tour of a complex area, the problem is that the moment of promise that set Ms. Wright off on her trip -- the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon combined with the Iraqi, Palestinian and Egyptian elections all in quick succession -- has turned distinctly sour.

The spirit in the region that animated her quest three years ago has been exposed as more illusory than real. This leaves her book somewhat off key. It was supposed to help understand the future, but ends up being a series of visits with some wonderful people who remain marginalized and powerless. Instead of helping readers to see how the Middle East is evolving, Ms. Wright offers a set of portraits of failed efforts.

That said, there is much to be gained from joining her on her trip. In some ways the subsequent failures of reform lend poignancy. The section on Morocco is a good example.

Four years ago, under a new young king, Mohammed VI, Morocco set up a so-called Equity and Reconciliation Commission to expose the horrors of abuse that existed under his father's rule. Testimony was taken in public; new laws protecting human rights and <u>women</u> were enacted. We meet Driss Benzekri, who languished in prison for 17 years for defying the ruler at the time, King Hassan II. Later Mr. Benzekri, who died last year, was made head of a human rights group and adviser to King Mohammed. And Morocco is a less oppressive place today that it was, thanks to the new monarch.

Yet King Mohammed "is head of state," Ms. Wright writes. "He is commander in chief. He appoints the prime minister and his cabinet. Both foreign and domestic policy comes from the palace. Judges are appointed on the recommendation of the Supreme Council, which is presided over by the king. The rubber-stamp Parliament debates, but it has little power and even less oversight of government performance. The king can legislate new laws without Parliament. And he can dismiss it at will. He still has the powers of a despot."

In other words, there has been no real change in the Moroccan power structure, only greater tolerance from on high. And that could change on a whim.

Ms. Wright's last chapter is about how the Iraq war has set back reform across the region, the opposite of its stated purpose. We re-encounter Ghada Shahbender, an Egyptian from an earlier chapter, who monitors presidential and parliamentary elections. Showing a group of students around the United States last year, Ms. Shahbender is angry but philosophical, a stand apparently shared by Ms. Wright.

"In Iraq, Bush set back democracy and freedom in the region more than any other American president," Ms. Shahbender tells her. So now that things are going nowhere, what will she do next? "Keep trying," was the reply.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTO (PHOTOGRAPH BY JULIA EWAN/THE WASHINGTON POST)

Load-Date: February 28, 2008



Bush gently touts democracy on undemocratic soil

The Bismarck Tribune
January 14, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1A

Length: 943 words

Byline: TERENCE HUNT AP White House Correspondent

Body

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates - President Bush gently nudged authoritarian Arab allies Sunday to satisfy frustrated desires for democracy in the Mideast and saved his harshest criticism for Iran, branding it "the world's leading state-sponsor of terror."

Speaking in this Persian Gulf country, about 150 miles from the shores of Iran, Bush said Tehran threatens nations everywhere and that the United States was "rallying friends around the world to confront this danger before it is too late."

The warning about Iran was much tougher than Bush's admonition about spreading democracy in the Middle East, which had been billed as the central theme of his speech.

In a region of autocratic rulers, Bush did not single out any country for criticism. He spoke about democracy in a deeply undemocratic country, the United Arab Emirates, where an elite of royal rulers makes virtually all the decisions. Large numbers of foreign resident workers have few legal or human rights, including no right to protest working conditions.

"To the people of the Middle East: We hear your cries for justice," Bush said. "We share your desire for a free and prosperous future. And as you struggle to find your voice and make your way in this world, the United States will stand with you."

Usually averse to sightseeing, Bush rode out into the sand dunes to the desert encampment of Abu Dhabi's crown prince, Sheik Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. He let Bush hold one of his prize falcons. Later, Bush returned to his suite in the opulent Emirates Palace Hotel, constructed at a cost of more than \$3 billion and reputed to be the most expensive hotel ever built.

The next stop scheduled on Bush's eight-day Mideast journey was Saudi Arabia. Its ruler, King Abdullah, has tried to push some reforms on education and <u>women</u>'s rights, and there have been limited municipal council elections. But he has been cautious and limited in his efforts, apparently hampered by others in the royal family worried that fast changes could upset the country's conservative clerics and citizens.

In Egypt, the last country Bush planned to visit, the democracy effort has stalled badly. The opposition candidate, Ayman Nour, who ran against longtime President Hosni Mubarak in the first multiparty elections, remains jailed on what many critics view as trumped-up criminal fraud charges.

Bush gently touts democracy on undemocratic soil

Apparently referring to Egypt, Bush said, "Unfortunately, amid some steps forward in this region we've also seen some setbacks. You cannot build trust when you hold an election where opposition candidates find themselves harassed or in prison."

Bush cast the broader campaign for democracy in terms of the battle against terrorism, saying there was a desire for freedom from terrorism, oppression and injustice. "We see this desire in the ordinary people across the Middle East, who are sick of violence, who are sick of corruption, sick of empty promises - and who choose a free future whenever they are given a chance."

Bush praised some democratic reforms in Arab countries. He urged leaders to show support for the fragile Iraqi government, open their societies and provide backing, and possible money, to help make an Israeli-Palestinian agreement stick.

"Leaders on both sides still have many tough decisions ahead, and they will need to back these decisions with real commitments," Bush said. "But the time has come for a holy land where Palestinians and Israelis live together in peace."

Bush's blistering words about Iran appeared intended to reassure Arab allies about U.S. readiness to confront Tehran. There have been doubts about Washington's intentions because of a new U.S. intelligence report that said Iran had stopped pursuing nuclear weapons in 2003.

Bush appeared to put the danger posed by Iran on par with that from al-Qaida, which the U.S. national intelligence director, Mike McConnell has said is America's greatest threat.

"One cause of instability is the extremists supported and embodied by the regime that sits in Tehran," Bush said. "Iran is today the world's leading state sponsor of terror."

Bush said Iran funds militant groups such as Hamas, <u>Hezbollah</u> and Islamic Jihad and sends arms to the Taliban in Afghanistan and Shiite extremists in Iraq. "The other major cause of instability is the extremists embodied by al-Qaida and its affiliates." he said.

His words brought a stern response from Iran's foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, to end what he called U.S. meddling.

"Mr. Bush has tried unsuccessfully to undermine our relations with the countries of the region. We believe his mission has totally failed. We have making strides in building ties with the region, politically, economically and even in security," Mottaki told the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera television. "It is much better if the Americans had stopped intervening in the region's affair."

Also Sunday, the U.S. focused new attention on the Jan. 6 confrontation between American and Iranian naval vessels in the Strait of Hormuz.

U.S. Vice Adm. Kevin Cosgriff, commander of the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, which patrols the Gulf, briefed Bush on the incident before the president left Bahrain on Sunday morning.

Cosgriff told Bush that he took it "deadly seriously" when an Iranian fleet of high-speed boats charged at and threatened to blow up a three-ship U.S. Navy convoy passing near Iranian waters. The Iranian naval forces vanished as the American ship commanders were preparing to open fire.

White House press secretary Dana Perino said that "all the military people remember what happened in the past, such as the USS Cole." Seventeen American sailors were killed in a terrorist attack on the USS Cole in Yemen in October 2000.

Load-Date: January 14, 2008



BIOGRAPHY HARRY MOUNT ON THE ASCENT OF THE MOST POWERFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD

The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON)

October 21, 2007 Sunday

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Section: SEVEN; Pg. 53

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Byline: HARRY MOUNT

Body

Condoleezza Rice: Naked Ambition

BY MARCUS MABRY

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Watching Condoleezza Rice in action next to Margaret Beckett in the UN, during last year's battle between Israel and <u>Hezbollah</u>, was a little shaming for any British viewer. Mrs Beckett, flushed, nervous and shrill, parroted the brief she'd been given by the Foreign Office like an impatient headmistress reading out nominations for the Sixth Form prize for raffia work. Miss Rice strolled in, beaming, to be hugged left, right and centre by Middle Eastern and Israeli dignitaries. It's not often either group hugs a black woman, I should imagine. She then gave the American line in an easy-going but determined style, her voice lilting with tiny, charming inflections from her Alabama youth.

Part of the difference in performance grew out of the difference in status - the most powerful woman in the world against the most powerful woman in Derby. But the big difference came from the steely confidence of a black woman groomed for world leadership from her childhood - when black <u>women</u> weren't allowed to eat at the same lunch counter as white <u>women</u>. The journey from Birmingham, Alabama, to the State Department is much longer than the one from Mrs Beckett's native Ashton-under-Lyne to King Charles Street. This often slanted biography only really comes alive when it deals with this aspect of Condoleezza Rice's life - her exceptional background.

Born 52 years ago, of slave stock, Rice made her first great decision in choosing her parents: the Reverend John Rice, a minister turned academic, and her schoolteacher mother, Angelena, who wanted to call her Condolcezza - Italian

for 'with sweetness' - before deciding that people couldn't pronounce it.

Little Condoleezza was less pushed than propelled with hothouse jet fuel. A November child, she was considered too young by the Alabama education board to enter

the year her mother wanted. So, rather than letting Condoleezza drop down a year, Angelena schooled her at home. The day began with the four-year-old putting on her coat, walking out of the door, going to the front gate and

BIOGRAPHY HARRY MOUNT ON THE ASCENT OF THE MOST POWERFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD

then turning around to begin the full academic day at home - large doses of violin, glockenspiel and flute, French, Spanish and ballet ensued. She trained to concert-pianist level and became a champion ice-skater.

Her concentration was immense. She never fidgeted, and never left her desk to go to the loo or have a snack. Then on to the universities of Denver, Notre Dame and Stanford. She was so young at her matriculation - 15 - that by the time of her school prom she had already finished a year of university.

A star at Stanford, she was plucked out to be George

Bush Senior's special Soviet and Eastern Europe adviser shortly before the Berlin Wall fell. Following a spell as

an exceptionally young provost of Stanford, she was summoned by George W. Bush to advise on his 2000 election campaign, then to become his National Security Adviser and, since 2005, his Secretary of State.

The two of them are joined at the frontal lobe. At a Washington dinner party, she reportedly said, 'As I was

telling my husb...' before correcting herself - 'As I was telling President Bush.' She may continue to work for him after his presidency ends in January 2009. That is, if she isn't planning to take over from him. Even though she has loudly denied that she plans ever to run for the presidency, her poll numbers remain high while his slump.

With Condi up at four am, behind her desk not long after, and working late, there has been little time for scandal. The few boyfriends of her youth - always American football players - didn't match up to her intellect or ambition, and she is said not to mind being unmarried and childless. Rumours of lesbianism are unfounded. Lack of scandal needn't necessarily make a biography dull, though. Rice is an exceptional study in the triumphs and pitfalls of hothousing - she was so overschooled that she didn't have the disciplinary abandon to be a top concert pianist, according to her tutor.

With exemplary acceptance of failure, Rice just got on with it. The same happened when she didn't make it as a professional skater. 'Life's not that long to spend a lot of time being obsessed with things that have gone wrong,' she said. Like a brilliant machine she keeps on going. Like a brilliant machine, though, she is also less original intellect than ace synthesiser of thoughts. As a result, she has not been a great Secretary of State. Nor has she made any spectacular blunders,

even though Marcus Mabry attacks her for shopping at Ferragamo while New Orleans drowned - a cheap shot. Hurricane Katrina was not the Secretary of State's pigeon.

Mabry, international business editor of The New York Times, who happens to be black, is clearly out to get his subject. He constantly compares Rice unfavourably to his ideal template of the black woman - one who fights the institutional racism of the Deep South, rather than fighting an individual battle for excellence, as Rice has. Like feminists who attacked Margaret Thatcher for not doing enough for <u>women</u>, Mabry attacks Rice for not doing enough for blacks - a ludicrous charge in both cases. How better to prove equality than by the superiority that comes from doing one of the most powerful jobs on earth?

Load-Date: October 21, 2007



Even if there is no common ground, U.S. must talk with Iran

The Salt Lake Tribune May 8, 2007 Tuesday

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Section: COLUMNISTS; Opinion

Length: 905 words **Byline:** Trudy Rubin

Body

He was supposed to sit across from her at the dinner table. Everyone was waiting to see if they would start a conversation.

But Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki left the diplomatic dinner in Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt, before Condoleezza Rice got there. "I'm not given to chasing anyone," said the U.S. secretary of state when asked if she felt stood up.

Thus ended the latest chapter of the ongoing saga of whether Iran and the United States will talk.

This isn't the end of the story. Iran and top Bush officials have openly signaled their interest in dialogue. The European Union's top foreign policy official, Javier Solana - point man for multilateral talks on Iran's nuclear program - says "the United States must engage" directly with Iran. Top Iraqi leaders say the same.

Yet, disputes within the administration still block serious talks. Vice President Dick Cheney and his circle want Iran regime change, not engagement. Rice understands the need for talks, but wants to keep them narrowly focused on issues like Iranian arms for Iraqi militias.

"They are taking very limited baby steps," says Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council. Without some broader strategy for U.S.-Iran dialogue, Parsi doesn't think such talks can go anywhere.

I agree. So here's four reasons the White House should start a strategic dialogue with Iran.

First, neither talks nor diplomacy mean capitulation. I get e-mail equating dialogue with Iran to Neville Chamberlain's pact at Munich. Nonsense. Reagan talked to the Kremlin, and Nixon went to China. Talks mean both sides put their interests on the table and discuss them directly. They may or may not reach agreement. Talks don't mean America endorses the nature of Iran's regime, or its human rights violations against students, <u>women</u> or workers.

Iran has rebuffed U.S. efforts in the past for direct contacts, and we have done likewise. But the issues at hand - Iran's nuclear program, its role in the region, and Iraq's future - require us to try again.

Second, if America wants to prevent Iran from getting the capacity for nuclear weapons, the best option is smart, tough diplomacy. Various formulas offer some hope of limiting Iran's program. They can't be fully explored unless we talk directly to Iran, alongside multilateral negotiations.

Even if there is no common ground, U.S. must talk with Iran

The alternative - bombing Iran's nuclear energy sites - would strengthen Tehran's hard-liners and Islamists worldwide; it would ensure that Iran pursued a bomb.

Third, Washington's interests in Iraq coincide more with Tehran's than with those of any other Middle Eastern country. Iran's Shiites back the elected Shiite-led Iraqi government; Sunni Arab states in the region yearn for the return to power of Iraq's Sunni minority.

Iran is making trouble for U.S. soldiers in Iraq because the United States has called for regime change in Tehran. We and the Iranians are playing tit-for-tat. We're still holding five Iranians we arrested in Erbil (which may be why Iran's foreign minister snubbed Rice). If the Tehran regime believed Washington no longer sought its ouster, we could work together to stabilize Iraq.

Fourth, despite the flaming rhetoric of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, there is reason to think the time is ripe for talks. In 2001, Iran provided U.S. forces with crucial cooperation in stabilizing Afghanistan.

In 2003, Iran transmitted a proposal for a "grand bargain" to the State Department. The proposal agreed to consider ending aid to Palestinian opposition groups, and acting to limit <u>Hezbollah</u> to politics. Iran was also willing to discuss accepting the Saudi/Arab League proposal that called for recognition of Israel alongside a Palestinian state. In return, Iran wanted to discuss its desire for "full access to peaceful nuclear technology" and wanted to be dropped from the "axis of evil."

That proposal got short shrift from the Bush team. We will never know whether it had the full backing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

In 2003, the United States had a much stronger hand in the Middle East. The ouster of Iran's archenemy, Saddam, and the mess in Iraq, have made Iran far more powerful. No one can be certain a "grand bargain" is possible today.

But there is an open struggle going on inside Iran between pragmatists who want to bargain and hard-line radicals led by Ahmadinejad. "There is a new discourse between those who want normalization (with the West and the United States) and those who want to retain tension and revolutionary fervor," says Hooshang Amirahmadi. He is an Iranian-American professor at Rutgers who played a key role in back-channel discussions that laid the ground for the Iranian proposals of 2003.

In the Iranian system, Ahmadinejad is not the key foreign policy maker - that is Ayatollah Khamenei. This is a moment when America needs to explore Iran's intentions, to see whether Iran is finally ready to play by accepted international rules. That would require the White House to stop dreaming of regime change, and put all issues on the table. It would require a whole new U.S. strategic approach to the region.

The venue for talks - Sharm el-Sheik, whatever - doesn't matter. What matters is the political will.

* TRUDY RUBIN is a columnist and editorial-board member for the Philadelphia Inquirer. Readers may write to her at: Philadelphia Inquirer, P.O. Box 8263, Philadelphia, Pa. 19101, or by e-mail at trubinphillynews.com.

Graphic

Trudy Rubin Philadelphia Inquirer

Load-Date: May 9, 2007



<u>Worldview | Why U.S. needs to sit down with Iran; The issues at hand - nuclear and otherwise - require that we try again. And right now, the time could be ripe.</u>

The Philadelphia Inquirer
May 6, 2007 Sunday
CITY-D Edition

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Section: CURRENTS; Inq Columnists; Pg. D01

Length: 888 words

Byline: By Trudy Rubin

Inquirer Columnist

Body

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Worldview | Why U.S. needs to sit down with Iran The issues at hand - nuclear and otherwise - require that we try again. And right now, the time could be ripe.

Load-Date: June 13, 2007



World must join battle with hate

The Australian (Australia)
June 18, 2007 Monday
All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Opinion / Op Ed; Pg. 14

Length: 983 words **Byline:** Barry Rubin

Body

MATP

The crucial contest is between radical Islamism and the rest of the planet, suggests Barry Rubin

HAMAS's capture of the Gaza Strip has created, along with Iran, a second radical Islamist state in the Middle East. The region, probably the Arab-Israeli conflict, and certainly the Palestinian movement, will never be the same.

What has happened should not be a surprise. Fatah's failure is not due to American foreign policy, Israel, or anyone but Fatah itself. It is Yasser Arafat's ultimate legacy, for he encouraged not only terrorist violence against Israel, but also anarchy and corruption within his own organisation.

Most importantly, Arafat failed to resolve the conflict or give his people an alternative vision to one of extreme radicalism and endless fighting. By rejecting a compromise peace solution in 2000 that would have created an independent Palestinian state with its capital in east Jerusalem and \$23billion in international aid, Arafat made clear that there would be no alternative, moderate scenario for resolving the Palestinians' problems.

It was clear before the January 2006 elections that Hamas was heading towards a victory. Under weak leadership, Fatah did nothing to address its deep-seated divisions and corruption. Competing Fatah candidates split the vote, ensuring that Hamas nominees won. Even after the defeat, Fatah implemented not a single reform or leadership change. Its leaders squabbled, regarding themselves as the sole possible rulers and engaged in wishful thinking that some external factor would hand them whatever they wanted. Meanwhile, like communist and fascist parties in the past, Hamas moved forward, with a clear doctrine, relative discipline, and grim determination. Fatah's ideology and practice laid the basis for Hamas to advance. With Fatah demonising Israel, rejecting compromise, demanding total victory, glorifying terrorist violence, and portraying moderation as treason, Hamas merely needed to prove that it was better at pursuing this course.

No one should underestimate Hamas's extremism. Indeed, the only difference between Hamas and al-Qa'ida -- though the two groups do not generally work together -- is that the latter emphasises attacks on Western targets, while the former has up until now focused on Israel.

Consequently, Hamas will not moderate its stance, and its victory sets back the chances of Israel-Palestinian peace for decades. Buoyed by its triumph, enjoying backing from Syria (where its headquarters are located), and Iran,

World must join battle with hate

Hamas will pursue its genocidal and openly stated goal: the extinction of Israel and its people. Any thought of concession or compromise is gravely mistaken.

Four specific issues now move to centre stage: the fate of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the future of the Fatah-ruled West Bank, the world's attitude toward Israel, and the strategic impact of Hamas's victory on the Middle East.

Until now, while Gazans have suffered from the constant fighting and economic failures brought about by their leaders' policies, they have been left alone in their private lives. Hamas might go slower or faster with an "Islamicising" program.

Nevertheless, it is determined to transform the lives of those it rules. It will kill as it chooses, abolish <u>women</u>'s rights, and indoctrinate schoolchildren with hatred and the ambition to be suicide bombers.

Gaza has suffered from anarchy; now it will be under the heel of a ruthless dictatorship. For example, when Hamas forces seized the Shati refugee camp, they deliberately executed three <u>women</u> -- two teenagers and a 75-year-old - because they were relatives of Fatah officials.

Those truly concerned with the Palestinians' wellbeing should direct their criticism at that people's leaders and seek to protect their human rights in the Gaza Strip.

Fatah's rule is still strong in the West Bank, but even the Gaza catastrophe is unlikely to lead it to change its ways. Logically, it should embrace moderation, crack down on cross-border terrorism, and seek some kind of peace with Israel.

But Fatah has its own view of what is logical -- one that might not coincide with such prescriptions. As wildly different as the two cases are, Fatah resembles the French monarchy before the revolution, incapable of learning from experience or taking the steps needed to avoid its own downfall. The world cannot save Fatah; only Fatah can save itself.

For Israel, of course, developments in Gaza pose a great challenge. Israel has long since decided that it has no interest in renewing its control over the Gaza Strip. In some ways, Hamas's coup makes things clearer. Gaza is ruled by a completely hostile regime. Israel will feel free to retaliate for cross-border attacks and continuing rocket fire at civilian targets within the country.

At last, the world must recognise that the hopes stirred by the 1990s peace process have been completely dashed. In effect, Hamas has returned the conflict to the '60s and '70s, when progress towards peace had to await the PLO's readiness to stop using terrorism and accept Israel's existence. Israel's survival and right to self-defence now has to be supported internationally, and the slander and demonisation of recent years should come to an end.

The strategic implications for the region are equally grim. Hamas's takeover of Gaza is a victory for the bloc comprising Iran, Syria and <u>Hezbollah</u>, as well as the separate branches of the Muslim Brotherhood (of which Hamas is one) seeking to capture power in their own countries.

These forces fully comprehend that the most important global contest today is between radical Islamism and the rest of the world. The question is when the rest of the world will figure that out.

Barry Rubin is director of the Global Research in International Affairs Center and editor of the Middle East Review of International Affairs journal. His latest book is The Truth About Syria.

Project Syndicate

Load-Date: June 17, 2007



Fanatical diatribe sets West grave challenge

The West Australian (Perth)
September 27, 2007 Thursday
METRO

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 20

Length: 882 words

Byline: PAUL MURRAY

Body

What should the Free World make of the posturings of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad now seen in their full unhinged ugliness on his visit to New York?

Its hard not to agree with the head of Columbia University, Lee Bollinger, that Mr Ahmadinejad appears ridiculous for some of his views.

But it would be a mistake to dismiss his provocative statements as those of a buffoon, given that he now looms as the No. 1 target of the White House which is toying with the idea of a conflict with Iran.

Central to US concerns are Irans support for the insurgency in Iraq, its financial aid to terrorists and Mr Ahmadinejads threat to wipe Israel off the map.

Having invited the Iranian President to use Columbia University as a forum for his views, Mr Bollinger controversially threw in his face a much wider list of complaints, prefacing it with the comment that he had all the signs of a petty and cruel dictator.

"Why have <u>women</u>, members of the Bahai faith, homosexuals and so many of our academic colleagues become targets of persecution in your country?" Mr Bollinger asked.

"Why, in a letter last week to the Secretary-General of the UN, did Akbar Ganji, Irans leading political dissident, and over 300 public intellectuals, writers and Nobel Laureates express such grave concern that your inflamed dispute with the West is distracting the worlds attention from the intolerable conditions in your regime within Iran, in particular the use of the press law to ban writers for criticising the ruling system?

"Why are you so afraid of Iranian citizens expressing their opinions for change?"

Mr Bollinger then put the President on the spot over the Holocaust, the existence of Israel -"Twelve days ago you said that the state of Israel cannot continue its life"- support for terrorism, principally <u>Hezbollah</u>, Hamas and Palestines Islamic jihad and Irans refusal to adhere to international standards for nuclear weapons verification.

"I doubt that you will have the intellectual courage to answer these questions," Mr Bollinger said. "But your avoiding them will in itself be meaningful to us.

"I do expect you to exhibit the fanatical mindset that characterises so much of what you say and do.

Fanatical diatribe sets West grave challenge

"Fortunately I am told by experts on your country that this only further undermines your position in Iran, with all the many good-hearted, intelligent citizens there."

Well, Mr Ahmadinejad did not let his host down. He failed to directly answer most of the challenges and his address lapsed from time to time into the sort of fanatical diatribes for which he is notorious.

The first five minutes was a rambling discourse on religion, science and knowledge that appeared close to being demented.

Overlooked in the media reports was that his first words were invoking the return of Imam al-Mahdi, the so-called Hidden Imam, who believers like Mr Ahmadinejad say will preside over Islams eventual triumph over the world.

He then made an attempt to justify his position on the Holocaust, turning it on to the Palestinian question. "Given this historical event, if it is a reality, we need to still question whether the Palestinian people should be paying for it or not," he said.

"After all, it happened in Europe. The Palestinian people had no role to play in it. So why is it that the Palestinian people are paying the price of an event they had nothing to do with?

"The Palestinian people didnt commit any crime. They had no role to play in World War II. They were living with the Jewish communities and the Christian communities in peace at the time.

"But why is it that the Palestinians should pay a price, innocent Palestinians? For five million people to remain displaced or refugees of war for 60 years are - is this not a crime? Is asking about these crimes a crime by itself?

"Why should an academic, myself, face insults when asking questions like this? Is this what you call freedom and upholding the freedom of thought?"

Lee Bollinger has been roundly criticised in both liberal and conservative quarters in America for so directly challenging Mr Ahmadinejad, claiming this would just build his support within Iran.

This was also one of the complaints of the diplomatic editor of Londons Independent newspaper, Anne Penketh.

"There are several problems with Americas demonisation of Mr Ahmadinejad," Ms Penketh wrote. "Firstly, it confers on him a prominence in the Iranian power structure that he does not have in reality.

"It is not the Iranian President who wields the most power in Tehran: the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, calls the shots and decides nuclear policy.

"Secondly, scaremongering has proved counter-productive by enabling him to portray nuclear power as a priority and a matter of national pride."

I dont think thats a distinction worth drawing. Irans nuclear ambitions are widely supported within the country and seriously risk further destabilising the Middle East.

They are far more dangerous than Saddam Husseins imaginary weapons of mass destruction.

Mr Ahmadinejads New York visit has been valuable in allowing a heightened focus in the West on Iran and the threat it poses.

The Free World now faces the challenge of restricting Iran without embarking on another debilitating war.

But that may be Mission Impossible.

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Graphic

Provocative: Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad can?t be dismissed as a buffoon.

Load-Date: September 27, 2007



<u>Lebanon sees worst internal fighting in decade; More than 40 people dead</u> and dozens injured as army grapples with militant group

The Toronto Star May 21, 2007 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A01

Length: 876 words

Byline: Andrew Mills, SPECIAL TO THE STAR; REUTERS NEWS AGENCY

Dateline: BEIRUT

Body

Eighty-year-old Claire Chaanine stood on the sidewalk last night, a forlorn figure wearing nothing but a blue nightie, having just been blown, quite literally, from her bed by a massive explosion in the parking lot next door.

"We escaped between the broken glass," she said, fumbling with the key to her front door. "I tried to lock it, but it wouldn't close."

She looked on, barely noticing the dozens of ambulances, fire trucks and military vehicles that rushed to her Christian neighbourhood around 11 p.m. yesterday after a fiery bomb blasted through the parking lot between her little white apartment building and a shopping mall.

Across the charred parking lot, the shockwaves from the bomb toppled a wall onto a 63-year-old woman, killing her. The blast injured at least 12 others, destroyed scores of cars and left windows shattered for blocks around.

"I don't know who did this," muttered Chaanine. "I just don't know."

The late night blast capped one of the deadliest and most troubling days of internal fighting Lebanon has seen since the end of the 1975-1990 civil war.

The fighting, which began in the northern port city of Tripoli, left more than 40 people dead and dozens injured. It was the most serious internal fight in more than a decade and the worst violence to hit Tripoli in two decades. The violence between the army and the Fatah Islam group erupted both in the city and the adjacent Nahr el-Bared refugee camp, home to about 40,000 Palestinians.

It added further instability to a country already mired in its worst political crisis between the Western-backed government and <u>Hezbollah</u>-led opposition since the end of the civil war. The clashes between army troops surrounding the camp and Fatah Islam fighters began after shooting raged in a neighbourhood in Tripoli, a predominantly Sunni city known to have Islamic fundamentalists, witnesses said.

Fighting spread after police raided suspected Fatah Islam hideouts in several buildings in the city, searching for men wanted in a recent bank robbery. A gunfight ensued and troops were called to help the police.

Lebanon sees worst internal fighting in decade More than 40 people dead and dozens injured as army grapples with militant group

Militants then burst out of the refugee camp, seizing Lebanese army positions, capturing two armoured vehicles and ambushing troops. They killed two soldiers on roads leading to the city.

Security forces were able to quell the resistance in Tripoli after sundown, and troops seized all positions around the refugee camp late yesterday, the army said.

A senior Lebanese security official said a high-ranking member of Fatah Islam, known as Abu Yazan, was among those killed.

The army had tightened its grip around Nahr el-Bared after four Fatah Islam members, all Syrian nationals, were charged with planting bombs on two buses in a Christian area near Beirut in February. Three civilians were killed in those attacks.

Fatah Islam, which the Lebanese government says is backed by Syria, is known to have Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians in its ranks. Its leader is a Palestinian.

Cabinet minister Ahmad Fatfat, speaking in Tripoli last night, said the violence was part of efforts to sabotage UN moves to set up an international tribunal to try suspects in the 2005 assassination of former prime minister Rafik al-Hariri.

A UN inquiry has implicated Syria and Lebanese officials in the Hariri killing. Damascus denies any involvement.

"There is someone trying to create security chaos to say to world public opinion: 'Look, if the tribunal is established, there will be security trouble in Lebanon,'" he told Lebanon's pro-government Future TV.

The United States, France and Britain circulated a draft UN resolution last week that would unilaterally set up the court.

As night fell, Fatah Islam issued a statement warning that if the Lebanese Army did not curb its offensive, the militant group would "open the gates of fire."

"We warn the Lebanese army of the consequences of continuing the provocative acts against our mujahideen who will open the gates of fire ... against (the army) and against the whole of Lebanon," it said in a statement faxed to .

The authenticity of the statement could not be verified.

Onlookers gathered on the shrapnel-strewn Beirut roadway last night were quick to connect the late-night blast to that ominous statement.

"What happened here is a warning from Fatah al-Islam," said Tony Boutros, who lives nearby. "It's the only logic."

Medical officers said 17 Palestinian civilians were wounded, with three <u>women</u> and four children in serious condition.

"We are living in a state of fear," said Khaled Najm, a Palestinian who spoke by telephone from inside the camp. "The electricity was cut since 6 a.m., and the shelling is targeting civilians," he said. "Those fighters came from abroad, and we are paying the price for their actions."

After midnight, Journa Aasailre, Chaanine's daughter, finally arrived at the scene, crossed the police lines and found her frail mother alive, if not a bit stunned. Then, she picked slivers of glass from her mother's hair and wept.

"They say it's connected to Syria. I'm convinced it's Syria," she later said.

"They want Lebanon to be like this. They want us to be weak. To suffer. This will never end. It will always be like this."

Lebanon sees worst internal fighting in decade More than 40 people dead and dozens injured as army grapples with militant group

Andrew Mills is a Canadian journalist based in Lebanon

With files from the Star's wire services

Graphic

Ahmad Omar ap A firefighter tries to extinguish burning cars after a blast hit east Beirut yesterday, killing a 63-year-old woman and injuring 12 others, capping the worst day of internal fighting in Lebanon in a decade.

Load-Date: May 21, 2007



Bold leadership vital as UN fails its task

Business Day (South Africa)

April 26, 2007

Business Day Edition

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Section: OPINION & EDITORIAL; Pg. 15

Length: 902 words

Byline: Ralph Mathekga

Body

DIPLOMACY /

Bold leadership vital as UN fails its task

THE past few years have been marred by a global crisis in terms of the role of diplomacy in conflict resolution and the restoration of peace and stability. The United Nations (UN), a symbol of global commitment to the protection of human rights, has been reduced to a talk shop in which member states seem to be primarily concerned about their national interests, instead of upholding human rights and the betterment of humanity.

The US circumvented the UN and invaded Iraq on apparently unjustifiable grounds.

The Israeli campaign in the south of Lebanon made it clear that the UN is incapable of reaching a resolution before conflict escalates into human catastrophe. It took gruesome footage of the massacre of children and <u>women</u> in the south of Lebanon for the UN to consider the situation unacceptable. It was only after the unnecessary deaths of people caught in the crossfire between the Israeli Defence Force and <u>Hezbollah</u> fighters that the UN Security Council finally passed a resolution calling for a cease-fire.

Here in Africa, Sudan continues to reject any UN resolution aimed at interfering in the continuing massacre in the Darfur region. Western countries, notably Britain and the US, have maintained that the killings in Darfur are systematic and consistent enough to amount to genocide; hence the global community should interfere.

African leaders are quite uneasy with the west's uncharacteristically hasty conclusion that genocide has occurred.

As some African academics have written, the west seems to be aiming at overstating the crisis in Darfur so that Africa can be seen to be a host to yet another episode of human atrocity.

This, it is believed, does not only fuel Afro-pessimism but, most important, undermines the moral base of African leadership.

The crisis in Sudan could easily be resolved - if only diplomacy was not riddled with self-interest and point-scoring.

It has been suggested that the UN needs to be restructured to restore the power balance among all member states.

Bold leadership vital as UN fails its task

The reigning system, in which only five permanent security council members (France, Britain, the US, China, and Russia) have veto power over whatever resolution is proposed in the UN, has recently come under attack by developing nations, who feel left out in the UN's decision-making processes.

But no amount of restructuring will assist the UN to live up to its founding principles of commitment to the protection of human rights. There is no turning back: the UN is a stage on which countries trade votes on resolutions, concerned mostly about their national interests and global influence. What can be achieved by restructuring the UN is to place member states on an equal footing. Perhaps then their tussling will balance the scale. However, national interests will always be the driving point of countries' positions on humanitarian crises.

Just across SA's northern border is yet another example of diplomacy's failure: Zimbabwe.

There is no doubt that diplomacy has failed in dealing with the continuing crisis there.

The situation in Zimbabwe is a diplomatic quagmire for African leaders and it further highlights diplomatic opportunism and miscalculations on the part of the west.

Since western countries have touted "regime change" as a solution to Zimbabwe's problems, African leaders have been careful not to tread in that direction. This is partly because it goes against the notion of self-reliance, as well as displaying a reluctance to kowtow to western pressure or to anyone.

Even more disturbing is that the idea of regime change has been part of foreign occupation in the Middle East.

I have no doubt that African leaders believe in democracy and a periodic rotation of leadership. I believe African leaders would have adopted bolder steps to address the situation in Zimbabwe if only western countries had initially maintained their distance in relation to the matter. In an era in which Africa is attempting to find its own solutions to its problems, the west's meddling with the situation in Zimbabwe has resulted only in silence on the part of African leaders.

However, that the west has been meddling in the Zimbabwe situation does not necessarily justify the stance adopted by African leaders on Zimbabwe. If African leaders believe the situation in Zimbabwe has reached a point at which it is unacceptable, they should forge ahead with a solution.

While avoiding to be seen as taking a diplomatic cue from the west, African leaders should stand strong and uphold the principles of justice, peace and human rights, irrespective of who shares similar principles with them and what their motives may be.

The Zimbabwean situation would not have escalated to where it is had African leaders spoken first on the issues. In that way, the west would not have had an opportunity to set the tone of the debate on Zimbabwe and the regime in Zimbabwe would have listened.

As Africa is in an era of conflict resolution, Zimbabwe should be a lesson to Africa that it should take a stance on issues affecting the continent at an early stage, before minor problems escalate into humanitarian crises. A strong and decisive African leadership is necessary in an age in which diplomacy is facing a tough test, so that Africa does not become a stage for struggles between powerful countries.

Mathekga is a political science lecturer at the University of Western Cape.

Load-Date: April 28, 2007



News Summary

The New York Times
April 30, 2007 Monday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 3; Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 2

Length: 972 words

Body

INTERNATIONAL A3-8 Iran Announces Intentions To Attend Iraq Conference The government of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran announced that it would attend a regional conference on Iraq this week, setting the stage for the first cabinet-level meeting between Iran and the United States since 2004. A1 Stephen J. Hadley, the national security adviser, is interviewing candidates for a new high-profile job that people in Washington are calling the war czar. The official would brief President Bush every morning on Iraq and Afghanistan, then prod cabinet secretaries into carrying out White House orders. A1 Militiamen loyal to the Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr clashed with American forces in northern Baghdad, an Interior Ministry official said, the latest in a series of indications that the militia may be emerging from two months of self-imposed dormancy. A5 Ireland Head Calls for Elections Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland called for a general election next month.

Under Irish law Mr. Ahern had to call elections by midsummer. He said he would campaign for re-election on the strength of the economy and helping restore Northern Ireland's stalled peace process. A6 Conduct Report Looms in Israel As an official report on the Israeli government's failings during the recent war against Hezbollah in Lebanon is about to be published, the main topic of public debate is whether Prime Minister Ehud Olmert will be able to hang onto power. Current polls show his approval ratings hovering between 2 and 3 percent. A6 U.S.-Afghan Raid Kills 6 American and Afghan troops raided a suspected bomb-making compound killing six people, including two women, and wounding two children, Afghan officials said. Angry villagers took the bodies of victims onto the main Kabul-to-Pakistan highway and demonstrated for more than five hours. A6 NATIONAL A14-18 Maine's Health Overhaul Harbors Costly Lessons Maine's new health care system was intended to provide universal care and cover 130,000 uninsured residents. But so far only 18,800 people have signed up for the state's coverage, DirigoChoice. The story of Maine's health program may harbor lessons for the country, as efforts to cover the uninsured take center stage in nearly every state. A1 Obama's Religious Background Senator Barack Obama converted to Christianity as an adult after an upbringing that offered him a course in comparative religion but no belief to call his own. Now his ties to a controversial Chicago minister have become a delicate issue for him as a presidential candidate. A1 Freeway Collapses in Bay Area A tanker truck accident caused a freeway overpass near downtown Oakland to collapse, sending hundreds of feet of concrete crashing onto a highway below, injuring the driver of the tanker truck. The repairs are likely to complicate the lives of Bay Area commuters for months. A14 Democrats Divided Over Veto The Democratic presidential field is divided over how to respond to President Bush's expected veto of legislation setting a timeline for removing troops from Iraq. While the candidates agree that the war should be ended, they differ over how fast troops should be withdrawn. A16 Spokesman Returns to Work Tony Snow, the White House press secretary, is to return to work today, while undergoing chemotherapy after a fiveweek absence after having discovered his colon cancer had spread to his liver. A15 Wrong Suspect Copes With Loss The killing of the first victim of the Virginia Tech shootings, Emily Hilscher, initially drew suspicion to her

News Summary

boyfriend, Karl D. Thornhill. Although he was soon cleared of wrongdoing, he is still coping with losing his girlfriend and being suspected in her death. A14 NEW YORK/REGION B1-4 Patrons Take a Final Ride As Historic Stable Closes The Claremont Riding Academy, the oldest continuously operated stable in New York City, has officially closed its doors. What made Claremont unique was not so much what it was but where it was: in the heart of the Upper West Side. B1 Little Relief for Over-65 Set When Gov. Eliot Spitzer and legislative leaders announced \$1.3 billion in new property tax relief, they did not mention that taxpayers 65 and older ended up with hardly any more money than they received last year under the plan. B1 An Artist's Legacy It would be impossible to mention Eddie Boros, an artist from the East Village who died on Friday, without describing his most visible work: a looming sculpture that rises 65 feet. The structure's survival over more than two decades has elevated it to the status of a neighborhood institution. B3 SPORTSMONDAY D1-10 Cardinals Pitcher Dies in Crash Josh Hancock, a relief pitcher for the St. Louis Cardinals, died in an automobile accident. His death was being compared to the 2002 death of Cardinals starting pitcher Darryl Kile. D1 BUSINESS DAY C1-10 Deal for Telecom Italia Telefonica of Spain and a group of Italian investors agreed to buy a controlling stake in Telecom Italia, allowing the Spanish telecommunications giant to expand into Italy and Latin America. C1 Film Tests Appetite for Horror "Hostel: Part II," a movie about the torture killing of college students, will serve as a test of the public's interest in graphic violence in the wake of killings at Virginia Tech. C1 Business Digest C2 OBITUARIES A19 horticulturist who stretched the boundaries of plant hardiness, she was 100. A19 Michael Malone A tattoo artist renowned for helping popularize and standardize tattooing through vivid images of dragons, daggers and crests, he was 64. A19 EDITORIAL A20-21 Editorials: The amnesty sideshow; who's afraid of pay go?; Georgia's shame; bundling in the Capitol. Columns: Bob Herbert, Paul Krugman. Bridge E7 Crossword E2 Metro Diary B2 TV Listings E8 Weather B5

http://www.nytimes.com

Load-Date: April 30, 2007



<u>Israelis bury eight terror victims; On high alert Gunman transfixed by Gaza</u> violence, his family says

The Gazette (Montreal)

March 8, 2008 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A3

Length: 865 words

Byline: ISABEL KERSHNER AND STEVEN ERLANGER, New York Times

Dateline: KFAR ETZION, West Bank

Body

They carried the body of Avraham David Moses, 16 years old, on a stretcher down the slope of the vibrant green cemetery here, shaded by tall pines, overlooking a valley, in utter silence.

The boy was wrapped in a black-and-white prayer shawl, and as the pallbearers slipped him into the grave yesterday, the long silence was broken by quiet weeping and occasional sobs.

Men recited psalms, and Naftali Moses, the boy's father, his garments torn in grief, said the Hebrew prayer for the dead, his voice breaking, before moving back up the slope to the parking lot, through a sombre line of mourners, men on one side, **women** on the other.

The boy's stepmother, Leah, described Avraham David, as he was known, as "a really good kid - he would come home and unload the dishwasher without being asked." And if the adults started gossiping at the table, she said, he would start reciting mishnayot, or oral teachings. "He was just an incredible blessing," she said.

Avraham David Moses was one of eight seminary students killed Thursday night in an act of terrorism, shot by a Palestinian from East Jerusalem who sprayed them with hundreds of rounds of automatic weapons fire before being killed himself. Ten other students were wounded, three of them seriously.

A 14-year-old Israeli-Canadian youth is one of the three students in critical condition. "We've discovered that one of the three critically wounded in hospital has Canadian citizenship, a kid that was born in Israel, but one of his parents is Canadian and he has dual citizenship. His family is from Toronto," Alan Baker, the Israeli ambassador to Canada, confirmed yesterday.

Nadav Samuels was born and raised in a suburb of Jerusalem. His father, Noah Samuels, is from Toronto, but moved to Israel with his British wife before their children were born.

It was unclear what group, if any, was responsible for the massacre. On Thursday, Hamas, the radical Islamic movement, praised the deed but did not claim responsibility for it. Yesterday, an anonymous caller claiming to be from Hamas took responsibility in a phone call to Reuters and said details would come later. But Fawzi Barhoum, a

Israelis bury eight terror victims; On high alert Gunman transfixed by Gaza violence, his family says

senior Hamas spokesperson in Gaza, said no claim of responsibility was official unless made in a written statement from the military wing of Hamas.

