

Date and Time: Saturday, May 4, 2024 2:44:00AM EEST

Job Number: 223498982

Documents (100)

1. Beware the 'moderate' Taliban; Governments must be careful about turning over territory to extremists

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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2. Handing Valley to Taliban wrong

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

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3. Life lessons for Lebanon 's children

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

4. Free elect ions in Iran 4 Don't make me laugh LEADER

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

5. Free elect ions in Iran 4 Don't make me laugh LEADER

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Dec 31, 2009

6. NEW ROCKET ATTACKS FUEL ISRAELI WARNING

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

7. From Iran 's hard-liners, tough talk - but pragmatism as well

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

8. Faith in arms

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

9. World journal

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

10. Off Piste - Digging deeper

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

11. Turkey: Retired military prosecutor calls for probe into suspicious suicides

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

12. Israel probes possible abduction of soldier

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

13. Mideast dream needs more than eloquence

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Dec 31, 2009

14. New development in Schalit case is small but important step, says Peres. French ambassador pledges to work for soldier's release and 'move quickly' on Iran sanctions

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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15. OFW protection up in talks

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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16. Guardian Weekly: UK news: News in brief

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

17. Hamas: Swap of Schalit video for 20 women prisoners is first phase of an exchange agreement. Tape to be handed over Friday * Germans and Egyptians broker deal to provide Israel with 'updated and unequivocal proof' of Schalit's well-being * First release of Palestinian prisoners since Netanyahu became PM

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

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

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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19. Time to sup with the 'devil'

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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20. The 'Harem Revolution'

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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21. WOMEN DESERVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

22. Lebanese Parliament lowers voting age to 18, delays other legislation

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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23. World Report

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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24. There's more anti-Christian hate speech around

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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25. Obama appeals for fresh start between US and Muslims

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009



26. <u>Mideast gets mediator in the form of an ex-spy Former British agent uses backdoor meetings to reach out to</u> *Islamists*

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

27. Obama stands idly by while Iranians fight for liberty

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

28. Obama is all for hope and change But apparently, not for Iranians

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

29. Lebanon 's power-distribution method 'inherently discriminatory' - US report

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

30. Khatami is just as rigid as the rest

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

31. Angry over Gaza, Turkey storms out of Davos forum



Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

32. Worldview: Debacle in Davos: Turkey storms out

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

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33. Home truths about Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

34. Thousands gather in Beirut to honor Hariri

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

35. Lebanon honors Hariri four years after murder

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

36. <u>Israel and Hamas deal: 20 prisoners for a video of Shalit Israel has agreed to release 20 female Palestinian</u> prisoners in exchange for a video of Cpl. Gilad Shalit, who is being held in Gaza.

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

37. UN Ambassador calls Palestinian Solidarity Day 'one- sided narrative'

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

38. The week in blood

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

39. Elections still a display of democracy other countries dream of

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

40. March 14 Forces court voters with promises of reform

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

41. TV series strives to topple sectarian, ethnic animosity

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

42. Former Iranian president attacked at rally

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

43. Terror trial suspect is described as 'a pleasant, quiet man'

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

44. Barak to Rabin camp: We're carrying on in his tradition

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

45. Of limits and Ahmadinejad

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

46. Lebanon capital of Mideast Fashion

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

47. British criticism of Israel is nothing special

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

48. Britain expels two Iranian diplomats in tit-for-tat response

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

49. Most Israelis distrust Palestinian intentions and international security guarantees, survey finds

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

50. How Turkey was lost

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

51. <u>Amnesty urges arms embargo against Israel</u>, <u>Palestinians. Israel</u>: <u>Report is a 'tendentious description of</u> reality that doesn't rest on objective and professional criteria'

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

52. Canada's Mideast conflict Minister's threat crosses the line into wedge politics

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

53. We may have to ignore deadline to halt al-Qaeda terror, general warns Iraq

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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54. We may have to ignore deadline to halt al-Qaeda terror, general warns Iraq