The gunman's family said he was intensely religious, but did not belong to any militant group.

Mark Regev, spokesperson for Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, said the government would act after proper investigation and deliberation, and he condemned those, like Hamas, who celebrated the killings with parades in Gaza. "That Hamas calls this a heroic act, and praises it, this exposes them for what they are," he said.

The young men died as they were studying in the library of the Mercaz Harav yeshiva in Jerusalem, a major centre for the religious Zionist movement that supports Israeli settlement in the West Bank.

The dead, most of them 15 or 16, with the oldest 26, were all buried yesterday, in separate funerals drawing thousands of weeping and angry Israelis.

The funeral processions began together earlier yesterday at the yeshiva itself, where thousands of people - many of them in the traditional black clothing of the ultra-Orthodox or wearing knitted skullcaps, characteristic of more modern religious Zionists - lined the streets.

In the large courtyard, where the blood had been washed away, eight benches were marked with the names of the dead, and one wall of the yeshiva was covered with large posters listing them.

As each body was brought forward to rest on its bench, the crowds outside the gates parted to let the pallbearers pass, with cries and screams from relatives and friends.

In every corner, students hugged and cried, and many went to see and touch the closed library door, shattered with bullets.

The ceremony ended as it began, with the procession of bodies taken out of the gates, one by one, for their separate burials.

The Israeli government declared a high alert yesterday and barred Palestinians in the West Bank from travelling to Jerusalem over the weekend, deploying thousands of police officers and limiting the numbers of Muslims allowed to pray at the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

The killer, identified as Ala Abu Dhaim, 25, was a Palestinian with permanent residency in Jerusalem.

His home in the Jebel Mukaber neighbourhood of East Jerusalem was adorned yesterday with the flags of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and <u>Hezbollah</u>. According to his family, he worked as a driver for a private company that had done deliveries to the yeshiva, but the police would not confirm that.

His family said that although he had been intensely religious, he was not a member of any militant group, and he had planned on marrying this summer. But he had been transfixed by the bloodshed in Gaza, where 126 Palestinians died from Wednesday through Monday, his sister, Iman Abu Dhaim, told the Associated Press. "He told me he was not able to sleep because of the grief," she said.

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah, condemned the killing of civilians by both sides, and Israel said it would continue peace talks with him. Abbas had suspended such talks after the deaths in Gaza.

Graphic

Israelis bury eight terror victims; On high alert Gunman transfixed by Gaza violence, his family says

Colour Photo: BRIAN HENDLER GETTY IMAGES; A family member ritually tears his shirt as a sign of mourning during the funeral service for eight religious Jewish students at the Mercaz Harav yeshiva in Jerusalem. The funeral processions began at the yeshiva itself, where thousands of people lined the streets.;

Colour Photo: REUTERS; Israelis mourn at burial service for Avraham David Moses, 16, in Kfar Etzion.;

Load-Date: May 29, 2008



The grim word on 'moderates'

The Sunday Mail (Australia)

April 15, 2007 Sunday

State - Main Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 52

Length: 960 words **Byline:** Andrew Bolt

Body

yournews@thesundaymail.com.au

Sheik Taj Din al-Hilali isn't the only hate-preacher in our mosques. Strange choices were made to show us Islamic values are universal values

MAYBE this time, I thought. Maybe this first Australian Islamic Conference would show us the moderate Muslim leaders we've searched for.

We need them. Look at the latest doings of the hate-preachers.

Australia's Sheik Taj Din al-Hilali gave an interview in Iran demanding Muslims stand "in the trenches" with its hostage-taking regime. He is being investigated for allegedly giving \$12,000 to a Lebanese propagandist linked to terrorists.

Meanwhile, the head of the Lebanese Muslim Association that pays him to preach at Australia's biggest mosque, has had to seek police protection for suggesting this fool had best shut up.

The Federation of Islamic Councils that made Hilali mufti refuses to sack him, though he's vilified Jews, praised suicide bombers as "heroes", called the September 11 terrorist attacks "God's work against oppressors", excused convicted pack rapist Bilal Skaf and said raped <u>women</u> should be "jailed for life".

The Howard Government sidelined its Muslim Community Reference Group after finding a third of the 14 "moderates" it hand-picked supported the Iranian-backed <u>Hezbollah</u> extremist group, notorious for its terrorist wing.

So we desperately need to hear from those moderate Muslim leaders we keep telling each other must surely exist.

Was it so dumb to think Mercy Mission would provide them -- Muslim leaders who would demonstrate that they "benefit the communities in which they live"?

You may have dared to hope, given this new group's leaders include the highly educated Tawfique Chowdhury, a Bangladeshi-born and Australian-raised IT project manager, and Adel Salman, who so impressed his employers at Cadbury Schweppes he was selected for the prestigious Asialink leaders program.

The grim word on 'moderates'

Salman organised Mercy Mission's first Australian Islamic Conference at Melbourne University over the Easter weekend.

The conference had a noble aim: to "present a true picture of 'Islam in action' to the wider community" and convince Australians that "Islamic values are universal values".

So who did Mercy Mission choose to give us this "true picture" of a moderate Islam?

Of the six international speakers it advertised, let me introduce you to two.

Bilal Philips, a Jamaican-born Canadian was a communist and worker for the Black Panther terrorist group before converting to Islam and becoming a preacher.

His message was uncompromising: "Western culture led by the United States is an enemy of Islam." Which makes him an odd choice to reassure us that "Islamic values are universal values".

The choice of Philips is even odder given the US named him as an "unindicted co-conspirator" over the 1993 bombing of New York's World Trade Centre. Our security agencies judged him such a threat he was banned from coming here.

Philips insists he rejects terrorism and considers al-Qaida a "deviate" group. But his website and interviews show why some might not take him at his word.

He admits he was hired by the Saudi air force during the first Gulf War to preach to American soldiers stationed in Saudi Arabia and convert them to Islam.

He says he succeeded, and "registered the names and addresses of over 3000 male and female US soldiers".

"My role was confined to encouraging them to train Muslim-American volunteers and go to Bosnia to help the mujahidin and take part in the war (against Serbia)," he boasted.

But Clement Rodney Hampton-El, an al-Qaida-trained American bombmaker serving a 35-year sentence for the World Trade Centre bombings, claimed Philips gave him the names of soldiers about to leave the military and who might help the Bosnian jihadists.

To repeat: Philips denies any links to al-Qaida, and swears he is opposed to terrorism, although he does say Muslims are entitled to defend their faith by force.

But given his support for jihadists, his past contacts with jailed terrorists and the allegations against him, why on earth did Mercy Mission choose him to preach here?

Also high on Mercy Mission's guest list was another convert, British journalist Yvonne Ridley.

Ridley didn't just marry a colonel in Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organisation but has been busy defending other terror groups like it.

Soon after the September 11 terrorist attacks, Ridley accused Islamic sheiks of going soft.

"Muslims have lost confidence since September 11," she complained. "Something as simple as suicide bombers being martyrs is being denied by prominent sheiks."

At a Belfast meeting of Islamic students she insisted there were no innocent Israeli victims in suicide bombings. Not even children.

She even hailed as a "martyr" the Chechen terrorist Shamil Basayev, who planned the attack on the Beslan school in which 333 hostages -- 186 of them children -- were killed.

The grim word on 'moderates'

And when relatives of al-Qaida's then-leader in Iraq, the head-hacker Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, denounced his bomb attacks on three hotels in Jordan leaving 61 dead, including members of a wedding party, she was livid.

"There is something rather repugnant about some of those who rush to renounce acts of terrorism," she sneered.

What, in Ridley's incantations of hatred and her defence of child-killers and wedding bombers, makes her the kind of Muslim who would "benefit the communities in which they live"?

What does it say about Mercy Mission that Ridley and Philips were hired as speakers to tell us "Islamic values are universal values" and we have nothing to fear?

Is this really the best our Muslim leaders can offer?

I beg of them: prove it isn't. Until you do I shall take you at your grim word.

Join Andrew to discuss this on blogs.news.com.au/heraldsun/andrewbolt

Load-Date: April 14, 2007



Political turmoil in 2008 hampers progress on human-rights issues

The Daily Star (Lebanon)
January 5, 2009 Monday

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Length: 1730 words **Byline:** Dalila Mahdawi

Body

2008 could have marked a year of change for human-rights campaigners in Lebanon, but their efforts were marred by political turbulence and reluctance from the government to address even the most glaring abuses. Lebanon remains a country in which, among other issues, *women* face routine discrimination.

Year in Review

BEIRUT: 2008 could have marked a year of change for human-rights campaigners in Lebanon, but their efforts were marred by political turbulence and reluctance from the government to address even the most glaring abuses. Lebanon remains a country in which, among other issues, <u>women</u> face routine discrimination, the abuse of migrant workers goes unpunished and politically motivated killings unsolved, refugees are disenfranchized, torture is still practiced, and the whereabouts of individuals missing since the 1975-90 Civil War have yet to be confirmed.

After six months of political vacuum, Lebanon's political troubles took a turn for the worst on May 7, when <u>Hizbullah</u> and its allies briefly took control of parts of Beirut. In the bloody fighting, at least 81 people, including many civilians, lost their lives.

To date, however, no investigations into the deaths have been launched and no perpetrators of the violence prosecuted, with the exception of a shop owner who shot dead two people at a funeral procession on May 10. Nor have victims from Tripoli, North Lebanon, and other areas of the country, seen anyone be held accountable for deadly fighting that has erupted intermittently since May. Despite repeated calls by a number of civil society institutions for those involved to be prosecuted, the dead have been forgotten in the ensuing tepid reconciliation efforts of Lebanon's rival politicians.

The dead of 2008 are not the only victims of governmental amnesia: The families of persons missing since the Lebanese Civil War are still campaigning to uncover the fate of their loved ones.

More than 17,400 individuals "disappeared" during those darkest days of Lebanon's history, and while most are presumed dead, hundreds are thought to still be languishing in Syrian prisons. However, an amnesty law for all crimes perpetrated before March 1991 gave protection to those responsible for the disappearances and the government all but dropped the issue.

Political turmoil in 2008 hampers progress on human-rights issues

But forgetting is something the families of the disappeared refuse to do and in 2008 continued to pressure the government. On April 10, the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Support of the Lebanese in Detention and Exile held a news conference outside the UN building in Beirut, where several families have been holding a sit-in protest for the last three years. Director Ghazi Aad lamented the failure of the Lebanese government to investigate the disappeared, saying, "Lebanon is party to this crime in its refusal to take the issue seriously."

Impunity in Lebanon looks likely to continue in 2009 as the country's judiciary is weak and not fully independent: The government only finalized long-overdue appointments in the sector in December. In addition, activists are still campaigning to abolish torture and ill-treatment, which Human Rights Watch (HRW) said "remain a serious problem in Lebanese detention facilities."

Testimonies gathered by a number of Lebanese rights groups from former detainees indicate that security officials at the Military Intelligence unit of the Defense Ministry, the Information Branch of the Internal Security Forces (ISF), the Drug Repression Bureau detention facilities in Beirut and Zahle, and some police stations, beat and tortured detainees.

Though Lebanon ratified the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 2000, it has yet to submit a report that was due in 2001 about the measures it is taking to abide by the convention, and torture against detainees is thought to be widespread.

Over the course of 2008, however, the Lebanese government trained police officers and prison guards in human rights and provided full access to the International Committee of the Red Cross to detention centers, indicating change is taking place, albeit on a small scale. Although over 40 prisoners still face the death penalty, no prisoner has been executed since 2004. It is expected Lebanon will this year begin drafting a law abolishing the practice after it supported a second UN resolution in December calling for a moratorium on capital punishment.

Meanwhile in 2008, freedom of expression suffered a blow as lawyer and human rights activist Mohammad Mughraby faced trial in a Beirut criminal court for a speech made in 2003 at the European Parliament. In his speech, Mughraby criticized Lebanon's military court system, noting allegations that suspects brought before military courts were tortured, as well as the lack of legal training of the judges in those courts.

Mughraby has faced the charge, as well as accusations of slander, before. His trial in 2008 was therefore criticized as a breach of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Lebanon is a party and which stipulates that no one should be tried or punished a second time for an offense for which they have been acquitted in a previous trial. Although a judge dropped the charges against Mughraby in November, the Lebanese government is pursuing other prosecutions against him.

Other violations to freedom of expression in 2008 included the hospitalization of journalist Omar Harqous after he was attacked by supporters of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, and the burning or forcible closure of offices belonging to Saad Hariri's Future TV and Al-Mustaqbal newspaper during the sectarian fighting in May.

Lebanon's refugee population continued to suffer from a lack of legal status and poverty in 2008, as well as high drop-out rates from schools and inadequate access to healthcare. According to a survey by the Danish Refugee Council in late 2007, there are some 50,000 Iraqi refugees in Lebanon, 77.5 percent of whom entered illegally.

Their plight has improved since 2007, however, with Lebanon gaining international notoriety for detaining and deporting high numbers of Iraqis. In February 2008, Iraqis in Lebanon gained official recognition as refugees and several have been able to acquire legal status after the government introduced a regularization program.

According to Amnesty International, however, "Iraqi refugees are still being arrested in Lebanon albeit on a much reduced scale." Just two months into the regularization program, the United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees said 22 Iraqis had been arrested and detained.

In November 2008, a representative from Save the Children Sweden said Lebanon was "the most difficult place" to live as a Palestinian refugee. Some 409,700 Palestinians reside in overcrowded camps lacking basic infrastructure

and suffer from a "complete lack of integration," according to Zara Sejberg, as well as inadequate access to healthcare and education. They also endure the highest levels of abject poverty of all Palestinian refugees, the UN Palestinian relief agency UNRWA has said.

Although the Lebanese Cabinet established the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee in 2005 in an effort to improve the plight of Palestinian refugees, it has produced little in terms of concrete reform over the last year. Palestinians continue to be barred from all but the most menial professions, forbidden from owning property and many analysts believe their situation has deteriorated since Islamist group Fatah al-Islam engaged the Lebanese Armed Forces in bloody fighting at the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp in 2007. The camp, which was reduced to rubble in the fighting, has yet to be rebuilt and its inhabitants remain displaced.

Lebanese <u>women</u> also continued to face discriminatory laws and insufficient protection from domestic and family violence over the course of the year. Despite active campaigning, Lebanese <u>women</u> married to non-Lebanese men still cannot pass on their nationality to their husbands or children and continue to face harmful stereotyping even in official school textbooks.

Although constituting 56 percent of the Lebanese population, <u>women</u> have less than 5 percent representation in government and complain they face insurmountable obstacles entering politics. Activists have seen little progress made on their call for a 35 percent <u>women</u>'s quota in government.

By the end of 2008, Lebanon had made no steps to ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against <u>Women</u> (CEDAW), though Clause 61 of the Ministerial Statement issued in August remarked that the Cabinet would "work toward implementing Lebanon's commitment to international conventions and in particular to CEDAW."

The clause also stated that the government would "also seek to address all forms of violence against females."

More than 200,000 <u>female</u> migrant domestic workers, excluded from Lebanese labor laws, also continued to face inadequate protection from workplace exploitation and abuse. Migrant workers continued to complain of withheld wages, overwork, and little access to the legal system when abused. According to HRW, at least one migrant worker dies in Lebanon every week, often while attempting to flee abusive employers. The Lebanese authorities rarely investigate these deaths, and abusive employers are almost never prosecuted. "Lebanon lags far behind almost every country in the region when it comes to protecting migrant <u>women</u>'s rights," said HRW representative Nisha Varia in December, adding 2008 "marked a year of missed opportunities" on the issue. Nevertheless, HRW has said it has noticed increasing media coverage on the issue over the last 12 months. In September, senior Shiite cleric Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah made the treatment of domestic workers of religious importance when he issued a fatwa, or religious edict, urging employers to refrain from physical violence and/or sexual harassment against their employees.

In late June, secretary general of Amnesty International Irene Khan visited Lebanon, urging the government to reaffirm its commitment to human rights through concrete action. But although the government claims to be developing a National Human Rights Plan, little information about it has materialized and rights campaigners look set to face another uphill struggle in 2009, especially if sectarian violence breaks out again.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



Canada strengthening its links with Israel; Tories abandon 'middle stance' of Liberals

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

May 3, 2008 Saturday

National Edition

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Section: ISRAEL AT 60; Pg. A16

Length: 2026 words

Byline: John Ivison, National Post

Body

Tal Pichovich runs a restaurant in the Israeli town of Sderot, which borders the Gaza Strip and is subject to incessant Qassam rocket attacks. She was in Ottawa this month to explain to Canadians how hard it is to bake bread when you have to run to the bomb shelter every 20 minutes, hands covered in dough.

Ms. Pichovich was accompanied by George Adjedj, who laments that his grandchildren have to play indoors at all times, and Eeki Elner, who tells a story about the day his house was hit by a rocket while he made his way to his morning shower. "I shook for two days. We feel abandoned -- there are lots of stories about the Palestinians but nothing about us."

The three Sderot residents were trying to change that by sharing their stories with Maxime Bernier, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who earlier this month issued a strongly worded diplomatic caution to Israel because of retaliation to the Qassam attacks on Sderot that killed Palestinian civilians.

They say they were given a sympathetic hearing by a government that has increasingly strong links with the Israeli regime.

More starkly than any of its predecessors, Stephen Harper's Conservative government has supported Israel when it has come under attack from Hamas or <u>Hezbollah</u>, considered by Canada to be terrorist organizations. Since it came to power, the Harper government has gone out of its way to make the point that when it comes to conflict between Israel and a terrorist organization, Canada is not neutral.

In the wake of <u>Hezbollah</u>'s attacks and the subsequent Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 2006, the Prime Minister told a B'nai Brith dinner, "The fact is this: Those who attacked Israel and those who sponsor such attacks don't seek merely to gain some leverage, alter some boundary or to right some wrong. They seek what they and those like them have always sought -- the destruction of Israel and the destruction of all Jewish people."

When then-Liberal leadership candidate Michael Ignatieff

condemned Israel's strike on the Lebanese village of Qana that killed 28 people as a "war crime," Mr. Harper was much more circumspect, describing the Israeli response as "measured" and accusing the Liberal Party of "an anti-Israeli bias."

Canada strengthening its links with Israel; Tories abandon 'middle stance' of Liberals

Canada was the first country to withdraw financial aid from the Hamas-led Palestinian government and, at a meeting of la Francophonie in Bucharest, Mr. Harper blocked a resolution that would only have recognized Lebanese suffering in the conflict.

Critics suggested that the Canadian government had abandoned its traditional role as an "honest broker" in the region and was doing so merely in order to woo Jewish voters in some key ridings in Toronto and Montreal.

Electoral politics may have played a role, but the more pro-Israeli position reflected Mr. Harper's desire to have a much more muscular foreign policy, backed by enhanced military spending. "My own assessment of Canada's role in the Middle East in the past decade or so is that we have been completely absent," he said.

That message was reinforced by then-Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay last year when he visited the region and defended a boycott of Hamas, saying Canada is a friend of Israel and was merely "standing up to terrorism." Earlier this month, Canada was the only voice of dissent to a UN Human Rights Council resolution that accused Israel of war crimes in its ongoing battle against Palestinian militants in Gaza.

Alan Baker, the Israeli ambassador in Ottawa, said the Harper government has been far more prepared to abandon the "middle stance" traditionally assumed by Liberal governments.

But, this being the Middle East, nothing is ever straightforward. While the Harper government has undeniably moved closer to Israel, it has not abandoned the Palestinians entirely. Funding to the Palestinian Authority was restored last summer after the government said it was encouraged by the efforts of its president, Mahmoud Abbas, to revive the peace process. Canada has since committed \$300-million over five years in support of the peace process and is a vocal proponent of a "two-state solution."

Neither is the relationship between Canada and Israel without its disagreements. Canada is still officially opposed to the establishment of settlements in the West Bank, even if Mr. Bernier was silent on the issue during a recent visit to Ramallah when he was asked if he approved of Har Homa, a settlement under construction that even the United States has condemned.

Then there was the recent tiff when the Foreign Minister scolded Israel for the military operation in Gaza. Mr. Baker, the Israeli ambassador, rejected what he called Mr. Bernier's "irresponsible allegations," saying, "Israel is duty bound to protect its citizens and will do so as it considers necessary to put an end to the bombings."

Rather than being a departure from previous policy, Shimon Fogel, chief executive of the Canada-Israel Committee, said that the Conservative government's stance is merely a progression from where Paul Martin's Liberals were already heading.

"It was under the Martin government that a recalibration took place -- it's not something exclusive to the Harper government," he said. "There are not huge gaps between where Canadian policy was and where Canadian thinking is now."

He said much more important than the change of government was the context in which policy was being decided. "A lot has changed over the past decade, in terms of ... the rise of radical Islam, its entrenchment throughout the region and so on. I make a distinction between tone and how that translates into policy. This government is pretty consistent with what the other parties would do. But in terms of warmth and the expression of friendship, they have ratcheted it up a notch."

For that, Mr. Elner and his colleagues from Sderot are grateful. "We feel our story is not told often enough," he said. "But the Canadian government is willing to listen and see the faces behind the news. They are not giving everyone that time [with the minister] and we are very appreciative of this."

David Azrieli

Acclaimed architect

Among Canada's most notable architects, Mr. Azrieli is also the father of Israel's modern skyline. After escaping Poland ahead of the Nazi invasion, he fought in Israel's 1948 War of Independence. In 1954, he settled in Montreal and began his career in building design. He has built several prominent Israeli complexes, including the country's first enclosed shopping centre, its largest centre, the Malha Shopping Mall, and Tel Aviv's Azrieli Center, encompassing a shopping complex and three distinct skyscrapers. He has established numerous endowments for Israeli and Canadian universities. In 1998, he received the Israel Prime Minister's Jubilee Award for contributions to the Israeli economy, and is also a Member of the Order of Canada.

Sidney Greenberg

Chairman, Israel Ice Hockey Federation

The 70-year-old, vice president with Canada's Astral Media Inc., chairs Israel's Ice Hockey Federation from his Toronto home. Israel's men's hockey team is ranked 34th in the world by the International Ice Hockey Federation, an improvement he credits to summer camps organized by former NHL coach Roger Nielson until his death in 2003. Last year, Israel hosted the first Jewish World Hockey Championship on the hockey rink in Metula, Israel's Canada Centre. Mr. Greenberg, credited with negotiating the Soviet Union's participation at the 1989 Maccabi Games, was named to Israel's Sports Hall of Fame.

Benny Landa

Inventor, Indigo Print Systems

He has been called Israel's most prolific inventor, creating the world's first Digital Offset Colour printing press. Mr. Landa was born in Poland following the Second World War and, after living for years in a German refugee camp, his family moved to a poor but warm home in Canada. As an adult, he immigrated to Israel and began working with machines. He holds 500 patents worldwide for advancements in the printing industry, and was recently presented with an honorary doctorate from Ben Gurion University. After selling his company Indigo to Hewlett-Packard in 2001, Mr. Landa became a strategic advisor to HP and chairman of Jerusalem's HumanEyes Technologies. He established the Landa Foundation to support equality and opportunity in education.

Moshe Safdie

Architect and urban designer

Mr. Safdie was born in the town of Haifa, Israel, before moving to Montreal as a teenager. After studying architecture at McGill University his master's thesis for a cellular habitat that could be lifted into place was selected to be part of Montreal's Expo compound in 1967. The same year, he returned to Israel and joined a team refurbishing Old Jerusalem. Mr. Safdie, who also holds U.S. citizenship became a professor at Harvard University from 1976 to 1984. He currently runs an urban design company with offices in Boston, Toronto and Jerusalem. His other works in Israel include the city plan for Modi'in, Jerusalem's Hebrew Union College, and the grave site of former prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and his wife Leah.

Benjamin Dunkelman

Commander, Israeli Defence Force

(1913 - June 11, 1997) Mr. Dunkelman was a Canadian soldier during the Second World War. The Toronto-born Jew joined the Israeli army to fight in the War of Independence. He was made commander of an armored brigade. During the summer offensive, he led the 7th Brigade to capture the town of Nazareth. After some resistance, the town leaders agreed to a ceasefire and surrender in exchange for written guarantee that no harm would come to the town's Arab residents. In his book, Dual Allegiance, he wrote that he soon received orders to expel civilians

from town, which he refused to follow based on the promises he made as a representative of the Israeli army. His refusal forced the general to seek sanctions from a higher level. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion vetoed the order, and the town of Nazareth was never forced to evacuate.

Faigie Zimmerman

Founder, Israel International Women's Forum

Ms. Zimmerman was born, educated and married in Montreal before moving to Israel in 1980. She has become a champion of woman's rights in Israel, founding Israel's International <u>Women</u>'s Forum and acting as an executive member of the Organization for the Advancement of <u>Women</u> in Politics in Israel. The mother of four, and grandmother of six, also founded the early child development program Equal Opportunity and chairs the Israel Vocal Arts Institute and was the international chairman of the Lion of Judah for about ten years.

Charles Bronfman

Co-founder, Birthright Israel

Mr. Bronfman made his mark in Canada as co-chairman of the Seagram Company Ltd., and as principal owner of the Montreal Expos Baseball Club. He was also Chairman of Koor Industries Ltd., one of Israel's leading investment holding companies. One of Canada's richest men, with a net worth of \$2.2 billion. Mr. Bronfman now uses his wealth to finance The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies Inc., a family of charitable foundations operating to help strengthen the unity of the Jewish People in Israel, Canada and the U.S. He also co-founded Birthright Israel, a program aimed at providing young Jewish people with the chance to visit and learn about Israel. His numerous honours include an honorary Doctorate of Philosophy from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and in 2002 was made an honorary member of the City of Jerusalem, with his wife Andrea Morrison.

Leon Koffler

CEO, Israeli drugstore chain SuperPharm

Mr. Koffler has been praised for revolutionizing Israel's shopping habits, after building his SuperPharm store into a national chain. The Kofflerfamily launched Israel's largest chain of drugstores in the 1970s, after Leon's father Murray built the Shoppers Drug Mart chain into a Canada staple. SuperPharm has more than 120 locations across Israel and annual sales of about \$500 million. He was named International Mass Market Retailer of the Year, for bringing North American-style chain drug retailing to Israel. Mr. Koffler has also brought North America's Office Depot, Tower Records and Blockbuster Video to the country.

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Graphic

Color Photo: Ronen Zvulun, Reuters; Foreign Minister Maxime Bernier views pictures of Jews killed during the Holocaust during a visit to Jerusalem in January. The Conservatives under Stephen Harper have supported Israel more than any of their predecessors.;

Load-Date: May 3, 2008



Kuwaiti newspaper criticizes 'barbaric' Mercaz Harav attack

The Jerusalem Post
March 12, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 19

Length: 199 words

Byline: Jerusalem Post staff

Body

A Kuwaiti newspaper published unprecedentedly harsh criticism of the terror attack in which eight students at Mercaz Harav Yeshiva were killed last week.

"The attack at the yeshiva was a barbaric murder of eight children who were engaged in religious study," read a Tuesday op-ed in the daily Al-Watan. "This odious and inhuman terror attack exemplifies the extremist and inhuman path of the terror organizations Hamas and *Hizbullah*."

The writer goes on to assert that "the terror attack must prompt the free world to comprehend the magnitude of terrorism and its threats and to realize that a clear and unequivocal stance must be assumed against it. There can be no negotiations with terrorism that indiscriminately aims itself at students, <u>women</u> and babies without any consideration for the means and the targets."

Contrasting the terror attack with the IDF's operations in the Gaza Strip, the writer explains that "there is no link between a murderous terrorist act and the inadvertent killing of civilians in response to the firing of rockets by Hamas."

The piece presented a stark contrast to the main current in the Arab press, which published almost sweeping praise for the "heroic operation."

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



The prime minister against the state

The Jerusalem Post July 18, 2008 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 24

Length: 1492 words **Byline:** David Horovitz

Highlight: EDITOR'S NOTES. Olmert's escalating battle to clear his name depends on undermining the very institutions that the citizenry is required to respect. It's a fight that should not be waged from the Prime Minister's

Office

Body

Flash back a year and a half. Raging and emotional, Israel's president Moshe Katsav, facing grave allegations of sexual misconduct, convenes a press conference at which he unleashes a flood of hysterical accusations against a dizzying array of those he says are out to get him. The media is looking to lynch him. The police is proving utterly susceptible to false allegations being levelled against him by all manner of disgruntled folks. The state prosecution hierarchy is biased and leaking like a sieve. And he? He, of course, is a paragon of tragically obscured innocence.

Watching the dismal performance unfold - watching Israel's ceremonial first citizen urge his countryfolk, in his personal cause, to sacrifice their fealty to our country's prime institutions of law and order - is that other Israeli first among equals, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

That same evening, departing from the prepared text of his ultra-important address to the Herzliya Conference on the Iranian nuclear threat, Olmert demands that the president step down from office. Although Katsav has yet to be indicted - indeed, 18 months later, the case against him is still locked in legal limbo - Olmert declares that "the president cannot continue to fulfill his position and he should leave Beit Hanassi."

The Herzliya audience, recognizing the validity of Olmert's plea, endorsing the premise that the president is staining his office and his people, applauds enthusiastically. Somberly, the prime minister concludes: "This is a sad day for the State of Israel," and then returns to his printed text.

Olmert has, thus far, spared us a repeat of the raging Katsav show. To date, mercifully, he has not summoned the camera crews and the correspondents and indulged in an orgy of outraged assault on his despicable accusers and their poisonous motives. When he did address the nation, indeed, a little over two months ago, after Morris Talansky's cash- stuffed envelopes were first ripped open, it was as a dignified, statesmanlike man of integrity - a man with the utmost respect for the rule of law. He was sure he had done nothing wrong, he said. He had "never received a bribe" nor taken "an agora for my own pocket." He was confident the suspicions would be swiftly dispelled. But if that did not prove the case, and "even though the law does not obligate this," he would resign if he were indicted.

But in the past few days, with the eruption of yet another alleged scandal, his lawyers, and to a lesser extent Olmert himself, have begun to veer into Katsav territory.

The prime minister against the state

In an impromptu briefing before he flew off to Paris and that awkward missed rendezvous with the elusive President Bashar Assad, Olmert declared that the leaks from the latest investigation were a breach of democratic norms. He was, he said, "astounded" by the distorted misrepresentations emanating from the relevant hierarchies. Starting to echo Katsav's tactics, he attempted to both turn the legal tables and encourage the public to make that journey with him, asserting that the result of such reprehensible behavior by the institutions of law and order "will only be public lack of faith in the enforcement authorities."

His army of lawyers and spokespeople have been considerably more forthright and combative, speaking terrifyingly of "a coup" being masterminded against our democratically elected prime minister, and invoking all kinds of conspiracy theories by way of ostensible motivation, including the risible notion that the cops, state prosecutors, courts, media et al are in league to oust Olmert because only thus can they be rid of his uncomfortably reformist Justice Minister Daniel Friedmann.

As those lawyers this week determinedly set about dismantling Talansky's testimony, they seemed wrong-footed by the new Rishon Tours double-billing allegations - with too many legal and PR cooks spoiling the Olmert-is-blameless broth via a range of sometimes contradictory explanations. One claimed that Olmert's travel agency sent out multiple bills to the various nonprofit groups on whose behalf he flew to speak because it wasn't clear which of them was going to foot the bill. Another asserted that some of the double-billed flight funds were used to cover other expenses.

Olmert's complaints about tendentious police leaks are well-founded. And as with the Talansky allegations, which stood unchallenged until this week's cross-examination, there should be no rush to judgement on the specifics of this latest scandal. However improbable it may seem, Olmert may be able to produce a legitimate explanation that both clarifies the Rishon Tours billing system and leaves him clear of income tax and other breaches.

The trouble is that those who have wanted to believe in Olmert's absolute propriety and complete innocence heartfeltedly endorsed his May 8 hope that his storm of legal trouble would pass "as swiftly as it came." Yet the storm has not passed. It has deepened. Olmert's legal advisers have not worked to resolve the allegations as speedily as possible but, rather, to stall and play for time. His aides, to put it mildly, have not always conducted themselves under police investigation in the manner one would expect of colleagues determined to clear the unjustly muddied name of an honest man. And, most problematically, the defense strategy now evidently involves undermining the institutions of the state.

Attorney-General Menahem Mazuz - a man in the deeply unenviable position of heading Israel's state prosecution during a period when its prime targets have been senior members of the government he simultaneously serves as chief legal adviser - asserted this week that it was not his task to seek the suspension of a prime minister who has not been charged with any offense.

"It is not the job of the attorney-general to appoint prime ministers or to dismiss them," Mazuz said. It was rather, he opined carefully, a matter for the prime minister himself, and for the public and the political echelons.

But there are, in fact, legal provisions that a different attorney-general might invoke to press for a prime ministerial suspension. And there are, of course, prime ministers who would not have needed prompting: Yitzhak Rabin, resigning in 1977 when confronted with the minor infraction of his wife's having maintained a dollar account in the US after he ended his term as ambassador there; Golda Meir, stepping down after the Yom Kippur War.

THE ISRAELI public drew its conclusions about Prime Minister Olmert during and after the Second Lebanon War. Memorably, a snap opinion survey on Channel 2 last year, taken by telephone on the day the Winograd Committee had issued its damning preliminary indictment of leadership ineptitude, found that precisely zero percent of those polled would choose him again as their leader.

This week's "exchange" with <u>Hizbullah</u> was so wrenching a choice, balancing a capitulation so totally, self-defeatingly stupid against the upholding of uniquely Israeli values, notably a commitment to the soldiers in our people's army that is incomprehensible to those who do not live here. But this is the most ruthless of neighborhoods, as the massed, hate-filled, bloodthirsty celebrants of Samir Kuntar's release reminded us. And

The prime minister against the state

when the message conveyed by our freeing of a brutal and unapologetic murderer of <u>women</u> and children is that kidnapping our troops, far from carrying such terrible consequences as to be unthinkable, pays off handsomely even if the victims are dead, a necessary comfort would be the certainty that everything has now been done to ensure that we are infinitely better organized and protected against further such assault.

Yet there can be no such assurance so long as the same failed prime minister is still at the helm. The National Security Council that was supposed to help compensate for his strategic inexpertise remains marginalized. And the one Winograd panelist who has seen fit to speak out rails despairingly against lessons unlearned and recommendations unimplemented.

The Olmert of 2006, moreover, was at least a full-time prime minister. In 2008, he is a multiple police suspect, too, and necessarily distracted as a consequence.

OLMERT SHOULD have resigned after the war in dignified recognition of his mishandling of it, as did his chief of General Staff and his defense minister. He did not.

He should have suspended himself when unable swiftly to clear his name in the Talansky affair. He did not.

Now, he asserts that he is clean and the law enforcement authorities are dirty, that his plight is a consequence of a corrupted apparatus. But whatever its merits, he must surely recognize that such a fight, Olmert vs Israel, whose success depends on undermining the very institutions of state that the citizenry is required to respect, cannot be conducted by a serving prime minister, a holder of high state office.

He should look back to what he had to say in that context, in January 2007, about Moshe Katsav.

Graphic

2 photos: DIGNIFIED, SO FAR. Olmert has spared us a repeat of the raging Katsav show. But he is veering into Katsav territory. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski; AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Egypt Offers Humanitarian Aid but Is Criticized for Refusing to Open Gaza Border - Correction Appended

The New York Times

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final



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Length: 861 words

Byline: By STEVEN ERLANGER; Nadim Audi contributed reporting.

Dateline: EL ARISH, Egypt

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Egypt Offers Humanitarian Aid but Is Criticized for Refusing to Open Gaza Border

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The two young men sat in a tea shop, eyes glued to Al Jazeera and its nonstop television coverage of the wounded and dead in Gaza, with a special focus on two dead sisters, shown repeatedly lying in shrouds side by side.

"When you see small children dying like that, why did they die?" Mr. Kamal said passionately. "What did they do?"

Both were careful in discussing the tunnels, but Mr. Salem said, with a bit of exaggeration, "Israel destroyed maybe 40 tunnels the other day, but there are a thousand."

His words were echoed by Ahmad Abdo, 43. "The tunnels are our lifeline," he said. "The Israelis bombed some, but they can't bomb them all. Their economy is our economy."

Mr. Salem said all Arabs should help the Palestinians, but he was less clear about how.

The military men in Rafah, Mr. Salem said, "are there to help." But then he said, neatly describing the Egyptian dilemma, "Of course, if the Palestinians push through, the military is also there to push them back."

http://www.nytimes.com

Correction

Egypt Offers Humanitarian Aid but Is Criticized for Refusing to Open Gaza Border

An article on Wednesday about Egypt's response to the Israeli assault on Gaza described their geographical relationship incorrectly. Gaza abuts northern Egypt, not southern Egypt.

Correction-Date: January 2, 2009

Graphic

PHOTO: A man wounded in the conflict between Israel and Hamas was put into an ambulance in El Arish, Egypt, to be taken to Cairo. (PHOTOGRAPH BY AMR DALSH/REUTERS)

Load-Date: December 31, 2008



Comment

Sunday Tribune (Ireland)
January 18, 2009

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Section: NEWS; Pg. N20

Length: 974 words

Byline: Diarmuid Doyle

Body

If you key the words "Joseph Goebbels" into the Google search engine, you will be offered a choice of 617,000 entries containing information about Adolf Hitler's propaganda minister. Goebbels still remains a point of reference for many people who should know better. In recent years, Tom Cruise, Michael Moore, Katie Couric, Peter Sutherland, Karl Rove, Condoleezza Rice, Silvio Berlusconi, Al Franken and, er, Richard Bruton have all been compared to Goebbels for one reason or another. And that's just a small selection.

Bruton's accuser was the former justice minister Michael McDowell, who made the comparison in the Dail a few years ago. He made a graceful and genuine apology subsequently, and there the matter rested. Nobody, least of all Richard Bruton, got too outraged, and Dick Roche resisted the temptation to throw himself like a human shield in front of Bruton to protect him from any more verbal attacks, as he did when Alan Shatter was the victim of a Goebbels comparison last week.

The difference, of course, is that there is a war on, and in times of war, words and their meanings become even more important than they normally are. Meanings are twisted, lies are told and outrages are justified by words. Sometimes this is done cleverly, sometimes awkwardly, sometimes obtusely. The murder of innocent people in Gaza has been accompanied by a comparable destruction of the English language, by Israel and her spokesmen and <u>women</u> around the world. In those circumstances, it is important to counter the butchery, of language and civilians, with a precise and accurate defence of the truth.

Throwing Goebbels comparisons around the place, as Aengus o Snodaigh did in relation to Shatter and the Israeli ambassador Zion Evrony, does more harm than good. It plays into the hands of the people who would use language to hide the truth and disguise their intentions. In this particular case, it allowed the aggressor to portray itself as the victim.

The comparison was ridiculous in relation to Shatter, and unfair in relation to Evrony. It would have been much more accurate to state that the ambassador is only obeying orders when he puts the Israeli case before a Dail committee, or on Morning Ireland or in letters to the newspapers. When Israel's war with <u>Hezbollah</u> in 2006 turned out to be such a public relations (and military) disaster, Tel Aviv set up a National Information Directorate to conceive and convey key messages in times of future conflict.

The Directorate makes sure that there is co-operation between all agencies that deal with public relations and diplomacy, so that Israel is sending a consistent message to the world. "In the war of pictures we lose," one foreign ministry official explained near the start of the current conflict, "so you need to correct, explain or balance it in other ways."

Comment

In recent weeks, as we have seen, such corrections have included Israel's insistence that this was a defensive war, even as it was murdering children innocent of any offence. They have included Israel's claim that Hamas was using children as shields, even as it targeted schools; they included Israel's boast that it was humanely telling Palestinians where it would attack even as it bombed the places they ran to as refuge.

Much of the coverage of George W Bush's impending departure from the White House has focused on his regular mangling of the English language during his time in office. These were often hilarious.

My current favourite is: "I heard somebody say, 'where's Mandela?' Well, Mandela's dead. Because Saddam killed all the Mandelas." This awkwardness with words has often been put forward as evidence that Bush is stupid, and therefore never really knows what he is doing, which would be a tempting analysis were it not for the fact that it lets Bush off the hook for the damage he has done over the last eight years. George Orwell, who is always a good person to turn to in times like these, had a theory about the way political leaders use words. He argued that language "becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts." George Bush, in trying to balance an array of crackpot policies about terrorism and the economy, personifies this sentence, and so too, you might argue, does Bertie Ahern. It was all the fashion to laugh indulgently at Ahern when he was butchering the language, but were his regular difficulties in making sense not down to the strain of coming up with ever more bizarre explanations for his dodgy behaviour?

By contrast with Ahern, Bush, the Israelis and so many others, Barack Obama has a concise and clear way with language.

We will just have to hope that, from Tuesday, this translates into the kind of clarity of purpose which his country, and the rest of the world, needs so badly.

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THE MEDIA WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS MINISTERS FOR COHERENT ANSWERS

Last Friday on Morning Ireland, presenter John Murray was accused by finance minister Brian Lenihan of being irresponsible for questioning some aspects of the nationalisation of Anglo Irish Bank.

On the News At One later that day, Irish Independent journalist Brendan Keenan was accused of being irresponsible by transport minister Noel Dempsey (above) for suggesting Ireland's reputation abroad might be damaged by the events of the week.

We seem to be witnessing a new way of governing: ministers will lurch from crisis to crisis, give the impression that they have no clue what they're doing and then question the patriotism of any journalist who dares to ask reasonable questions.

The media has no responsibility for the current crisis; still less is it obliged to be a cheerleader for government. Journalists will continue to ask questions of Lenihan et al. One day, perhaps, we might even get some coherent answers.

Load-Date: January 20, 2009



Foreign residents flee Gaza amid continuing Israeli air assaults; Mosque and Hamas activists' homes hit on sixth day of attacks

The Western Mail

January 3, 2009 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 943 words **Byline:** Robert Dex

Body

ISRAEL allowed hundreds of Palestinians with foreign passports to leave besieged Gaza after mounting international pressure.

But it kept up attacks for a sixth day, including bombing a mosque it said was used to store weapons and destroying the homes of more than a dozen Hamas operatives.

Yesterday's death toll included three children - two brothers and their cousin - out playing, two teenagers, and in a separate attack, a man in a house believed to belong to a Hamas activist.

Israel has been building up artillery, armour and infantry on Gaza's border in an indication the week-old air assault against its Hamas rulers could soon expand with a ground incursion.

International calls for a cease-fire have been growing, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy is expected in the region next week.

There was no slowdown in violence, as Israel attacked new targets and Palestinians fired at least 30 rockets into southern Israel.

But amid the violence, Israel managed to open its border with Gaza to allow nearly 300 Palestinians with foreign passports to flee. Many of the evacuees were foreign-born <u>women</u> married to Palestinians and their children. Spouses who did not hold foreign citizenship were not allowed out.

Israel launched the air attacks last Saturday in what it said was a bid to halt weeks of intensifying Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza.

It has dealt a heavy blow to Hamas, but failed to halt the rockets. New rocket attacks yesterday struck homes in the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon, wounding four Israelis.

After destroying Hamas' security compounds, Israel turned its attention to the group's leadership. Planes hit about 20 houses believed to belong to Hamas militants and members of other armed groups.

The Israelis either warned nearby residents by phone or fired a warning missile to try to reduce civilian casualties.

Foreign residents flee Gaza amid continuing Israeli air assaults Mosque and Hamas activists' homes hit on sixth day of attacks

Israeli planes also dropped leaflets east of Gaza giving a phone number and email address for people to report locations of rocket squads.

It used similar tactics during its 2006 war against *Hezbollah* in Lebanon.

Most of the targeted homes belonged to activist leaders and appeared to be empty at the time, but one man was killed in a strike in the Jebaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza.

Separate airstrikes killed five other Palestinians - including a young teenage boy east of Gaza City and three children - two brothers and their cousin - who were playing in southern Gaza.

More than 400 Gazans have been killed and 1,700 wounded in the Israeli attacks, Gaza health officials said. The number of combatants and civilians killed is unclear, but Hamas has said about half of the dead were members of its security forces and the UN has said more than 60 are civilians, 34 of them children.

Three Israeli civilians and one soldier have also died in the rocket attacks, which have reached deeper into Israel than ever before, bringing an eighth of Israel's population of seven million within rocket range.

The mosque destroyed yesterday was known as a Hamas stronghold, and the army said it was used to store weapons. It also was identified with Nizar Rayan, the Hamas militant leader killed on Thursday when Israel dropped a one-ton bomb on his home.

While keeping up the military pressure, Israel has offered a small opening for the intense diplomatic efforts, saying it would consider a halt to the fighting.

But it has attached the strict condition that international monitors enforce the truce.

Concerned about protests, Israeli police stepped up security and restricted access to Friday prayers at Jerusalem's al-Aqsa Mosque, barring all males under 50 from entering.

Prayers in Jerusalem ended without incident, though in a nearby east Jerusalem district youths clashed with antiriot police on horseback.

Jerusalem's Grand Mufti Mohammed Hussein said a mere 3,000 Palestinians attended prayers because of tough restrictions, which barred all males under the age of 50 from entering.

"We condemn these measures, and we believe they contradict the principle of freedom of worship," he said.

Demonstration today as stars call on Obama to intervene

Former model Bianca Jagger and singer Annie Lennox joined human rights campaigners yesterday to call on American president elect Barack Obama to speak up against the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip.

Former Mayor of London Ken Livingstone and the comedian Alexei Sayle also added their support to the campaign to end the violence.

At a press conference in central London, Ms Jagger said: "I would like to make an appeal to president elect Obama to speak up. People throughout the world were hopeful when he was elected and we must appeal to him to ask for the immediate cessation of the bombardment of the civilian population in the Gaza Strip."

The press conference was called ahead of a demonstration today that is expected to see thousands of people rally along the Embankment in London before marching to Trafalgar Square to demand an immediate end to the Israeli attacks.

Annie Lennox spoke of her shock at watching scenes of the bombing on television.

Foreign residents flee Gaza amid continuing Israeli air assaults Mosque and Hamas activists' homes hit on sixth day of attacks

She said: "A few days after Christmas I came downstairs, put the television on, and saw smoke pyres coming from buildings and I was shocked to the core because I was thinking as a mother and as a human being, 'How was this going to be the solution to peace?'"

Comedian Alexei Sayle said he was speaking out because it was important for Jewish voices to be heard.

He said: "I want to feel proud of Israel, I want to be proud of my people but I am ashamed."

Also present were Tariq Ali, Lib-Dem MP Sarah Teather, Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn and Respect MP George Galloway.

Graphic

MOURNING: Palestinians carry the bodies of the children of Hamas senior leader Nizar Rayan during their funeral yesterday in Jabalia, Gaza. Rayan was killed with fifteen others from his family PICTURE: Abid Katib/Getty Images)

Load-Date: January 3, 2009



Hundreds killed in air assault on Gaza Strip

The New Zealand Herald December 28, 2008 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; World

Length: 1041 words

Body

JERUSALEM - Israeli warplanes sent more than 100 tons of bombs crashing down on key security installations in Hamas-ruled Gaza on Saturday, launching an open-ended campaign mean to stop rocket and mortar attacks that have traumatised southern Israel.

At least 225 Palestinians, most of them militants, were killed and more than 400 wounded in one of the bloodiest days in decades of Israeli-Palestinian fighting. One Israeli was also killed, and six Israelis were wounded.

The unprecedented assault sparked protests and condemnations throughout the Arab world, and many of Israel's Western allies urged restraint, though the US blamed Hamas for the fighting.

But there was no end in sight. Israel obliquely threatened to go after Hamas' leaders, and militants kept pelting Israel with rockets. Hundreds of Israeli infantry and armoured corps troops headed for the Gaza border in preparation for a possible ground invasion, military officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity under army guidelines.

The Israeli airstrikes caused widespread panic and confusion, and black plumes of smoke billowed above the territory, ruled by the Islamic militant Hamas for the past 18 months.

Some of the Israeli missiles struck in densely populated areas as students were leaving school, and <u>women</u> rushed into the streets frantically looking for their children. At least 15 civilians were killed, officials said.

"My son is gone, my son is gone," wailed Said Masri, a 57-year-old shopkeeper, as he sat in the middle of a Gaza City street, slapping his face and covering his head with dust from a bombed-out security compound nearby.

He said he had sent his 9-year-old son out to purchase cigarettes minutes before the airstrikes began and could not find him.

"May I burn like the cigarettes, may Israel burn," Masri moaned.

The offensive began eight days after a six-month truce between Israel and the militants expired. The Israeli army says Palestinian militants have fired some 300 rockets and mortars at Israeli targets over the past week, and 10 times that number over the past year.

"There is a time for calm and there is a time for fighting, and now is the time for fighting," said Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak, vowing to expand the operation if necessary.

In Gaza City's main security compound, bodies of more than a dozen uniformed Hamas police lay on the ground.

Hundreds killed in air assault on Gaza Strip

Civilians rushed wounded people in cars and vans to hospitals because there weren't enough ambulances to transport all the dead and wounded.

"There are heads without bodies ... There's blood in the corridors. People are weeping, <u>women</u> are crying, doctors are shouting, " said nurse Ahmed Abdel Salaam from Shifa Hospital, Gaza's main treatment centre.

Military officials said aircraft released more than 100 tons of bombs in the first nine hours of fighting, focusing initially on militant training camps, rocket-manufacturing facilities and weapons warehouses that had been identified in advance.

A second wave was directed at squads who fired about 180 rockets and mortars at Israeli border communities.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said Hamas' political leaders could soon be targeted.

""Hamas is a terrorist organisation and nobody is immune," she declared.

The campaign was launched six weeks before national elections. Livni and Barak hope to succeed Ehud Olmert as prime minister, and the outgoing government has faced pressure to take tough action.

Gaza's political leaders, who have been targeted in the past, went into hiding earlier this week. In a speech broadcast on local Gaza television, Hamas' prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, declared his movement would not be cowed.

"We are stronger, and more determined, and have more will, and we will hold onto our rights even more than before," Haniyeh said. It was not clear where he spoke.

In Damascus, Syria, Hamas' top leader, Khaled Mashaal, called on Palestinians to rekindle their fight against Israel.

"This is the time for a third uprising," he said.

Israel withdrew its troops and settlers in 2005 after crushing the second Palestinian uprising, but it has maintained control over the territory's border crossings.

Despite the overwhelming show of force, it was not clear the offensive would halt the rocket fire. Past operations have never achieved that goal.

Late Saturday, Gaza health official Dr Moaiya Hassanain said 225 Palestinians were killed and more than 400 were wounded.

The lone fatality in Israel was in the town of Netivot, where a rocket killed an Israeli man. Six other people were wounded, rescue services said.

Netivot only recently become a target, and dozens of stunned residents, some weeping, gathered at the house that took the deadly rocket hit. A hole gaped in one of the walls, which was pocked with shrapnel marks.

"We need to finish this once and for all and strike back hard," said next-door neighbour Avraham Chen-Chatam, 57.

Streets were nearly empty in Sderot, the Israeli border town pummelled hardest by rockets. But dozens of people congregated on a hilltop to watch the Israeli aerial attacks.

The TV images of dead and wounded Gazans inflamed Arab public opinion, and protests erupted in Arab Israeli villages, the West Bank and elsewhere in the Arab world.

The campaign embarrassed moderate Arab regimes that have encouraged Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking and weakened Hamas' rival, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who has ruled only the West Bank since Hamas violently seized control of Gaza in June 2007.

Hundreds killed in air assault on Gaza Strip

Abbas condemned the attacks, but fearing violence could spiral out of control, his forces also broke up protests in the West Bank.

The offensive also risked opening new fronts, including unrest that could destabilize the West Bank and ignite possible rocket attacks by Lebanese *Hezbollah* guerrillas on northern Israel.

Britain, the EU, the Vatican, the UN secretary-general and special Mideast envoy Tony Blair all called for an immediate restoration of calm. The Arab League scheduled an emergency meeting Sunday to discuss the situation.

But the US, Israel's closest ally, blamed Hamas.

"These people are nothing but thugs, so Israel is going to defend its people against terrorists like Hamas that indiscriminately kill their own people," White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said.

- AP

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



Why the Israeli people have finally had enough

Irish Independent

January 5, 2009 Monday

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Independent.ie 🛭

Section: FEATURES
Length: 951 words

Body

So, it's genocide now, is it? Or is it actually another holocaust, something which one typically restrained Palestinian analyst described as "worse than Hitler's war against the Jews"? Are we watching the ethnic cleansing of an entire people? Are we witnessing the deliberate eradication of a race'

Well, no actually, we're not.

Yet the conventional dinner party wisdom which we've had to put up with in the media, both here in Ireland and generally across Britain, is that somehow Israel is the aggressor in the rapidly worsening situation in Gaza.

Footage of air strikes with the ensuing photogenic explosions and dramatic plumes of smoke, quickly followed by clips of collapsed buildings and enraged mourners, makes far better copy than actually looking at the reasons why Israel has done what it's done.

Anyone who devotes only a cursory glance at the news, both print and television, would be forgiven for thinking that, out of spite, might and malice, Israel has decided to destroy the Palestinian people.

The problem with that conclusion -- and it's not something you're going to learn from the BBC and most other outlets -- is that, contrary to the currently popular belief, Israel is actually acting with a ridiculous degree of restraint.

Over the last couple of years, thousands of rockets have been landing on Israeli soil and, finally, they have had enough.

But behind that statistic there is a human dimension which tends to be rather ignored.

I know many people in the southern Israeli town of Sderot and what is remarkable about their stories is not the number or make of rockets which have fallen on them on a daily basis for years, but the psychological carnage this wreaked upon them.

One woman freely admitted to me that she hasn't had a proper night's sleep in more than two years as she and her family now basically live in their bomb shelter and it's hard to tell who she hates more -- the Muslim terrorists of Hamas or the Israeli government which she thinks has abandoned them.

Why the Israeli people have finally had enough

It's a common feeling amongst residents of southern Israeli towns who have been the silent victims of a long campaign of violence, intimidation and murder carried out by Hamas. And now, finally, that the Israelis have said that enough is enough, they are somehow meant to be the aggressors?

There are people of good conscience on both sides of this argument, but one of the main problems in this debate lies in the cowardly tendency of the Western media to apply equivalence to both sides.

Thus, Hamas is seen to be as legitimate a government as the Israelis, and its rocket attacks across the border from Gaza are seen as being part of a yet another, intractable, interminable Middle Eastern dispute.

There's just one problem with that approach -- it's completely wrong.

Hamas is a fundamentalist Islamic organisation intent on the eradication of the state of Israel and all its citizens; a violent fascist regime that allows honour killings and the execution of homosexuals to continue in its sphere of influence. Bankrolled by Iran, it manages to make even <u>Hezbollah</u> look like a moderate organisation.

But Hamas is clever.

As a friend of mine from Sderot pointed out, one of its favourite tactics is to launch Qassams from Palestinian schoolyards -- while the schools are still in session.

Hamas does this, you see, knowing that the IDF can't immediately strike back (they can vector a rocket launch site within 90 seconds) because the last thing the Israelis need is footage of a devastated Palestinian school with dead kids.

And, over the last week, we have seen carefully manipulated footage of dead civilians, with the fact that they were effectively used as human shields conveniently ignored. When Israel pulled out of Gaza -- ironically, the last battalion of IDF troops to leave Gaza contained some people from Sderot -- they were acceding to international and internal pressure. The doves on the Left said it was to prove to Palestinians that they wanted to give Palestinians independence, the hawks on the Right -- and there are some truly scary right-wingers in Israel, even as ardent a supporter of the country as I am will freely admit that -- prophesied that it would lead to carnage.

And, lo and behold, virtually as soon as the last jeep left Gaza the rockets started. And then the blockade began, and the whole damn mess started all over again.

But there's a bigger picture here, something which Israelis have been trying to broadcast to the world, but which, thanks to their spectacular inability to accurately and sympathetically portray their point of view, has not been properly transmitted. It's this -- Israel is the front line of the war between democracy and Islamic fascism.

Would you rather live in a society with a free press, equal rights for <u>women</u> -- and anyone who knows an Israeli woman will know that they're not easily suppressed, anyway -- equal rights for gay people and a proud and stubborn belief in the right of the individual to lead their life in the way that they see fitor would you rather exist in a society where <u>women</u> who dare to speak their mind are executed, where gay people are not just shunned but murdered and where having a dissenting thought marks you out for death?

The civilian deaths in Gaza are to be mourned, and anyone who says otherwise is reprehensible. But in a sick and twisted irony, they are mourned more by Israelis than by Hamas, who know that every dead Palestinian kid is worth another piece of propaganda.

Here in the West, where we share the same values as Israel, we need to start standing shoulder with this tiny oasis of democracy in a vast desert of savagery.

To do otherwise is moral cowardice of the most repugnant kind.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



Meade High students tackle homeland security issues

The Maryland Gazette
October 15, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: FRONT; Pg. A1

Length: 1003 words

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 <u>Hezbollah</u> and Hamas in the vice presidential debate the day before.

They discuss rocket-propelled grenades, the Aryan Nation and al-Qaida 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 agencies and 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.

Students in the program are 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 High 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 work force 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 work force 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 High 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 has dwindled to about 20.

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.

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Load-Date: October 15, 2008



Turkish scholars prepare to reinterpret Islam

Charleston Gazette (West Virginia)

April 27, 2008, Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. P6C

Length: 966 words

Byline: Dion Nissenbaum, McClatchy Newspapers

Body

ANKARA, Turkey - In a sterile, boxy stone building in the shadow of Ankara's central mosque, a group of Turkish scholars is spearheading a reinterpretation of the literary foundations of Islam that some have compared to Christianity's Protestant Reformation.

With the backing of Turkey's reform-minded government, the team of 80 Islamic academicians from around the world is preparing to release a revised collection of the Prophet Muhammad's words and deeds, which guide Muslims on everything from brushing their teeth to reaching heaven.

As with most religions, the accuracy of the words that have been handed down through centuries has long been in dispute.

Did Muhammad really say that <u>women</u> are bad luck? Did the prophet tell his followers that the word of a woman is worth half that of a man? Did he call for adulterers to be stoned to death?

By year's end, the academics hope to answer those questions by preparing a new intellectual road map for Islam.

"It's a state-sponsored project that is bringing together a large number of scholars to undertake quite an extensive reinterpretation of the sources in a systematic way that has not been achieved before in modern times," said Fadi Hakura, an associate fellow in the European Program at Chatham House, an independent London-based policy institute. He calls the project "somewhat akin to the Christian Reformation."

The revised collection of Muhammad's guidance will be the latest initiative in a contentious debate about the role of Islam in an era when the most prominent Muslim figures, at least in the West, are extremists such as Osama bin Laden.

The rise of al-Qaida and prominence of hard-line Islamist groups such as Hamas, <u>Hezbollah</u> and the Taliban, some Islamic reformers argue, has created a warped view of Islam in the West.

"This may help to take the words of the prophet from the hands of people who are using them to legitimize their bad deeds," said Mehmet Gormez, the vice president of Turkey's Religious Affairs Ministry, which is overseeing the project.

In the past, maverick Muslim scholars in the Middle East who've tried to propose modern reinterpretations of Islam have been ostracized and, in some cases, forced to seek sanctuary in Western countries.

Turkish scholars prepare to reinterpret Islam

Turkey is charting a new course by supporting the project, which is focused on the Hadith - a massive collection of Muhammad's words and deeds that's the foundation of Islamic law.

The lessons were transmitted orally for hundreds of years, throwing their veracity into question, and when Muslim scholars first began to write them down, they sought to bolster their authenticity by explaining the words' lineage.

The Turkish researchers have meticulously collected more than 160,000 sayings from the Hadith and entered them in a specially designed computer program for analysis. They've grouped the sayings by subject and passed them out to scholars for reinterpretation.

Gormez compared the Hadith to a pharmacy and said that people need the advice of a skilled doctor before going in to get their medicine. "One may get poisoned if he goes to the pharmacy without the recommendation of a good doctor," he said.

In essence, the scholars are sorting out which prescriptions to keep on the pharmacy shelves and which ones to remove.

The new analysis of these Islamic pillars is something akin to the debate in Christian circles between those who believe that the Bible is the literal word of God and those who see it as a holy moral guide.

Though Biblical commandments allow fathers to sell their daughters into slavery and state that those who work on the Sabbath should be killed, those dictates have few adherents in the modern world, while others, such as the Ten Commandments and Jesus' injunction to love your neighbor, endure.

The Turkish scholars could have a similar impact on conservative Islamic views of <u>women</u>, adultery, honor killings and more.

Some of the revisions will focus on simple issues such as hygiene.

Just because Muhammad urged his followers to brush their teeth with a certain kind of twig, for example, doesn't mean that a modern Muslim must use a twig instead of a toothbrush; it simply means that the prophet wanted his followers to take care of their teeth.

One of the places the project is expected to have the biggest impact is on the Islamic view of women.

Ismail Hakki Unal, a professor at Ankara University's Divinity School who's leading the project, said the final product is unlikely to include sayings attributed to Muhammad that suggest that <u>women</u> are bad luck, that they're stupid or that their word is worth half that of a man.

"Those definitely cannot be the words of the prophet," Unal said.

The project, which has been unfolding slowly for two years, is beginning to create a backlash across the Muslim world.

Gormez pored over a thick blue binder filled with stories from the Arabic press that criticized Turkey for its initiative, especially because of the politically charged comparisons to the Protestant Reformation that outsiders have made.

"If they continue assessing things like this without being serious, then I don't think any academic study will affect the Muslim world," Gormez said. "But there is a good tradition in Egypt, Jordan, Malaysia, and I think this will be a good connection to the scholars there."

The goal is to produce a five-volume set that will be used in mosques across Turkey and sold in religious bookstores around the nation. The work will first be released in Turkish, Arabic and Russian.

Turkey's evaluation of the prophet's word could have an impact beyond the Muslim world, as well.

Turkish scholars prepare to reinterpret Islam

"The Turkish experiment may inspire future debate and that, in itself would be a significant achievement for the West to dramatically show clearly that religion and modernity are not contradictory, but compatible," Hakura said.

Load-Date: April 28, 2008



Dame Maeve Fort

The Times (London)
October 9, 2008 Thursday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg.59

Length: 993 words

Body

Dame Maeve Fort, DCMG, DCVO, diplomat, was born on November 19, 1940. She died after a short illness, on September 18, 2008, aged 67

Shrewd diplomat who developed a valuable expertise in the affairs of the countries of southern Africa

Even in the modern Diplomatic Service, Maeve Fort was unusual both because she was a woman and because she did not have an Oxbridge education. Also unusual was her success: she became the highest- ranking *female* British diplomat and, as High Commissioner in South Africa, enjoyed close contact with Nelson Mandela. She also represen-ted British interests in Beirut and Mozambique.

Maeve Geraldine Fort was born in Liverpool in 1940. She attended Nantwich grammar school, Trinity College Dublin and the Sorbonne. She joined the Foreign Office in 1963 - in spite of being warned that her gender and her academic background would count against her. She went on to enjoy a 37-year diplomatic career, serving in missions from Bangkok to Bonn, and Santiago to the UN in New York.

She developed an expertise in African affairs that would define the larger part of her diplomatic career, first with a posting in Lagos, Nigeria, from 1971 and then at the UK mission to the UN from 1978. While at the UN she was involved in negotiations over the southwest African state of Namibia, which was then enduring an ugly war of independence with South Africa.

After stints with the Royal College of Defence Studies and the Santiago posting, Fort returned to London in 1986 to be head of the West African department. Concurrently she won her first ambassadorial post, although as the UK representative to Chad she lived in London. Chad, which was being subjected to bombing raids launched from Libya, its neighbour, was thought too unstable to have permanent ambassadorial presence.

In 1989 Fort became Ambassador to Mozambique. During her three-year appointment she fostered contacts between the left-wing Government of President Joaquim Chissano and the nationalist Renamo rebels led by Afonso Dhlakama. The conflict killed tens of thousands and threatened one third of the country's 15 million people with famine.

Dame Maeve Fort

Later Fort described her tasks. "The real job of a diplomat is to stop war...Your job is to keep all the options going when people want to say 'no' and keep fighting." She had no illusions about how difficult this was. "It's not enough to say there is an obvious solution in a conflict; you've got to work at it," she said.

After Mozambique, from 1992 to 1996, Fort volunteered to take the posting in Lebanon. Beirut was thought safe enough, or important enough, to have an ambassador in residence but with <u>Hezbollah</u> ascendant, tight security was essential. Fort habitually travelled in an armoured Range Rover and was surrounded by six militarily trained bodyguards. Here the ambassadorial tasks were as much about attempting to develop an understanding of conditions on the ground as trying to ensure that British advice was heeded.

Fort was appointed High Commissioner to South Africa in 1996. She drew on her previous experience of southwest African politics when civil tensions in Angola were reawakened in 1997. Later that year she was also on hand when the Prince of Wales completed a nine-day visit to the region. It was a sensitive time, just weeks after the sudden death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

Fort won lasting respect from Mandela. She attended the 80th birthday party of the first President of the post-apartheid republic in 1998, alongside Clare Short, the Secretary for International Development. Fort was the senior Briton on hand when Mandela handed the reigns of power to Thabo Mbeki in June 1999. Shortly afterwards a fire destroyed her official residence in Cape Town. The blaze, started by accident while repairs were being made to thatched buildings, destroyed most of her personal possessions.

In 2000, just as she retired from the Diplomatic Service, Fort directed stern criticism at African leaders who failed to stand up to Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe. She said she found it disturbing that neighbours failed to take a more robust stand against violence in the run-up to that year's election. She believed that Mugabe had introduced land ownership reforms as an act of revenge when Zimbabweans appeared to reject him in a referendum vote. Britain, she asserted, would have been willing to provide financial help to Zimbabwe, whose fortunes declined rapidly in the past decade. But in a pointed reference to Mugabe she said: "Funds for development can only be spent on development and not to reward cronies and so-called war veterans for outbreaks of lawlessness."

In 1998 Fort was one of only six <u>females</u> of ambassador rank or higher, out of a total of 145 positions in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Only 30 of 443 officials in the senior roles were <u>women</u>. But speaking at that time she said that her gender worked to her advantage. "The curiosity value of being a woman can be exploited. One can often get access to people more easily because male-to-male relationships often have an element of competition. Men don't usually find <u>women</u> socially confrontational. In fact, men can get a little confessional with a woman. They find it easier to relax in *female* company. Which can be very useful indeed."

According to one <u>female</u> colleague: "She succeeded because she was a woman and in spite of that fact. She was jolly shrewd, but also fun and different in approach. She was clever and likeable with a knack for getting on with awkward people."

In retirement she was a trustee of the British Red Cross and the Beit Trust, a charity that helps to fund health, education, welfare and environmental projects in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Fort was appointed CMG in 1990, advanced to DCMG in 1998 and appointed DCVO the following year, making her one of the few **women** with the status of a so called double dame. She did not marry.

Load-Date: October 9, 2008



Where Senility Is No Barrier to High Office; THE HOUR

The Forward September 21, 2007

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Section: Letters; Pg. A10

Length: 956 words

Body

Why not go for all those who are totally out of touch?

The news from Israel has a surreal

quality these days, half farcical, half

simply bizarre. Last week, Christian

crosses and the words Hitler is

the messiah, long live Jesus were spraypainted

on the walls of the Pahad Yitzhak

synagogue in Eilat and on the second day of

Rosh Hashanah, swastikas were painted on

the walls of a synagogue in Dimona.

It turns out there are gangs of neo-Nazi

youth in the country. A gang of eight from Petach Tikvah was arrested this week for allegedly perpetrating hate crimes against Asians (guest workers), religious Jews, drug addicts and homosexuals. The gang appears to be Russian, which, of course, has led many people to presume its members are among the many Russians who've come to Israel with only the sketchiest Jewish credentials.

That's a story that will one day be told, the story of how Israel lowered the bar to enable a huge immigration from the former Soviet Union and did so in some (perhaps large) part as a response to the demographic challenge, wanting to ensure that the proportion of Arabs in its population, about 20%, would not increase. The result is a cohort of which as many as 40% do not identify as Jews; many of these feel alienated from Israeli society and some act out their alienation in violence and vandalism.

The story is filled with ironies, not the least of which is that now that economic conditions in the former Soviet Union are improving, some of the better educated Russians are reversing course and returning from Israel, leaving Israel with a more problematic compote.

Where Senility Is No Barrier to High Office THE HOUR

Then we have Madonna in Israel for a Rosh Hashanah Kabbalah trip. Go figure. (One wonders whether President Shimon Peres regarded her private visit with him as a perk of office or a burden.)

And what of the Israeli raid over Syria, the mysterious raid which either was successful or was not, which either targeted arms destined for <u>Hezbollah</u> or nuclear material delivered by North Korea, which jettisoned its fuel tanks (over Turkey) because it had used more fuel than intended in evading Syrian radar or penetrated deep into Syria before being spotted, which included a ground unit or did not, and which will lead to Syrian reprisals of some sort or won't?

And then we have the Israeli consulate in New York approaching Maxim, the men's magazine, to feature a spread on former Israeli <u>female</u> soldiers dressed in well, very little. Maxim says that it was approached by the consulate to be a part of reshaping Israel's public image.

The rationale? According to one adviser to the consulate, speaking to AP, Males that age [18-35] have no feeling toward Israel one way or another, and we view that as a problem, so we came up with an idea that would be appealing to them.

This is presumably part of a rebranding campaign in which Israel is seeking to be seen as an advanced Western nation pharmaceuticals and computers, nightclubs and bikini beaches. Whether this kind of pimping for Israel comports with the Zionist dream is evidently thought an anachronistic question, a throwback to the Age of Ideology, zl.

Now it is time for serious PR, and that requires a flesh approach.

But what if Spain or Bulgaria comes up with even comelier models? And what of 18- 35 Jewish <u>females</u>? How shall Israel appeal to them?

Somehow, though some fine Jewish <u>women</u> of my acquaintance tell me I'm mistaken, the notion of bare-torsoed males brandishing Uzis doesn't quite do it. My suggestion? Back to basics: a gallery of consumptive poets and winsome shepherds.

I doubt the consulate will accept that suggestion; they will instead turn again to the hucksters who respect neither men nor <u>women</u>. As they put it, their purpose is first and foremost [to] demonstrate to the world that Israel is not just a land of conflict.

The trouble with campaigns that focus on image is that they keep bumping into reality, and reality is always more complex. Israel has, indeed, pharmaceuticals and computers, nightclubs and bikini beaches, but these are not all it has. It has neo-Nazis and hoodlums, it has enemies and cluster bombs, it has a yawning income gap and willing ex-soldier <u>women</u> and much, much more much that is inspiring, much that is fun, much that is beautiful and much that is tawdry.

That, in a roundabout way, brings us to reliable Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, former chief rabbi of the Sephardic community and long-time spiritual leader of the Shas party, who, commenting the other day on last year's war in Lebanon, proposed that It is no wonder that soldiers are killed in war; they don't observe Shabbat, don' observe the Torah, don't pray every day

don't lay phylacteries on a daily basis so is it any wonder that they are killed? No, it's not When soldiers believe and pray, God helps them during the war. [These soldiers] don't get killed.

No great surprise here: After all, Yosef blames Katrina on President Bush's endorsement of the Gaza disengagement plan and on his belief that the victims of Katrina have no God. That was also the source of the tsunami: There was a tsunami and there are terrible natural disasters, because there isn't enough Torah study.... Black people reside there. Blacks will study the Torah? [God said:] Let's bring a tsunami and drown them.

Where Senility Is No Barrier to High Office THE HOUR

Perhaps the octogenarian Yosef offers a new element in Israel's marketing campaign providing picturesque evidence of how senility in Israel is no barrier to high office. Why limit the rebranding campaign to the 18-35 generation? Go for all those who are totally out of touch.

May you and all those you hold close be sealed for a good year, a year of health, prosperity, courage, grace and love.

Graphic

IMAGE

Load-Date: September 20, 2007



Letters

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

July 24, 2008 Thursday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Letters; Pg. 12

Length: 1057 words

Body

Define reasonable, Mr Loewenstein

Antony Loewenstein says "not many Jews" agree that the 2001 UN conference against racism in Durban was an anti-Semitic hatefest (Letters, July 23).

I was a delegate and I don't remember Mr Loewenstein being there when hundreds of Palestinians and Muslims were screaming in our faces "death to the Jews". Nor when Palestinians and members of the Arab Lawyers League were handing out leaflets saying that if Hitler had done his job properly, there would have been no Israel and no Palestinian problem.

More importantly, he misses Anne Bayefsky's key point, which is that Western values of free speech and support for open interfaith dialogue are threatened, rather than supported, by the UN Human Rights Council.

Alan Gold Leura

The headline on Antony Loewenstein's letter, "Israel the aggressor must accept reasonable and unbiased criticism" could have been more appropriately worded "Israel must accept reasonable criticism".

Each of us brings our bias, our opinion weighted with life experience, when we enter into conversation. As a Jew, I recognise mistakes have been made on both sides of the conflict in the Middle East. But to argue as Mr Loewenstein does that the "Palestinians are the eternally demonised people, occupied, starved and killed with impunity by Israel" only presents another "biased" perspective, not reasonable criticism.

In the past week, Israel has mourned the losses of soldiers Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser, while <u>Hezbollah</u> and Mahmoud Abbas, the leader of the Palestinian Authority, have praised the release of the murderer Samir Kuntar. I hope Mr Loewenstein, in his ardent pursuit of human rights, would not condemn Israel while its neighbours dance in the street when murderers go free.

Reasonable criticism and a pursuit of human rights will come only when we acknowledge the mistakes of both sides. But when one nation mourns and others celebrate a vigilante with seemingly no respect for human life, I reserve my right to be reasonably biased.

Paul Jacobson Bondi

Nursing old wounds

Letters

I understand the anger and frustration of the pregnant <u>women</u> of the Blue Mountains who have had their local obstetrics services downgraded. Like many of the ills confronting the NSW health system, this problem exists because of nursing shortages stemming from the decision in the Wran era to remove nursing training from hospitals and restrict it to universities.

While I support the elevation in training and status of nursing, this decision has done more than anything to disrupt the efficient provision of hospital services, particularly surgical ones. It also denied many potential nurses the opportunity to enter the profession because of economic, geographical and family factors.

With today's technology, remote and outer-suburban training in association with local "nursing tutors" is feasible, and could achieve equal status to direct university entry candidates. Until the number of nurses in the system increases, efficient use of other resources and improved outcomes are impossible, regardless of the financial input.

Dr Robert Wines Whale Beach

Your front page headline (July 23) describes moves by the Health Minister to provide transparency in the public health system as "bungles to be exposed". Infections, and indeed any adverse outcome, in hospitals, are an integral part of even best practice. They can be minimised, but never excluded. They are not "bungles".

Dr Charles McCusker Mosman

Tobacco lobby out of puff

To hell with the emphysema industry and all those investors who sail with her ("Hide-and-seek ban ignites tobacco lobby", July 23). Their bleatings ought to be rewarded with the introduction of greater restrictions, not fewer. They should be grateful their product is legal at all.

Suzy Jackson Lane Cove

The vigour with which tobacco companies are campaigning against a proposed ban on the display of cigarettes in shops suggests it may be the most productive health promotion measure the NSW Government has considered in a long time.

Norm Neill Darlinghurst

A world away from event

Cardinal George Pell's admission on Monday that the Pope's direct apology to victims was conditional and planned weeks ago is a slap in the face for many victims who have been seeking justice and reconciliation for years.

None of the victim organisations in Australia, who have made repeated representations to the church in anticipation of a direct apology, were consulted or informed. The Professional Standards Office director of the Sydney Archdiocese hand-picked churchgoing Catholics who have already achieved resolution with the church and who were prepared to attend Mass with the Pope and receive Holy Communion. Unless action is taken by the church soon, the Pope's broader apology in the cathedral on Saturday will be, in effect, limited to such reconciled victims.

The speculation, confusion and secrecy surrounding the apology has added to many survivors' feelings of disappointment. Many have lost the faith, but still have a spiritual integrity that ought to be acknowledged by the church.

Mark Fabbro Convener, Catholic Clergy Abuse Survivors Collective in Sydney, Bondi

Michael Wren (Letters, July 23) wants to know if there were any forums of World Youth Day in which young people set the agenda. I noted the huge array of events arranged by students of the Australian Catholic University - from art and photographic exhibitions, debates, presentations from overseas justice groups to interfaith dialogues, workshops on indigenous culture and social justice forums.

Letters

I also greatly enjoyed the citywide Jesuswalks sculpture exhibition, co-ordinated by an under-25 year-old.

Elizabeth Jones Kirribilli

Annette Spooner (Letters, July 23), just because someone is young does not mean they do not like Gregorian chant, Latin prayers or similar "old-fashioned" things. When I was in my early 20s and an Anglican I was constantly annoyed by comments that I should enjoy "modern songs" and "hip choruses", when what really spoke to me were old hymns and chants and, yes, even pieces and prayers in Latin. I am now Orthodox, where the 15th century appears modern - and I love it.

Ian Holder Bossley Park

On Monday night's TV news, Cardinal Pell gave the numbers of priests, deacons, bishops, archbishops and cardinals who attended World Youth Day. What about the nuns?

Kate Skrzynecki Eastwood

Graphic

CARTOON: By Cathy Wilcox

Load-Date: July 23, 2008



Government of Laws, Not Men

New York Sun (Archive) April 24, 2007 Tuesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 7

Length: 961 words **Byline:** SETH GITELL

Body

A late afternoon sun shone down on an army of the blue and white Israeli flags lining the Highway One from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem last week. The stirring sight marked the beginning of Israel's season of secular high holy days, Holocaust Remembrance Day, Memorial Day, marking the fallen soldiers of Israel's wars, and Independence Day.

There was another, somewhat less majestic flag that flew alongside the Magen David one, a light-blue one with Hebrew lettering. It was the banner of the Israeli Public Works Department, the arm of the government that maintains the roads.

As Israel prepares for its 60th year of its existence, the miraculous and the mundane coexist - just as the flag of a people flies alongside that of a government department.

For much of its history, from David Ben-Gurion through Yitzhak Rabin and Ariel Sharon, the country was blessed with a collection of visionary, pragmatic, and brave political leaders. Today, though, scandal and political woes beset Israel's leadership, from Prime Minister Olmert to Defense Minister Peretz to President Katsav.

The results from investigating the painful failures of last summer's Lebanon war by the Winograd Commission will be released soon. The ramifications of the report could be seismic. Criminal proceedings have been taken against Mr. Katsav due to allegations of sexual assault. Aside from the questions of leadership emanating from how Mr. Olmert handled last summer's war, he is also under scrutiny for his financial dealings. His finance minister, Avraham Hirschson, has temporarily resigned from his post amid a legal probe into his alleged financial corruption.

Five days of my recent visit in Israel, under the sponsorship of the American Israel Education Fund, along with other journalists, coincided with the 120 hours of community service of the former justice minister, Haim Ramon, performed for forcing a young *female* soldier to be kissed.

The current leaders in power possess peccadilloes that bring to mind backwater city councilors - not leaders who will help mold the future of Israel. On the right, Benjamin Netanyahu is the head of the Likud Party. Polls suggest he is popular nationally, although an election will not be held for more than two-and-a-half years. Still, there are those on the right who say Mr. Netanyahu is no salvation. "Netanyahu is a man of principles but he doesn't have the personality to keep them," the director general of the Begin Center and a one-time aide to Yitzhak Shamir, Herzi Makov, said. "On CNN, he is very good."

Government of Laws, Not Men

Did Theodor Herzl write the book, "Der Judenstaat," that calls for the creation of the state of Israel, did the early Zionists turn swamps into farmlands, and did Israel fend off a multitude of Arab attacks aimed at ending its existence for all of this? The answer, oddly, is yes.

Israel's founders envisioned their country as a "normal" one - with both the good and the bad. Like Great Britain, France, Spain, and America, it must have leaders who are just as good as leaders elsewhere, but also must have the strength to endure the strain that comes from bad leaders. What is remarkable about the public life of today's Israel is that the country, under constant duress, with a population just over 7 million, has the depth to weather the storms and the scandals. Israel has entered a period in which the sum of its institutions is stronger than the force of any of its leaders' personality.

A glimpse of the country's physical infrastructure reinforces the strength - not weakness - of Israel's society. Ben-Gurion Airport is a brand new and beautifully constructed airport that was designed in the era of terrorism. It also has an efficiency far above most American airports with considerable built-in allowances for homeland security.

In 2006, the airport came in first out of 40 European airports in an "Airport Service Quality" survey by the Airports Council International. Key tourist spots, such as Masada, have impressive new amenities built up for travelers such as a state-of-the-art welcome center for tourists. And a new light-rail system is being constructed in Jerusalem.

Fueling all this, of course, is an economy of innovation. Foreign investment in Israel was \$21 billion in 2006 - up threefold from \$7 billion in 2004. "This is a risk embracing society," an Israeli venture capitalist, Jonathan Medved, said.

As glum as the news on the military front has appeared, it's not anywhere near as bad as the perception. According to a spokesman for the Israel Army, Major Manny Socolovsky, Israel's air force met with success in the early days of its struggle against *Hezbollah*. "In 34 minutes, the Israeli Air Force took out their mid and long-range missiles," he said. Perhaps this is a sign that an Israeli air campaign could meet with success if called upon to strike Iran, admittedly a much more difficult job than hitting sites in Lebanon. Additionally, Israeli infantry units fought with courage demonstrating that the spirit of the country still flows in the veins of its young people. Most hopeful, the Israel Defense Force has learned its lesson from the conflict - a painful but important process - and is already implementing new training tactics.

For better or for worse, a leader will have to emerge who can guide Israel through a period of external trouble emanating from Iran and elsewhere in the Islamic world. It may seem dark on the leader front, but even America had to endure Taylor, Fillmore, and Buchanan, after we had Washington, Jefferson, and Madison and before we could find Lincoln.

Israel's strength, like that of America's, is that it is, to use the words of another great leader, John Adams, "a government of laws, and not of men."

Mr. Gitell (gitell.com) is a contributing editor of The New York Sun.

Load-Date: April 24, 2007



US's chance to step between Israel and Palestinians

Canberra Times (Australia)
January 6, 2009 Tuesday
Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. 15 Length: 961 words

Byline: GARY YOUNGE

Body

On New Year's Day Atif Irfan boarded a flight in Washington, DC, with seven members of his family. Edging down the aisle, he wondered out loud whether the back of the plane was the best place to be.

His sister-in-law said she thought it was the safest part, rather than being close to the engine or wings "in case something happened".

The conversation was overheard by two teenage girls, who took one look at the men's dark skin and beards and the **women**'s headscarves and saw a family of suicide bombers, including three small children aged between two and seven. The girls told their parents, who told the flight attendant, who told the air marshals and the captain. The air marshals called the FBI and the airport police.

The pilot asked the marshals to remove the family from the plane.

Then officials asked everybody else to get off so they could perform a thorough sweep. The family and a family friend were surrounded by armed guards, detained for questioning and then released. The plane eventually took off without them. When they tried to get on a later flight the airline refused to book them. The Irfan family's ordeal escalated according to its own humiliating logic.

But, seven years after 9/11, it's not an isolated incident. Presumptive and discriminatory, it speaks volumes about the prevailing values in the United States. A country that confuses Muslim and terrorist, and conflates the civilian and combatant by taking popular fear and prejudice and handing them over to state power. Driven by the maxim that you are better safe than sorry, it leaves nobody safe and everybody sorry.

There is nothing particularly American about this. The war on terror may have started in the US but it quickly went global. In the months after the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, everybody wanted a piece of the action.

However, few nations pursued it with such consistent zeal as Israel.

"You in America are in a war against terror," Ariel Sharon said after he left the White House following suicide bombings in Haifa and Jerusalem in December 2001. "We in Israel are in a war against terror it's the same war."

US 's chance to step between Israel and Palestinians

The trouble is that over the past seven years, the war on terror has been thoroughly discredited not only morally, but militarily and strategically. Nobody listens to moderates, let alone to reason, when bombs are falling and people are dying. That is as true for the rockets that have killed a handful of Israelis as it is for the bombs and tanks that have killed hundreds of Palestinians.

By erasing any prospect of negotiation, the violence did not weaken extremists but emboldened them. Israel may want to boost the moderate Fatah faction which governs the West Bank now. But Hamas's electoral rise was a direct result of the contempt the Israelis showed them in the past.

Meanwhile, the Iraq war has left Iran the primary sponsor of both <u>Hezbollah</u> and Hamas with far more influence in the region than they would have had. On almost every front in almost every part of the world, including in the US, the war on terror is now seen as a colossal mistake. Only Israel did not get the memo. And it is now set to fail for the same reasons that America has.

Diplomatically, Israeli efforts to sell its bombardment and invasion of Gaza as a straightforward extension of the war on terror have been fairly blatant. It has described the shelling of homes, mosques and police stations as the destruction of "the infrastructure of terror". Even as the rest of the world condemns it, Israel's foreign minister, and Kadima party leader, Tzipi Livni, has been saying that her country's actions place it firmly within the community of nations and leaves Gazans and their democratically elected rulers outside.

"Israel is part of the free world and fights extremism and terrorism Hamas is not," she said. Livni added, "These are the days when every individual in the region and in the world has to choose a side."

Meanwhile, Israel has been busy implementing the very tenets of the war on terror that have served the US so badly, primarily that intractable political problems can be solved solely by military means with the aim of not simply bombing your enemies into submission, but eliminating them and then creating resolution on your own terms from the rubble.

"What I think we need to do is to reach a situation in which we do not allow Hamas to govern," Deputy Prime Minister Haim Ramon said.

"That is the most important thing."

Who he thinks should govern when Hamas has gone, and precisely what legitimacy they would have, does not seem to bother him.

On this matter Livni is right. People have to choose sides. But, so far, it has not been her side. The war on terror is over. War lost. For the first time in a long time, that even appears to be true in the US.

A recent poll shows the US public far less indulgent of Israeli aggression than many previously believed.

Opinion on the bombing of Gaza is fairly evenly divided, showing 44 per cent supporting Israel's military action against the Palestinians and 41per cent saying it should have tried to find a diplomatic solution to the problems. Given the absence of any honest or informed debate about events in the Middle East, this suggests significant room for manoeuvre for President-elect Barack Obama in pursuing a more even-handed policy towards the region, if he should choose to take it.

The benefits could strengthen America's hand throughout the region. Majorities in seven Arab nations say their opinion of the US would significantly improve if it put pressure on Israel to comply with international law in its treatment of Palestinians.