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Dec 31, 2009

55. Wildcard in Iran election: Obama

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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56. Videos of explosions and assassinations of soldiers shown at trial

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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57. Pakistan: Israel, Hamas inch towards prisoner exchange



Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

58. Reform from the bottom: How judiciary, civil society can loosen the sectarian grip from Lebanese citizens

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

59. LTTE propaganda machine worming into Aussie Parliament

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

60. REFORMISTS ARE KEY IN IRANIAN ELECTIONS AHMADINEJAD FACES CHALLENGE TODAY

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

61. Iran appoints bombing suspect as defence minister

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

62. IRELAND TRAVEL UPDATE

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

63. Lebanon: Hariri makes statement following three-day parliamentary session on Thursday

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

64. Ex-Spy Turned Negotiator Sits Down With Islamists and the West

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

65. OTHER VIEWS

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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66. An ex-British spy turns to mediation in Mideast

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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67. Ex-spy turns Mideast mediator Former British agent uses backdoor meetings to reach out to Islamists

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

68. The War on Terror goes on, whatever we call it Binyam Mohamed may have been maltreated, but that doesn't mean that the threat from Islamic theocracies is not real

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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69. Iranian vote offers glimmers of hope

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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70. Poland 's hooligans export violence

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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71. Police 'found bomb-making videos on computer'

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

72. Who was really cheated in Iran 's vote? Women.

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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73. Israel blasted over drone strikes on Gaza civilians

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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74. Tehran opposition takes to streets

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

75. WORLD DIGEST

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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76. The Saudis are ready for peace - right after pigs fly

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

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77. Israel blasted over drone strikes on Gaza civilians

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009



78. Around the world: Journalists given 12 years in secretive North Korean trial

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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79. Israel, Hamas inch toward prisoner swap deal

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

80. Peres proves a hit in Azerbaijan

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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81. Radically new strategy needed for deeply troubled region

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

82. A Hamas victory in 2010?

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

83. The option no one wants to think about

Client/Matter: -None-



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

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84. Goldstone's sorry search for symmetry

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

85. Princes and Imams

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

86. Intolerance on the Temple Mount

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

87. Obama gives hope for a final peace

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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88. German Mediator In Gaza For Prisoner Exchange Negotiations

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

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89. World - World in brief

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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90. Lebanese critics blast Israel director's " Lebanon "

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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91. Obama's challenge after tainted Iran election

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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Dec 31, 2009

92. IDF dismisses 'unreliable' claims that soldiers killed Gaza civilians. Human Rights Watch report quotes
Palestinians as saying army killed 11 people waving white flags

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

93. <u>Iran: root of ME terrorism Guest columnist Arnold Roth rebuts Gwynne Dyer's comparision of Israeli and South Korean reactions to the threat of nuclear attack, published in yesterday's Kalgoorlie Miner.</u>

Client/Matter: -None-

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

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

94. The politics of War

Client/Matter: -None-

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

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

95. Feature - As we revert from denial to harsh reality The bold campaign against injustice may yet be won,

observes Jeremy Corbyn

Client/Matter: -None-

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

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

96. Stunning campaign performance could give Livni her turn in power

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

97. Women candidates sidelined in Lebanon vote

Client/Matter: -None-

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

98. Stunning campaign performance could give Livni her turn in power - DEADLOCK IN ISRAEL

Client/Matter: -None-

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

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009

99. Mayhem in Bangkok

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

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100. Female candidates sidelined in Lebanon vote

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

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

Dec 31, 2009



Beware the 'moderate' Taliban; Governments must be careful about turning over territory to extremists

The Gazette (Montreal)

March 11, 2009 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL / OP-ED; Pg. A17; CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Length: 1071 words

Byline: CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS, Freelance

Body

A whole new fashion is suddenly upon us. If only, in the confrontation with reactionary Islamism, we could separate the moderate extremists from the really extreme extremists.