That is the change the US and the Middle East need. It's also the change most of the rest of the world wants to believe in.

Gary Younge writes for The Guardian.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



Israel likely to gain woman prime minister

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)
September 5, 2008 Friday

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Length: 964 words

Byline: Amy Teibel Associated Press

Body

JERUSALEM -- For the first time since Golda Meir more than three decades ago, a woman is within reach of becoming the prime minister of Israel, a nation dominated by macho military men and a religious establishment with strict views on the role of <u>women</u>.

But unlike Hillary Clinton or Sarah Palin, Israel's Tzipi Livni doesn't talk about cracking glass ceilings, even as she leads the field in the ruling Kadima Party's Sept. 17 primary to choose the likely successor to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Yet the tough-minded foreign minister's gender is popping up.

Top male rivals have branded Livni with words like "weak" and "that woman." And there is talk about ultra-Orthodox Jewish lawmakers who might be kingmakers in the next government being uncomfortable with the idea of a *female* leader.

Livni hasn't commented about the gender issue, and adviser Gil Messing said the foreign minister would not agree to be interviewed on the subject, but others have complained about the allusions to her gender.

Former lawmaker Naomi Chazan says the jabs at Livni are built on "deep chauvinistic foundations."

"Livni, it is hinted, exhibits signs of weakness (or is it femininity?), and so is unworthy of taking over the reins of power," she wrote in an op-ed piece in the Jerusalem Post.

The soft-spoken, 50-year-old Livni was an army captain and had a brief career in the Mossad spy agency. She traded that in for a life as corporate lawyer, wife and mother of two sons. Nine years ago she entered politics as a protege of then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. She has earned a reputation as a pragmatic straight talker who disdains backroom politics.

Her father, Eitan Livni, was a Zionist underground hero who battled the British in pre-state Palestine and thought Israel should expand its borders into Arab lands.

She initially shared that dream. But Livni eventually concluded it clashed irreconcilably with the reality of living among a fast-growing Palestinian population.

During her relatively short tenure in politics, she has held six Cabinet posts, including minister of foreign affairs, justice and immigrant absorption. As foreign minister and vice premier, she has led Israel's negotiations with the Palestinians on ending decades of conflict and establishing a Palestinian state.

Israel likely to gain woman prime minister

Last year Time magazine included her in its list of the world's 100 most influential people, and she was No. 52 in Forbes magazine's recent ranking of the planet's 100 most powerful **women**.

But this resume apparently doesn't impress political rivals in a nation at war that values toughness over sensitivity.

Defense Minister Ehud Barak, a former prime minister with an eye on his old job, recently played on an ad from Hillary Clinton's failed presidential bid that suggested rival Barack Obama was not the man to handle a 3 a.m. crisis call.

"The foreign minister, her background being what it is, is not cut out to make decisions, not at three in the morning and not at three in the afternoon," said Barak, who also served as commander of the military and is Israel's most-decorated soldier.

His comment was widely regarded in the media as veiled sexism, as was his pointed reference to Livni by her full name, Tzipora -- Hebrew for "bird" and a name that aides say she despises.

During a recent appearance before foreign reporters in Jerusalem, Livni insisted she had plenty of security experience, including a key role as foreign minister during Israel's 2006 war against <u>Hezbollah</u> militants in Lebanon. That war has been the target of intense criticism in Israel, but Livni emerged largely unscathed because of her calls to end the fighting quickly.

There are also ultra-Orthodox parties to consider.

They could be crucial to Livni's efforts to form a new government, but are uneasy with a woman at the helm because "it's not modest" in their world view, said Menachem Friedman, an expert on religious society in Israel.

But Friedman, a professor at Bar Ilan University outside Tel Aviv, thinks practical politics would trump those concerns. The religious parties would join a Livni-led government if it promised them more money for pet causes and no territorial concessions to the Palestinians on Jerusalem, he said.

"If she gives them what they want, then they'll accept her," he said.

Spokesman Roi Lachmanovich of the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party, parliament's largest religious faction, said that "Shas has no problem with Tzipi Livni as prime minister of Israel."

For its part, the Israeli public appears to have little problem with having a woman leader.

Polls put Livni ahead of Mofaz in the Kadima primary and indicate she would fare better than him in a general election. She's also significantly ahead of Barak in national polls, though a general election race against her other key rival, hawkish former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, would be tighter.

Back in 1969, Israel took the extraordinary step of choosing a woman as prime minister: Golda Meir. But in the four decades since, <u>women</u> have remained significantly underrepresented in Israel's government and business, though they have made strides in other areas.

Meir resigned in disgrace after Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel in October 1973. Israel repelled the attackers but took heavy casualties in a war that many Israelis still see as their country's most humiliating military episode.

Since then, no woman until Livni has come close to holding the reins of power. But her reputation for honesty, in a country where a series of high-ranking officials, including Olmert, have been convicted or accused of corruption, is an asset for Livni.

"She has a clean-hands image, and this is a time when we're looking for decent, honest people," Chazan told The Associated Press. "She meets this criterion, and it's very, very important."

Load-Date: September 5, 2008



International: Gaza: Analysis: For as long as both sides think they can win, blood will continue to be spilt

The Guardian - Final Edition
January 3, 2009 Saturday

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Section: GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 6

Length: 891 words

Byline: Jeremy Bowen

Body

Israel was not allowing international journalists into Gaza this week, so I sat under a pine tree on a small hill, on the edge of the Israeli border town of Sderot, watching the war from a distance. Israeli attack helicopters moved lazily across the sky, taking all the time they wanted, waiting for the next target.

An F-15 warplane suddenly screamed over, only a couple of hundred feet up, fiery decoy flares flicking around its tail just in case Hamas had managed to smuggle in some sort of anti aircraft missile through the tunnels from Egypt.

A vapour trail rose out of the dark line of buildings on the edge of Gaza City. Almost simultaneously a *female* voice drifted towards our pine tree from the loudspeakers in Sderot.

"Colour Red. Colour Red."

Her voice was a signal to run for cover. They used to have sirens but they frightened the children too much. The voice was calm, insistent; maybe she is meant to sound like a mother. The voice meant a launch had been detected and a rocket was coming in from Gaza. The 15 or 20 seconds before it struck were not pleasant. There was a scream from the rocket before it exploded. A cloud of black smoke rose from the grass to the south of the hill, about 200 metres away. No one was hurt. The cameramen on the hill focused on the spot from where the launch had come. They expected an Israeli answer, a plume of smoke and an explosion.

But half an hour later the launch sites still had not been attacked. Presumably the rocket crews had gone back under cover and were now planning their next attack.

The lesson they can learn is that firing at the Israelis does not mean certain death. The young, religious men in the armed wing of Hamas have taken some very heavy casualties so far, and many more of them will die before this is over. But those who have launched rockets and are still alive must be gaining confidence for whatever lies ahead. It is clear that for all its air power, surveillance drones and modern technology, the Israeli air force cannot stop every rocket.

Reputation

International: Gaza: Analysis: For as long as both sides think they can win, blood will continue to be spilt

That is why Israeli generals were pressing to send troops in, to wipe out the stain on the army's reputation caused by its poor showing in Lebanon in 2006. Halfway through the week, lines of Israeli tanks were lined up in the ploughed fields between Sderot and the border wire. It was hard to say whether the soldiers hunkered down around the tanks, water dripping down their necks, were keen to be off and into Gaza or keen to be out of the field and back home - journalists were not allowed to talk to them, and the fields had been declared a closed military area, so we were not meant to be there at all.

Even though it has not been possible this week for most journalists to report firsthand from Gaza, plenty of information is coming out about the condition of the people there.

The Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, says there is no humanitarian crisis there because Israel is allowing in dozens of truckloads of relief supplies every day. Her view is not shared by the people at the United Nations who run the relief operation.

Even before Israel started its military campaign they were providing food aid to one million people, which is two-thirds of Gaza's population. The Israeli blockade over the past 18 months has destroyed Gaza's economy; 80% of the population lives on less than \$2 a day.

This week there has been an extra, deadly dimension to civilian life in Gaza. Five sisters from the Balusha family were killed as they slept. Even through a TV picture you could feel the grief and loneliness of the sister who survived as she described how the walls fell in on them. Too many other Gazans have similar stories to tell.

Civilian casualties get Israel a lot of bad publicity, so it is probably fair to say that it does not hit every target it wants, otherwise many more would have died. Even so, it knows that the use of powerful weapons in a territory as confined and heavily populated as Gaza means that the most accurate satellite-guided weapons in its arsenal will still neighbours, passersby, children taking out the rubbish or playing outside. I spoke to a friend in Gaza on the phone. He said he had evacuated his wife and children. What he meant was he had moved them a short distance from their home to a place that seemed less exposed. In Gaza, there aren't many places to go to.

Israel would like to topple Hamas from power in Gaza. The government hopes the people of Gaza will stop blaming Israel for what is happening to their families and start blaming Hamas. The people I speak to here say that is not happening, and will not.

Accusations

If Israel cannot stop the rocket fire, with or without sending in the tanks, its leaders will be accused of failure, as they were after the 2006 summer war in Lebanon. If Hamas can still fire a rocket or even a bullet when the ceasefire comes it will claim victory, just as *Hezbollah* did in Lebanon in 2006.

In this war both sides believe their actions are legitimate and justified on grounds of self defence. Many more Palestinians than Israelis have died, but both sides believe they are the real victims. The only way to settle their differences is through political agreement. But there are people in Israel, and in Gaza, who think they can win. And while they think like that, more blood will spill.

Jeremy Bowen is the BBC's Middle East editor

Load-Date: January 3, 2009



More fighting starts between Lebanese army and militants at Palestinian refugee camp

Prince Rupert Daily News (British Columbia)

May 22, 2007 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 11

Length: 947 words

Byline: Associated Press

Dateline: TRIPOLI, Lebanon

Body

TRIPOLI, Lebanon (AP) -- Artillery and machine-gun fire echoed around a crowded Palestinian refugee camp Tuesday as the Lebanese government ordered the army to finish off the Fatah Islam militants holed up inside the camp in the country's north.

The fighting -- which resumed for a third straight day after a brief nighttime lull -- reflected the government's determination to pursue the Islamic militants who staged attacks on Lebanese troops on Sunday and Monday, killing 29 soldiers. Some 20 militants have also been killed, as well as an undetermined number of civilians.

The cabinet late Monday authorized the army to step up its campaign and "end the terrorist phenomenon that is alien to the values and nature of the Palestinian people," Information Minister Ghazi Aridi said.

Hours after the decision, fighting flared up again Tuesday morning around the Nahr el-Bared camp outside the northern port city of Tripoli, with black smoke billowing from the area after artillery and machine-gun exchanges.

A spokesman for Fatah Islam, Abu Salim Taha, said fighters of the group repulsed several attempts by Lebanese troops to advance on their positions inside the camp.

"The shelling is heavy, not only on our positions, but also on children and <u>women</u>. Destruction is all over," he said. Speaking to The Associated Press by telephone from the camp, he denied his group was behind bomb blasts in Beirut on Sunday and Monday night, as well as media reports the group's No. 2 was wounded.

Inside the city of Tripoli, Lebanese troops moved in Tuesday against a suspected Fatah Islam hideout, witnesses said. Shots rang out on Mitein Street at midmorning, as security forces, acting on a tip about armed men in an apartment, raided the building using tear gas.

At Nahr el-Bared, Lebanese artillery has pounded the suspected positions of the Fatah Islam, seeking to destroy the group with al-Qaida ties or force them out of the camp.

The fighting has also raised fears that Lebanon's worst internal violence since the 1975-1990 civil war could spread in a country with an uneasy balancing act among various sects and factions.

More fighting starts between Lebanese army and militants at Palestinian refugee camp

Fighting paused briefly Monday afternoon to allow the evacuation of 18 wounded civilians, according to Saleh Badran, an official with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society.

Palestinian refugees have been hiding in their homes inside the camp and Palestinian officials there said nine civilians were killed Monday. Reports from the camp of food and medical supplies running out could not be confirmed because officials and reporters could not enter.

Mufti Salim Lababidi, a Sunni spiritual leader of Palestinians in Lebanon, denounced the shelling which he claimed has killed or wounded some 100 civilians.

"We have condemned the attacks on the army but what about the civilians being killed? Who is for those innocent people," he said on al-Jazeera television. "There are thousand ways to uproot Fatah Islam ... there are ways other than this."

As he spoke, major Palestinian faction leaders met with Prime Minister Fuad Saniora for the second time in as many days to try to resolve the crisis.

The camp is home to more than 31,000 people living in two-or three-storey white buildings on densely packed narrow streets. It is one of more than 12 impoverished camps housing more than 215,000 refugees, out of a total of 400,000 Palestinians here. Lebanese authorities do not enter the camps, according to a nearly 40-year-old agreement with the Palestinians.

Major Palestinian factions have distanced themselves from Fatah Islam, which arose here last year and touts itself as a Palestinian liberation movement. But many view it as a nascent branch of al-Qaida-style terrorism with ambitions of carrying out attacks around the region.

The military assault adds yet another dimension to Lebanon's potentially explosive politics. Saniora's government already faces a domestic political crisis, with the opposition led by Iranian-and Syrian-backed <u>Hezbollah</u> demanding its removal.

Raising fears of spreading violence, an explosion went off in a shopping area in a Sunni Muslim sector of Beirut late Monday, wrecking parked cars and injuring seven people - a day after a bomb blast in a Christian part of the capital killed a woman. The confluence of two bombings while the fighting was going on in Tripoli was highly unusual.

Saniora also risks a backlash among Palestinians in Lebanon's other refugee camps, where armed groups and Islamic extremists have been growing in influence. The White House said it supports Saniora's efforts to deal with the fighting, and the State Department defended the Lebanese army, saying it was working in a "legitimate manner" against "provocations by violent extremists" operating in the camp.

The leader of Fatah Islam, Palestinian Shaker al-Absi, has been linked to the former head of al-Qaida in Iraq and is accused in the 2002 assassination of a U.S. diplomat in Jordan. He moved into Nahr el-Bared last fall after being expelled from Syria, where he was in custody.

Since then, he is believed to have recruited about 100 fighters, including militants from Saudi Arabia, Yemen and other Arab countries, and he has said he follows the ideology of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. Among the militants killed in the fighting Sunday was a man suspected in a plot to bomb trains in Germany last year, according to Lebanese security officials.

Beirut security officials accuse Syria of backing Fatah Islam to disrupt Lebanon, charges that are denied by Damascus, which controlled Lebanon until 2005 when its troops were forced to withdraw from the country following the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri.

The Canadian Press, 2007

Graphic

Colour Photo: Mahmoud Tawil, AP Photo; CITY IN CHAOS: A Lebanese police officer secures the scene a day after an explosion hit the Verdun shopping area in the Muslim sector of Beirut.;

Load-Date: May 23, 2007



A Southerner opines

University Wire
May 11, 2007 Friday

Copyright 2007 Tufts Daily via U-Wire

Section: COLUMN Length: 1007 words

Byline: By Daniel Halper, Tufts Daily; SOURCE: Tufts U.

Dateline: MEDFORD, Mass.

Body

Aceh is a tropical paradise that attracted thousands of tourists per year until a devastating tsunami struck Indonesia on Dec. 26, 2004. The concomitant death and destruction is well known. Also well documented in the world press has been the slow pace of the clean up operation, which affects the recovery of the tourist industry - the mainstay of the province's economy.

A dramatic change of a very different sort, however, may have rendered Aceh permanently unrecognizable to those who enjoyed its sybaritic pleasures. Aceh has been governed by Sharia, the strict Islamic law that Islamic militants have sought to forcefully impose in Muslim nations worldwide.

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) has fought small-scale guerilla battles in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, over the past couple of years. JI is responsible for the bombings that shook Bali several years ago and is suspected of having strong ties to al-Qaida.

After the tsunami, activists declared a unilateral cease-fire and immediately hit the beach with offers of aid and support for the devastated population. (Both Hamas and <u>Hezbollah</u>, among several others, have employed this tactic to bolster their growth.)

The stratagem worked. The years of terror attacks were overshadowed by this act of seeming good will and the Acehnese voted into office lawmakers who would eventually pass legislation handing over rule to supporters of Sharia.

It may have been their last chance for free elections and the changes since then have been sweeping on all fronts. This further placed the liberty of free speech in jeopardy, as many scholars believe that those who oppose Sharia in the region are now fearful of speaking out. The men, <u>women</u> and children of Aceh are forced to conform to the Islamists' strict view of their faith, in stark contrast with the secularism that prevails through most of the rest of Indonesia. Everyone must cover themselves completely; however, this law is hardly enforced for men. <u>Women</u> are required to adhere to a strict curfew, wear hijabs (head scarves), and must have a male escort after a certain hour. Failure to comply with any law may lead to severe punishment. Additionally, Sharia is hardly compatible with the tourist industry that was the mainstay of the Island's economy.

The German Press Corporation (Deutsche Presse-Agentur) recently declared Aceh's Sharia police as "Taliban-style Islamic police terrorizing Indonesia's Aceh." Most recently, the International Crisis Group (ICG) reported that both

A Southerner opines

the poor and <u>women</u> in Aceh have had their rights taken away. To those who understand radical Islam, this comes as no surprise. Often, Sharia, but mainly the proponents of such ideas, leads to unruly side effects.

An Islamist state, while clearly favored by some in the region, impedes the civil liberties held so dearly by most other Indonesians. Aceh has become a Sharia police state ruled by the strong with the weak at their mercy. The strong have little regard for those with less power, thus it is necessary for the Sharia-grounded state to accept inalienable rights for all citizens if it wants to continue. Without this, atrocities will continue on a daily basis.

This not only impedes physical rights, but also intellectual ones. A primary problem with religion being forced upon citizens is that these individuals become unable to accept religion with the pure use of reason. A personal commitment demonstrates a person's true dedication. The faculty of reason allows individuals to act as humans. The attraction to religion stems from its ability to make people more human by guiding them to the realization of a higher being through the use of reason, not through imposition.

In order for Sharia to be a fully viable solution to the problems of citizens, it must take into account the imperfections of human beings. Thus, any interpretation of the Quran and Hadith (scholarly text) would have the possibility of being incorrect. Of course, any reasonable person would be able to recognize the fallibility of humans and realize that mistakes are unavoidable. Sharia-based states hardly allow this as a possibility. Rather, fatwas (religious mandates) are considered the final rule and all Muslims in such a state are required to follow these dictates. Radicalism must not be forced on those with different beliefs; rather, a systematic change is necessary. Humanity must be preserved, and in order to ensure this, people must be allowed to make their own decisions. In a liberal state, this as well as civil discussions would be widely accepted in a truly humane way.

This liberal state would allow for discourse and perhaps cause people to change their minds and accept Islam. That is the beauty of liberal democracy. A liberal state allows for people of different beliefs to come together, discuss their ideas, and eventually come to reasonable conclusions. This idea has become the model for states that promote freedom. However, the liberal state recognizes the fallibility of humans and thus implements basic rights that each citizen is guaranteed.

People whose actions differ from a given perception of Islam only affect those who make those decisions. Step back and put yourself in the shoes of the oppressed. Imagine for a second what your reaction would be if you were forced to live under such rule. It is hard to imagine life without inalienable rights. It is hard to imagine not being able to express yourself. It is hard to imagine not being able to say what is on your mind.

Of course the Indonesians are different from us.

Of course they have different customs.

But we share a commonality of being humans.

An Islamic state in Indonesia only weakens the religion and the region. It violates human rights and impedes lives. Without this much needed transition, Aceh and its Sharia governance must continue to face both international and domestic scrutiny.

The tsunami that struck Aceh has been chronicled worldwide as a disaster. However, the imposition of Sharia may prove to be an even larger one.

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Load-Date: May 11, 2007



Rock the Casbah

The New York Times
July 20, 2008 Sunday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section BR; Column 0; Book Review Desk; Pg. 6

Length: 973 words

Byline: By HOWARD HAMPTON

Howard Hampton is the author of "Born in Flames: Termite Dreams, Dialectical Fairy Tales, and Pop Apocalypses."

Body

HEAVY METAL ISLAM

Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam.

By Mark LeVine.

Illustrated. 296 pp. Three Rivers Press. Paper, \$13.95.

This professor of Middle Eastern history walks into a bar in Fez, Morocco -- right from the get-go, Mark LeVine's "Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam" is not your typical dry academic slog. (Did I mention he's also a longhaired Jewish rock guitarist whose bio lists gigs with Mick Jagger and Dr. John?) So when somebody in that hotel bar starts talking up the local punk and metal scenes, an incredulous LeVine is hooked. "There are Muslim punks? In Morocco?" Quicker than you can whistle "Rock the Casbah," he's on the trail of Western-influenced underground music movements that have blossomed under authoritarian regimes across the Middle East and North Africa.

Going to meet the seven-string guitarist Marz of Hate Suffocation, a Cairo band, LeVine confesses sheepishly, "I still couldn't tell the difference between death, doom, black, melodic, symphonic, grind-core, hard-core, thrash and half a dozen other styles." (Marz explains that his group plays a cross between death and black metal: "But it's not blackened death metal!") Despite a certain amount of scholarly dogma that goes with the territory -- here any combination of "neoliberal" and "globalization" is as ominous an epithet as Black Sabbath's "War Pigs" -- "Heavy Metal Islam" offers the hit-and-run (as well as hit-and-miss) pleasures of a lively road trip. Practicing a first-person brand of shuttle diplomacy as he moves between countries and cultures, musicians and Islamic activists, LeVine manages to unpack enough cross-cultural incongruities to mount his own mosh pit follow-up to "You Don't Mess With the Zohan."

An ex-Mossad hairdresser is scarcely more anomalous than disheveled Moroccan riot grrrls, virtuoso Egyptian metalheads, Lebanese "muhajababes" (young <u>women</u> wearing full head scarves, army fatigues, tight black T-shirts and <u>Hezbollah</u> wristbands), Tupac-influenced Palestinian M.C.'s, "the Israeli Oriental death-doom metal band Orphaned Land" (complete with a devoted Arab following) and rapt Iranian Iron Maiden acolytes. A participatory,

Rock the Casbah

hands-on guy, LeVine not only meets and eats with Muslim headbangers, he jams with them in apartments, studios and outdoor festivals, taking in the food and the noise and the people as if it were all a movable metal feast.

Eagerly seizing on the stereotype-busting possibilities of "an 18-year-old from Casablanca with spiked hair, or a 20-year-old from Dubai wearing goth makeup," LeVine would like us to see them as the faces of an emerging Muslim world, potentially a much less monochromatic place than the one represented on TV by the usual "Death to America" brigades. "Heavy Metal Islam" turns the notion of irreconcilable differences between Islam and the West on its head, appealing to the universality of youth culture as "a model for communication and cooperation" in the Internet age. LeVine reckons the likes of Metallica and Slayer provide a brute lingua franca that knows no borders, opening up breathing room in cloistered societies, gradually undermining rigid belief systems -- a benign, bottom-up brand of globalization as opposed to the ruthless corporate or state-sponsored kind.

It's that old-time Lennon/Bono rock idealism reimagined for a post-Cannibal Corpse world, and that's winning on a case-by-case basis. In lands where playing "satanic" music or even attending semi-clandestine concerts can get you thrown in jail (actually charged with things like "shaking the foundations of Islam"), there's something truly heartening about the Moroccan thrash girls Mystik Moods striving to break through centuries-old sexist taboos, or Hate Suffocation trying to carve out a niche to play music and "be left alone by both the government and society." In theocratic Iran, when Arthimoth's leader wears a T-shirt reading "Your God Is Dead," he's risking a fate much worse than being suspended from school or getting dirty looks at the mall.

"Heavy Metal Islam" gets trapped by its good intentions whenever it attempts to shoehorn the headbangers' intransigence into preconceived political slots. Metal music, however you parse it, is dystopian in the extreme: hyper-aggressively embracing the death instinct, regimented chaos, deliriously fetishized morbidity. Call it cathartic, sure, even a way of keeping sane in an insane world (as one performer here says, "We play heavy metal because our lives are heavy metal"), but don't confuse it with "If I Had a Hammer." Unless it's a hammer of the nihilist gods aimed at your forehead -- not to hammer out justice or a warning or "the common struggle for democracy and economic equality," but to crack your skull open, scrape out your pulverized brains and feed them to the wolverines.

Even though these antisocial bands want no part of hard-liners like the mystical Justice and Spirituality Association in Morocco or the spooky Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (and the disdain is often mutual), LeVine thinks if they could all put aside their petty differences and work together, they could start a domino effect in the Middle East like the one that toppled the Eastern bloc. (He's like the straight arrow in comic books who'd invariably look around at the scene of Armageddon and say with a sigh, "If only we could have harnessed their mutant energy for goodness.") The punch line of LeVine's informative, valuable and moderately mad book is twofold: this conscientious anti-imperialist has written a swell tract in favor of large-scale cultural imperialism -- a Marshall Amps Plan -- and his program is undoubtedly the first to enlist death metal as the spearhead of a new Peace Corps(e).

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

DRAWING (DRAWING BY ERIK BRANDT)

Load-Date: July 20, 2008



Hamas Fires Mortars After Palestinian Is Killed

The New York Times
June 4, 2007 Monday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 4; Foreign Desk; Pg. 6

Length: 951 words

Byline: By ISABEL KERSHNER; Taghreed El-Khodary contributed reporting from Gaza City.

Dateline: JERUSALEM, June 3

Body

The military wing of Hamas claimed responsibility for firing mortar shells at the Erez crossing on the Gaza-Israel border on Sunday, slightly wounding four Israeli soldiers, hours after Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian man in the West Bank city of Jenin.

An Israeli Army spokesman said that Palestinian gunmen had opened fire on the soldiers in Jenin, and that the man who was hit earlier was armed. Palestinian reports identified him as Muhammad Farahati, 22, a militant affiliated with both the pro-Fatah Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades militia and the group Islamic Jihad.

In a tactical shift, Hamas stopped firing Qassam rockets from Gaza into Israel a few days ago, according to a person close to the organization's military wing who asked not to be identified. He said Hamas was aiming its fire at the Gaza-Israel border and Israeli military posts, instead of at civilian centers like the Israeli border town of Sderot.

Hamas is demanding that any renewed truce with Israel must be applied simultaneously to the West Bank. The military wing said that Sunday's mortar shells had been a response to "Zionist aggression" against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

On Saturday night, Israeli soldiers shot and killed another Palestinian man in the West Bank city of Nablus. The army spokesman said the man had been armed.

Hostilities between Gaza and Israel flared in mid-May after Hamas, the Islamist faction that dominates the Palestinian government, announced that it was resuming rocket fire against Israel after a six-month lull. That was followed by two weeks of intense rocket fire and an Israeli air campaign against military compounds and posts in Gaza, mostly belonging to Hamas.

Sunday started out as the quietest day since the escalation began, with just the firing of the mortar shells, no rockets fired and no Israeli airstrikes by sundown. On Friday and Saturday, a total of nine rockets were launched by smaller Palestinian factions. At least five landed in Israeli territory, according to the army.

In mid-May, at the peak of the rocket fire, nearly 40 Qassams were launched in one day.

Hamas Fires Mortars After Palestinian Is Killed

At the opening of Sunday's cabinet meeting, the Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, said, "With regard to what appears to be a reduction in the Qassam fire, I should like to clarify: We are not negotiating, nor do we undertake to change our modus operandi."

Mr. Olmert said security services would continue to act both in Gaza and in the West Bank. The military actions have "produced results," he said.

Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator and a close aide of President Mahmoud Abbas, of Fatah, said Israel's actions in the West Bank had been "undermining the chances" of reaching a new cease-fire. "We are asking for a mutual cessation of hostilities," he said.

Mr. Erekat also accused Israel of a "policy of political blindness," a reference to its forces killing or arresting a number of West Bank Palestinians affiliated with Fatah's military wing in recent days. On Tuesday, Israel arrested a Fatah lawmaker, Jamal Tirawi, from Nablus.

Separately, the Winograd Committee, which investigated the Israeli government's actions during last summer's war in Lebanon, released a censored version of the testimony of Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

The government-appointed committee published a partial report in late April accusing the political and military leadership of severe failures, after which Ms. Livni called on the prime minister to resign.

But Ms. Livni did not resign, arguing that she had come out of the report unscathed. As a result, an attempt by Kadima party colleagues to replace Mr. Olmert with Ms. Livni quickly fizzled out.

In her testimony, Ms. Livni said that on July 12, the day the war started, she thought that Israel had embarked on a military operation that would end the same night, or at the latest, by noon the next day. The war, which followed the seizure of two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border raid by *Hezbollah*, the Lebanese militant organization, lasted 34 days.

Ms. Livni told the Winograd panel that she had been pushing Mr. Olmert to focus on a diplomatic exit strategy from July 13 on, but that he told her to "calm down," put off meeting with her in private, and seemed inattentive when she spoke of the need for a diplomatic process in cabinet meetings. The war eventually ended with a cease-fire brokered by the United Nations.

Mr. Olmert has denied that Ms. Livni tried to bring the war to an early end. A censored version of his testimony was released in May. Threats to **Women** on TV Protested By The New York Times

GAZA CITY, June 3 -- About 50 employees of the official Palestinian Authority television station demonstrated in Gaza City on Sunday, protesting threats to its **female** anchors from a radical Islamic organization calling itself Swords of Truth.

The shadowy group issued a statement criticizing the <u>women</u> for wearing makeup and not wearing veils, as many religious Muslim <u>women</u> do. The organization said their behavior was immodest and was "destroying the Islamic culture."

Muhammad Daoudi, who is in charge of Palestinian Authority TV, said the protest was meant to send "a message of anger and condemnation." Almost 300 **women** and 350 men work for the station, he said.

Many of the <u>women</u> at the demonstration covered up with head scarves, contrary to their usual practice. The protesters marched to the office of President Abbas, which is next to the television building, and demanded his protection.

Swords of Truth has claimed responsibility for bombing dozens of Internet cafes, music stores and other symbols of Western-style entertainment in Gaza in recent months.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

Photo: Israeli soldiers and police officers at the Erez crossing between Israel and Gaza after a mortar attack yesterday. (Photo by Gil Cohen Magen/Reuters)

Load-Date: June 4, 2007



Accept That the Regime in Iran Is Here To Stay; The strategic Interest

The Forward February 8, 2008

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Section: Forward Forum; Pg. A9

Length: 991 words

Byline:

Yossi Alpher, a former senior adviser to Prime Minister Ehud Barak and former director of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, is co-editor of the bitterlemons family of online publications.

Body

Many respectable experts on Iran, prominent among them Americans, Israelis and Iranians-in-exile, believe they know how to replace the theocratic regime in Tehran with something far more benign and friendly.

Another \$100 million for broadcasting to Iran's disaffected youth and <u>women</u> will do the trick, says a veteran Israeli security official who served in pre-

revolutionary Iran.

Half the population are non-Persian minorities Azeris, Kurds, Baluch, Arabs, says an American intelligence expert. We should incite them to rise up against the Persians.

Once you do the math with these experts, you can only conclude that nearly 100% of Iranians are so unhappy with their nasty rulers that getting rid of the Islamic regime is a slam dunk.

I have been listening to this talk, often from the highest American and Israeli government and security officials, for nearly 30 years. Much of it is based on a persistent belief that the regime brought to power by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 is an aberration, not the true Iran we knew back in the Shah's day, and hence undoubtedly illegitimate in the eyes of most Iranians.

Other advocates of regime change in Tehran base their views on opinion polls of doubtful veracity, the popularity of smuggled American movies and music clips in the salons of north Tehran, or just plain faith in the longing of everyday Iranians to doff their chadors, rebuff their religious police and embrace Western-style freedom and liberty. Wishful thinking plays a role, too: This regime is indeed dangerous, hence it simply must be overthrown, whatever the price.

Like almost any Israeli and Jew, I, too, would like to see the emergence of a more tolerant and friendly regime in Iran. Indeed, I have my own special reasons of late: A few months ago, the regime contrived to manipulate the televised confessions of two imprisoned Iranian intellectuals so as to implicate me and the Internet dialogue magazines I co-edit in an alleged American effort to sponsor a Ukrainian-style orange revolution in Tehran.

Accept That the Regime in Iran Is Here To Stay The strategic Interest

These assertions are ridiculous. Not only do I not advocate changing this regime by force or outside manipulation, I believe it is a totally unrealistic proposition. Moreover, it is harmful to pursue this approach to the Islamic Republic.

True, the Tehran regime actually encourages Western regime-change advocates by its paranoia. A regime that goes to such extreme measures to suppress dissent and concoct virtual subversives must, the outsider reasons, be extremely weak and unstable.

Yet the simplest indication that regime change efforts against Tehran don't work is the fact that for nearly 30 years they haven't worked.

Indeed, objectively speaking, the mullahs' regime has been in far worse straits throughout most of the past three decades than it is today, when it is flooded with petrodollars. Iranians willingly vote in their elections, however unfair and undemocratic they may look to us. They idolize the heroes of the war in the 1980s with Iraq. And when they express dissatisfaction with their abject lack of freedoms, the regime is very skillful at suppressing dissent.

After three decades, you would think that intelligent observers and analysts would get the message: This regime, however odious, is here to stay.

When it comes to Iran, it still makes sense to keep all options on the table as long as these don't include regime change. If international sanctions and pressures don't bring the Iranians to their senses regarding their nuclear plans and if military action, by the United States or Israel, is judged to have a good chance of succeeding, then it cannot be ruled out, as long as we don't delude ourselves that it will catalyze a revolution in Tehran.

On the contrary, military achievements aside, it is likely to strengthen the regime. That is but one of the reasons why, as the Iraq Study Group report advocated a few months ago, genuine dialogue should be tried first.

Israel should not fear an American-Iranian dialogue. True, Iran poses a far greater threat to Israel than to the United States. And the Islamic Republic not only appears to covet weapons of mass destruction but is actively working with Hamas, *Hezbollah* and other non-state actors on Israel's borders that, like Tehran itself, advocate Israel's destruction.

Nonetheless, if Israeli security officials and decision- makers would abandon their unfounded hope of bringing down the Iranian regime, they could more constructively confront the remaining, more practical, options.

Iran refuses to talk to Israel, but not to the United States. Fears in Israel that Washington might somehow cut a deal with Tehran that compromises Israel's security or, for that matter, Saudi Arabia's security, or Jordan's appear to have no foundation.

If Washington does agree to sit down at the negotiating table with Iran, it cannot permit itself to be perceived by Iranians as entering the talks with dirty hands. It cannot appropriate tens of millions of dollars to encourage Iranian civil society efforts, however admirable, that are understood by the regime as subversive, and perhaps here and there encourage dissident Iranian Baluch and Kurds to oppose the regime (while reassuring Iran with a smirk that regime-change is not official American policy), and still expect to engage the Tehran regime in dialogue on a level playing field.

Whether talking to this regime will produce useful results is, of course, not clear. But it is certainly a more pragmatic option once we rid ourselves of the pathetic notion that, with a little push, or even a big push, the regime will collapse.

If and when the theocratic regime in Tehran is replaced, its demise will, like the Khomeini revolution 30 years ago, be the result of domestic developments, not outside intervention. In the meantime, containment will be an easier task if we approach Iran without illusions.

Graphic

IMAGE

Load-Date: February 14, 2008



A new 'road map' for Islam in Turkey; Reform-minded scholars to conduct modern reinterpretation of the words of the Prophet

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)

May 3, 2008 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: INSIGHT; Pg. A17

Length: 964 words

Byline: Dion Nissenbaum, McClatchy Newspapers

Dateline: ANKARA, Turkey

Body

ANKARA, Turkey - In a sterile, boxy stone building in the shadow of Ankara's central mosque, a group of Turkish scholars is spearheading a reinterpretation of the literary foundations of Islam that some have compared to Christianity's Protestant Reformation.

With the backing of Turkey's reform-minded government, the team of 80 Islamic academicians from around the world is preparing to release a revised collection of the Prophet Muhammad's words and deeds, which guide Muslims on everything from brushing their teeth to reaching heaven.

As with most religions, the accuracy of the words that have been handed down through centuries has long been in dispute.

Did Muhammad really say that <u>women</u> are bad luck? Did the prophet tell his followers that the word of a woman is worth half that of a man? Did he call for adulterers to be stoned to death?

By year's end, the academics hope to answer those questions by preparing a new intellectual road map for Islam.

"It's a state-sponsored project that is bringing together a large number of scholars to undertake quite an extensive reinterpretation of the sources in a systematic way that has not been achieved before in modern times," said Fadi Hakura, an associate fellow in the European Program at Chatham House, an independent London-based policy institute.

He calls the project "somewhat akin to the Christian Reformation."

The revised collection of Muhammad's guidance will be the latest initiative in a contentious debate about the role of Islam in an era when the most prominent Muslim figures, at least in the West, are extremists such as Osama bin Laden.

The rise of al-Qaida and prominence of hard-line Islamist groups such as Hamas, <u>Hezbollah</u> and the Taliban, some Islamic reformers argue, has created a warped view of Islam in the West.

A new 'road map' for Islam in Turkey; Reform-minded scholars to conduct modern reinterpretation of the words of the Prophet

"This may help to take the words of the prophet from the hands of people who are using them to legitimize their bad deeds," said Mehmet Gormez, the vice president of Turkey's Religious Affairs Ministry, which is overseeing the project.

In the past, maverick Muslim scholars in the Middle East who've tried to propose modern reinterpretations of Islam have been ostracized and, in some cases, forced to seek sanctuary in Western countries.

Turkey is charting a new course by supporting the project, which is focused on the Hadith -- a massive collection of Muhammad's words and deeds that is the foundation of Islamic law.

The lessons were transmitted orally for hundreds of years, throwing their veracity into question, and when Muslim scholars first began to write them down, they sought to bolster their authenticity by explaining the words' lineage.

The Turkish researchers have meticulously collected more than 160,000 sayings from the Hadith and entered them into a specially designed computer program for analysis. They've grouped the sayings by subject and passed them out to scholars for reinterpretation.

Gormez compared the Hadith to a pharmacy and said that people need the advice of a skilled doctor before going in to get their medicine. "One may get poisoned if he goes to the pharmacy without the recommendation of a good doctor," he said.

In essence, the scholars are sorting out which prescriptions to keep on the pharmacy shelves and which ones to remove.

The new analysis of these Islamic pillars is something akin to the debate in Christian circles between those who believe that the Bible is the literal word of God and those who see it as a holy moral guide.

Though Biblical commandments allow fathers to sell their daughters into slavery and state that those who work on the Sabbath should be killed, those dictates have few adherents in the modern world, while others, such as the Ten Commandments and the injunction to love your neighbour, endure.

The Turkish scholars could have a similar impact on conservative Islamic views of <u>women</u>, adultery, honour killings and more.

Some of the revisions will focus on simple issues such as hygiene.

Just because Muhammad urged his followers to brush their teeth with a certain kind of twig, for example, doesn't mean that a modern Muslim must use a twig instead of a toothbrush; it simply means that the prophet wanted his followers to take care of their teeth.

One of the places the project is expected to have the biggest impact is on the Islamic view of women.

Ismail Hakki Unal, a professor at Ankara University's Divinity School who's leading the project, said the final product is unlikely to include sayings attributed to Muhammad that suggest that <u>women</u> are bad luck, that they're stupid or that their word is worth half that of a man.

"Those definitely cannot be the words of the prophet," Unal said.

The project, which has been unfolding slowly for two years, is beginning to create a backlash across the Muslim world.

Gormez pored over a thick blue binder filled with stories from the Arabic press that criticized Turkey for its initiative, especially because of the politically charged comparisons to the Protestant Reformation that outsiders have made.

"If they continue assessing things like this without being serious, then I don't think any academic study will affect the Muslim world," Gormez said.

Page 3 of 3

A new 'road map' for Islam in Turkey; Reform-minded scholars to conduct modern reinterpretation of the words of the Prophet

"But there is a good tradition in Egypt, Jordan, Malaysia, and I think this will be a good connection to the scholars there."

The goal is to produce a five-volume set that will be used in mosques across Turkey and sold in religious bookstores there. The work will first be released in Turkish, Arabic and Russian.

Turkey's evaluation of the prophet's word could have an impact beyond the Muslim world as well.

"The Turkish experiment may inspire future debate, and that in itself would be a significant achievement for the West to dramatically show clearly that religion and modernity are not contradictory, but compatible," Hakura said.

Graphic

Photo: Christinne Muschi, Reuters; (See hard copy for photo description.);

Photo: Dion Nissenbaum, McClatchy Tribune News Service; Mehmet Gormez, vice president of Turkey's Religious Affairs Ministry;

Load-Date: May 4, 2008



What price for victory?; Innocents, enemies indistinguishable in Iraq fighting

Charleston Gazette (West Virginia)

June 7, 2007, Thursday

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. P5A

Length: 1012 words **Byline:** Gerald Beller

Body

FOR ALL the opposition to the American occupation of Iraq, it is not at all clear that most people yet understand a simple fact: our soldiers are forced to kill and die in a land where it is impossible to separate enemy from friend.

Consider the First Battle of Sadr City in April 2004, described by ABC reporter Martha Raddatz in a recent book, when 19 American soldiers were trapped in an alley where survival depended upon the massacre of children, <u>women</u> and elderly people acting as shields for Mahdi Army forces intent on killing them. Or the simultaneous battle over Fallujah, where Iraqi men between the ages of 15 and 45 were not allowed to leave before an American assault on the city because all were seen as potential threats.

The subsequent destruction in Fallujah spurred a nationwide Iraqi uprising with American occupiers now targeted by militia forces with broad support among a population that some previously thought would greet us with flowers. It seems obvious that these dynamics have only worsened, despite the new U.S. military leadership's desire to face realities previously unacknowledged by political leaders utterly out of touch with the world our soldiers encounter every day.

American soldiers did not choose these circumstances. Without adequate intelligence about political ambiguities in the society we sought to change, knowledge of the local culture or clarity at the highest levels about our own political goals, confusion reigned about who was the enemy. As in Vietnam, we find ourselves in support of a government widely considered illegitimate and wedded to factions we cannot trust. Today, responsible leaders acknowledge the need to obtain compromises with forces that have deliberately killed thousands of innocent people as well as our own soldiers.

Lessons learned from the Iraqi disaster should not have been necessary. In the world we now inhabit, says British Gen. Rupert Smith in his book The Utility of Force, war must be fought "amongst the people" rather than with clearly defined enemies, much less an "axis of evil." Hard decisions must be made about whom "we are dealing with," whether we want "order or justice," and "whose law" we wish to enforce. Clear-cut victories such as those in World War II haven't been meaningful for over half a century.

In fact, it is worse than that. In his extensive study, Children at War, P. W. Singer found that over 40 percent of contemporary armies consist of children 16 years old or younger. In Iraq as in Vietnam, the greatest threats may well be kids barely into their teens. The psychological damage to occupying forces is incalculable - especially to soldiers who have children of their own. Precisely as military authorities have overcome the natural human reluctance to kill people in close combat, resulting increases in kill rates have been matched by dramatic increases

in psychiatric problems among veterans, according to Dave Grossman in his book On Killing. In this respect, Iraq once again recapitulates the experience of Korea and Vietnam.

In today's world, political mobilization of non-noncombatants by guerrilla forces willing to ignore normal "laws of war" usually overcome militarily superior occupation forces. Defeat comes as widespread problems of demoralization among occupying soldiers become obvious. Consider the arguments of Israeli military analyst Martin van Creveld in The Changing Face of War: whether it be the British confronting Jewish insurgents in 1940s Palestine or nationalists in Kenya, Malaysia, Cyprus and Aden; Israelis confronting Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank; French in Algeria and Vietnam; Dutch in Indonesia; Americans in Vietnam; or the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, occupying forces have always lost. (I would dispute this presumption for Malaysia, but let it pass.) The recent disaster associated with the battle against *Hezbollah* in Lebanon by Israeli forces reinforces this lesson.

In every case, the occupiers lost because they did not understand the culture or speak the language of those they occupied, and inflicted heavy casualties upon civilians who could not be distinguished from combatants, thereby generating intense hatred among those they sought to control for their own ends. Professor van Creveld notes only two exceptions to this record of failed occupation in the post-World War II period. The first was in Northern Ireland, where British forces obviously knew the culture and language of terrorist groups lodged within the civilian population and were willing to accept larger casualties among their own troops than among civilians. The second example was Syria in 1982, when President Afaz al-Asad massacred thousands without compunction and turned a famous mosque into a parking lot in a successful effort to frighten survivors out of any association with Islamists.

Like Asad, the United States has the capacity to massacre without compunction. Fortunately, our moral scruples and larger international responsibilities forbid such behavior. Nonetheless, we should all be appalled at the huge civilian casualties in Iraq. Even the British government now acknowledges that a controversial study released several months ago claiming that deaths incurred since the invasion may have reached 601,027 was based on sound methods.

Most of these fatalities were carried out by death squads and terrorists which the occupation unleashed, and which we now try to destroy, even as we ask many of their leaders to join the government we are backing. It is also important to acknowledge that however much our government tries to hide the facts, American forces were also responsible for many civilian casualties simply because we did not anticipate what we were getting into. We retain little or no capacity to change the horrific conditions now faced by the population our leaders thought they were "liberating."

The next time someone talks about "victory" in Iraq, we ought to ask them how we obtain it without losing our souls.

Dr. Beller, a professor at West Virginia State University, is a Gazette contributing columnist.

Load-Date: June 7, 2007



HAMAS BETRAYS THE PALESTINIANS

The Australian

December 29, 2008 Monday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 11

Length: 1070 words

Body

The deaths of hundreds in the Gaza airstrikes at the weekend are a further cost of implacable militancy

THE piteous images of the dead and wounded in the Gaza Strip after the Israeli airstrikes there at the weekend cannot obscure the betrayal of undeniable Palestinian welfare and interests that is perpetrated by Hamas, the militant ruling party in the long-suffering refugee enclave. Civilians have died cruelly, caught in the line of fire. Even the Hamas police recruits who were killed may have been young men seeking one of the few jobs to be had in the besieged strip. But who is to blame? Where might peace be found? How will other governments, particularly the incoming administration of Barack Obama in the US, respond to this test in a most fractious region?

The Gazans have been on the path to worsening strife since many of them, with other Palestinians in the West Bank, elected Hamas to power in the Palestinian Authority's parliament in early 2006. Hamas is an Islamist group whose goal of Israel's destruction is also championed by Iran, which likes to see the Middle East and Gulf as part of its rising hegemony. Hamas did not follow up on its election win by implementing a program of enlightened and progressive policies across the Palestinian territories. Instead it chose to entrench itself militarily and politically within teeming Gaza, expelling its main Palestinian rival party, Fatah. The strip became a base camp for the radicals' struggle against Israel.

The military and political wisdom of the caretaker Israeli cabinet's approval of the strikes will be debated, as was the case with Israel's incursion into Lebanon in 2006. The latter was seen afterwards as possibly having strengthened the political clout of the radical Islamist party *Hezbollah*, which was Israel's target in Lebanon. The same risk applies with Hamas, but to a much lesser degree. Both military actions were responses to an intolerable pattern of rocket attacks on Israel and the seizing of its soldiers.

What counts now is that the Israeli leadership has at least a partial political solution to the conflict with Gaza in mind, beyond a substantial dismantling of Hamas's ability to harass. The cabinet, dominated by the Kadima and Labour parties, will be hoping the strikes have done sufficient military damage to obviate the need for a major ground invasion, with its risk of high casualties on both sides.

The relatively muted and balanced response from Western governments shows Israel's dilemma is understood, and Jerusalem will be given time. The strongest language among leaders is probably that of France's President Nicholas Sarkozy, who called the strikes ``disproportionate" to Hamas's threat. The strikes certainly exceeded the rockets emanating from Gaza in destruction but they were reportedly aimed at reducing Hamas's military power for long enough to get useful negotiations going -- finally.

HAMAS BETRAYS THE PALESTINIANS

In 2005, then prime minister Ariel Sharon took Israeli forces and civilian settlers out of Gaza after nearly four decades of occupation, but instead of the improved relations that could have been a precursor to an eventual Palestinian state, the result was an increase in attacks on nearby communities in Israel. Israel's punitive reprisals were tough and by the middle of this year a six-month ceasefire was in place. But rocket attacks resumed in earnest after the six months were up this month.

Hamas has proved the hardest of enemies to crack without warfare. A near-total Israeli blockade of the strip, accompanied by matching security to the south by Egypt -- desirous of excluding radicals from entry -- has boosted the dominance of Hamas within the strip, as the party grabbed control of goods and money in short supply. The blockade became porous as a result of tunnelling, but Hamas controlled that, too. Instead of the revolt against Hamas that Israel -- and let it be said most Western nations -- hoped would occur, Hamas was able to exploit the shortages to encourage dependence on it among Gazans. For months, it turns out, the Israeli leadership has been contemplating an attempt at disarming Gaza as the next step, and these airstrikes are the result. Dislodging Hamas completely appears impossible in the near future, despite Fatah's expressed interest in filling any void, so renewed international pressure to draw it into talks with Israel, directly or otherwise, would be welcome.

The suffering of the Gazans, who number about 1.5 million, must end. The impasse has global consequences. The death and maiming will inflame opponents of Israel and the West, especially in Muslim countries. But often that denunciation will be hypocritical, if understandable. It is also no time for holding the misapprehension that Israel's existence is a thorn between the West and Israel's implacable opponents. Israel attracts fierce opposition in the Middle East because it is seen as Western, as a democracy espousing liberal values, including religious tolerance. If the Middle East question merely concerned a territorial settlement for displaced Palestinians, peace would have come long ago.

The strikes have come at a messy time. The US is in political transition, and Israel faces elections in February. The latest polling, done just before the strikes, rates as fairly even Kadima and Labour on the one hand, and the Likud Opposition, led by former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, usually regarded as a hardliner. Likud had been seen as the likely winner. The military option was reportedly supervised by caretaker Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. If the Israeli public approves of the strikes, this will do no harm to his successor as Kadima leader, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who is seeking to become Israel's second *female* prime minister.

In the US, even before being sworn into office on January 20, the president-elect, Mr Obama, is facing his first major foreign challenge, as is his secretary of state-designate, Hillary Clinton. The choice of Senator Clinton -- one of whose main advisers would be her husband, former president Bill Clinton -- has been depicted as of much significance for the Middle East. Mr Clinton made the last concentrated attempt at a solution until Fatah's Yasser Arafat pulled the rug out from under him. His successor, George W. Bush, has seen little point in trying again at this late stage. Mr Obama and Senator Clinton are presented with grave danger, but also opportunity.

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



How many more?

The Scotsman

January 7, 2009, Wednesday

1 Edition

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Section: Pg. 1

Length: 1031 words

Byline: Brian Ferguson

Body

ISRAEL last night took a step back from all-out war in Gaza after agreeing to a United Nations plan to suspend some attacks and open an "aid corridor" into the stricken territory.

Ehud Olmert, the prime minister, signalled an apparent softening of his stance just hours after an Israeli bombardment left at least 30 civilians dead at a UN-run school, sparking international outrage.

There were also hopes last night that Israel might be prepared to accept a ceasefire proposal put forward by France and Egypt to bring the escalating conflict to a halt.

The school attack was seen as a major setback to the Jewish state's attempts to win the PR battle over its Gaza incursion. Hundreds of Palestinians had sought safety in the building when it came under attack yesterday.

Many <u>women</u> and children were reported to be among the dead after shells struck outside the Fakhura school in the Jabaliya refugee camp, leading to renewed international demands for an end to the bloodshed. The Israeli army claimed two Hamas militants were among the dead and accused the group of using civilians as human shields.

Under last night's plans tabled at the UN Security Council in New York, Israel would suspend attacks in some areas of Gaza to allow civilians access to supplies.

While Israel had not responded to calls for a complete ceasefire in the early hours today, a statement from Mr Olmert's office said the proposal to create an aid corridor had been accepted to "prevent a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip".

Israel insists it has allowed enough supplies into the territory during 11 days of conflict, but the UN says there is already a crisis there because of shortages of food, fuel and medicine.

In the school attack, three mortar shells landed at the perimeter of the building. As well as the dead, 55 people were injured.

The explosions - which resulted in shrapnel being sprayed over victims inside and outside the building - marked the second Israeli attack on a UN-run school. Earlier, at least three Palestinians were killed when a school was hit in the Shati refugee camp.

How many more?

Outside the Fakhura school, the target of the second attack, bodies could be seen scattered on the ground amid pools of blood, while torn shoes and clothes littered the scene.

Fares Ghanem, an official at Kamal Radwan Hospital, said: "I saw a lot of <u>women</u> and children wheeled in. A lot of the wounded were missing limbs and a lot of the dead were in pieces."

Majed Hamdan, a news photographer, said he reached the scene shortly after the attacks, and stated that many children were among the dead. "I saw <u>women</u> and men - parents - slapping their faces in grief, screaming, some of them collapsed to the floor. They knew their children were dead," he said.

"In the mortuary, most appeared to be children. In the hospital, there was not enough space for the wounded."

John Ging, the top UN official in Gaza, said: "There's nowhere safe in Gaza. Everyone here is terrorised and traumatised.

"I am appealing to political leaders here and in the region and the world to get their act together and stop this," he said. "They are responsible for these deaths."

In a statement, the Israeli army said an initial investigation had found "mortar shells were fired from within the school at IDF [Israeli Defence Force] soldiers. The force responded with mortars. The Hamas cynically uses civilians as human shields".

However, hospital officials insisted they had not seen any gunmen among the casualties.

It was the deadliest attack since Israel sent ground forces into Gaza last weekend. The assault has left nearly 600 Palestinians dead.

The rising death toll has drawn international condemnation and raised concerns of a looming humanitarian disaster in Gaza, which is home to 1.5 million people.

Many Gazans are without electricity or running water, thousands have been displaced from their homes and food supplies are running out.

"This is not a crisis - it's a disaster," said Munzir Shiblak, an official with Gaza's water utility body. "We are not even able to respond to the cry of the people."

A senior UN official in Gaza said 350 people had been sheltering at the Fakhura school and the UN gave the Israeli army exact co-ordinates to protect them from attack.

UN staff estimate that 15,000 people have fled to 23 of its schools that have been turned into makeshift refuges.

The school deaths in Gaza took the number of Palestinian civilians killed yesterday alone to 77, according to medical officials.

Earlier yesterday, Israel said it would not stop the overall assault until its southern towns were freed from the threat of Palestinian rocket fire and there were guarantees Hamas would not restock its weapons.

The growing number of civilian casualties could prove to be a turning point in Israel's "Operation Cast Lead", which was launched on 27 December.

The killing of 28 unarmed Lebanese during Israeli bombing of the village of Qana in the 2006 Lebanon war drained foreign support for its campaign against *Hezbollah* guerrillas. Israel said it had not known civilians were in the area.

Gordon Brown, the Prime Minister, last night

said the situation in Gaza was a "humanitarian crisis", and went on: "This is the darkest moment yet for the Middle East and it affects the whole of the world.

How many more?

"It's because of that we must get humanitarian aid that we are promising in."

The US state department said it wanted an immediate ceasefire but stressed it would not alter its stance that it must be sustainable and indefinite.

Meanwhile, Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, said he supported a proposal by Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian president, for an immediate truce between Israel and the Palestinians in Gaza. The plan was also backed by the United States last night.

Ban Ki-moon, the UN secretary-general, said he would travel to Israel and the Palestinian territories next week, adding it was vital to reach a ceasefire in Gaza before then.

Barack Obama, the US president-elect, said he was "deeply concerned" about civilian casualties in Gaza.

United Nations officials pleaded with world leaders to unite in a bid to end the carnage, while the International Committee of the Red Cross warned of a "full-blown humanitarian crisis".

Load-Date: January 7, 2009



ISRAELIS ARE JUST DEFENDING THEMSELVES

The Capital Times (Madison, Wisconsin)

January 21, 2009 Wednesday

ALL EDITION

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Section: THE CAP TIMES; Pg. 36

Length: 1059 words

Body

Dear Editor: The European press complains about the disproportion of the Israeli defense against the Palestinian Hamas terrorists, but if they want proportionality, give Israel a population of 300 million residing in 22 countries, similar to the Arab Muslims who surround and ambush Israel instead of the 5.5 million Jews in one single country.

What has been happening in Israel is the equivalent of Kristallnacht - the night of the broken glass - when on the night of Nov. 9-10, 1938, gangs of Nazi youths roamed through Jewish neighborhoods, breaking windows of Jewish businesses and homes, burning synagogues and looting. These acts of intimidation were designed to frighten the Jews into leaving Germany.

Despite the chronic intimidation by Hamas and <u>Hezbollah</u>, Israelis will not allow themselves to be annihilated by those who refuse to recognize their right to exist, and we would not allow it either were we in a similar position.

John Anderson Merrimac

Surgeon general pick wrong on mad cow

Dear Editor: Recent criticism of Dr. Sanjay Gupta, the CNN medical correspondent who is reportedly Barack Obama's choice for surgeon general, is due either to his close ties with pharmaceutical sponsors or his infamous attack on a popular supporter of single-payer health care. But I am deeply concerned with his apparent lack of awareness regarding public safety in the handling of meat which might be contaminated with the prions that cause Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, the human form of mad cow disease.

Reliable information on CJD is especially crucial to people who live close to areas known to harbor deer herds infected with chronic wasting disease. Though the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources responsibly publishes precautions for butchering and consuming meat from harvested deer, the likelihood of contracting CJD from ingesting improperly butchered meat rises sharply if a false sense of safety results from erroneous information spread by other traditionally trustworthy sources.

In a 2006 interview, Gupta not only denied that any human CJD cases have ever occurred in this country, but recklessly advised that normal cooking would destroy any infectious agents. Both statements are contrary to widely available and well-established data.

Though CJD deaths remain lower in the U.S. than in many other countries, Gupta's claim that it simply doesn't occur here leaves the impression that human crossover is virtually impossible. Misinforming the public by

ISRAELIS ARE JUST DEFENDING THEMSELVES

contradicting well-established findings that prions cannot be destroyed by cooking is both irresponsible and negligent.

Joe Rogozinski Oxford

Comparing ageism to racism, sexism wrong

Dear Editor: Barbara Quirk's claim that elder abuse and negative depictions of senior citizens in the media point to a larger pattern of discrimination is plain wrong. Elder abuse is a terrible crime that, like all crimes, reflects poorly on the society in which it occurs. Theft is also rampant in society; does this mean that we as a society hate property holders?

The Constitution was adopted in 1787, legally giving white male citizens (elderly included) the right to vote. In 1920 **women** were given the right to vote and the Voting Rights Act helps ensure that racial minorities can exercise their right to vote.

Perhaps if the elderly used their long-held voting right to vote for candidates who actually care about protecting the unprotected instead of consistently voting for reactionary and ideologically bankrupt candidates who pander to tradition and nativist "patriotism," this country might be a kinder place for all. As it is my generation (I am 21) and that of my parents will have to spend our lives cleaning up the social ills of sexism and racism that previous generations signally failed to address in due time.

Ben Moser Madison

PHLEGM the answer for Madison's left

Dear Editor: Legislative Democratic majorities, nationally and statewide, have accompanied the Obama tsunami.

Justifiably atwitter, the Madison left should be considering how best to spend this avalanche of political capital. Further handcuff local businesses? Shifting the blame for the Overture Center debacle? What to do when all the red pedestrian flags are on the other side of the street? The possibilities are limitless.

Instead, a very public hissy fit between two Madison liberals, Mayor Dave and Ald. Brenda Konkel, has ensued. Trouble in paradise?

Madison's left needs a makeover to show a unified front.

The Progressive Humanitarian Liberal Environmentalist Global Movement - or PHLEGM - could be all things to all things left, inclusive, and good for the environment. Its motto: "When rolling up your sleeves to do the heavy lifting in deciding what's best for everyone else leaves you feeling emotional, PHLEGM is that lump in your throat!" Progressive Dane, step aside.

Paul W. Schlecht Madison

Mayor misguided on bus fare hikes

Dear Editor: Why does Mayor Dave Cieslewicz hate transit so?

Fare increases create a downward spiral. Increased fares lead to reduced ridership, leading to reduced revenue, leading to the ultimate decline of transit service.

Mayor Dave's petulance in demanding a fare increase was compounded by his threat to replace members of the commission.

Transit is not a charity; it is a basic government service. A city survey lists Metro service as one of 15 core city services.

ISRAELIS ARE JUST DEFENDING THEMSELVES

The Streets Department will keep plowing if the snow keeps falling, regardless of its budget. So too Madison Metro should keep running buses. Let the mayor and the City Council worry about funding.

The mayor's attitude is "it's my way or the highway - and lots of them!"

Al Matano Dane County Board, District 11

Cap Times prompts sneer of disgust

Dear Editor: Once again your paper has given me a sneer of disgust. You say that "Local residents can't wait for W's reign to be over." While that may be true for many, not all area residents share that feeling. It is sad how far off the left your paper has fallen. I have to remind you that not everyone that reads your paper is a white flag-waving, foreign car-driving, left-leaning snobbish Madisonian.

I do wish Barack Obama the best in his presidency but I have to wonder if your paper will rip him to shreds if/when he fails. Will you print daily slanted articles and terribly nasty cartoons of him like you have of George Bush, John McCain and Sarah Palin?

Michael V. Simon Verona

Notes

Some of these letters also appeared on The Capital Times Web site.

Load-Date: January 22, 2009



Israel bombs Gaza

Chicago Daily Herald

December 28, 2008 Sunday

L2 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1 Length: 1150 words

Byline: Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Israeli warplanes rained more than 100 tons of bombs on security installations in Hamas-ruled Gaza on Saturday, killing at least 230 people in one of the bloodiest days in decades of the Mideast conflict.

The government said the open-ended campaign was aimed at stopping rocket and mortar attacks that have traumatized southern Israel.

More than 400 people were also wounded. Most of the casualties were security forces, but Palestinian officials said at least 15 civilians were among the dead.

The unprecedented assault sparked protests and condemnations throughout the Arab world, and many of Israel's Western allies urged restraint, though the U.S. blamed

Hamas for the fighting.

But there was no end in sight. Israel warned it might go after Hamas' leaders, and militants kept pelting Israel with rockets — killing at least one Israeli and wounding six.

Hundreds of Israeli infantry and armored corps troops headed for the Gaza border in preparation for a possible ground invasion, military officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity under army guidelines.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the goal was "to bring about a fundamental improvement in the security situation of the residents of the southern part of the country." He added, "It could take some time."

The Israeli airstrikes caused widespread panic and confusion, and black plumes of smoke billowed above the territory, ruled by the Islamic militant Hamas for the past 18 months. Some of the Israeli missiles struck in densely populated areas as students were leaving school, and <u>women</u> rushed into the streets frantically looking for their children.

"My son is gone, my son is gone," wailed Said Masri, a 57-year-old shopkeeper, as he sat in the middle of a Gaza City street, slapping his face and covering his head with dust from a bombed-out security compound nearby.

He said he had sent his 9-year-old son out to purchase cigarettes minutes before the airstrikes began and could not find him. "May I burn like the cigarettes, may Israel burn," Masri moaned.

Israel bombs Gaza

Militants often operate against Israel from civilian areas. Late Saturday, thousands of Gazans received Arabiclanguage cell-phone messages from the Israeli military, urging them to leave homes where militants might have stashed weapons.

The offensive began eight days after a six-month truce between Israel and the militants expired. The Israeli army says Palestinian militants have fired some 300 rockets and mortars at Israeli targets over the past week, and 10 times that number over the past year.

"There is a time for calm and there is a time for fighting, and now is the time for fighting," said Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, vowing to expand the operation if necessary.

In Gaza City's main security compound, bodies of more than a dozen uniformed Hamas police lay on the ground. Civilians rushed wounded people in cars and vans to hospitals because there weren't enough ambulances to transport all the dead and wounded.

"There are heads without bodies... There's blood in the corridors. People are weeping, <u>women</u> are crying, doctors are shouting, " said nurse Ahmed Abdel Salaam from Shifa Hospital, Gaza's main treatment center.

Military officials said aircraft released more than 100 tons of bombs in the first nine hours of fighting, focusing initially on militant training camps, rocket-manufacturing facilities and weapons warehouses that had been identified in advance.

A second wave was directed at squads who fired about 180 rockets and mortars at Israeli border communities. In an attack early Sunday, Palestinians said Israeli aircraft bombed a mosque near Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, destroying it.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said Hamas' political leaders could soon be targeted. ""Hamas is a terrorist organization and nobody is immune," she declared.

The campaign was launched six weeks before national elections. Livni and Barak hope to succeed Ehud Olmert as prime minister, and the outgoing government has faced pressure to take tough action.

Gaza's political leaders, who have been targeted in the past, went into hiding earlier this week. In a speech broadcast on local Gaza television, Hamas' prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, declared his movement would not be cowed.

"We are stronger, and more determined, and have more will, and we will hold onto our rights even more than before," Haniyeh said. It was not clear where he spoke.

In Damascus, Syria, Hamas' top leader, Khaled Mashaal, called on Palestinians to rekindle their fight against Israel. "This is the time for a third uprising," he said.

Israel withdrew its troops and settlers in 2005 after crushing the second Palestinian uprising, but it has maintained control over the territory's border crossings.

Despite the overwhelming show of force, it was not clear the offensive would halt the rocket fire. Past operations have never achieved that goal.

Late Saturday, Gaza health official Dr. Moaiya Hassanain said 230 Palestinians were killed and more than 400 were wounded.

The lone fatality in Israel was in the town of Netivot, where a rocket killed an Israeli man. Six other people were wounded, rescue services said.

Netivot only recently become a target, and dozens of stunned residents, some weeping, gathered at the house that took the deadly rocket hit. A hole gaped in one of the walls, which was pocked with shrapnel marks.

Israel bombs Gaza

"We need to finish this once and for all and strike back hard," said next-door neighbor Avraham Chen-Chatam, 57.

Streets were nearly empty in Sderot, the Israeli border town pummeled hardest by rockets. But dozens of people congregated on a hilltop to watch the Israeli aerial attacks.

The TV images of dead and wounded Gazans inflamed Arab public opinion, and protests erupted in Arab Israeli villages, the West Bank and elsewhere in the Arab world.

The campaign embarrassed moderate Arab regimes that have encouraged Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking and weakened Hamas' rival, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who has ruled only the West Bank since Hamas violently seized control of Gaza in June 2007.

Abbas condemned the attacks, but fearing violence could spiral out of control, his forces also broke up protests in the West Bank.

The offensive also risked opening new fronts, including unrest that could destabilize the West Bank and ignite possible rocket attacks by Lebanese *Hezbollah* guerrillas on northern Israel.

Britain, the EU, the Vatican, the U.N. secretary-general and special Mideast envoy Tony Blair all called for an immediate restoration of calm. The Arab League scheduled an emergency meeting Wednesday to discuss the situation.

But the U.S., Israel's closest ally, blamed Hamas. "These people are nothing but thugs, so Israel is going to defend its people against terrorists like Hamas that indiscriminately kill their own people," White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said.

Attack: Arab countries protest Israeli move

Graphic

associated Press A Palestinian girl wounded in an Israeli missile strike is carried into the emergency area at Shifa hospital in Gaza City on Saturday.

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



Egyptians struggle over response; Sympathy for their 'brothers' apparently goes only so far - Correction Appended

The International Herald Tribune December 31, 2008 Wednesday

Correction Appended

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 5

Length: 1014 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: EL ARISH, Egypt

Body

Nadim Audi contributed reporting.

*

Egyptian ambulances have brought at least 43 wounded Palestinians from Gaza to the general hospital in this southern city, with 15 of them needing mechanical respirators to keep them alive, said Muhammad al-Gabr, a doctor who has been trying to keep them alive and get them to more sophisticated surgical hospitals in Cairo.

Nine remained here Tuesday, including a young boy. They all were in critical condition with blast and fracture wounds, and Gabr hoped to medivac them out Tuesday night. "The doctors in Gaza are very talented," he said with some admiration. "They've had a lot of experience."

He said that as far as he knew all the patients sent here were civilians.

He said he felt he was trying to do his part for Gaza, though he recognized that Egypt and its longtime president, Hosni Mubarak, faced a difficult political dilemma - needing to show solidarity with the Palestinians under attack while refusing to open the border between Egypt and Gaza to anything but carefully monitored humanitarian missions, like the 30 ambulances this reporter saw Tuesday heading toward Gaza.

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

But some here, where an important part of the economy is based on smuggling food, supplies, weapons and explosives to Gaza, feel that Egypt must do more while Gaza is under such heavy attack from Israeli warplanes.

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

Egyptians struggle over response Sympathy for their 'brothers' apparently goes only so far

Open criticism of Mubarak was rare Tuesday in southern Egypt, where the landscape and the architecture are nearly identical to that in Gaza. There is a heavy presence of police, military and secret police, the Mukhabarat, and numerous checkpoints along the roads on the way to Rafah, which has been declared a military zone.

President Bashar al-Assad of Syria and his ally, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of <u>Hezbollah</u> in Lebanon, have called on Egypt to open the barriers to Gaza and the Egyptian people to break them down. But Mubarak's forces have already clashed with Palestinians trying to leave Gaza, and he has said that the border would remain closed.

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

"We in Egypt are not going to contribute to perpetuating the rift by opening the Rafah crossing in the absence of the Palestinian Authority and European Union observers," as called for in a 2005 agreement opening Rafah that was negotiated with Abbas, Israel and the United States.

Mubarak condemned Israel's "savage aggression," said Israel's "blood-stained hands are stirring up feelings of enormous anger" and called for an immediate cease-fire.

But in a riposte to Arab critics who live at a distance, Mubarak said: "We say to those who are trying to make political capital out of the plight of the Palestinian people that Palestinian blood has a price." He told the Palestinians "to restore your unity" and said he had warned Hamas leaders that ending the six-month truce with Israel would bring new Israeli attacks.

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

There have been attacks, meanwhile, on Egyptian diplomatic missions in Beirut and in Aden, Yemen. Egypt will act as host of a meeting Wednesday of Arab League foreign ministers before a summit meeting on Friday in Doha.

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

Hassan Salem, 22, said he and Khaled Kamal, 25, had traveled the 35 kilometers, or 20 miles, from Rafah to this seaside city "to look at young <u>women</u> and to rest my head." Kamal said that when the Israelis were bombing near Rafah to try to destroy the smuggling tunnels that run between the Egyptian and Gazan side of the once-unified city, "we were almost knocked out by the noise."

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

They sat in a tea shop, eyes glued to Al Jazeera and its nonstop coverage of the wounded and dead in Gaza, with a special focus on two dead sisters, 4 and 11, shown lying in shrouds side by side.

"When you see small children dying like that, why did they die?" Kamal said passionately. "What did they do?"

Both were careful in discussing the tunnels, but Salem said, with a bit of exaggeration: "Israel destroyed maybe 40 tunnels the other day, but there are a thousand."

His words were echoed by Ahmad Abdo, 43. "The tunnels are our lifeline," he said. "The Israelis bombed some, but they can't bomb them all. Their economy is our economy."

Salem said that all Arabs should help the Palestinians, but he was less clear about how.

Egyptians struggle over response Sympathy for their 'brothers' apparently goes only so far

As for Egypt, he said that Mubarak was "doing all he can to help them." Kamal remembered how Hamas blew up the border between Gaza and Egypt last year, and how the first days of celebration were followed by resentments and the denuding of southern Egypt of goods meant for Egyptians. "After three days, there was nothing left for us to buy," he said.

The military men in Rafah, Salem said, "are there to help." But then he said, neatly describing the Egyptian dilemma, "Of course, if the Palestinians push through, the military is also there to push them back."

Correction

An article Wednesday about Egypt's response to the Israeli assault on Gaza described their geographical relationship incorrectly. Gaza abuts northern Egypt, not southern Egypt.

Correction-Date: January 3, 2009

Load-Date: January 6, 2009



What will her opponents make of a dovish new woman leader?

The Times (London)
September 19, 2008 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg.36

Length: 1052 words **Byline:** Mark Almond

Body

Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir, Margaret Thatcher... Tzipi Livni finds herself in a tough line of *female* heads of state, says Mark Almond

Tzipi Livni, the new leader of Kadima, Israel's ruling party, is close to joining that very select club of <u>women</u> heads of government. Ms Livni, Israel's Foreign Minister, if she becomes her nation's second woman prime minister, will face the day-to-day security dilemmas that are not on the agenda of the more numerous <u>women</u> leaders of Scandinavian or Antipodean countries.

It is not only the politically correct who will welcome a woman politician who climbs to the top of the greasy pole, particularly one without a dynasty like the Gandhi family or the Bhuttos to push her there. But gender cannot be ignored in discussing the challenges likely to come Ms Livni's way in the male-dominated and decidedly macho Middle East.

Being a woman is a fact of life. For Tzipi Livni as Israeli Prime Minister there will be opponents who want to make her sex a matter of life and death. <u>Hezbollah</u>, Hamas and Iran will note her dovish commitment to the peace process with the Palestinians, which they reject in any case. How will they test her inaugural comments? If they see them as a sign of weakness on Israel's part for choosing her as Prime Minister, will they respond with pressure for more concessions to prove her bona fides, or more violence to weaken her standing? How will she respond?

<u>Women</u> prime ministers have come under intense pressure from foreign enemies and domestic terrorists before now. Margaret Thatcher, Indira Gandhi and Golda Meir all rose to the top in even less <u>female</u>-friendly political environments than Israel today - though Ms Lipni certainly didn't lack rivals who, during the Kadima leadership campaign, publicly doubted her capacity to direct the Israeli Defence Force.

Even though Indira Gandhi owed her power base in the Congress Party to her father, Pandit Nehru, she survived so long in office only because she took hard decisions. In 1971 she defied the United States and China over the Bangladesh crisis when she invaded to halt a bloody civil war between an East Pakistani Army and a West Pakistani population. Whatever has gone wrong in Bangladesh since, it was not the wrong decision at the time.

What will her opponents make of a dovish new woman leader?

When she decided to suppress the Sikh militants occupying the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Indira Gandhi knew she could be signing her own death warrant. She outraged peaceful Sikhs by sending troops into a shrine that even General Dyer had respected in the 1919 massacre, but she was convinced that allowing a terrorist haven there would spawn more trouble. She had the courage to keep her Sikh bodyguards afterwards, but it was foolhardy, as her assassination showed.

In politics, there are often situations without an answer. Every course of action will have negative effects weighing them in the balance; and getting the least bad result is what separates statesmen from the rest. But no one is infallible and being a woman in the moment of crisis can weigh on the <u>female</u> leader's mind as much as anyone else's.

In early autumn 1973 Israel's first woman Prime Minister, Golda Meir, faced a dilemma. Israeli intelligence said Syria was massing forces but Moshe Dayan, the Defence Minister and war hero, told her not to worry. The US advised against a pre-emptive attack like the 1967 Six-Day War. Then on Yom Kippur both Egypt and Syria caught the Israelis napping - and sent Meir into retirement for resisting her instinct to strike first. But she had thought if the one-eyed Dayan wasn't for it, how could she be more aggressive?

Even a pretty iron-willed lady such as Meir could let considerations of what "real" men on her own team thought influence her policymaking. However, politicians who follow hunches rather than expert advice soon go off the rails when their luck comes unstuck. Churchill's intuitions often let him down in war planning. Take the Dardanelles: right in theory but hopelessly impractical.

Margaret Thatcher's wars were small beer by comparison with Churchill's or even Tony Blair's but her approach was marked by the attention to detail and the lack of wishful thinking that bedevilled the operations of the other two. Call it good housekeeping if you like but, however risky the Falkands War was, Mrs Thatcher took the decision to send the task force only after admirals had assured her of the availability of forces for it. Taking a risk is not the same as a reckless gamble, as she recognised.

Both at home and abroad, Mrs Thatcher knew how to play both sides of her status as a woman prime minister. It gave her what Richard Nixon thought was a very important quality in a national leader - unpredictability. Precisely because a woman prime minister had broken the mould of domestic politics, foreign leaders would be wise to treat her with respect and make a cautious appraisal. Stereotyping a woman leader as either inherently dovish because of her sex or artificially hawkish despite her nature is primitive - but, worse, too often mistaken to be a guide for policy.

After all, it was the Iron Lady who saw the opening to better relations with the Soviet Union offered by Mikhail Gorbachev's arrival on the scene even before he took charge in the Kremlin. Mrs Thatcher could coo like a dove on occasion and it worked. It was a surprise burst of conciliation that came after her earlier tough line on the Soviet Union and hard-heartedness to the IRA hunger strikers and the miners.

As Hillary Clinton's "3am in the White House" attack ad showed, nowadays a woman can play the national security card against younger man with no military credentials. But Barack Obama of course won the primaries.

Tzipi Livni's 3am wake-up call is yet to come. When it does, her answer had better be indifferent to whether it is a gender-based bombshell or not.

Past form in lesser office - as admirers of Gordon Brown have found out - is no guide to performance as prime minister. With little data to play with, history suggests that self-confident <u>women</u> politicians are no more prone to error than men. Small comfort for those who want certainty in a dangerous world.

Mark Almond is lecturer in History at Oriel College, Oxford, and a visiting professor at Bilkent University, Ankara

Load-Date: September 19, 2008



The Wrap: 'It's like having a fire in a cinema'

Guardian.com

September 18, 2008

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Length: 980 words

Body

'IT'S LIKE HAVING A FIRE IN A CINEMA'

"The world is on the brink. The market is puking all over us. There's no capital left in the world," is how a senior banker describes the financial world as we know it in the Times.

News today of Lloyds TSB's emergency takeover of its old foe - and Britain's biggest lender - HBOS in a £12bn deal has failed to stop the downward stockmarket spiral. Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs - "once the storm troopers of global capitalism," according to one report - are now fighting to survive.

Hyun Song Shin, an economics professor at Princeton, says: "It's like having a fire in a cinema. Everybody is rushing to the door. You are rushing to the door because everyone is rushing to the door. Clearly, as a collective action, it is a disaster."

In the US, government bonds have been bought at a level not seen since Pearl Harbour in 1941 as investors tried to move their money into the safest investments possible.

"Some economists worry that a psychology of fear has gripped investors, not only in the United States but also in Europe and Asia," says the New York Times.

Analysts have estimated that under the HBOS bailout as many as 40,000 jobs could be lost from the banks' combined 145,000 staff.

The Times examines the mood of uncertainty among staff at the Halifax headquarters in West Yorkshire, where the bank employs more than 6,000 people.

"They're telling us we've got to treat it like a storm, that the boat is well built and it's still strong, so all we need to do is cling on tight to the mast and ride it out. Well, we're all clinging on for dear life and trying to get on with our jobs but it's been on hell of a storm and it's not over yet."

Lloyds' takeover of HBOS means the joint group will now hold one-third of the UK mortgage market - a situation not blocked by financial services watchdogs as the historic move was backed by the government.

*Times: Fear stalks the banks*New York Times: Stocks slump as Investors run to safety*Guardian: Lloyds pulls HBOS out of the fire with £12bn merger

The Wrap: 'It's like having a fire in a cinema'

LIVNI ENTERS EYE OF ISRAEL'S POLITICAL STORM

Israel's foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, has won an incredible election victory to become the leader of the ruling Kadima party, which places her in a position to become the country's first <u>female</u> prime minister since Golda Meir resigned in 1974.

She now has six weeks to put together a coalition government. "New Golda Meir wins election to be Prime Minister in extra time," declares the Times.

An analysis in Haaretz focuses on how fast-moving Livni will have to be from now on to achieve her aims. "If she were leading a rock group, we would call it Tzipi and the Expectations," writes Amir Oren. "She is expected to form a nimble yet stable government... Her first priority will be to briskly de-Olmertize the party and purge the rot and corruption at the top of government.

"Livni has no time. She may find herself leading a state at war not in a year's time but in a month or even a week, because it is not only Israel that has the initiative. Its enemies - Iran, <u>Hezbollah</u>, Hamas - may be tempted to take advantage of her inexperience."

*Guardian: Livni wins Kadima election landslide*Haaretz: Livni's first priority will be to de-Olmertise Kadima

CLEGG WALKS THE WALK

Nick Clegg's performance at the Liberal Democrat conference in Bournemouth yesterday has been widely praised. (Although there was pretty much unanimous agreement in the political sketches this morning that he walked too much across stage.)

Out of his victorious speech came the following gems:

*Labour is a zombie government: "They are the living dead: no heart, no mind, no soul. Stumbling around with no idea what to do. They are a zombie government."

*David Cameron, in turn, was the "Andrex puppy" of British politics: "Cameron's only aim was to make the Conservatives inoffensive. Problem is, once you strip out the offensive parts of the Conservative government there isn't much left."

The only solution? To embrace the Lib Dems as the champions of social justice.

*Times: Nick Clegg begins a long march from a toilet joke to the seat of power*Guardian: 'Zombie' Labour is finished, says Clegg

THE INVISIBILITY OF DISABILITY

As the British paralympic team leaves Beijing to return home with an unprecedented medal haul (Team GB's 42 gold medals put it ahead of the US in the medal table) comes news that London's Olympic organisers plan to place the event on equal footing with the Olympics in terms of crowd sizes and branding come 2012. For the first time, the two events will also be run by the same committee.

Ade Adepitan, an ex-paralympian, told the Guardian how much public interest in the competition had changed over the years. "I remember events with one man and a dog watching but the other day the Birds Nest was full with 90,000 spectators... People have come and been amazed at athletes feats."

Given this though, why is it that the Paralympics does not get the same exposure as the Olympics? In today's G2, Kira Cochrane asks why, after all the drama, grit and inspiration of the Beijing Paralympics, there are so few disabled people on television.

*Guardian: Kira Cochrane asks what the Paralympics say about the visibility of disability in the media*Guardian: British team sets new gold standard

The Wrap: 'It's like having a fire in a cinema'

SONG LURES DIVERS TO SHIPWRECK

It has been called one of Britain's most romantic shipwrecks and sank more than two centuries ago off the Isles of Scilly. On board was one of the most famous opera singers of her time - Ann Cargill, the tragic, scandal-ridden singer - who perished when the Nancy sank in 1784.

While her body was recovered a week after the ship sank, her fortune - £200,000 of money and jewels - has never been found. Two British divers now believe they have found the wreck scattered across 300 square metres of seabed.

No sign of the jewels yet however.

*Times: Divers close in on lost fortune of a scandalous star

Load-Date: September 18, 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?

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

Schaumburg

Load-Date: December 23, 2008



Despite Deeper Strikes, Israelis Vow to Soldier On

The New York Times

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 11

Length: 950 words

Byline: By ISABEL KERSHNER

Dateline: ASHDOD, Israel

Body

A piercing shriek went up and a young woman fainted as the body, wrapped in a white shroud, was brought into the packed funeral hall.

On Tuesday, this fast-developing, modern port city about halfway between Gaza and Tel Aviv buried its first victim of a rocket attack: Irit Sheetrit, a 39-year-old mother of four.

The Katyusha-type rocket that killed her was fired Monday night by Palestinian militants from Gaza. It was the first to have hit this city of more than 200,000, about 18 miles north of the Palestinian territory, and underscored how rockets from Gaza were reaching farther into the country with each passing day.

As the sun set on Tuesday, rockets flying out of Gaza were landing in new places, like Kiryat Malachi, to the northeast, and Beersheba, a major city in Israel's south.

Over the weekend, Israel began its devastating aerial bombardment of Hamas targets in Gaza with the stated goal of stopping the incessant rocket fire that has plagued Israeli towns and villages close to the border for years.

More than 370 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli assault so far, Palestinian officials said. Among the dead were at least 62 **women** and children, according to the United Nations, and an unknown number of civilian men. The militants have responded by firing increasingly advanced rockets with longer ranges into Israel.

Yet here, amid the sobbing of the mourners, many of them in a state of shock and disbelief, support for a sustained Israeli military campaign remained strong.

"Of course we support it," said Rosette Alalouf, a former colleague of Ms. Sheetrit, at the funeral. "Do we have a choice?"

In his eulogy, Yehiel Lasri, the mayor of Ashdod, conveyed the prevailing spirit of resolve here. "Has not the time come to use full force and all the means at our disposal?"

Mr. Lasri added that he had watched as Sderot first came under rocket fire, then Ashkelon, a city on the coast. "We hoped they would not get to Ashdod, but we did not delude ourselves," he said, noting that the authorities had been preparing for such a situation for two years.

Despite Deeper Strikes, Israelis Vow to Soldier On

The ability of civilians to withstand heavy rocket fire, which Israel fully expected in the wake of its campaign, is a crucial part of the military equation. As Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel put it at the weekly cabinet meeting on Sunday, "The patience, determination and stamina of the residents of the home front will, in the end, determine the ability" of Israel to attain its military and diplomatic goals.

Israeli officials say the preparations in that home front -- which now includes hundreds of thousands of citizens in southern Israel -- have saved many lives. Though four Israelis have been killed in rocket attacks since the start of the military operation, three of them on Monday, officials say the hundreds of rockets that have been fired could have exacted a much heavier toll.

All communities within 25 miles of Gaza have sirens that serve as alerts for incoming rockets, and while the Hanukkah vacation officially ended on Tuesday, schools within the range of the rockets remained closed.

Television and radio stations repeatedly broadcast instructions on how to behave during an alert. Those driving, for example, are told to get out of their cars and lie on the ground.

Ms. Sheetrit had been on her way home from the gym with her sister when the siren wailed. She managed to get out of the car and tried to take shelter in a bus station, but the rocket slammed down too quickly, too close.

The impact site has turned into something of a local destination. Curious residents came by on Tuesday, some taking photographs on their cellphones. A group of children from a nearby apartment building searched a grassy verge for tiny metal balls and other bits of shrapnel that had scattered all around.

Two more rockets hit Ashdod in the evening, this time falling in open areas and causing no harm.

The center of town was unusually quiet on Tuesday, though stores remained open in an attempt to maintain a sense of normality. Many of the adults seemed reconciled to the new situation, but they said that the children were very afraid.

Zion Ben Abu, 45, the owner of a falafel shop, said he used to run a factory in an industrial zone on the Gaza border where dozens of Palestinians worked. He said he felt some sympathy for average Gazans, who "mostly want to send their kids to school and live quietly, like us."

The problem, he said, is the Hamas leaders, who had left Israel no choice but to fight.

Oren Idelman, 33, an investment adviser at a nearby bank, said, "I'm prepared to live like this for months, as long as the army continues this aggressive line." The Gazans "have to understand that if we get hit, they get hit," he said.