In the last few days, we have heard President Barack Obama musing about a distinction between good and bad Taliban, the British government insisting on a difference between <u>Hezbollah</u> the political party and <u>Hezbollah</u> the militia, and Fareed Zakaria saying that the best way of stopping the militants might be to allow them to run things in their own way, since an appetite for the imposition of sharia does not equate to a thirst for global jihad and might even partially slake that thirst.

It would be foolish to doubt that there is some case to be made for this: The Karzai government in Afghanistan has been making a distinction between the "Mullah Omar" madmen and the merely localized Taliban for some time, offering various sorts of guarantees and accommodation to the former. In Lebanon anyway, *Hezbollah* takes part in elections and so far abides by the results (also serving as a proxy for possible future talks with Iran). In Iraq, the initial success of the counter-Al-Qa'ida insurgency depended on the suborning and recruitment of other Sunni insurgents who were hostile to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Osama bin Laden.

One of the many reasons that I have always opposed the use of torture and other extra-legal methods is that such conduct destroys the possibility of "turning" certain kinds of Islamic militants and making potential allies of them.

However, one should be careful of the seductions of this compromise. In a wishful attempt to bring peace with the Taliban in Pakistan itself, the government has recently ceded a fertile and prosperous and modernized valley province - the former princedom of Swat - to the ultra-violent votaries of the one party and the one god. This is not some desolate tribal area where government and frontier have been poorly delineated for decades, as in Waziristan. It is a short commute from the capital city of Islamabad.

The Taliban have never won an election in the area; indeed, the last vote went exactly the other way. And refugees are pouring out of Swat as the fundamentalists take hold and begin their campaign of cultural and economic obliteration: no music, no schooling for *females*, no recognition of the writ of the central government.

According to this and other reports, the surrender of authority by the already crumbling Pakistani authorities has had an emboldening effect on the extremists rather than an appeasing one. The nominal interlocutor with whom the

Beware the 'moderate' Taliban; Governments must be careful about turning over territory to extremists

deal was signed, Maulana Sufi Muhammad, is related by clan and ideology to much fiercer and younger figures, including those suspected in the murder of Benazir Bhutto, in the burning of hundreds of girls' schools, in the killing of Pakistani soldiers and in the slaughter of local tribal leaders who have resisted Taliban rule.

Numberless witnesses attest that the militants show not the smallest intention of abiding by the terms of the so-called "truce." Instead of purchasing peace, the Pakistani government has surrendered part of its heartland without a fight to those who can and will convert it into a base for further and more exorbitant demands. This is not even a postponement of the coming nightmare, which is the utter disintegration of Pakistan as a state. It is a stage in that disintegration.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, where many very hard-line Muslims take the side of the elected governments against the nihilists, there is also a determined NATO or coalition presence that can bring firepower to bear as part of the argument. This was the necessary if not sufficient condition for the "awakening" movements on which U.S. General David Petraeus relied and still relies. But even in default of that factor, the handing over of large swaths of sovereign and strategic territory to the enemy was never a part of any such plan, and it would have been calamitous if it had been.

Fareed Zakaria makes the perfectly good observation in his Newsweek essay Learning to Live with Radical Islam that no Afghans have been found among the transnational terrorist groups that apparently most concern us. (He's righter than he knows: It's more likely now that a wanted would-be hijacker would be a British citizen than an Afghan one.)

However, this can easily decay into being a distinction without a difference. What the Afghan fundamentalists did do when they were in power was offer their country as a safe haven to Al-Qa'ida and give it a hinterland that included the ability to issue passports, make use of an airport, and so forth. Comparable facilities will now become available, much nearer to the centre of things, in a formerly civilized province of the U.S. ally Pakistan. This is incredible.

There is another symbiosis between state failure of that kind and the spread of deadly violence. A state or region taken over by jihadists will not last long before declining into extreme poverty and backwardness and savagery. There are no exceptions to this rule. We do not need to demonstrate again what happens to countries where vicious fantasists try to govern illiterates with the help of only one book.