In Netivot, an Israeli town east of Gaza, clusters of people waited at bus stops with small suitcases when the Sabbath ended on Saturday evening, hours after a local man was killed in a rocket attack.

But nobody seemed to be speaking of leaving Ashdod, perhaps because of the shrinking number of places where it was safe to go.

"I've been here since 1976," said Avraham Ohana, an older resident. "We are used to wars. But they always used to happen somewhere else, far away."

As Mr. Ohana spoke, his brother called on his cellphone and urged him to come and stay with him in Haifa, about 80 miles to the north.

"I said, 'What for? To be within range of Nasrallah's rockets?' " he joked bleakly, referring to Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of <u>Hezbollah</u>, the militant Lebanese group that fired thousands of Katyusha-type rockets into northern Israel in 2006 when they fought a 34-day war.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTOS: Friends and relatives of Irit Sheetrit, who was killed on Monday in a rocket attack, gathered Tuesday at her funeral, above and left. So far, four Israelis have been killed in rocket attacks. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY URIEL SINAI/GETTY IMAGES)

Load-Date: December 31, 2008



How many more?

The Scotsman

January 7, 2009, Wednesday

2 Edition

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Section: Pg. 1

Length: 1055 words

Byline: Brian Ferguson

Body

SHE was one of the lucky ones. Bloodied and shocked but still alive, the girl was carried into a Gaza hospital yesterday, following an Israeli bombardment that left at least 40 civilians dead after a United Nations-run school was hit by mortar shells.

There was international outrage over the attack on the school, where hundreds had sought safety. Many <u>women</u> and children were reported to be among the dead after shells struck outside the Fakhura school in the Jabaliya refugee camp - leading to renewed demands for an end to the bloodshed.

The Israeli army said two Hamas militants were among the dead and accused the group of using civilians as human shields.

Gordon Brown, the Prime Minister, warned that the Middle East was facing its "darkest moment yet", while Barack Obama, the United States president-elect, said he was "deeply concerned" about civilian casualties in Gaza.

United Nations officials pleaded with world leaders to "get their act together" to end the carnage, while the International Committee of the Red Cross warned of a "full-blown humanitarian crisis".

In the school attack, three artillery shells landed at the perimeter of the building where many Palestinians had taken refuge. As well as the dead, 55 people were injured.

The explosions - which resulted in shrapnel being sprayed over people inside and outside the building - marked the second Israeli attack on a UN-run school. Earlier, at least three Palestinians were killed when a school was hit in the Shati refugee camp.

Outside the Fakhura school, bodies could be seen scattered on the ground amid pools of blood, while torn shoes and clothes littered the scene. A donkey also lay in its own blood.

The attack occurred in the middle of the afternoon, when many people in the densely populated Jabaliya camp were out and about. Many of the refugees apparently had stepped outside the shelter to get some air, thinking the area around a school would be safe.

Fares Ghanem, an official at Kamal Radwan Hospital, said: "I saw a lot of <u>women</u> and children wheeled in. A lot of the wounded were missing limbs and a lot of the dead were in pieces."

How many more?

Majed Hamdan, a news photographer, said he reached the scene shortly after the attacks, and that many children were among the dead.

"I saw <u>women</u> and men - parents - slapping their faces in grief, screaming, some of them collapsed to the floor. They knew their children were dead," he said. "In the mortuary, most appeared to be children. In the hospital, there was not enough space for the wounded."

John Ging, the top UN official in Gaza, said: "There's nowhere safe in Gaza. Everyone here is terrorised and traumatised.

"I am appealing to political leaders here and in the region and the world to get their act together and stop this. They are responsible for these deaths."

In a statement, the Israeli army said an initial investigation had found that "mortar shells were fired from within the school at IDF [Israeli Defence Force] soldiers. The force responded with mortars at the source of fire. The Hamas cynically uses civilians as human shields".

However, hospital officials insisted they had not seen any gunmen among the casualties.

It was the deadliest attack since Israel sent ground forces into Gaza last weekend. The assault has left nearly 600 Palestinians dead.

The rising death toll has drawn international condemnation and raised concerns of a looming humanitarian disaster in Gaza, which is home to 1.5 million people. Many Gazans are without electricity or running water, thousands have been displaced from their homes and food supplies are running thin.

"This is not a crisis - it's a disaster," said Munzir Shiblak, an official with Gaza's water utility. "We are not even able to respond to the cry of the people."

Pierre Kraehenbuehl, head of operations at the International Red Cross, warned that the few remaining power supplies could collapse at any moment.

A senior UN official in Gaza said 350 people had been sheltering at the school in Jabaliya and the UN regularly gave the Israeli army exact geographical co-ordinates to try to keep them safe from attack.

UN staff estimate that 15,000 people have fled to 23 of its schools that have been turned into makeshift refuges.

The school deaths in Gaza, home to 1.5 million people, took the number of Palestinian civilians killed yesterday alone to 77, according to medical officials.

Israel says it will not stop the assault until its southern towns are freed from the threat of Palestinian rocket fire and it receives international guarantees that Hamas, which is backed by Iran and Syria, will not restock its weapons stockpile.

It blames Hamas for the civilian casualties, saying the group intentionally seeks cover in crowded residential areas.

Ehud Barak, the Israeli defence minister, said: "The battle is bitter but unavoidable. We set out on this operation in order to deal Hamas a heavy blow and to alter living conditions in the south of the country and to block smuggling into the Gaza Strip."

The growing number of civilian casualties could prove to be a turning point in Israel's "Operation Cast Lead", which was launched on 27 December.

The killing of 28 unarmed Lebanese during Israeli bombing of the village of Qana in the 2006 Lebanon war drained foreign support for its campaign against *Hezbollah* guerrillas. Israel said it had not known civilians were in the area.

Mr Brown last night expressed the hope that a deal could be struck for an immediate ceasefire.

How many more?

The Prime Minister said the situation was a "humanitarian crisis", and went on: "This is the darkest moment yet for the Middle East and it affects the whole of the world. It's because of that we must get humanitarian aid that we are promising in."

Mr Brown said he had been discussing the situation with fellow world leaders, including those from Egypt and Turkey, and he had put forward proposals for making progress. "I am hopeful the basis on which an immediate ceasefire can take place can be found," he said.

He stressed that any deal would have to solve the issue of weapons being smuggled into the Gaza Strip through tunnels, as well as ensuring security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

The US state department said it wanted an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, but officials stressed they would not budge from their stance that it must be durable, sustainable and indefinite.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009



Year of superbabies and Chinese whales, but no showerheads

Sunday Times (South Africa)

January 11, 2009

Appointments Edition

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Section: OPINION & EDITORIAL

Length: 1029 words **Byline:** Ben Trovato

Body

Year of superbabies and Chinese whales, but no showerheads

Former president Thabo Mbeki is briefly seen in public wearing a Gloria Gaynor wig and too much eyeliner

IT'S that time of year again. No, not the time when you have to face going back to work for a paranoid control freak with unresolved mother issues and a thinly disguised coke habit, but rather the time when crapulent journalists, stoned sangomas and dream-catching astromancers make their predictions for 2009.

Ignore them. They are charlatans and frauds. Nostradamus notwithstanding, I am the only one you can trust. After gazing long and hard into my crystal ball, certain immutable truths were revealed to me. One being that the ball weighed a ton and damn near killed the dog when I dropped it. Never saw that one coming, I must say.

Here are the others.

Jacob Zuma is inaugurated as president of South Africa. In an uncharacteristic act of reconciliation, he invites cartoonist Zapiro to be his minister of culture. Zapiro responds by drawing a cartoon of Zuma with his bum where his face should be. Zuma withdraws the offer and sues Zapiro for R100-million, orders the closure of all major newspapers and uses his executive powers to ban the sale of showerheads.

The minister of safety and security announces a powerful new weapon in the war against crime. In a white paper before parliament, it emerges that the new weapon is to be called "policemen".

Former president Thabo Mbeki is briefly seen in public wearing a Gloria Gaynor wig and too much eyeliner. He makes no comment and warns a passing journalist not to quote him on that.

Terror Lekota and Mbhazima Shilowa form an alliance with Helen Zille after the DA leader undergoes a cosmetic procedure that leaves her looking like a youthful Isabella Rossellini. Mrs Lekota and Mrs Shilowa form an alliance of their own and images of an unseemly eye-gouging fracas outside parliament are televised to the world.

Reserve Bank governor Tito Mboweni calls a media conference to announce he is slashing interest rates by two basis points. He starts sweating heavily and bans the media from the conference with the result that nobody knows about the decrease. Inflation soars and the economy capsizes.

Year of superbabies and Chinese whales, but no showerheads

President Zuma calls on Trevor Manuel to salvage the situation, but a message on his cellphone indicates that he is still on honeymoon. The sound of giggling and money can be heard in the background.

Naledi Pandor and Ngconde Balfour amalgamate their ministries. Grade 8 becomes the new grade 12 and child labour laws are amended. This simultaneously solves the matric pass rate problem and the unemployment crisis. Balfour nominates himself for a Nobel prize.

Startling new tests conducted by CSIR scientists reveal that five servings of fruit and vegetables a day are guaranteed to give you cancer. Parallel research reveals that smoking is good for you. Legislation is passed forcing farmers to put health warnings on all fresh produce. The state subsidises cigarettes for expectant mothers.

The navy holds live firing exercises in False Bay. Two penguins suffer flesh wounds and the NSRI is called in to tow the submarine back to Simon's Town.

On the entertainment front, Steve Hofmeyr is arrested for assaulting seven reporters, four photographers and a homeless man in a wheelchair who asked him for his autograph. The magistrate acquits him on the grounds that Hofmeyr is his father.

Danny K admits that he married Lee-Ann Liebenberg knowing that she was his sister. His defence? "So what, man. You'd do the same in my position. Now back off or I'll start singing."

Minki van der Westhuizen defends her 150kg weight gain by saying, "Constant and me, we got a restaurant now. I look so good because I eat so good."

As far as sport goes, Bafana Bafana travel to Conakry for a crucial game against Guinea. The visitors score a remarkable 178-1 victory after the team captain, Captain Moussa Camara, pulls out of the match minutes before kickoff to overthrow the government that he installed after overthrowing the previous government.

In developments abroad, the National Rifle Association and the Christian Coalition of America mark "I Told You So Day" when President Barack Obama turns out to be a Muslim fundamentalist after all. MuBarak bin Jihad-Taliban Al-Ounabomber, as he prefers to be addressed, dismisses the secret service agents assigned to protect him and replaces them with trusted members of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.

After dissolving the senate and establishing a star council made up of leaders of <u>Hezbollah</u>, al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, Abu Sayyaf and Faizel from Pagad in Cape Town, he imposes sharia in every state except for California, which he says is beyond salvation and will be used instead to confine Jews, Christians, bottie bandits, dykes, whores, abortionists, <u>women</u> who wear skirts and, if he doesn't stop with the tik, Faizel.

Historians discover that a misprint in the Torah might have created the impression that Jews are God's chosen people. Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak calls in a nuclear strike on Palestine and says, "How's that for a misprint?" Peace in the Middle East reigns for a full nine minutes until the Lebanese and Iranians go to war after squabbling over the now-available title of God's Chosen People.

The Japanese government is vindicated when exhaustive research finally proves that minke whales are being made in China and deployed in industrial espionage. The Sea Shepherd organisation is forced to apologise.

And finally, in a globally televised event dubbed "The Breakfast of Champions", Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Tom Cruise and Will Smith produce the "mother of all sperm milkshakes" to fertilise a "fabulous omelette" made from the eggs of Angelina Jolie, Katie Holmes, Charlize Theron and Halle Berry. The "superbaby" is spawned in a crystal-plated hothouse on the island of Bora Bora and signed up to star in a movie adapted from a novel so powerful that nobody has been able to write it.

Remember. You read it here first.

DEEP: Our only reliable purveyor of immutable truths, , gazes penetratingly into his damn heavy crystal ball and sees a Muslim fundamentalist US president and a remarkable Bafana victory

Load-Date: January 14, 2009



Amid Sorrow and Anger, Yeshiva's Dead Are Buried

The New York Times

March 8, 2008 Saturday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 8

Length: 1051 words

Byline: By ISABEL KERSHNER and STEVEN ERLANGER; Isabel Kershner reported from Kfar Etzion, West Bank, and Steven Erlanger from Jerusalem. Rina Castelnuovo contributed reporting from Jerusalem, and Taghreed El-

Khodary from Gaza.

Dateline: KFAR ETZION, West Bank

Body

They carried the body of Avraham David Moses, 16 years old, on a stretcher down the slope of the vibrant green cemetery here, shaded by tall pines, overlooking a valley, in utter silence.

The boy was wrapped in a black-and-white prayer shawl, and as the pallbearers slipped him into the grave on Friday, the long silence was broken by quiet weeping and occasional sobs.

Men recited psalms, and Naftali Moses, the boy's father, his garments torn in grief, said the Hebrew prayer for the dead, his voice breaking, before moving back up the slope to the parking lot, through a somber line of mourners, men on one side, **women** on the other.

The boy's stepmother, Leah, described Avraham David, as he was known, as "a really good kid -- he would come home and unload the dishwasher without being asked." If the adults started gossiping at the table, she said, he would recite mishnayot, or oral teachings. "He was just an incredible blessing," she said.

Avraham David was one of eight seminary students killed Thursday night in an act of terrorism, shot by a Palestinian from East Jerusalem who sprayed them with hundreds of rounds of automatic weapons fire before being killed himself. Ten other students were wounded, three of them seriously.

It was unclear what group, if any, was responsible for the massacre. The radical Islamic Hamas movement praised the deed on Thursday but did not claim it.

On Friday an anonymous caller claiming to be from Hamas took responsibility in a phone call to Reuters and said that details would come later. But Fawzi Barhoum, a senior Hamas spokesman in Gaza, said that no claim was official unless made in a written statement signed by the military wing of Hamas. The family of the gunman, identified as Ala Abu Dhaim, 25, said he had been intensely religious, but did not belong to any militant group.

Mark Regev, spokesman for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, said Israel would act after proper investigation and deliberation, and he condemned those, like Hamas, who celebrated the killings with parades in Gaza. "That Hamas calls this a heroic act, and praises it, this exposes them for what they are," he said.

Amid Sorrow and Anger, Yeshiva's Dead Are Buried

The young men died as they were studying in the library of the Mercaz Harav yeshiva in Jerusalem, a major center for the religious Zionist movement that supports Israeli settlement in the West Bank -- settlements like this one, which Israel intends to keep in any future peace treaty.

The dead, most of them 15 or 16, with the oldest 26, were all buried Friday, in separate funerals drawing thousands of weeping and angry Israelis.

The funeral processions began together earlier on Friday at the yeshiva itself, where thousands of people, many of them in the traditional black clothing of the ultra-Orthodox or wearing knitted skullcaps, characteristic of more modern religious Zionists, lined the streets. In the large courtyard, where the blood had been washed away, eight benches were marked with the names of the dead, and one wall of the yeshiva was covered with large posters listing them.

As each body was brought forward to rest on its bench, the crowds outside the gates parted to let the pallbearers pass, with cries and screams from relatives and friends.

In every corner, students hugged and cried, and many went to see and touch the closed library door, shattered by bullets. In his eulogy, the yeshiva's chief rabbi, Yaakov Shapira, said that the gunman had made targets of "everyone living in the holy city of Jerusalem" and criticized the Olmert government for its willingness to negotiate the return of some occupied land to the Palestinians.

"The time has come for all of us to understand that an external struggle is raging, and an internal struggle, and everyone believes the hour has come for us to have a good leadership, a stronger leadership, a more believing leadership," he said.

Weeping, Rabbi Shapira said, "The murderers are the Amalek of our day, coming to remind us that Amalek has not disappeared, just changed its appearance." The Amalekites were indigenous nomads who attacked the Israelites on their flight from Egypt, and were annihilated by King David. "God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son," the rabbi said. "We had to sacrifice eight."

The ceremony ended as it began, with the procession of bodies taken out of the gates, one by one, for their separate burials.

The Israeli government declared a high alert on Friday and barred Palestinians in the West Bank from traveling to Jerusalem over the weekend, deploying thousands of police officers and limiting the numbers of Muslims allowed to pray at the Al Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem.

The killer was a Palestinian with permanent residency in Jerusalem. His home in the Jebel Mukaber neighborhood of East Jerusalem was adorned Friday with the flags of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and <u>Hezbollah</u>. According to his family, he was a driver for a private company that had made deliveries to the yeshiva, but the police would not confirm that.

His family said that although he had been intensely religious, he was not a member of any militant group, and he had planned on marrying this summer. But he had been transfixed by the bloodshed in Gaza, where 126 Palestinians died from Wednesday through Monday, his sister, Iman Abu Dhaim, told The Associated Press. Several of his relatives were detained for questioning.

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah, condemned the killing of civilians by both sides, and Israel said it would continue peace talks with him. Mr. Abbas had suspended such talks after the Gaza deaths.

Mr. Regev urged Mr. Abbas to do more to stop terrorism. "They have clear obligations to act against terror cells," he said. "While we understand that they have limitations on their capabilities today, we believe that they could be doing much more."

A senior Israeli official who spoke anonymously because of the delicacy of the issue said many details about the killing were unclear and no major decisions had been made. Mr. Olmert, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign

Amid Sorrow and Anger, Yeshiva's Dead Are Buried

Minister Tzipi Livni "understand that there is no quick fix for Hamas, that this will take time, and the goal is to continually apply pressure on the Hamas leadership -- economic, military, diplomatic and political," the official said.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTO: Thousands of Israelis attended the funeral procession on Friday for the eight yeshiva students who were killed in Jerusalem.(PHOTOGRAPH BY RINA CASTELNUOVO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Load-Date: March 8, 2008



<u>Tunnels, traps and martyrs: the Hamas strategy to defeat Israel; The underground army says it is better prepared than many expected. Report by Azmi Keshawi in Gaza City, Martin Fletcher and Sheera Frenkel</u>

The Times (London)

January 12, 2009 Monday

Edition 2

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 32,33

Length: 1053 words

Byline: Keshawi; Martin Fletcher; Sheera Frenkel

Body

The bearded young Hamas fighter stood beneath a shop's awning in the centre of Gaza City as he tried to hide from Israeli drones. "Gaza will be like a volcano erupting beneath the Israelis. It will destroy the legend of their invincible army," he boasted as the street echoed to the sound of distant gunfire and explosions.

"We are soldiers who run towards death. They run away from it," he declared as the Israeli army engaged in some of the fiercest fighting yet on the city's fringes. "The Israeli leaders are gambling their future by coming into the mud of Gaza. They will leave defeated."

Mohammed achieved his childhood dream of joining the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, at the age of 18. He trained as a signaller, was taught how to fire rocket-propelled grenades and was given his own AK47. Now 24, he is married only to his cause and religion. With an easy smile that masks his fanaticism, he described some of the elaborate plans Hamas has laid to ensnare Israeli soldiers in Gaza's labyrinthine streets and alleys.

He spoke of a huge network of tunnels designed to enable Hamas fighters to attack and retreat, to ambush and kidnap, to blow up Israeli vehicles passing overhead and move undetected by aerial surveillance. He talked of mines which have been laid but are not primed until the Israelis approach.

He described how plans had been prepared to defend each part of the city, and how they were immediately changed when a fighter was captured.

If a fighter was killed, another was trained to take his place.

He said the fighters constantly changed their locations and tactics. They never attacked from the same place twice. They had secret means of communication, and spread disinformation to confuse the Israelis when speaking on their radios. They wore civilian clothes, concealed their weapons, and no longer walked around in groups.

Tunnels, traps and martyrs: the Hamas strategy to defeat Israel The underground army says it is better prepared than many expected. Report by Azmi Keshawi in Ga....

Morale was high, Mohammed insisted. Hamas had lost fewer fighters than expected and there was an infinite supply of eager replacements for those "martyred". It still had plenty of rockets that could be launched remotely from hidden bunkers. "We can continue as long as it takes," he said. "I tell you, even our ghosts will defeat the Israelis."

By contrast, the Israeli military suggests that Hamas is on the run.

Major-General Yoav Galant, the head of the Southern Command, told the Security Cabinet at the weekend that Operation Cast Lead had created a "once in a generation" opportunity to destroy Hamas, and called for the deployment of thousands more troops in Gaza.

A senior officer said that more than 300 Hamas fighters had been killed and "entire companies and battalions have been simply wiped out". Another claimed that Amir Mansi, the commander of Gaza City's rocket division, was killed on Saturday because Hamas fighters were running scared and he had to go out and fire mortars himself. "We are seeing people deserting and going AWOL among Hamas's combat personnel. They are afraid to go out and fight," he said.

Impartial observers believe that the battle is far from over, and that Mohammed and his fellow zealots remain a very serious threat.

Ronen Bergman, an Israeli security expert and author of The Secret War with Iran, said Hamas had watched how <u>Hezbollah</u> successfully resisted the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon in 2006, accepted training and equipment from Iran, and transformed itself into a disciplined, professional organisation that posed a real threat. "If Israel sends troops into the built-up areas of Gaza, they will find themselves facing a very formidable opponent," he said.

Ron Ben-Yishai, a senior military correspondent with the Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot, who travelled with Israeli troops last week, said he was "amazed" by Hamas's preparations. Whole blocks, not just individual houses, had been booby-trapped and wired. "We have seen things like this before, but not of this magnitude."

A detailed, hand-drawn Hamas map of a neighbourhood called Al-Atatra, discovered by Israeli paratroopers last week on the body of a Hamas fighter, showed tunnels, sniper positions next to a mosque and numerous explosive devices planted in roads, homes and a petrol station. The neighbourhood had been divided into three, with a team of fighters allocated to each.

Mr Ben-Yishai told The Times that his unit found a mannequin filled with explosives in a hallway in the Zaytun area of Gaza City. It was dressed in a Hamas fighter's black uniform. Had Israeli soldiers fired on it, it would have exploded and brought down the building. In the hallway of another house, a 30-gallon container of diesel fuel had been placed on two sacks of explosives, with a detonation wire running through a tunnel to a shack 200 metres away. Instead of entering houses through doorways, Israeli soldiers now blow holes in the walls and send sniffer dogs in first.

Suicide bombers are another hazard. On Saturday a man wearing an explosives belt sprang from a side alley in Jabaliya as an Israeli patrol walked past. They shot him seconds before he could detonate himself..

Early in the ground war a suicide bomber ran up to a lone Israeli bomb dismantler and literally hugged him as he blew them both up. There have been several such attacks in the past week, two by **women**.

Hamas has yet to capture an Israeli soldier - a top priority - but is trying hard. Reshef, an Israeli soldier wounded during an engagement in the Jabaliya refugee camp, told The Times: "Hamas was playing cat and mouse, trying to lure us into the tunnels they had prepared. They were firing from the tunnels, trying to get us to engage them and follow them in. Once inside the tunnels there were dozens more waiting to ambush."

Another Hamas tactic, said Mr Ben- Yishai, was to spring from tunnels concealed beneath floors, or behind sinks in houses where Israeli troops were sheltering, and open fire.

Tunnels, traps and martyrs: the Hamas strategy to defeat Israel The underground army says it is better prepared than many expected. Report by Azmi Keshawi in Ga....

In many ways it is far easier for Hamas to achieve "victory". All it must do is to survive as international pressure on Israel grows, keep firing rockets across the border, and erode Israeli support for the war by picking off soldiers. Mohammed already claims victory. "We have stood in the face of the strongest army in the region for two weeks," he bragged.

Pictures and video from the front line timesonline.co.uk/middleeast Online

Graphic

YOAV LEMMER / AFP / GETTY IMAGES A mosque stands in stark silhouette after an Israeli air strike in the northern Gaza Strip. The area was the scene yesterday of some of the fiercest fighting yet between Hamas and Israeli forces

Load-Date: January 12, 2009



Your view

The Sun Herald (Sydney, Australia)

April 29, 2007 Sunday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Letters; Pg. 30

Length: 1090 words

Body

Spare us the deja vu

WITH Mandarin [and Italian] lessons costing taxpayers \$41,717.46 for Amanda Vanstone ("Vanstone's Rome posting an electoral headache for Howard", The Sun-Herald, April 22), will Rod Kemp require us, the taxpayers, to pay \$50,000 for French lessons if he decides to move to Paris?

I know both parties award plum ambassadorial postings to party hacks, but these important positions should be carried out by skilled public servants who've had years of training and postings before they attain the top job. Look how we reacted when US President George Bush sent two of his cronies here.

What have the Italians and French done to deserve Vanstone (pictured) and Kemp?ROBERT PALLISTER

Punchbowl

Grooming terrorists

THE Sun-Herald reported (April 22) that a bunch of murderers in Goulburn jail have converted to Islam and jihad.

Nice thinking. They will be unemployable in Australia by the time they emerge from prison but they will probably be welcomed by Hamas or <u>Hezbollah</u> or the Taliban or the Chechen child-killers or the South Philippines decapitators or the Indonesian bombers or whatever Muslim murder groups are still then in business.

NORMAN RICH

Newport

Browned off

BOB Brown's expulsion from the ALP for writing to the The Herald in Newcastle criticising the ALP's failure to hold rank-and-file preselection (The Sun-Herald, April 22) is a sad reflection on the founding principles of the party.

People like Bob Brown are the essence of the ALP, and his treatment at the hands of the current party powerbrokers only serves to highlight why many people have failed to renew their ALP membership in recent years.

RICHARD TALBOT

Your view

Cheltenham

Losing my religion

AFTER decades of deliberations, the great minds in the Vatican have bowed to the limited evidence and come to the conclusion that limbo does not exist ("Unbaptised go straight to heaven," The Sun-Herald, April 22).

I don't hold much faith in the notions of heaven, hell and purgatory receiving the same time-consuming scrutiny and, once all the evidence is collated, a similar response being broadcast.

MAX FISCHER

Scarborough

Cleaning up an ice mess

IN your editorial "Rehabilitation is the key to control of ice" (The Sun-Herald, April 22) you claim that much of my Government's spending under the Tough on Drugs strategy has been focused on law enforcement and abstinence.

The Tough on Drugs strategy is a comprehensive and balanced approach to the problems of drug abuse. Law enforcement measures are needed, but so is rehabilitation and education. Of my Government's \$1.4 billion investment, about two-thirds has been directly targeted at rehabilitation, education and prevention as well as about one-third for law enforcement measures.

In my recent announcement to combat ice and other illicit drugs, more than \$100 million is being provided for drug rehabilitation services. However, disrupting the supply of illicit drugs is also fundamental to the strategy and an additional \$38 million will be invested to stop these dangerous drugs from reaching the streets in the first place.

JOHN HOWARD

Kirribilli

A dry argument

IT is absolute nonsense for people to blame either the present or previous governments for the current drought. Australia produces only about 1 per cent of global emissions, and anything we could have done in previous years would have had no discernible effect on the current situation. Nothing we do in the future will have any worthwhile effect either. In Australia droughts are a regular occurrence, a fact of life.

BRIAN CALLER

Willoughby

Jones wrist slap a joke

SURELY there was a mistake in The Sun-Herald - "Jones back in court as libel fight resumes" (April 22)?

Surely no magistrate would fine Alan Jones \$1000 for breaking the rules and broadcasting the name of a juvenile witness in 2005. I can't believe it - \$1000 is probably the amount Jones would tip a waiter. And putting him on a bond is the next joke. How many times is he charged with various offences before the courts will treat him as they would a person not as well known?

G HEALEY

Condell Park

Celebration of debacles

Your view

IT has been pointed out by numerous observers that we and the English have a tendency to remember military disasters - Gallipoli is an excellent example of this phenomenon as the hordes of pilgrims each year demonstrate.

Another bumper crowd last week and most of them probably could not tell you the names of the 1918 battles that smashed the German armies. No ballad about El Alamein, either.

As far as I know there are no stirring battle poems to match The Charge Of The Light Brigade, which again is about another disaster - the cavalry charged the wrong way and most of them got quickly killed.

Do other nationalities have this tradition of literary disaster/stuff-up glorification?

If I ever make it to Anzac Cove I will have my Siegfried Sassoon handy, if he is allowed there. Especially the following, which he wrote about the same time he chucked his Military Cross in the River Mersey after winning it for suicidal bravery, on numerous occasions, on the Western Front:

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye

Who cheer when soldier lads march by,

Sneak home and pray you'll never know

The hell where youth and laughter go.

BILL McLEAN

Kingsford

PM blind to the horror

WITH more than half a million dead since the US invasion, many Iraqis must be thinking that Saddam Hussein wasn't such a bad bloke after all. At least they could go shopping without the risk of being blown to bits, yet our Prime Minister refuses to see our involvement in this debacle as the mother of all mistakes.

How refreshing that Kevin Rudd at least admits his errors. Incredibly, John Howard still defends our role in the Vietnam War that cost 500 Australians their lives.

TERRY PADLEY

Beacon Hill

No reason AWB should be let off

MICHELLE Grattan is correct to emphasise the dubious political influence of AWB in this election year (The Sun-Herald, April 22) but she lets that company off very lightly with such phrases as "bad behaviour". As the Cole inquiry found, it was far worse than merely "bribes" and "kickbacks": it was theft. When people or companies pay bribes, unsavoury though their behaviour is, it is with their own money. What AWB did was to steal money from the trust ("escrow") fund that the United Nations had set up as part of its "Oil for Food" program, which was to minimise the adverse effects of trading sanctions on the *women* and children of Iraq.

The behaviour was worse than "bad" and warrants criminal charges, not "forgiving and forgetting" election-time rewards.

JOHN CARMODY

Roseville

Graphic

TWO PHOTOS: SCANDAL: Michael Long; and (inset) Trevor Flugge, both formerly of AWB. CARTOON: By David Pope

Load-Date: July 17, 2007



Bid to shame draft evaders divides Israelis

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)

March 15, 2008 Saturday

Final Edition

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Length: 998 words

Byline: Dion Nissenbaum, McClatchy Newspapers

Dateline: TEL AVIV, Israel

Body

TEL AVIV, Israel - Throughout Israel's short, turbulent history, the nation has grown cynical about almost every sector of society but one: its military.

Though the Israeli military has been buffeted by political scandal, castigated for enforcing a 40-year occupation of the Palestinians, and humbled during its 34-day war in 2006 against <u>Hezbollah</u> fighters in southern Lebanon, most Israelis never seemed to lose faith in their citizen soldiers.

But under the surface, something has been slowly shifting in Israel as the nation prepares to celebrate its 60th anniversary May 14. More and more Israelis are avoiding mandatory military service -- something long viewed in this country as a proud rite of passage.

"In the past, it is true that not serving in the military was considered the exception," said Dr. Rueven Gal, author of A Portrait of the Israeli Soldier and former chief psychologist for the Israeli military. "In more recent years it became more tolerable and more acceptable to people."

In 1997, according to army statistics, fewer than one in 10 Israeli men avoided their mandatory three-year military service. These days, it's closer to three in 10. **Women**, too, are opting out at a faster pace: Over the last decade, the number of **women** avoiding military duty rose from 37 per cent to 44 per cent.

The steady decline in Israelis willing to serve in the army has generated a stinging new backlash against draft dodgers. And it has sparked renewed debate over the dominant role the military plays in the nation's politics, culture and society.

Gabi Ashkenazi, Israel's defence forces chief of staff, set the tone last summer by declaring that the military should "bring the blush of shame back into the cheeks of the draft dodgers."

Israeli lawmakers soon began crafting proposals that would bar Israelis who don't serve in the military from voting or getting university scholarships.

Israel's Army Radio even stripped Aviv Gefen, one of the country's best-known singers, of his popular show because he never completed his military service.

Bid to shame draft evaders divides Israelis

Around the time that Israel celebrates 60 years of independence in May, its military is expected to unveil its first-ever public relations campaign to combat draft dodging.

The initiative will include new gold, silver and bronze honorable discharge cards for soldiers who may be able to use them to secure everything from academic scholarships to special discounts at their favourite shopping mall.

Those who don't complete their military service won't get any card at all.

"Serving in the army is your entry card into society," said Maj. Rony Stoler, a spokesman for the Israeli army's human relations office who is helping to craft the new anti-draft dodging campaign. "And whoever serves more, gets more."

The attempt to shame Israelis who don't complete their military service has already drawn criticism that people are being unfairly labelled as draft dodgers when they use accepted exemptions for religious studies, health problems or living abroad.

The most recent salvo in the debate is an ongoing ad campaign produced by Yehoshua/TBWA, one of Israel's biggest advertising firms.

With the Israeli military's blessing, the private company spent more than \$1 million producing billboards, bus ads and TV commercials to discourage draft avoidance. The centrepiece is a 30-second ad shown on television and in movie theatres across Israel.

In the ad, a group of funky young Israelis on holiday in India -- a popular post-military decompression spot -- are chatting about their army service with a couple of pretty, English-speaking blonds.

The Israelis go around the table touting their time in some of Israel's most prestigious military units -- until they get to one of their fellow travellers.

"Hey, brother," one of the Israelis asks the quiet guy, "where did you serve?"

The Israeli is speechless as he looks nervously at his dinner companions. The ad ends with the slogan: "A real Israeli doesn't evade."

"At the end of that day, it should not be the social norm," said Rami Yehoshua, who heads Yehoshua/TBWA. "Someone who is not serving should be ashamed before his friends, community and family."

By chance, the commercial was filmed in an Indian restaurant in Tel Aviv where several anti-militarism activists worked as waitresses and cooks. The activists were appalled by the ad. So they decided to use the same table as the setting for their own 90-second retort.

The commercials are nearly identical -- except for the message.

In the alternative ad, all the Israelis, but one, proudly announce that they refused to serve in an Israeli army they saw as morally bankrupt and callous.

It ends with the slogan: "A real Israeli doesn't evade. The truth."

Both commercials have been seen on YouTube more than 16,000 times.

"A great part of what defines us is our military service," said Yfat Doron, a 30-year-old former conscientious objector who helped produce the alternative ad. "But now the army is panicking because so many people are not doing their military service."

The reasons for the declines are complicated and, in some ways, irrelevant to the national debate.

Bid to shame draft evaders divides Israelis

Academics in Israel disagree about the extent there is even a problem. Some researchers have pointed out that most Israelis who opt out of military service do so to study Jewish religion. Only a small percentage of Israelis opt out under the military's mental health exemption.

But the Israeli government is taking the issue very seriously. To raise the pool of potential soldiers, the Israeli military is considering lowering its standards to allow people with lower test scores and minor criminal convictions to join.

Along with the forthcoming military PR campaign, Gal is leading a new governmental plan to promote AmeriCorpsstyle civil service as an option for those who don't want to serve in the military.

"Serving Israel became synonymous with military service and I find this very appalling," said Gal. "I think there are many many ways that people can serve their country."

Graphic

Photo: Reuters; The brother of Staff Sgt. Eran Dan-Gur holds a picture of him as a child while touching his coffin during his funeral in Jerusalem last week. Israelis have long viewed military service as a proud rite of passage. But that is changing.;

Photo: Getty Images; An Israeli soldier wounded while fighting Palestinian militants is evacuated by army medics to a waiting ambulance this week near a gate in the Israeli-Gaza border.; Chart/Graph: Israel Defense Forces; Draft Dodging in Israeli Military?;

Load-Date: March 15, 2008



The Wrap: Clouds gather over economy

Guardian.com

December 5, 2007

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theguardian

Length: 1063 words

Highlight: Welcome to the Wrap, Guardian Unlimited's roundup of the best of the day's papers.

Body

Welcome to the Wrap, Guardian Unlimited's roundup of the best of the day's papers.

CLOUDS GATHER OVER ECONOMY

Why bother with the FT's low-key splash ("Mortgage lenders warned by watchdog") when you can wallow in a bout of real recession-mongering with the Independent? "Banks have stopped lending. Consumers aren't spending. Investors aren't investing. Businesses aren't hiring. Houses aren't selling. IS BRITAIN'S ECONOMY HEADING FOR ..."

[shot of storm clouds hovering over London]

"THE PERFECT STORM?"

"It is one of those rare moments in economics," says the paper's Hamish McRae, "when you know that the next few months will feel quite different to the past few ones." He has changed his mind about interest rates and now thinks the Bank of England should cut them tomorrow. "But is recession really likely? For the US it is quite possible, but I think the balance of probability in the UK is more for two or three years of much slower growth...

"At the moment our economy is still growing strongly, companies are buoyant, and it always takes quite a while for any slowdown to move through the system. We are not in as big a mess as we were in during the early 1990s."

What, companies buoyant? McRae, have you seen your own employer's front page? What's more, Barnaby Stutter of Brixton Cycles Co-Operative tells the Independent on page three that he is not expecting a "Christmas bonanza". "Realists always sleep well at night," he adds, cryptically.

The Telegraph has a very specific concern: the 1.4 million people on fixed-term mortgage deals that expire next year. These borrowers will "struggle to find an affordable mortgage". Some monthly repayments could rise by 60%, the FT says.

The pink paper is not in favour of cutting rates unless today's Purchasing Managers' Index suggests that tighter credit is likely to push inflation below target next year. Otherwise, the FT says, the Bank should wait until Christmas sales data is available. Tesco disagrees. The supermarket urged the Bank to cut rates yesterday, saying inflation in its own stores was a mere 0.8%.

The Wrap: Clouds gather over economy

* Independent: The perfect storm?* Telegraph: Higher mortgages to hit 1.5m* FT: Mortgage lenders warned

UP THE CREEK

The overnight arrest of John Darwin - the man who vanished five years ago after an apparent canoeing accident and claims to have no memory of events since 2000 - confirms the papers' suspicions of fishiness.

"SECRET LIFE OF MR CANOE," splashes the Mirror ("SECRET LIFE OF DARWIN" really wouldn't have worked), which says he may have spent the intervening years "in America with a woman he met on the internet". Police trawling through his emails discovered he had been romantically involved with a number of <u>women</u>. The Sun says they were tipped off three months ago that Darwin was still alive.

"YES, I DID POCKET THE LIFE INSURANCE," splashes the Mail, alongside a picture of Darwin's wife, Anne, who emigrated to Panama City six weeks ago after selling the family home for almost 500,000. She claimed the payout "in good faith", she says. The Sun says she is sharing her two-bedroom flat "with a man".

* Mirror: 'Dead' John Darwin pictured with wife* Daily Mail: Yes, I did pocket the insurance* Sun: 'Dead' canoeist arrested in raid

HOW TO DEMONISE IRAN NOW?

"It is always tempting to praise intelligence reports that we agree with and to condemn those that we do not," the Guardian says cautiously. Nonetheless, the news that Iran has halted its nuclear weapons programme "should stop the drums of war beating in Washington". Now, the paper says, the US and Iran should start direct negotiations - if it worked with North Korea, it can work in Tehran.

The Times is more circumspect. It welcomes the National Intelligence Estimate report as proof to the world that the Bush administration is not manipulating intelligence. But there is a risk that "Democrats will seize on it to try to ridicule warnings of the threat posed by Iran." The Times shares George Bush's concern that Iran's nuclear weapons programme could restart at any time. "In truth, the likelihood of a US military strike was always slim, given Iran's ability to sabotage peace in Iraq.

"In recent months there has been a drop in Iran's sponsorship of terrorist activity there, and Washington is unlikely to jeopardise this welcome change at a pivotal moment. That does not hold true of Iran's backing for Hamas and **Hezbollah**. Israel still sees Iran as a mortal threat."

Indeed, Israeli officials said yesterday they were still convinced that Tehran was trying to build a nuclear weapon. "We cannot allow ourselves to rest just because of an intelligence report from the other side of the earth, even if it is from our greatest friend," said the defence minister Ehud Barak.

* War postponed* Times: Relax? Don't. Iran can still build a bomb

SECRET ABORTION TRIALS

<u>Women</u> may be able to obtain an abortion at their GP's surgery if the "secret trials" currently under way are extended, the Times says. The locations of the two trials are being kept secret to foil anti-abortion campaigners.

* Times: Secret trials to let GPs carry out abortions

BANKS POSE AS CHARITIES

Banks are making money by siphoning their mortgage loans into so-called charitable trusts that donate very little to charity, according to the Guardian's splash. Trusts with a charitable status have various advantages and do not oblige the banks to make any regular donations.

The paper says Northern Rock, Halifax, Abbey and Lloyds TSB are among the banks who invest billions in this way.

The Wrap: Clouds gather over economy

* Revealed: how banks exploit charity tax laws

PETE AND AMY PAIR UP AT 4AM

A sighting of Kate Moss's wastrel ex-boyfriend arriving at Amy Winehouse's new flat at 4am appalls the red-tops and the Mail. "For Pete's sake!" exclaims the Mail. "Your world is falling apart and your husband is in prison ... the last thing you need at 4am is a visit from Doherty."

"Earlier in the evening as she moved her possessions, she either did not know or care that she had left a plastic bag filled with a white substance on display in the open boot of her car," the paper continues. Winehouse's spokesman said it contained towels.

Doherty left at 9am "looking dirty and unkempt", the Sun says. Certainly his teeth seem in worse condition than ever.

* Daily Mail: For Pete's sake* Sun: Amy shambles

TODAY ON GUARDIAN UNLIMITED

More on the arrest of canoe mystery manLatest developments in the Iraq hostage case

Load-Date: December 5, 2007



MUSLIMS, JEWS FORM POST-9; 11FRIENDSHIPS

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

November 6, 2007 Tuesday

SOONER EDITION

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Byline: Sally Kalson, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Body

On a Sunday afternoon in late September, an unusual group of people got together in a Point Breeze house. Half of them were Muslims, who, in the midst of Ramadan, talked about their beliefs and practices around the holy period. The other half were Jews, who talked about the meaning and rituals of the recently completed holy days, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

As the sun set, the Muslims repaired to a side room for evening prayers, while the Jews laid out a meal of Asian, Jewish and American dishes that everyone had brought. Soon all were gathered around the table sampling sweet rice, spicy chicken and noodle dishes, laughing and chatting.

Muslims and Jews elsewhere may be thinking the worst of each other, but this group came together in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, looking for common ground. On Sunday it will celebrate its fifth anniversary.

The Pittsburgh group, one of a few that have formed around the country, has 24 members, and most were present that day: Farooq and Karen Hussaini, Mohammad and Nayyra Ilyas, Safdar and Rahila Khwaja, Kazim Rezaf, and Waseem Ahmed; Janice Gordon and Rob Kraftowitz, Allen Baum and Liz Witzke-Baum, Jean Clickner, Carrie Ban, James Osher and Carol Shubert.

Mostly Pittsburgh-area professionals, they gather every six weeks or so in each other's homes to talk about religion, culture, world affairs and current events.

"When 9/11 happened, after the shock wore off, my response was, 'My gosh, I don't know a single Muslim,' " said Ms. Gordon, of Point Breeze.

"I felt that was a huge problem for me. I was very eager to make a connection with someone in the Muslim community who was like-minded."

She found a partner in Suraiya Farukhi, a public relations specialist from Monroeville and a native of Pakistan. The <u>women</u> met when Ms. Farukhi spoke at a program of Ms. Gordon's congregation. Ms. Farukhi and her husband, Nayeem, have since moved to Chicago for work.

"Suraiya and I got together at Starbucks and found our goals were completely in sync," Ms. Gordon said. "We both wanted an ongoing group of Muslims and Jews who could get to know each other over time and become comfortable in each other's company."

MUSLIMS, JEWS FORM POST-9 11FRIENDSHIPS

The two <u>women</u> handpicked people they thought would be interested. The Muslim Community Center in Monroeville was Ms. Farukhi's primary connection, although not everyone in the group is a member there. Ms. Gordon contacted fellow members of Dor Hadash, the Reconstructionist congregation in Squirrel Hill that is her primary source of Jewish friends.

The first meeting had 22 people, evenly divided. They discussed goals and agreed that food would play an important role.

No one was sure how much staying power the group would have, so this month's fifth anniversary is a happy occasion. Thirteen current members are from the original group.

Rahila Khwaja, an original member who lives in Murrysville, said she and her husband, Safdar, joined in part as a defensive measure, and wound up finding more than they expected.

"Especially after 9/11, we felt we had to defend ourselves and come out of the island mentality we were living in," she said.

"We had to let people know what kind of people we were and what our faith stood for. But in the process we made very good friends who I'm sure we can trust in other things also.

"There is so much propaganda against the Jews in Muslim countries," she continued. "I come from Pakistan, where people consider them enemies. So it was very important that I could sit in the same room, talk with them, share a meal. My ignorance of the Jewish people has changed. It's ignorance that causes a lot of fear, and if you learn about different people then you really don't have anything to fear."

Rob Kraftowitz, another original member and Ms. Gordon's husband, said the meetings give him a sense of hope.

"I've learned from my Muslim friends about their religion and have found many things in Islam that are very similar to what I have been taught as a Jew," he said.

"That's different from what I felt before, when I just assumed that we were on two different wavelengths. In fact, a lot of what we believe and practice is very much the same."

In the early days, group members focused on educating each other about their holidays, beliefs and practices. Over time, they felt freer to tackle deeper topics.

Discrimination on the basis of religion or ethnicity is an occasional theme, as is the U.S. invasion of Iraq. (Did Saddam pose a real threat; was it related to oil or to Muslim-Jewish tensions?) *Hezbollah*'s rocketing of northern Israel in 2006, followed by Israel's invasion of southern Lebanon, also was a hot topic.

The group read and discussed Rabbi Michael Lerner's book, "Healing Israel/Palestine: A Path to Peace and Reconciliation." And at the recent meeting during Ramadan, several Muslim members said they were in a quandary about how to help their fellow Muslims abroad without getting into trouble because so many charities were under suspicion by the U.S. government.

The group is fairly stable now, and members want to keep it a manageable size. But they also wanted to have an impact on their respective communities. So in April, they all invited friends to attend a larger gathering at the Squirrel Hill library. Everyone brought food, and 70 people attended. The group is planning to do it again.

One sign that members have established comfortable friendships: At first they made a big point of alternating their meeting places between Jewish and Muslim homes.

"Finally," Ms. Gordon said, "one of the Muslim <u>women</u> said, 'What difference does it make, we're all in the same group.' "

Notes

Sally Kalson can be reached at skalson@po st-gazette.com or 412-263-1610.

Graphic

PHOTO: John Heller/Post-Gazette: Farooq Hussaini, left, Nayyra Ilyas and her husband, Mohammad, share in the conversation at September's get-together.

\ PHOTO: John Heller/Post-Gazette: Janice Gordon, right, listens as the conversation goes around a group of Muslims and Jews in a gathering at her Point Breeze home.

Load-Date: November 6, 2007



Land of hope, or gates of hell?

South China Morning Post January 10, 2009 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Other Voices; Pg. 11

Length: 1033 words **Byline:** Kevin Rafferty

Body

What a truly awful New Year present Israel, with help from its Hamas enemies, delivered to the world when it launched its ferocious bombardment of Gaza. The immediate victims are the wretchedly poor Palestinians trapped between the superior weaponry of Israel and the evil men of Hamas. But what is happening should be put in proper frightful context - it goes beyond the shedding of innocent blood in Gaza to the slaughter of fragile hopes of peace in the Middle East and to an indictment of the 21st-century world "leadership".

Israeli spokespeople excused the suffering and deaths their soldiers wrought, claiming they could no longer tolerate rockets fired day after day from Gaza deep into Israel; they blamed Hamas for civilian deaths, for sheltering and firing from mosques and schools. Hamas' response was a fiery warning that the attack on Gaza would open the "gates of hell".

Apologists for Hamas might ponder the implications of that threat. The battle in Gaza is not just some ordinary territorial dispute. This is the "Holy Land", the crucible of the monotheistic religions of the Book - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - all of which proclaim divine inspiration. For Christians who read the Bible literally, it is also the location of Armageddon, where the final battle signalling the end of the world will take place as God confronts Satan.

The countries that claim a stake in the conflict extend from the Holy Land to the world's biggest oil-producing areas, including Iran. It is a region of myriad animosities and enmities, to the extent of being a land of enemies in search of a war. The entry of nuclear-seeking Iran claiming to be the saviour of the Palestinians makes it radically more dangerous.

Timing of the fighting owes much to political convenience of the interregnum before Barack Obama becomes US president. It also began conveniently before elections in Israel, allowing lame-duck Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to go out with military credentials burnished, and his would-be successor, Tzipi Livni, to steal a march on the hawkish Benjamin Netanyahu.

Military experts disagree over whether Israel can destroy Hamas. This would involve shutting down Hamas' mobile weapons sites and killing its fighters, plus disrupting supply lines for new weapons, which means closing hundreds of tunnels between Egypt and Gaza.

These things alone would entail massive loss of civilian life, maybe more deaths of its conscript soldiers than the Israeli public will tolerate, and more time than Israel has before the US insists that it is time for talks.

Land of hope, or gates of hell?

By mid-week, Israeli soldiers had cut Gaza in two and penetrated Gaza City. Just four Israelis had been killed by Hamas' rockets, whereas almost 700 Palestinians had died in the onslaught. A Catholic priest described Gaza as "drowning in blood". But Hamas was still firing rockets into Israel.

Even if Israel can stop the rockets, how much time will it buy? Analysts say six months to four years. What is this among peoples whose memories go back millennia?

This is particularly so if the "peace" eventually reached refills wells of hatred and fuels determination that, next time, it will be different and the other side will really be destroyed. Commentators who claim that both sides seek the complete destruction of the other, but neither has the ability to achieve it, have so far been proved correct.

"Peace" as it has hitherto been signed, has become a signpost towards the next battle. Will Israelis sleep easily even if Hamas is brought to its knees? Meanwhile, in the streets and slums of Gaza, what is the feeling towards the Israeli military that marched in, smashed mosques and schools, and killed brothers, cousins, old <u>women</u> and young children?

Israel has said that it does not want to reoccupy Gaza. But the brutal methods it has chosen mean that it will for ever have to regard Gaza as its sullen and hostile protectorate. There is slim hope that the people of Gaza will rise and overthrow Hamas at the behest of Israel. Hamas, after all, has the velvet cloak of democratic respectability, which it reinforced with the iron fist of dictatorship.

The Gaza bloodshed also reflects badly on the rest of the world for not doing more. True, European Union leaders rushed into action calling for an immediate ceasefire, but this was either naive or grandstanding. Israel was not going to stop when it had barely started, and the silence from the US was a signal to give Israel time.

Will the new US president be able to make a difference? Not if he follows the shortsighted route of his predecessors in being led by the Jewish lobby and the military-industrial complex that wins every time that Israel goes to war. (On the other side, China has been a beneficiary of Hamas' spending on rockets.)

True peace, for Israel, the Middle East and the world will only be achieved if there is hope on both sides. Israel, as the established state and with stronger military forces, has the obligation to show generosity. Actively rolling back disputed settlements, making a proper peace with the Palestinian Authority and easing ultra-strict border restrictions would point towards a more hopeful way.

Israel should encourage other countries to play a more active role, suggesting international safeguards and assistance in economic development of a viable Palestinian state.

Friends of Israel might point out to the new government there that Hamas, and indeed <u>Hezbollah</u> in Lebanon, are the bastard offspring of Ariel Sharon's aggressive ways of dealing with Arab populations in his brutal way. At least, Israel might try treating its neighbours as people.

It is no use just being panicked into action when the shooting war has started. We are all of us, whether Asians, Americans, Europeans, Buddhists, Christians, Jews or Muslims, involved in war or peace in the Middle East. Obligations to other human beings go beyond the strictly legal requirements. When Iran is aggressively pursuing a nuclear option, the comment of the great Trappist monk Thomas Merton becomes all the more pertinent: "When they finally succeed in blowing up the world, it will be perfectly legal."

Kevin Rafferty is editor-in-chief of PlainWords Media

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Muslim women test cultural boundaries

The Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick)

June 7, 2008 Saturday

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Section: LIFE; Pg. H6

Length: 1099 words

Byline: Jeffrey Fleishman Los Angeles Times

Body

The censors didn't quite know what to do with Lina Khoury's play about sex, rape, menopause and a visit to the gynecologist, but Islamic hard- liners were pretty specific: One wanted to stone the 32-year-old writer; others accused her of being an Israeli agent planting immoral ideas in the Arab world.

The characters in <u>Women</u>'s Talk share secrets only uttered when men aren't around. Riffs on sexual desires might be a predictable story line in Hollywood, but here Western-influenced portrayals of <u>women</u> in the arts are condemned by clerics and conservatives as devil-inspired liberalism.

Khoury and her sharp-tongued alter egos are part of a coterie of real-life and fictional <u>women</u> across the Middle East who are pushing boundaries as political talk-show hosts, hip-hop divas, war correspondents, a defiantly divorced columnist and characters such as Vola, the red-haired eccentric of the Lebanese film The Bus who slips into an affair without any care of what society thinks.

They are at once liberated and repressed, devout and rebellious. Borrowing from Oprah Winfrey, Beyonce and even Hillary Rodham Clinton, they move between tribal and Islamic customs and media markets that are often layered in sexual innuendo.

In Saudi Arabia, <u>women</u> cannot drive or vote, glimpsing equality only during vacations away from the kingdom. But many <u>women</u> in Islamic countries long ago broke through the image of the black-veiled wife peeking from behind courtyard walls. Venture beyond the scrim of conservatism to the film studios of Lebanon, where the diva pose, seductively articulated by Haifa Wehbe, a Shiite Muslim model-actress-singer, is calculated down to the curl of an eyelash.

The crosscurrent of cultures is apparent in <u>Women's Talk</u>, a Middle East version of the Broadway play The Vagina Monologues that has turned the diarist into an unwitting Dr. Ruth for <u>women</u> who wear low-cut blouses and slit skirts and also for those draped in niqabs, or face veils, and abayas.

Tempering Western attitudes with Muslim sensibilities becomes a question of how far to push the Middle East's patriarchal societies. This is still a region, after all, where in some countries a wife can be stoned for committing adultery and <u>women</u> make up nine percent of lawmakers in Arab parliaments and 33 percent of the workforce, the lowest in the world.

The candor in Khoury's play is comical and acerbic; one character says her parents would handle an Israeli invasion of Lebanon better than news of her divorce. A more salacious take on <u>women</u>'s rights and sexual freedom

Muslim women test cultural boundaries

is Beirut's music-video market that beams seduction into Arab living rooms. The tension underlying both sides can be spotted on this city's streets where posters of Kalashnikov assault rifles and martyrs for the militant group *Hezbollah* peek out amid billboards of *women* who appear as though they've slipped off the pages of Vanity Fair.

"The sexy look in Beirut is provocative and plastic," said Khoury, who was born into a Christian family during Lebanon's civil conflict in the 1980s. "It all grows out of a restricted society of sexual repression. And when this freedom finally does come out, it comes out very dramatically in a concentrated, almost pornographic look."

But if you turn off the "bimbos, you see a lot of positive <u>women</u> role models in the media," said Dima Dabbous-Sensenig, head of the Institute for <u>Women</u>'s Studies in the Arab World at Lebanese American University in Beirut. "Lebanon's July 2006 war with Israel was covered by <u>women</u> television correspondents in their 20s. They were going everywhere. They were braver than men."

Women have become important opinion makers in news and talk shows that borrow heavily from Western programming. In 2003, Algerian newscaster Khadija Ben Ganna became the first anchor on Al Jazeera to wear the hijab on air, a gesture denounced by secularists as a symbol of Islamic revival. In Cairo, the unveiled Mona El Shazly has risen in the ratings with Ten O'Clock, a show that asks tough questions on politics, social unrest and other sensitive topics. The cultural terrain between the veil and free-flowing hair has led to contentious debate within Islam over virtue and image. But growing Islamic devotion in countries such as Egypt has led to an increase in hijabs, and those who don't wear them often feel societal and family pressures.

An illustration of this is the cover of Amy Mowafi's new book, Fe-Mail: The Trials and Tribulations of Being a Good Egyptian Girl, which features a drawing of an unveiled woman in stiletto boots with a halo and a devil's tail. An editor and columnist in Cairo, Mowafi is the Muslim version of the Carrie Bradshaw character in Sex and the City. Mowafi is not as explicit, but she is unabashed as she stumbles, if not in Manolo Blahniks, "along that precarious line between East and West."

The daughter of an Egyptian investment banker and businesswoman, Mowafi was raised in a moderately religious home in England. Her 2002 move to Egypt, where she writes for the lifestyle magazine Enigma, led her to an Islamic society of nosy doormen, evangelical preachers and encounters with men who proclaimed to be pious but used professional meetings as a chance to flirt.

What she notices is an increasing number of Middle Eastern <u>women</u> educated in the West returning to their countries with a progressiveness that threatens tradition. Khoury fits that description; she wrote <u>Women</u>'s Talk after getting a master of fine arts degree at the University of Arkansas. Mowafi said images of the liberal Arab woman are also spreading on blogs and Facebook, creating a two-track world in which the call to prayer lingers amid the latest hit from the Pussycat Dolls.

"You should see some of the comments I get on Facebook," she said. "They are from girls in hijabs who have looked at my pictures and some of the things I've done, and said, 'That looks like so much fun,' or 'Yes, I've always thought these same things.' *Women* like me can come back to invest our knowledge."

The battle between religion and culture often turns into a game of euphemisms. In the play <u>Women</u>'s Talk, the censors, skilled mainly in excising political passages, were out of their element with gynecological terminology. Khoury had to submit the play to them five times for arguments over proposed revisions. She saved them a bit of consternation by changing the word "vagina" to the less threatening, made-up "coco."

"'Vagina' translated in Arabic for me sounded too awkward," Khoury said.

Noha El-Hennawy of the Times' Cairo bureau and Raed Rafei of the Times' Beirut bureau contributed to this report.

Load-Date: June 7, 2008



SADR CHALLENGED AGAIN; IRAQI TROOPS INVADE AMARA, A POLITICAL STRONGHOLD OF RADICAL CLERIC

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

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TWO STAR EDITION

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Byline: Andrew E. Krammer, The New York Times

Dateline: BAGHDAD

Body

Aiming at a power base of a rival Shiite leader, Prime Minister Nouri Kamal al-Maliki sent troops into the southern city of Amara yesterday.

The operation in Amara, a city that is dominated politically by the radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, was the fourth initiative this year in which Mr. Maliki has sent troops into a city dominated by Shiite or Sunni militias.

The launch of the operation came a day after Mr. Sadr announced that he was reorganizing his Shiite movement.

In a statement read by aides during Friday prayers, Mr. Sadr said the movement would be divided into two branches. One group will remain armed and operate as an underground force, continuing to oppose the presence of American troops. The other branch would concentrate on politics and providing social services to Iraqis.

The armed wing, he said, will be drawn from experienced Mahdi Army fighters and be limited in size. Mr. Sadr said that fighters would have to have his written permission to carry weapons.

Mr. Sadr is a mercurial figure who leads a movement that is at once a guerrilla group fighting Americans and an important political force in the parliamentary democracy that the United States hopes to help create as a lasting government in Iraq.

The decision to divide the Mahdi Army into political and armed wings recalled similar evolutions in movements like Hamas in the Palestinian territories and *Hezbollah* in Lebanon.

In Amara, residents awoke yesterday to helicopters thudding overhead, dropping leaflets that told them to stay indoors and to cooperate with Iraqi soldiers who would be arriving shortly.

Amara is the capital of Maysan province, the only province in Iraq where the local government is run by politicians aligned with Mr. Sadr, whose movement competes with other Shiite parties.

The military operation, planned for weeks, did not appear related to Mr. Sadr's decision to remake his organization. But both actions reflected less tolerance in Iraq for the mixture of politics and guns outside a better trained military.

SADR CHALLENGED AGAIN IRAQI TROOPS INVADE AMARA, A POLITICAL STRONGHOLD OF RADICAL CLERIC

For months, Mr. Maliki has been cracking down on what he calls "criminal elements," many of which have ties to Mr. Sadr, but it is not clear if he is working against Mr. Sadr himself.

Several experts speculated that Mr. Sadr was acting to formally separate his political movement from the militias in anticipation of electoral laws likely to ban parties from having armed wings.

An Iraqi general said the operation in Amara would unfold along the lines of an initiative this year against Shiite militias in the nearby city of Basra. There, Iraqi soldiers entered but relied on air support from the American military and small teams of American advisers.

Then, as now, commanders took pains to clarify they were targeting rogue elements of the Mahdi Army rather than Mr. Sadr's supporters in the general population.

With a population of about 350,000, Amara is smaller than Basra and the sites of other operations initiated by Mr. Maliki: the predominantly Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City in Baghdad, and Mosul. But Amara is tactically important as a suspected conduit for weapons smuggled across marshlands along the border with Iran.

The Iraqi soldiers assembled at an airport six miles to the northeast of Amara, and at a local stadium, a local police official said.

By early evening, the troops had fanned out in the city center. The district police chief said security forces raided 68 homes in the province and found ammunition and explosives.

In the early months after the United States invaded Iraq, rival militant groups engaged in frequent gun battles in Amara, sometime overrunning government buildings. The militias seized control of the city, over which the central government in Baghdad had limited control.

Gen. Hameed Nabeel, the commander of the Iraqi army 1st Brigade, which is garrisoned in Maysan province, said in an interview that the purpose of the operation was to serve court-issued arrest warrants.

He said soldiers would try to detain militants who had fled north to Amara from the earlier fighting in Basra.

"This operation will be just like the operations in Basra and Mosul," Gen. Nabeel said.

But a senior Sadr official, Luaa Smaisem, the head of the movement's political commission, said he believed the operation would go beyond targeting militia fighters. He said it would be used to weaken the Sadrists politically before provincial elections in the fall.

"Unfortunately, the executive system is used by political parties to strike the Sadr movement," he said.

In violence yesterday, a <u>female</u> suicide bomber blew herself up in a village market in Diyala province, where people had gathered to watch the Iraqi national soccer team defeat China 2-1 in a World Cup qualifying match.

At least 25 people were wounded, 12 of them critically, a police official said.

Insurgents have been turning increasingly to the use of <u>female</u> suicide bombers. Because police officers and soldiers are reluctant to search <u>women</u>, <u>female</u> suicide bombers have succeeded in slipping into gatherings where male bombers might have been stopped.

Also yesterday, President Bush expressed confidence that the United States and Iraq would agree on a new security arrangement this year, even though Mr. Maliki, his strongest ally in Iraq, declared the negotiations at an impasse the previous day.

Speaking in Paris during a European trip that has been dominated by discussions of Iran, not Iraq, Mr. Bush sought to play down remarks by Mr. Maliki suggesting that the United States was making unacceptable demands on Iraq's sovereignty.

SADR CHALLENGED AGAIN IRAQI TROOPS INVADE AMARA, A POLITICAL STRONGHOLD OF RADICAL CLERIC

Mr. Maliki's remarks, along with increasingly vociferous protests in Baghdad and opposition in the U.S. Congress, have cast doubts on the prospect for extending the legal authority for U.S. forces to remain in Iraq after a U.N. mandate expires at the end of the year.

Mr. Bush said his administration respected Iraq's sovereignty and its leaders' political goals, adding that his administration would "accommodate their desires" and negotiate "in a way the elected government is comfortable."

"If I were a betting man, we'll reach an agreement with the Iraqis," Mr. Bush said, speaking at the Elysee Palace during a news conference with the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy.

Graphic

PHOTO: Kim Gamel/Associated Press: U.S. troops examine a poster of Muqtada al-Sadr and other religious propaganda discovered during a raid in Basra on Monday, evidence of continued support for the anti-American cleric and his Mahdi Army militia.

Load-Date: June 17, 2008



Battleground Gaza; * Israeli troops in heavy fighting * UN fails to condemn attack

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

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Third Edition

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Length: 979 words

Byline: JASON KOUTSOUKIS ON THE GAZA BORDER with agencies

Body

THE noise of gunfire and the dull thuds and sharp cracks of shells being fired and exploding could be heard on the Gaza-Israel border yesterday as Israeli forces pressed ahead with a pincer movement on Gaza City.

From a hill on the Israeli side of the border a dense expanse of apartments stretched uninterrupted from left to right across the horizon to the west: the cities of Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahiya, Gaza City and the refugee camp of Jabaliya.

From the columns of black smoke rising at several intervals, it was clear that some of those neighbourhoods were ablaze.

Israeli Army helicopters circled above, helping to direct the invasion below, and there was the faint buzz of propellers from the unmanned aircraft being used to fire missiles.

Israeli tanks continued pouring into Gaza yesterday along with military ambulances as artillery shells rained down on the Palestinian territory.

Troops were reported to be operating just three kilometres south of Gaza City, the main population centre of the densely populated enclave sandwiched between Israel and Egypt.

Late on Saturday thousands of Israeli troops and tanks invaded the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip after eight days of punishing air strikes failed to halt the group's rocket fire into Israel.

Hamas remained defiant, vowing that the Israeli Army would pay a high price. "Gaza will become your cemetery," said a spokesman, Ismail Radwan.

Despite the huge show of force, Hamas was still firing shells into Israel. Two exploded 300 metres from foreign journalists covering the invasion on the Israeli side of the border. The Israeli military has barred the media from entering Gaza.

At least 19 people have been killed since Israel launched the night-time offensive on Saturday after eight days of air strikes in which at least 485 Palestinians died and more than 2400 were wounded, Gaza medics said. More than 80 children are among the dead.

Battleground Gaza * Israeli troops in heavy fighting * UN fails to condemn attack

About 30 Israeli soldiers and "several" Hamas fighters were reported to have been wounded in the ground offensive, the army and medics said.

Hamas said that nine Israeli soldiers had been killed in the operation. The Israeli military denied the claim.

As the invasion began, Israeli infantry kitted with night-vision goggles trotted alongside tank columns across the northern and north-eastern borders and into the Hamas stronghold.

Hamas fighters fired mortar rounds and detonated roadside bombs as the Israelis advanced.

Shortly after the ground offensive began, flames shot high into the night sky when warplanes bombed a gas depot near Beit Lahiya, causing a deafening blast.

Flares also streamed into the sky and exploded like fireworks, briefly lighting up the overcrowded territory.

The Hamas-run Al-Aqsa Television said yesterday that two Israeli soldiers had been captured by militants from the Izzidin Qassam Brigades. An Israel Defence Forces spokesman immediately denied the report.

A Hamas spokesman, Bushi el-Masri, told Al-Aqsa that Hamas was fighting back and that one of its main goals was to kidnap soldiers. Israeli troops were fighting near the northern towns of el-Atatra, Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahiya and Sajaiya, yesterday.

Israeli Defence Forces sources said that exchanges of fire continued through Sunday night, and that the army had hit dozens of Palestinian fighters, with the Israeli air force and navy striking at more than 45 targets.

Palestinian media inside Gaza reported that Israeli tanks had begun to advance along the Karni-Netzarim road to the south-east of Gaza City, advancing in the direction of the former Jewish settlement of Netzarim.

The sources speculated that the intention was to cut Gaza City off from the rest of the strip.

Cars and trucks filled with women and children headed south from the Netzarim area, witnesses said.

According to the Al-Jazeera television network there was a continuous flow of ambulances and firefighting trucks in Gaza. The network also reported that Israeli troops had entered Gaza from five roads.

Palestinian sources reported that the Israeli Defence Force was using loudspeakers to call on Gazans to evacuate their homes before they were bombed.

Tens of thousands of Israeli reservists were being called up yesterday, most of them for combat duty and for the Home Front Command. The Israeli military said it was prepared for the third stage of the operation if necessary. The Defence Minister, Ehud Barak, said Israel would escalate the attack "as much as necessary".

"This operation won't be easy and won't be simple. The operation will be expanded and intensified as much as necessary. War is not a picnic. We will not allow a humanitarian crisis to develop in the Gaza Strip. We will help supply food and medicine."

But in comments thought to be directed at Lebanon's <u>Hezbollah</u> movement he said: "Israel has no interest in opening new fronts other than the one in the south."

Meanwhile, Egypt has initiated fresh attempts to achieve a ceasefire with Hamas officials based in the Syrian capital, Damascus.

According to the Arabic newspaper Al-Hayat, a senior assistant of the Egyptian Intelligence Minister, Omar Suleiman, had telephoned Hamas's political leader, Khaled Mashal, to discuss ways to resolve the crisis.

The newspaper said Iran was also working in several Arab states for the acceptance of its own formula for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

Battleground Gaza * Israeli troops in heavy fighting * UN fails to condemn attack

Earlier the movement's radio output was interrupted by a man speaking in Hebrew-accented Arabic: "Hamas leaders are hiding in the tunnels and are leaving you on the front line of Israel's defence forces," he said.

"Hamas leaders are lying to you, and they are hiding in hospitals. Launching rockets puts civilians in danger."

The ground offensive was aimed primarily at Hamas's rocket-launching facilities, Israeli officials said.

Hamas's leaders appear to be gambling that they can withstand an onslaught by the Middle East's mightiest army and remain in power in Gaza.

Graphic

THREE PHOTOS: Israeli ground forces entered Gaza under cover of darkness. Hamas warned the strip would become their "cemetery". Photo: Reuters/Baz Ratner An Israeli artillery unit opens fire. Photo: Reuters/Yannis Behrakis Casualty . . . an Israeli soldier is rushed to hospital after he was wounded in the invasion of Gaza yesterday. Photo: AFP/Yehuda Raizner

Load-Date: January 4, 2009



Israeli assault on Hamas kills more than 200

The Bismarck Tribune
December 28, 2008 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1A

Length: 1143 words

Byline: IBRAHIM BARZAK and AMY TEIBEL Associated Press Writer

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Israeli warplanes rained more than 100 tons of bombs on security installations in Hamasruled Gaza on Saturday, killing at least 230 people in one of the bloodiest days in decades of the mideast conflict. The government said the open-ended campaign was aimed at stopping rocket and mortar attacks that have traumatized southern Israel.

More than 400 people were also wounded. Most of the casualties were security forces, but Palestinian officials said at least 15 civilians were among the dead.

The unprecedented assault sparked protests and condemnations throughout the Arab world, and many of Israel's Western allies urged restraint, though the U.S. blamed Hamas for the fighting.

But there was no end in sight. Israel warned it might go after Hamas' leaders, and militants kept pelting Israel with rockets - killing at least one Israeli and wounding six.

Hundreds of Israeli infantry and armored corps troops headed for the Gaza border in preparation for a possible ground invasion, military officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity under army guidelines.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the goal was "to bring about a fundamental improvement in the security situation of the residents of the southern part of the country." He added, "It could take some time."

The Israeli airstrikes caused widespread panic and confusion, and black plumes of smoke billowed above the territory, ruled by the Islamic militant Hamas for the past 18 months. Some of the Israeli missiles struck in densely populated areas as students were leaving school, and <u>women</u> rushed into the streets frantically looking for their children.

"My son is gone, my son is gone," wailed Said Masri, a 57-year-old shopkeeper, as he sat in the middle of a Gaza City street, slapping his face and covering his head with dust from a bombed-out security compound nearby.

He said he had sent his 9-year-old son out to purchase cigarettes minutes before the airstrikes began and could not find him. "May I burn like the cigarettes, may Israel burn," Masri moaned.

Militants often operate against Israel from civilian areas. Late Saturday, thousands of Gazans received Arabic-language cell-phone messages from the Israeli military, urging them to leave homes where militants might have stashed weapons.

Israeli assault on Hamas kills more than 200

The offensive began eight days after a six-month truce between Israel and the militants expired. The Israeli army says Palestinian militants have fired some 300 rockets and mortars at Israeli targets over the past week, and 10 times that number over the past year.

"There is a time for calm and there is a time for fighting, and now is the time for fighting," said Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, vowing to expand the operation if necessary.

In Gaza City's main security compound, bodies of more than a dozen uniformed Hamas police lay on the ground. Civilians rushed wounded people in cars and vans to hospitals because there weren't enough ambulances to transport all the dead and wounded.

"There are heads without bodies There's blood in the corridors. People are weeping, <u>women</u> are crying, doctors are shouting, " said nurse Ahmed Abdel Salaam from Shifa Hospital, Gaza's main treatment center.

Military officials said aircraft released more than 100 tons of bombs in the first nine hours of fighting, focusing initially on militant training camps, rocket-manufacturing facilities and weapons warehouses that had been identified in advance.

A second wave was directed at squads who fired about 180 rockets and mortars at Israeli border communities. In an attack early today, Palestinians said Israeli aircraft bombed a mosque near Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, destroying it.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said Hamas' political leaders could soon be targeted. ""Hamas is a terrorist organization and nobody is immune," she declared.

The campaign was launched six weeks before national elections. Livni and Barak hope to succeed Ehud Olmert as prime minister, and the outgoing government has faced pressure to take tough action.

Gaza's political leaders, who have been targeted in the past, went into hiding earlier this week. In a speech broadcast on local Gaza television, Hamas' prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, declared his movement would not be cowed.

"We are stronger, and more determined, and have more will, and we will hold onto our rights even more than before," Haniyeh said. It was not clear where he spoke.

In Damascus, Syria, Hamas' top leader, Khaled Mashaal, called on Palestinians to rekindle their fight against Israel. "This is the time for a third uprising," he said.

Israel withdrew its troops and settlers in 2005 after crushing the second Palestinian uprising, but it has maintained control over the territory's border crossings.

Despite the overwhelming show of force, it was not clear the offensive would halt the rocket fire. Past operations have never achieved that goal.

Late Saturday, Gaza health official Dr. Moaiya Hassanain said 230 Palestinians were killed and more than 400 were wounded.

The lone fatality in Israel was in the town of Netivot, where a rocket killed an Israeli man. Six other people were wounded, rescue services said.

Netivot only recently become a target, and dozens of stunned residents, some weeping, gathered at the house that took the deadly rocket hit. A hole gaped in one of the walls, which was pocked with shrapnel marks.

"We need to finish this once and for all and strike back hard," said next-door neighbor Avraham Chen-Chatam, 57.

Streets were nearly empty in Sderot, the Israeli border town pummeled hardest by rockets. But dozens of people congregated on a hilltop to watch the Israeli aerial attacks.

Israeli assault on Hamas kills more than 200

The TV images of dead and wounded Gazans inflamed Arab public opinion, and protests erupted in Arab Israeli villages, the West Bank and elsewhere in the Arab world.

The campaign embarrassed moderate Arab regimes that have encouraged Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking and weakened Hamas' rival, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who has ruled only the West Bank since Hamas violently seized control of Gaza in June 2007.

Abbas condemned the attacks, but fearing violence could spiral out of control, his forces also broke up protests in the West Bank.

The offensive also risked opening new fronts, including unrest that could destabilize the West Bank and ignite possible rocket attacks by Lebanese *Hezbollah* guerrillas on northern Israel.

Britain, the EU, the Vatican, the U.N. secretary-general and special Mideast envoy Tony Blair all called for an immediate restoration of calm. The Arab League scheduled an emergency meeting Wednesday to discuss the situation.

But the U.S., Israel's closest ally, blamed Hamas. "These people are nothing but thugs, so Israel is going to defend its people against terrorists like Hamas that indiscriminately kill their own people," White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Clouds gather over economy

Guardian.com

December 5, 2007

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theguardian

Length: 1049 words

Highlight: Welcome to the Wrap, Guardian Unlimited's roundup of the best of the day's papers.

Body

CLOUDS GATHER OVER ECONOMY

Why bother with the FT's low-key splash ("Mortgage lenders warned by watchdog") when you can wallow in a bout of real recession-mongering with the Independent? "Banks have stopped lending. Consumers aren't spending. Investors aren't investing. Businesses aren't hiring. Houses aren't selling. IS BRITAIN'S ECONOMY HEADING FOR ..."

[shot of storm clouds hovering over London]

"THE PERFECT STORM?"

"It is one of those rare moments in economics," says the paper's Hamish McRae, "when you know that the next few months will feel quite different to the past few ones." He has changed his mind about interest rates and now thinks the Bank of England should cut them tomorrow. "But is recession really likely? For the US it is quite possible, but I think the balance of probability in the UK is more for two or three years of much slower growth...

"At the moment our economy is still growing strongly, companies are buoyant, and it always takes quite a while for any slowdown to move through the system. We are not in as big a mess as we were in during the early 1990s."

What, companies buoyant? McRae, have you seen your own employer's front page? What's more, Barnaby Stutter of Brixton Cycles Co-Operative tells the Independent on page three that he is not expecting a "Christmas bonanza". "Realists always sleep well at night," he adds, cryptically.

The Telegraph has a very specific concern: the 1.4 million people on fixed-term mortgage deals that expire next year. These borrowers will "struggle to find an affordable mortgage". Some monthly repayments could rise by 60%, the FT says.

The pink paper is not in favour of cutting rates unless today's Purchasing Managers' Index suggests that tighter credit is likely to push inflation below target next year. Otherwise, the FT says, the Bank should wait until Christmas sales data is available. Tesco disagrees. The supermarket urged the Bank to cut rates yesterday, saying inflation in its own stores was a mere 0.8%.

^{*} Independent: The perfect storm?* Telegraph: Higher mortgages to hit 1.5m* FT: Mortgage lenders warned

UP THE CREEK

The overnight arrest of John Darwin - the man who vanished five years ago after an apparent canoeing accident and claims to have no memory of events since 2000 - confirms the papers' suspicions of fishiness.

"SECRET LIFE OF MR CANOE," splashes the Mirror ("SECRET LIFE OF DARWIN" really wouldn't have worked), which says he may have spent the intervening years "in America with a woman he met on the internet". Police trawling through his emails discovered he had been romantically involved with a number of <u>women</u>. The Sun says they were tipped off three months ago that Darwin was still alive.

"YES, I DID POCKET THE LIFE INSURANCE," splashes the Mail, alongside a picture of Darwin's wife, Anne, who emigrated to Panama City six weeks ago after selling the family home for almost 500,000. She claimed the payout "in good faith", she says. The Sun says she is sharing her two-bedroom flat "with a man".

* Mirror: 'Dead' John Darwin pictured with wife* Daily Mail: Yes, I did pocket the insurance* Sun: 'Dead' canoeist arrested in raid

HOW TO DEMONISE IRAN NOW?

"It is always tempting to praise intelligence reports that we agree with and to condemn those that we do not," the Guardian says cautiously. Nonetheless, the news that Iran has halted its nuclear weapons programme "should stop the drums of war beating in Washington". Now, the paper says, the US and Iran should start direct negotiations - if it worked with North Korea, it can work in Tehran.

The Times is more circumspect. It welcomes the National Intelligence Estimate report as proof to the world that the Bush administration is not manipulating intelligence. But there is a risk that "Democrats will seize on it to try to ridicule warnings of the threat posed by Iran." The Times shares George Bush's concern that Iran's nuclear weapons programme could restart at any time. "In truth, the likelihood of a US military strike was always slim, given Iran's ability to sabotage peace in Iraq.

"In recent months there has been a drop in Iran's sponsorship of terrorist activity there, and Washington is unlikely to jeopardise this welcome change at a pivotal moment. That does not hold true of Iran's backing for Hamas and *Hezbollah*. Israel still sees Iran as a mortal threat."

Indeed, Israeli officials said yesterday they were still convinced that Tehran was trying to build a nuclear weapon. "We cannot allow ourselves to rest just because of an intelligence report from the other side of the earth, even if it is from our greatest friend," said the defence minister Ehud Barak.

* War postponed* Times: Relax? Don't. Iran can still build a bomb

SECRET ABORTION TRIALS

<u>Women</u> may be able to obtain an abortion at their GP's surgery if the "secret trials" currently under way are extended, the Times says. The locations of the two trials are being kept secret to foil anti-abortion campaigners.

* Times: Secret trials to let GPs carry out abortions

BANKS POSE AS CHARITIES

Banks are making money by siphoning their mortgage loans into so-called charitable trusts that donate very little to charity, according to the Guardian's splash. Trusts with a charitable status have various advantages and do not oblige the banks to make any regular donations.

The paper says Northern Rock, Halifax, Abbey and Lloyds TSB are among the banks who invest billions in this way.

* Revealed: how banks exploit charity tax laws

Clouds gather over economy

PETE AND AMY PAIR UP AT 4AM

A sighting of Kate Moss's wastrel ex-boyfriend arriving at Amy Winehouse's new flat at 4am appalls the red-tops and the Mail. "For Pete's sake!" exclaims the Mail. "Your world is falling apart and your husband is in prison ... the last thing you need at 4am is a visit from Doherty."

"Earlier in the evening as she moved her possessions, she either did not know or care that she had left a plastic bag filled with a white substance on display in the open boot of her car," the paper continues. Winehouse's spokesman said it contained towels.

Doherty left at 9am "looking dirty and unkempt", the Sun says. Certainly his teeth seem in worse condition than ever.

* Daily Mail: For Pete's sake* Sun: Amy shambles

TODAY ON GUARDIAN UNLIMITED

More on the arrest of canoe mystery manLatest developments in the Iraq hostage case

Load-Date: December 5, 2007



<u>Israel buries its dead, and ponders; Amid tears for 8 youths, an investigation</u> and a 'deep breath'

The International Herald Tribune

March 8, 2008 Saturday

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Length: 1081 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger and Isabel Kershner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: KFAR ETZION, West Bank

Body

Steven Erlanger reported from Jerusalem and Isabel Kershner from Kfar Etzion. Rina Castelnuovo contributed reporting from Jerusalem and Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza.

*

They carried the body of Avraham David Moses, 16 years old, on a small stretcher down the slope of the vibrant green cemetery here, shaded by tall pines, overlooking a valley, in utter silence.

The boy was wrapped in a black-and-white prayer shawl, and as the pallbearers slipped him into the grave Friday, the long silence was broken by quiet weeping and occasional sobs.

Men recited psalms, and Naftali Moses, the boy's father, his garments torn in grief, said the Hebrew prayer for the dead, his voice breaking, before moving back up the slope to the parking lot, through a somber line of mourners, men on one side, **women** on the other.

His stepmother, Leah, described Avraham David, as he was known, as "a really good kid - he would come home and unload the dishwasher without being asked." And if the adults started gossiping at the table, she said, he would start reciting mishnayot, or oral teachings. "He was just an incredible blessing," she said.

Avraham David was one of eight yeshiva, or Jewish religious school, students slain Thursday night, killed by a Palestinian living in east Jerusalem, who sprayed them with hundreds of rounds of automatic weapons fire before being killed himself. Ten other students were wounded, three of them seriously.

It was unclear which group was responsible for the massacre. The radical Islamic Hamas movement, which praised the deed on Thursday, claimed responsibility on Friday in an anonymous phone call to the Reuters news agency and said that details would come later. But Fawzi Barhoum, a senior Hamas spokesman in Gaza, said that no claim would be official unless made in a written statement signed by the military wing of Hamas.

Mark Regev, spokesman for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, said that the government would act after proper investigation and deliberation, and he condemned those, like Hamas, who celebrated the slayings with parades in Gaza. "That Hamas calls this a heroic act, and praises it. This exposes them for what they are," he said.

Israel buries its dead, and ponders Amid tears for 8 youths, an investigation and a 'deep breath'

The young men were killed as they were studying in the library of the Mercaz Harav yeshiva in Jerusalem, a major center for the national religious movement that provides the backbone of Israeli settlement in the West Bank - settlements like this one, which Israel intends to keep in any future peace treaty.

The young men, most of them 15 or 16, with the oldest 26, were buried Friday, in separate funerals that drew thousands of weeping and angry Israelis.

The funeral processions began together at the yeshiva itself, where thousands of people, many of them in the black clothing of the ultra-Orthodox or wearing knitted yarmulkas, lined the streets. In the large courtyard, where the blood had been washed away, eight benches were marked with the names of the dead and one wall of the yeshiva was covered with large posters listing them.

As each body was brought forward to rest on its bench, the crowds outside the gates parted to let the pallbearers pass, with cries and screams from relatives and friends.

In every corner, students hugged and cried, and many went to see and touch the closed library door, shattered with bullets. In his eulogy, the yeshiva's chief rabbi, Yaakov Shapira, said that the gunman had targeted "everyone living in the holy city of Jerusalem" and criticized the Olmert government for its willingness to negotiate the return of some occupied land to the Palestinians.

"The time has come for all of us to understand that an external struggle is raging, and an internal struggle, and everyone believes the hour has come for us to have a good leadership, a stronger leadership, a more believing leadership," the rabbi said.

Weeping, Shapira said, "the murderers are the Amalek of our day, coming to remind us that Amalek has not disappeared, just changed its appearance." The Amalekites were indigenous nomads who attacked the Israelites on their flight from Egypt, and they were annihilated by King David.

"God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son," the rabbi said. "We had to sacrifice eight."

The ceremony ended as it began, with the procession of bodies taken out of the gates, one by one, for their separate burials.

The Israeli government declared a high alert on Friday and closed off the West Bank for the weekend, deploying thousands of police officers and limiting the number of Muslims allowed to pray at Al Aksa Mosque.

The killer, identified as Ala Abu Dhaim, 25, was a Palestinian Jerusalemite with permanent residency in the city. His home in the Jebel Mukaber neighborhood of East Jerusalem was adorned on Friday with the flags of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, *Hezbollah* and other religious groups. He was said to have worked as a driver for a private company that had made deliveries to the yeshiva, but the police would not confirm that.

His family said he was intensely religious but not a member of any militant group, planned on marrying this summer, but had been transfixed by the bloodshed in Gaza, where 126 Palestinians died from last Wednesday through Monday, his sister, Iman Abu Dhaim, told The Associated Press. "He told me he wasn't able to sleep because of the grief," she said. Several of his relatives were detained for questioning.

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah, condemned the killing of civilians by both sides, and Israel said it would continue to talk peace with him.

Regev urged Abbas to do more to stop terrorism. "They have clear obligations to act against terror cells," he said. "While we understand that they have limitations on their capabilities today, we believe that they could be doing much more, and it is incumbent upon them to do so."

A senior Israeli official said that many details about the killing were unclear and no big decisions had been made. "When things like this happen, there's an immediate desire to do something," the official said. "But we learned under Ariel Sharon that it's better to take a deep breath."

Israel buries its dead, and ponders Amid tears for 8 youths, an investigation and a 'deep breath'

The three key members of the security cabinet - Olmert, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni - "would meet and think and calculate and respond," the official said. "These three understand that there is no quick fix for Hamas, that this will take time, and the goal is to continually apply pressure on the Hamas leadership - economic, military, diplomatic and political."

Load-Date: March 18, 2008



You don't mess with the formula

The Jerusalem Post June 20, 2008 Friday

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Section: ARTS; Pg. 6 **Length:** 1014 words

Byline: HANNAH BROWN Highlight: movie review

Body

YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN

*

Directed by Dennis Dugan. Written by Adam Sandler, Robert Smigel and Judd Apatow. 113 minutes. In English and Hebrew, with Hebrew titles.

With Adam Sandler, John Turturro, Emmanuelle Chriqui

The reason you're reading a review of the latest Adam Sandler comedy, and the reason I'm writing it, is that in You Don't Mess with the Zohan, Sandler plays an Israeli - specifically, a crack Mossad commando who goes to New York to become a hairdresser. It's a tried-and-true mix for Sandler, whose movies tend to be among the most profitable in Hollywood. Take a few funny lines and gross-out slapstick, put them into a plot that can be summarized in a single sentence, then add a couple of motivational lines about staying true to yourself to give it a pinch of seriousness. You Don't Mess with the Zohan follows the formula slavishly (the believe-in-yourself stuff has been retooled to incorporate a little why-don't-we-all-just-get- along dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian characters), but it lacks the key ingredient that made the formula work in the past: fun. That's largely because Sandler, at 41, seems too old for this.

He's become so low- key he's barely there, emoting with a slightly glazed look that seems to be telling us: I know this is a piece of junk, but I couldn't turn down the paycheck. And, let's be honest: given that he gets paid around \$20 million a picture, who could?

There are certainly a few laughs during the nearly two-hour running time, but not nearly as many jokes as you would imagine, as if the producers spent the bulk of the film's budget on Sandler's massive salary and nothing on re-writes. So, they had to make do with five or six main comic routines that get run into the ground. The plot, such as it is, centers on super-macho Zohan Dvir (Sandler), the man who always gets the call when the higher-ups need to take down a terrorist. He gets frustrated when the guy he caught the month before is released in a prisoner swap and has to be recaptured (this is one of the few jokes that boasts a glimmer of sophistication). So when the Mossad (or is it the army? - it doesn't really matter) calls, he bids farewell to the bathing beauties who join him as he grills fish naked on the Tel Aviv shore, where he catches the whole fish, as well as hacky sacks, in his butt (you already knew you didn't want to see this, right?).

You don't mess with the formula

Then he's off to take on his nemesis, the Phantom, played by John Turturro, a gifted and very funny actor. Those who remember him fondly as the over-the-top Jesus from The Big Lebowski will be disappointed that here, he is positively restrained. No one in the film gives the kind of big, bravura performance that could have made it really fun. Before Zohan takes on the Phantom, he confesses to his parents that his dream is to style hair and make it "silky smooth," a phrase that doesn't get many laughs the first time he utters it and even fewer when he repeats it approximately ten thousand times. The parents (Dina Doron and Shelley Berman), urge him, "Play it safe, stay in the army." Ha ha. They also ply him with gallons of hummus, one of the film's other running/limping jokes. Zohan even brushes his teeth in hummus.

Pretending that the Phantom has killed him, Zohan sneaks off to New York where he plans to study his chosen craft with stylist Paul Mitchell (one of the film's more grating product placements, of which there are many). When that doesn't work, he helps out a beleaguered cyclist by twisting the man's nasty yuppie opponent into a pretzel shape with his martial-arts technique (another of the film's gags that quickly wears thin). The cyclist takes him home to his mother (Lainie Kazan), and she quickly jumps into bed with Zohan, which leads us to the next running joke: He's a sex machine with middle-aged and elderly <u>women</u>. (I already told you that you don't want to see this, didn't I?) Yes, the older gals can't resist his overstuffed crotch and this is a big help when he gets a job sweeping floors at a neighborhood hair salon run by Dalia (Emmanuelle Chriqui, who is best known for her role as Sloan on the HBO series, Entourage). The older <u>women</u> line up for his special attentions and Dalia, a sweet young Palestinian, is more concerned about a rent increase than the fact that her new hairdresser keeps disappearing into the back room with customers.

The anemic plot kicks into slightly higher gear when some Palestinian cab drivers (one of whom is played by Rob Schneider) spot Zohan and recognize him. Deciding to expose the Phantom as a fraud and kill Zohan themselves, they start out by calling *Hezbollah* Customer Service. This proves to be one of the movie's funniest moments (when they press 4 for bomb-making materials, they get a recording telling them to call back when ceasefire talks break down). Eventually, after a lot of scenes in which the New York- based Palestinians and Israelis learn to love each other and fight together against the real enemy - real-estate developers - it's all over. Several throwaway cameos by such big names as Chris Rock, Mariah Carey, Kevin Nealon and John McEnroe don't do much for the movie, either. Carey spends most of her one scene talking about Bluetooth and it's not exactly a showstopper.

For Israeli audiences, there is minimal fun to be had seeing some of the characters (including Zohan) speak Hebrew with each other, watching Israeli actors such as Dina Doron and Ido Mosseri in small roles and listening to Israeli pop on the soundtrack. The clever use of songs by Hadag Nahash, Dana International and Balkan Beat Box is the movie's one redeeming feature.

If only the writers had shown the same sophistication and sense of fun as the film's musical director. Co-written by Sandler, Robert Smigel (a longtime Saturday Night Live writer) and the ubiquitous Judd Apatow (who directed Knocked Up and produced Superbad and Forgetting Sarah Marshall), this movie has no excuse. It's a given that a lot of it would be in politically incorrect bad taste, and that's to be expected, but an unfunny comedy is unforgivable.

Graphic

2 photos

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Iranian Dissidents Gather To Discuss Regime Change

New York Sun (Archive)
June 18, 2007 Monday

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Byline: CLAUDIA ROSETT -, Special to the Sun

Dateline: PARIS

Body

Regime change for Iran may be a dead letter in the loftiest councils of world affairs, but as a prime goal, it is very much alive in the plans of some 200 exiled Iranian dissidents who gathered here in a basement conference hall these past three days to launch a movement they are calling "Solidarity Iran."

Inspired by the Polish Solidarity union movement that helped bring down communist rule in the 1980s, the aim of this new Solidarity is to give a more coherent shape and identity to the diverse and often fractious Iranian dissident diaspora. Brought together by about half a dozen organizers of various political stripes, the participants are seeking to devise more and better-coordinated ways of boosting efforts by people within Iran itself to replace the country's terrorist-sponsoring and brutal Islamic regime with secular, democratic rule.

The obstacles are enormous. But as diplomats in Europe and America maneuver to cut deals with the Iranian regime that focus on its nuclear program and dignify its officials, the single most important contribution of this new Solidarity movement may be the insistence of its participants that no such deal will suffice to stop the poisonous influence and terrorist activities of the Iranian theocracy.

They say the regime - they refer to it as "the Islamic Republic" - must go.

The organizing document for the conference declares: "We consider the system of Islamic Republic incorrigible and we think that the establishment of democracy in Iran is conditional upon the abolishment of that regime."

The Iranian regime has "created a wall of separation between the Iranian people and the international community," said one of the organizers, U.K.-based Hossein Bagherzadeh, who left Iran in 1981, two years after the Islamic revolution. "The Iranian people want to join the free world; the free world must respond," he said.

Following less diverse meetings in Berlin in 2005 and London in 2006, this conclave brought together, in some cases for the first time, Iranian-born exiles from a wide array of beliefs and affiliations - some of whom have in past years been at each other's throats, and in some cases on each other's hit lists.

Participants came from places as far-flung as Canada, America, Europe and in a few cases from inside Iran itself. Some had tales of relatives murdered by the regime; some had been beaten and imprisoned before leaving the country. One man lifted his pants leg just enough to show the scars on his ankles from torture at the hands of the Islamic regime. The assembly included leftists, monarchists, ethnic minorities, former student leaders and former adherents of the Islamic regime. There were plenty of <u>women</u>; some wore skirts. There was not a veil in sight.

Iranian Dissidents Gather To Discuss Regime Change

The ranks included such prominent Iranian exiles as Amir Farshad Ebrahimi, formerly a member in Iran of Ansar *Hezbollah*, a paramilitary outfit that enforces the dictates of the mullahs. In 2000, Ebrahimi began exposing their abuses. For that he spent four years in prison in Iran before ending up in exile in Germany. In a scene that sums up some of the diversity and spirit of the Solidarity gathering, this past Saturday found Mr. Ebrahimi telling his tale to two reporters in a French hotel lobby, with interpreting help provided by an Iranian-born Jew, Pooya Dayanim, whose family fled the country in 1985. Dayanim recounts that his family made the decision to leave Iran because they expected trouble when he refused, at the age of 14, to join in the obligatory daily chant at his school of "Death to America! Death to Israel." Based in Los Angeles, Dayanim is now president of the Iranian Jewish Public Affairs Committee.

Unlike the leaders of the original Polish Solidarity, most of those launching Solidarity Iran are forced to operate from outside the country. But some of the participants pointed out that they hope to turn their diversity and distance to advantage - looking for ways from their vantage in the free world to help protesters inside Iran coordinate both with the outside world and with each other.

"There are thousands of circles of protest inside Iran. The government of Iran does not allow them to connect to each other," said one of the conference organizers, Shahriyar Ahy, a spokesman for Reza Pahlavi, the American-based son of the former Shah (Mr. Pahlavi did not attend the gathering).

Most of those at the Paris gathering are opposed to military action to remove the Islamic regime. But not all. One attendee, Faramarz Bakhtiar, who left Iran in 1998 and now lives in Germany, says "We cannot free Iran like Ukraine happened, or Poland." Mr. Bakhtiar, whose uncle (later assassinated) was prime minister under the Shah, says the "the only way that these mullahs will go away is by military," and suggests combining such non-violent activities as those proposed by Solidarity Iran with the bombing of such places inside Iran as terrorist training camps and the nuclear facilities at Natanz. In broken English he delivers a clear message: "When mullah is plus atom, the whole humanity is in danger."

A woman who came from inside Iran, attending under a false name to reduce the risk of retaliation from the regime upon her return, said that the United Nations sanctions to date have made no dent at all. She suggests that given the miserable economic conditions created by the regime itself, a complete embargo on Iranian oil sales - however that might be achieved - could topple the mullahs in a matter of months. Noting, like many here, that the only real solution to the Iranian regime's terrorist-wielding war-mongering ambitions is to get rid of theocratic rule, she asks: "Why is the problem of the atomic bomb more important than human rights?"

Much remains to be done before Solidarity Iran might make a serious mark. Simply arriving at an agreement to go forward entailed much debate among members of this gathering, at one point till 4:30 in the morning. As the meeting drew to a close, a 20-member council was elected, which will now choose a seven-member executive board tasked with coordinating genuine action.

One participant, an Iranian-born economist now living in Britain, compared the creation of this new Solidarity to the act of pressing down the accelerator of a car not yet in gear. But if nothing else, these dissidents came from near and far, and sidelined many deep differences, to agree on a call from Paris that the vital task is not to negotiate with the Islamic Republic, but to get rid of it.

Ms. Rosett is a journalist-inresidence with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

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U.S. Now Reaching Out to Those It Shunned

The New York Times
May 5, 2007 Saturday
Late Edition - Final

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Byline: By MICHAEL SLACKMAN and HELENE COOPER

Dateline: SHARM EL SHEIK, Egypt, May 4

Body

After two days of talks aimed at building an international strategy to help bring peace and stability to Iraq, little changed in what many here saw as the crucial factor: relations between Iran and the United States.

The United States reached out to the Iranians, seeking a diplomatic conversation after years of pursuing a policy of trying to isolate them.

But the Iranian foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, seemed unimpressed, offering a blistering critique of the American role in Iraq. He also used the international platform to attack Israel and to reaffirm Iran's right to a nuclear program, which it says is peaceful and the West says is intended to build weapons.

"The unilateral policy, the arrogant one-sided policy, is a principal reason for the complex situation we are seeing in Iraq," Mr. Mottaki said of Washington's stance in remarks made at a news conference at the end of the two-day meeting. "Even the ordinary people of the United States realize that the policies pursued by the United States in Iraq are flawed, and they at least must admit that the policies have failed."

Mr. Mottaki's remarks disappointed many diplomats here -- including Iraqi officials -- who had tried to orchestrate a brief meeting between him and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as a step toward thawing tensions between the two countries.

The Egyptian foreign minister, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, tried to put the best face on the disappointment with a touch of humor. "They were in the same room, at the same table," he said. "It wasn't a very big table."

The meeting, attended by representatives of about 60 countries, produced a series of promises, from Iraqi officials and leaders of neighboring countries, intended to bring peace. There was a promise of debt relief from the international community and a promise by Iraqis to do more to bring about national reconciliation.

But perhaps the most significant development, many people here said, was the more humble face of American diplomacy. The change suggests that the Bush administration now agrees with what Arab leaders have been saying for years: that Washington cannot succeed in the Middle East with unilateral action.

"Yes, I believe they are listening," the Egyptian foreign minister said as he shuttled between meetings.

U.S. Now Reaching Out to Those It Shunned

Officials of countries that were once on the Bush administration's do-not-call list are now getting face time with top American envoys. This seems like a different administration from the one that consistently said it would not reward bad behavior on the part of Syria, North Korea and Iran, with high-level American contact (Syria), one-on-one American contact (North Korea) or any American contact (Iran).

On Thursday, Ms. Rice met for 30 minutes with the Syrian foreign minister, Walid al-Moallem. It was the first high-level meeting between the two countries since President Bush recalled his ambassador from Damascus in February 2005 after the assassination of Rafik Hariri, the former Lebanese prime minister.

The decision to unfreeze relations came after State Department officials concluded that directly asking Syria to crack down on the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq was worth facing criticism from conservative hawks in Washington who argue that America should not talk to its foes.

But despite the opening, the issue of Lebanon remains a huge obstacle to American-Syrian ties. The Bush administration still plans to seek a United Nations Security Council resolution authorizing an international tribunal to prosecute suspects in the Hariri assassination, an inquest that is adamantly opposed in Damascus.

Aaron David Miller, a scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center and a former senior adviser on Arab-Israeli relations at the State Department, said neither the United States nor Syria was willing to deliver what the other wanted. Syria, he said, wants the Hariri tribunal to go away, while the United States wants Syria to help with Iraq and to rein in the militant Lebanese Shiite group <u>Hezbollah</u>.

Even so, he said, the Bush administration, running out of options in the Middle East, "may be looking for another lever to pull in Iraq, Lebanon and the peace process."

On Iran, attempts at high-level talk did not succeed.

"Well, first of all the opportunity simply didn't arise for the foreign minister of Iran and me" to meet, Ms. Rice said in response to a question. "As I said, I would have taken that opportunity," she added, "but the opportunity didn't arise."

The opportunity was almost there -- and it was derailed. Ms. Rice planned to seek out Mr. Mottaki at dinner on Thursday, but he arrived before she did, took one look at a <u>female</u> Russian violinist clad in a red dress -- too risque for strict Muslim sensibilities, diplomats said -- and left as Ms. Rice arrived.

State Department officials said they hoped to engage Iran about the American belief that it had been arming Shiite militias in Iraq with "explosively formed projectiles," which have been used against American troops and Iraqi civilians.

The Americans did say they managed to have a hallway chat with some Iranian officials, an effort at contact that just a short time ago would have seemed unthinkable.

Ms. Rice said the change did not reflect a broad new policy but was restricted to Iraq and to the conference. Others saw something else: a humbler White House eager to enlist as much help as possible to extract itself from Iraq.

"The United States now is changing its policies, and it means to save that which can be saved," said Anwar Majid Eshki, head of the Middle East Center for Strategic and Legal Studies in Saudi Arabia. "Arab countries were distanced by the United States before from Iraq. So the change in U.S. policy is driving the change in Arab policy."

In the end, though, there was disappointment that Iran and the United States left as they arrived, estranged.

"It is in my country's interest, really, to see a reduction in the tensions," said the Iraqi foreign minister, Hoshyar Zebari.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

Photo: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was among the representatives of about 60 countries yesterday at a conference in Egypt about Iraq. (Photo by Shawn Baldwin for The New York Times)

Load-Date: May 5, 2007



Sideshow: Joe the Journalist, in Gaza

The Philadelphia Inquirer
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Byline: By Tirdad Derakhshani

Inquirer Staff Writer

Body

Joe the Plumber, whose pronouncements during the campaign established him as the most influential political pundit since Bart Simpson, plans to save journalism - from itself. London's Guardian says **Samuel Joseph Wurzelbacher** is "dropping his unlicensed plunger and picking up a reporter's notebook" to cover the latest eruption of violence in the Gaza strip for conservative Web site pjtv.com.

Joe the War Correspondent, who will immerse himself in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for 10 whole days, promises to report "without a politically correct filter." Joe, who became a mascot for John McCain's campaign when he challenged Barack Obama's economic plan, tells NBC News he will try to explain Israel's reason for the offensive against Hamas. "I get to go over there and let their 'average Joes' share their story, what they think, how they feel, especially with world opinion," he said. "It's very tragic," he said of the rising death toll. "But at the same time what are the Israeli people supposed to do?"HBO nabs inauguration HBO, which paid a cool \$1.5 mil in '93 for exclusive rights to televise Bill Clinton's inaugural show at the Lincoln Memorial, which featured Bob Dylan and Diana Ross, has signed a deal, for an undisclosed sum, to cover the plethora of events leading up to and including Barack Obama's inauguration.

Programming will begin Jan. 18, two days before the big day, with a live telecast of the star-studded opening ceremony. HBO says this time its coverage will be available for free to all cable subscribers. Don't be despondent: All the major networks will cover the Jan. 20 ceremony itself. They will also broadcast taped segments of various inaugural-related shows.

Jay-Z announces inauguration show Hip-hop king **Jay-Z**, who was one of Obama's biggest celebrity boosters, has announced that he will perform an intimate show for a crowd of fewer than 2,000 people at the Warner Theatre in Washington on Jan. 19, the day before the inauguration.

Baby girl for Garner & Affleck **Jennifer Garner** and husband **Ben Affleck**, both 36, welcomed their second daughter on Tuesday, People mag reports. The baby, who was born in Los Angeles at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, has yet to be identified to the masses by name.

She joins 3-year-old sis, Violet.

Brad: I didn't cheat on Jen The Brad Pitt-Jennifer Aniston-Angelina Jolie love triangle has flared up again.

Brad, 45, tells W magazine's Web site that contrary to popular opinion, he did not have sexual relations with that woman (Angie) while he was still married (to Jen).

Brad's denials come on the heels of a recent scuffle between the two <u>women</u> that started when Angie revealed that she and Brad fell in love on the set of their '05 collaboration, *Mr. & Mrs. Smith.* Brad was still married at the time.

Jen called Angie's comments "really uncool," a retort so cutting it's a wonder Angie came out alive.

So what's the truth? Brad says he and Jen broke up before filming ended on *Smith*. Thus, his liaison with Angie wasn't "some kind of dastardly affair."

NAACP nods to Beyoncé, Hudson **Beyoncé Knowles**, **Alicia Keys** and **Jennifer Hudson** have each received NAACP Image Award nominations in two categories, music and film. The three stars are vying for multiple music prizes, including best <u>female</u> musical artist and best music video, as well as best supporting actress: Keys and Hudson for *The Secret Life of Bees* and Knowles for *Cadillac Records*.

Both films also are up for best picture, along with *Miracle at St. Anna*, *Seven Pounds*, and *Tyler Perry'sThe Family That Preys*.

The awards, which celebrate diversity in the arts, will be presented Feb. 12. For a list of nominations, visit www.naacpimageawards.net.

Bush looks forward to normal life **Laura Bush** tells *Entertainment Tonight*'s **Mary Hart** she has mixed feelings about leaving the White House after eight years.

"I'll be sad when I say goodbye to all the people that work here that we know so well and have made our lives so terrific," the first lady says in a two-part interview set to air last night and tonight. But Bush says the whole family is looking forward to resuming life in Texas. "Eight years is a long time and both George and I look forward to a much more normal life in Texas," she said.

Joe & Anderson, men among mice **Joe the Plumber**, who is shipping out to Israel as a war correspondent, will have the edge on all the major networks. The AP reports that ABC, CBS and NBC have decided to save money by not sending out their top news anchors to the Middle East to cover Israel's conflict with Hamas. (In '06, they sent their biggest stars to cover Israel's war with <u>Hezbollah</u>.) The only other star journalist to brave the war was CNN's **Anderson Cooper** - but he was recalled yesterday due to budgetary constraints. Perhaps Joe will save journalism from journalists after all.

Michael finds a new playhouse **Michael Jackson**, who lost an entire world when he stopped living in Neverland, has signed a lease for a Bel-Air mansion for \$100,000 a month, says the L.A. Times. M.J.'s rep, **Tohme Tohme**, says the former King of Pop wants to be closer to "where all the action is" in the entertainment biz. Added Tohme, "He might want to build his own dream house" during that time.

The new digs? A French chateau estate built in '02 that boasts 13 bathrooms, 12 fireplaces, a theater, wine cellar and tasting room. The Times notes that sadly, the dump doesn't have a Ferris wheel, roller coaster or exotic animal zoo.

Porn kings seek alms Porn moguls **Larry Flynt** and **Joe Francis** have taken to Capitol Hill to beg for alms. TMZ.com says the Hustler king has teamed up with the dude behind the sophisticated *Girls Gone Wild* vids to ask Congress for a *\$5 billion* porn bailout. "With all this economic misery and people losing all that money, sex is the farthest thing from their mind," Flynt said. "It's time for Congress to rejuvenate the sexual appetite of America." Francis said, "We feel we deserve the same consideration" as other "important businesses."

Sideshow: Joe the Journalist, in Gaza

Nicole denies 'Gossip' gossip A rep for **Nicole Richie** denies a New York Daily News report that the sometime actress plans to guest star on CW's *Gossip Girl*. (Fan blogs have been buzzing with the news.) "This isn't true," the rep tells E!Online. Richie surprised TV fans this season when she gave a non-awful performance on NBC's *Chuck*.

This column contains information from Inquirer wire services. Contact "SideShow" at sideShow @phillynews.com.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009



Saudi King's Visit To U.K. Draws Fire; Critics denounce poor human rights record

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

October 30, 2007 Tuesday

National Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A19

Length: 973 words

Byline: Peter Goodspeed, National Post

Body

There will be more in play than pomp and circumstance when King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia climbs into a gold carriage and rides down London's Mall to Buckingham Palace with Queen Elizabeth today.

The 83-year-old Saudi monarch kicks off a five-country tour of Europe with a three-day visit to London -- the first state visit to Britain by a Saudi king in 20 years.

He will stay as a guest of honour at Buckingham Palace, hold talks with Prime Minister Gordon Brown and attend a gala banquet at the Guildhall hosted by the Lord Mayor of London.

In the process, he will be denounced by British politicians, targeted by human rights activists and ridiculed by the media.

Britons are already engaged in a fierce debate over whether they should even have agreed to the visit. A story headlined "A royal guest to be proud of?" in yesterday's edition of The Independent noted Mr. Brown "will welcome the leader of one of the world's most vicious dictatorships to Britain."

The paper noted Britain is rolling out the red carpet for the Saudis just weeks after Mr. Brown delivered a speech, at last month's Labour party congress, in which he declared: "The message should go out to anyone facing persecution, from Burma to Zimbabwe ... human rights are universal."

So why, the newspaper asked, after refusing to attend an Africa-European Union summit in Portugal because Zimbabwean dictator Robert Mugabe will be there, does Mr. Brown want to be so hospitable to King Abdullah?

After all, according to Amnesty International: "Fear and secrecy permeate every aspect of life [in Saudi Arabia]. Every day, the most fundamental human rights of people in Saudi Arabia are being violated."

King Abdullah did not make himself welcome when, just before he left home, he gave the BBC an interview in which he berated the West for not doing enough to counter Islamic terrorists.

Al-Qaeda, he complained, remains a problem in his country and "it will take 20 to 30 years to defeat the scourge of terrorism." But in the same breath, he said most countries are not taking the issue seriously, "including, unfortunately, Great Britain."

Saudi King's Visit To U.K. Draws Fire; Critics denounce poor human rights record

He complained that Britain failed to act on previous Saudi warnings of possible terrorist attacks in Britain.

That is rich coming from the leader of the country that is the main exporter of Islamist extremism. Osama bin Laden is Saudi. Fifteen of the 19 terrorists who launched the Sept. 11, 2001, suicide attacks against the United States were Saudis. Saudi money, funnelled to madrassas in Afghanistan and Pakistan, supports the Taliban. Most of the foreign jihadists fighting in Iraq are Saudis.

Since ascending the throne in August, 2005, following the death of his half-brother former king Fahd, King Abdullah has embraced a program of gradual reform and political caution. He walks a tightrope between reassuring the West and retaining the support of domestic religious leaders. The result is a series of mixed signals.

While chipping away at the influence of the Wahabbist religious establishment, King Abdullah has unveiled plans for a transformation of Saudi Arabia's judicial system and encouraged education reforms.

Considered the most open of his 42 brothers, he seeks to showcase modernization in Saudi Arabia through massive new construction projects. Last week he unveiled plans for a US\$10-billion King Abdullah University of Science and Technology. It will be a modern co-educational institution in a country where <u>women</u> cannot vote or drive or receive life-saving surgery without a man's permission.

Even with one-quarter of the world's proven oil reserves and record-high oil prices, the Saudi economy is struggling to absorb millions of young people entering the job market. Forty per cent of the population is under 15 and unemployment is around 30% for men and 90% for **women**.

As a result, the King has vowed to spend hundreds of billions on roads, railways, water, sewage and electricity plants. The King also supports privatization programs, foreign direct investment and limited tourism.

Still, he remains an enigmatic ally. He has denounced the U.S. presence in Iraq as an "illegal foreign occupation." He has worked with Iran to ease Sunni and Shiite tensions in Lebanon and seeks common ground with <u>Hezbollah</u> and Hamas.

Writing last year in the magazine Foreign Affairs, Rachel Bronson and Isobel Coleman of the Council on Foreign Relations argued King Abdullah is an old man working to deadline.

"King Abdullah is neither a radical nor a revolutionary," they wrote.

"But it is up to him to push the country far enough ahead during his reign that it will have no choice but to move forward with reforms once he is gone. And time is already running out."

THE SAUDI VISIT IN NUMBERS:

King Abdullah arrives for a three-day visit to Britain:

13

The number of members of the Saudi royal family accompanying King Abdullah on his first state visit to the U.K., and who are staying at Buckingham Palace.

5,000

The total number of family members in the House of Saud.

20

The number of years since the last Saudi Arabian state visit to the U.K.

Saudi King's Visit To U.K. Draws Fire; Critics denounce poor human rights record

The number of planes thought to have landed at Heathrow carrying King Abdullah and his entourage yesterday.

23

The people in his all-male official entourage who came to the U.K., including senior ministers and advisors.

200+

The number of cooks, maids, barbers, doctors, nurses and security officials attending to the King during his trip.

2

The banquets he will attend during his three-night visit.

200

The people attending the state banquet tomorrow, including all senior members of the British royal family.

30

The number of wives King Abdullah is said to have married over his lifetime. It is thought he keeps around four wives at a time.

13

The number of people expected at a protest today against the visit and Saudi Arabia's human rights record.

Source: The Daily Telegraph

pgoodspeed@nationalpost.com

Graphic

Black & White Photo:; (See hardcopy for Photo Description);

Black & White Photo: Dylan Martinez, Reuters; Prince Charles greets Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah upon his arrival at Heathrow airport in west London yesterday.;

Black & White Photo:; (See hardcopy for Photo Description);

Load-Date: October 30, 2007



'Rights are for individuals, not religions or beliefs'

The Times (London)

March 12, 2008, Wednesday

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Section: FEATURES; Times2; Pg. 11

Length: 1063 words **Byline:** Juliet Rix

Body

Maryam Namazie, head of the Council of Ex-Muslims in Britain, tells JULIET RIX why it's time to take a stand against Islam and Sharia Picture this, says Maryam Namazie: "A child is swathed in cloth from head to toe every day. Everything but her face and hands are covered for fear that a man might find her attractive. At school she learns that she is worth less than a boy. She is not allowed to dance or swim or feel the sun on her skin or the wind in her hair. This is clearly unacceptable, yet it is accepted when it is done in the name of religion."

Namazie is the founder of the Council of Ex-Muslims in Britain (CEMB) which started life in the middle of last year. On Monday -in celebration of the centenary of International <u>Women</u>'s Day -she spoke at a conference on Political Islam and **Women**'s Rights, and launched a campaign against Sharia.

Iranian Muslim by birth, Namazie, 41, is friendly and softly spoken. But she does not mince her words. It takes nerve to start an organisation for people who have rejected Islam. In Islamic law, apostasy is punishable by death. Namazie receives periodic threats, usually on her mobile phone: "One said, 'You are going to be decapitated'...I went to the police. They were very attentive at first because they thought it might be linked to the attempted bombings in Glasgow. But when they realised it wasn't, they never bothered contacting me again." Doesn't she worry about her safety? "Yes, I do, frequently. I worry about whether I will live, especially now I am a mother. If I see someone looking at me strangely, I wonder." Why doesn't she use a pseudonym? "They can find out who you are anyway. And the point of the Council of Ex-Muslims is to stand up and be counted." She doesn't really like the label exMuslim and would prefer not to frame her identity in religious terms but, she says, it is like gays "coming out" 30 years ago: something has to become public if you are to break taboos. The CEMB has more than 100 members with inquiries from people who do not dare to join. "Some have horrendous stories but do not put them on the website because they are afraid."

Namazie's grandfather was a mullah and her father was brought up a strict Muslim. Both of her parents (now living in America) remain Muslim. When Namazie told her father about the launch of the CEMB, she remembers that he said: "Oh no, Grandpa is going to be turning in his grave." "So I told him that what I am doing benefits Muslims, too, because if you live in a secular society, you can be a Muslim, a Sikh, a Christian or an atheist and be treated equally." Namazie's opposition to state religion is informed by her own experience. She was 12 when the Iranian revolution "was hijacked by the Ayatollahs" and her country became the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"I had never worn the veil and was at a mixed school. Suddenly a strange man appeared in the playground. He was bearded and had been sent to separate the sexes -but we ran circles round him." She can still picture, too, the face of "the *Hezbollah*" who stopped her in the street because her head was uncovered. "I was 12 or 13. It was really

scary." Worse happened to others: "There were beatings and acid was thrown in <u>women</u>'s faces, and there were executions on elevision every day," she says. Then her school was closed "for Islamicisation".

Namazie and her mother left for India. They lived in a B&B in Delhi and Namazie attended the British School while her father and three-year-old sister remained in Tehran. This was meant to be a temporary measure, but soon her father -a journalist -decided that they all had to leave. The family spent a year in Bournemouth before travelling to the US where, when Namazie was 17, they were granted residency.

At university, she joined the United Nations Development Programme and went to work with Ethiopian refugees in Sudan. "Six months after I arrived Sudan became an Islamic state. I was, like, this is following me around!" Along with others, Namazie started an unofficial human rights organisation, gathering information on the government. The Sudanese security service called her in for questioning. "I wasn't very respectful and the UN guy who came with me said, 'No wonder your parents took you out of Iran'. The Sudanese guy threatened me, saying, 'you don't know what will happen to you. You might have a motorbike accident or something'." The UN quietly put her on a plane home.

This was a turning point, shifting her from non-practising Muslim to atheist. Two decades on, she is devoting her life to opposing religious power. She is in the midst of organising the first international conference of Ex-Muslims, to be held in London on October 10. And she is about to launch a "no Sharia" campaign.

She must have been shocked, I suggest, when the Archbishop of Canterbury said the introduction of some Sharia in Britain was unavoidable. No, she says; she wasn't even surprised. "It was quite apt, although he didn't expect the reaction he got. It was an attack on secularism really. It is, in a sense, to his benefit if there are Muslim schools and Sharia. It makes it less likely that anyone will oppose Christian schools and the privileged place of religion in society."

She is adamant, though, that no form of Sharia should be allowed here. "It is fundamentally discriminatory and misogynist," she says and is dismissive of the idea that people would be able to choose between Sharia and civil jurisdiction. <u>Women</u> could be railroaded into a Sharia court, she says. "This would hit people who need the protection of British law more than anyone else."

She believes that we are confused about the meaning of human rights. "Rights are for individuals, not for religions or beliefs. 'Every human is equal' does not mean that every belief is equal." Islamists portray themselves as victims, she says, and policymakers have bought into this. Namazie says that the Muslim Council of Britain should not be seen as representative of British Muslims but would nonetheless welcome any opportunities to debate with it. "Ex-Muslims are in a good position to challenge political Islam," she says. "We must not let little girls or anyone else lose their human rights. We can't tolerate the intolerable for any reason -including religion."

Council of Ex-Muslims in Britain www.ex-muslim.org.uk <u>exmuslimcouncil@googlemail.com;</u> 07719-166731; <u>www.maryamnamazie.com</u>

Load-Date: March 12, 2008



There is no defence against these children of death

The Times (London)
October 8, 2007, Monday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 19

Length: 996 words **Byline:** Robert Baer

Body

Robert Baer Face to face with the first of the remote-controlled human bombs

We are deep inside intelligence headquarters in Kabul. On the faded sofa opposite is an extraordinary new weapon -a 17-year-old Pakistani peasant boy called Farman Ullah. He is the world's first remotely detonated human bomb.

Farman is from the wilds of northern Pakistan and his mission was to blow up and kill the pro-Western Governor of Jalabad, an important Afghan city close to the Pakistan frontier. "Even before you blow yourself up, virgins come to the site of the explosion and wait to take you to Paradise," he says, parroting the propaganda he learnt from his Taleban indoctrinators.

The attack failed and Farman and another 17-year-old accomplice, Abdul Quboshi, were captured. But Farman's fanatic certainty about his scheduled appointment with the virgins of Paradise was not enough for his Taleban trainers. Attached to Farman's suicide bomb vest was a radio transmitter. If Farman's nerve failed or something went wrong, Abdul Quboshi's job was to press the detonator. As Farman told me: "The Taleban said God himself would ignite the vest. I did not have to do anything."

Farman may have thought God was taking him to Paradise but the real initiator was almost certainly a high-frequency radio signal.

Farman wanted to blow people up. He was a willing killer. But he was also a victim of the cult of the suicide bomber. Both he and Abdul were schoolboys, innocents, who for a thin dream of glory volunteered to fight and die in a holy war, a jihad.

Farman could not read the Koran and when I asked him he had no idea where Iraq was, or Palestine, though he did tell me that President Musharraf of Pakistan was "a Jew".

When I asked Farman why he wanted to kill the Governor he said "because he was an infidel and worked with the Americans". That was justification enough for the Governor to die. Farman believed that Afghanistan had been invaded by Christian foreigners who were raping Muslim <u>women</u> and killing innocent Muslims.

This deadly, vengeful child is every Western intelligence chief's ultimate nightmare. A programmed human bomb that cannot be reasoned with. And against whom there is little real defence. The suicide bomber. But a weapon that we must find some way to neutralise.

There is no defence against these children of death

I used to work for the CIA in the Middle East. In the CIA I saw terrible things but Farman's indoctrination was a new twist in the depths of human depravity; recruiting an ignorant child for his own remotely-controlled death. In the CIA my job was to stop terrorist organisations from attacking the United States and its interests. I used to recruit agents inside those terrorist organisations to gain intelligence.

And I know personally about the cost of intelligence failures. Six of my CIA colleagues died in the first suicide-bomb attack on a Western target in the bombing of our Beirut embassy in April 1983.

I've left the CIA but for the past three years I've gone back on the intelligence trail to investigate the cult of the suicide bomber. That journey has taken me through Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and on to the grim back streets of Leeds, where the suicide bombers of July 7, 2005, came from. Along the way I have interviewed dozens of members of Hamas, *Hezbollah*, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, Western intelligence chiefs and failed suicide bombers and their families.

The lessons learnt are complex but there is an answer. The cult of the suicide bomber will burn itself out. This cult of death will one day burn itself out and perish from the face of the earth.

But we will not defeat that cult by intelligence or military means alone. It is simply impossible. Across the Islamic world, even through the internet in some British Asian teenager's bedroom, it is all too easy to join the cult of the bomber. You don't need a gun or an RPG, just a keyboard and an ISP connection.

Within minutes you can be electronically downloading the poisonous propaganda that Farman was inculcated with by his Taleban controllers in the lawless border regions of Waziristan. You can share beheading video files with your new internet friends. And listen to Osama bin Laden's warped interpretation of the Koran that portrays the West as an aggressor and calls upon all Muslims to join in a "defensive jihad" to protect Muslim lands against Crusader invaders.

To stop suicide bombing we must first recognise the kind of war we are facing.

This is a war of belief, of ideology. The key concept in suicide bombing is not martyrdom but this notion of jihad -of what constitutes a righteous holy war. In the Koran there are many different interpretations of jihad, some personal and some charitable -alms to the poor. But bin Laden and the Taleban rely upon just one Koranic verse that declares jihad a religious obligation on all Muslims if another Muslim land has been invaded.

For this "defensive jihad" to work the West must be clearly identified as the aggressor. In this warped morality the 7/7 attacks are a justifiable act of war in revenge for the invasion of Iraq.

Bin Laden's world view is false. And there are many, many Islamic scholars who disagree with his theology and the killing of civilians. And it is obvious that the vast majority of the Muslim faith reject the cult of the suicide bomber. But it is that silent army of fathers, brothers, sisters and mothers who are the only real weapon against another generation of Farmans. It is only when this majority engages in a counter-ideological war that suicide bombing will finally die out. As one former Mujahidin commander told me: "You cannot make Allah happy by killing civilians."

But this is an ideological battle that will be won, or lost, at the local mosque, at the family dinner table or between friends across the Islamic world. Suicide bombing will be defeated not by a gun or a fancy scanner but by the religious principles of Koran itself.

Robert Baer's Cult of the Suicide Bomber is broadcast tonight on Channel 4 at 8pm

Load-Date: October 8, 2007



<u>'Enigmatic, intricate, unpredictable'; Far from a dictatorship united in belligerence, Iran is a bubbling social and political cauldron - Correction Appended</u>

The Toronto Star

July 13, 2008 Sunday

Correction Appended

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A12

Length: 985 words

Byline: Olivia Ward, Toronto Star

Body

Missiles rising in an ominous trail of smoke, a nuclear program that won't quit, the belligerent threats of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. These are the public images of Iran that rattle Western nerves and shake the global oil market.

But those who know Iran well say bellicose gestures are only a small part of a much more complex picture - one in which highly educated students challenge the mullahs, plastic surgery is a growth industry and the revolution that most attracts the young is sexual.

Peek beneath the clouded surface of the conservative clerical regime, they say, and dozens of streams of thought will surge into view, many of them surprising to outsiders.

And they point out that, from Iran's point of view, Wednesday's publicly provocative test firing of powerful new ballistic missiles was a poorly calculated (and partly faked) show of force by a government under pressure from without and within.

"Iranians have not learned how to address the international community and its concerns," says Houchang Hassan-Yari, a professor of international relations at the Royal Military College of Canada.

"Instead, they are playing a very raw diplomatic game."

Iran's nuclear ambitions - which Tehran insists are peaceful - have brought threats of tougher sanctions from Washington and a warning that Israel is "not afraid to take action when its vital security interests are at stake."

Iran's support for the Lebanese Islamist group <u>Hezbollah</u>, Palestinian Hamas militants and Iraq's violent Shiite Mahdi Army has also stoked the instability of a region already smouldering.

But far from a dictatorship united under a banner of belligerence, Iran is "bewildering, enigmatic, incongruent, intricate, ironic, multi-dimensional and unpredictable" in a way that often baffles its own people, says Mehrzad Boroujerdi, director of Middle Eastern Studies at Syracuse University in New York.

'Enigmatic, intricate, unpredictable' Far from a dictatorship united in belligerence, Iran is a bubbling social and political cauldron

Small wonder it is so badly understood in the West.

"There is such an amazing mismatch between what the government preaches and what goes on in the privacy of people's homes that it's mind-boggling," says Boroujerdi. "It's a duality of character that people have grown accustomed to."

Iran elects its president and parliament but is actually controlled by a confusing array of unelected bodies that decide who is allowed to run and how policy is made - placing most of the authority in the hands of the ruling clergy and making it impossible to vote the regime out of power.

Three decades after the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's Islamic revolution, Iran's supreme leader is still a religious figure, supported by a powerful Republican Guard that enforces the regime's ideology and has spread its tentacles into the economy and the contentious nuclear program.

"From its inception, the Islamic Republic was a state divided between competing centres of power and profoundly differing conceptions of political authority," writes author Ray Takeyh in Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic. "Iran today is a nation in search of an identity, a state that oscillates between promises of democratic modernity and retrogressive tradition."

While the religious police make life uncomfortable for people who want to lead secular lives - fining them for "immodest" dress, imprisoning them for "un-Islamic behaviour" - they have not managed to hold back the tide of globalization.

With its 70 million population largely well educated and under 30, Iran can't shut out global cultural, technological and political influences. In spite of censorship, the Internet has opened up expanding possibilities, and a lively black market trade in DVDs gives a glimpse of the latest Western movies, while satellite television is a window on international politics and lifestyles.

Ubiquitous cellphones allow text-message romances and furtive dates behind closed doors. And even in public, many young <u>women</u> have abandoned flowing chadors for body-hugging styles, spike heels and colourful headscarves over fashionably streaked hair.

The tentative opening of Iranian society comes at a price. Those who flout the rules know they could be arrested, beaten, tortured and sentenced to prison terms at the whim of the religious police.

"Students have a history of political action," says Mori Abdolalian, an exiled Iranian journalist who lives in Toronto. "There is a lot of unrest now. There are daily arrests of students who protest, and young <u>women</u> as well as men are supporting the protests."

Abdolalian, who monitors the Iranian media, says <u>women</u> activists are especially at risk of being targeted by the authorities and jailed, as happened with Canadian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi, who died in detention five years ago.

Inflation has also fuelled unrest, topping 20 per cent. As it eats up the benefits of spiking oil prices in energy-rich Iran, low-paid teachers and other workers are joining the protests, demanding more rights and higher wages.

"Iran isn't short of cash, but worldwide prices are going up," says economist Akbar Torbat of California State University, Dominguez Hills. "It has to import and pay higher prices, like other countries. But there is also political discontent. People think the elected president and parliament should have power, not unelected bodies."

As unrest builds, so does pressure on the regime.

Says Abdolalian: "When people are young, educated and urban, they expect more of their government. In Iran, all three trends are taking place simultaneously."

Page 3 of 3

'Enigmatic, intricate, unpredictable' Far from a dictatorship united in belligerence, Iran is a bubbling social and political cauldron

But he adds that the West should be wary of promoting an aggressive regime change in Tehran, a tactic likely to backfire.

"Iranians are in a predicament," concludes Abdolalian. "They don't want another revolution, but they don't want an attack.

"After 30 years of ups and downs, people may not like the government, but they're looking for some harmony in their lives. That means dealing with the devil you know instead of experimenting with the one you don't."

Correction

Some quotes in a July 13 analysis article about Iran were incorrectly attributed. Mehrzad Boroujerdi, director of Middle Eastern Studies at Syracuse University (not Mori Abdolalian, an exiled Iranian journalist who lives in Toronto) said: "When people are young, educated and urban, they expect more of their government ..." adding that the West should be wary of promoting an aggressive regime change in Tehran, a tactic likely to backfire. Boroujerdi (not Abdolalian) also said, "Iranians are in a predicament. They don't want another revolution, but they don't want an attack."

Correction-Date: July 15, 2008

Graphic

Reuters Photo Iranian religious police shut down this Tehran barbershop last month for giving Western-style haircuts to its youthful clientele.

Load-Date: July 19, 2008