And who will be blamed for the failure? There will not, let me assure you, be a self-criticism session mounted by the responsible mullahs. Instead, all ills will be blamed on the Crusader-Zionist conspiracy, and young men with deficiency diseases and learning disabilities will be taught how to export their frustrations to happier lands.

Thus does the failed state become the rogue state. This is why we have a duty of solidarity with all the secular forces, **women**'s groups and other constituencies who don't want this to happen to their societies or to ours.

By all means, let field commanders make tactical agreements with discrepant groups, play them off against one another, employ the methods of divide and rule, and pit the bad against the worst. C'est la guerre. But under no circumstances should a monopoly of violence be ceded to totalitarian or theocratic forces.

For this and for other reasons, we shall long have cause to regret the shameful decision to deliver the good people of the Swat Valley bound and gagged into the hands of the Taliban, and - worst of all- without even a struggle.

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair and Slate Magazine (<u>www.slate.com</u>), where this column originally appeared.

Graphic

Photo: MOHAMMAD SHOIAB, REUTERS; A former Taliban fighter displays his weapon in Herat, Afghanistan.;

Beware the 'moderate' Taliban; Governments must be careful about turning over territory to extremists

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Handing Valley to Taliban wrong

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

March 12, 2009 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: Q: QUERIES - QUIBBLES - QUIRKS; Pg. A17; Christopher Hitchens

Length: 1030 words

Byline: Christopher Hitchens, For The Calgary Herald

Body

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the militia, and Fareed Zakaria saying that the best way of stopping the militants may be to allow them to run things in their own way, since an appetite for the imposition of sharia does not equate to a thirst for global jihad and may partially slake that thirst.

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Handing Valley to Taliban wrong

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Hitchens Is A Columnist For Vanity Fair And Slate Magazine (<u>www.slate.com</u>), Where This Column Originally Appeared.

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Life lessons for Lebanon's children

Christian Science Monitor August 23, 2009, Sunday

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Section: World; Pg. 8 Length: 1119 words

Byline: Nicholas Blanford Correspondent

Dateline: Joun, Southern Lebanon

Body

Some Lebanese, especially those with a sense of irony, like to share an American traveler's impressions of their homeland on the eastern Mediterranean:

William Thomson noted that Lebanon's religions and sects - there are 18 recognized ones in a country smaller than Connecticut - share a country but little fraternal feeling.

Of the Muslim sects, he wrote, the Sunnis "excommunicate" the Shiites, "both hate" the Druze, and all three "detest" the Alawites. As for the Christians, "the Maronites have no particular love for anybody and, in turn, are disliked by all." The Greek Orthodox "cannot endure" the Greek Catholics, and "all despise the Jews."

"They can never form one united people ... and will therefore remain weak, incapable of self-government, and exposed to the ... oppressions of foreigners," Mr. Thomson concluded.

Thomson's comments could be those of a contemporary observation. But he wrote them in 1870 in "The Land and the Book," an account of his travels as a missionary in the Levant.

Breaking such deeply embedded and historical suspicions is no easy task, but one nongovernmental organization (NGO) is turning to Lebanese schools in a grass-roots approach to promote a culture of problem solving and tolerance in the classroom.

Search for Common Ground (SFCG), an international NGO specializing in conflict resolution, has launched a nationwide initiative to train schoolteachers in techniques to mediate and resolve classroom disputes among Lebanese youths.

"The idea is to institutionalize listening and problem solving among 8- and 14-year-olds in the schools," says Sarah Shouman, SFCG's country director for Lebanon.

Lebanese youths argue and fight over childish issues much the same as other young people all over the world. Additionally, however, the political and religious prejudices of their parents can seep onto the playground, particularly at times of heightened internal tension, perpetuating the legacy of communal mistrust.

Even *Hezbollah* participates

Life lessons for Lebanon 's children

SFCG's pilot project focuses on seven schools, three private and four public, in cities as well as rural regions. One of them, in Akkar Province in north Lebanon, is a private Greek Orthodox establishment with priests as teachers. Another is a mainly Shiite school in Baalbek in the Bekaa Valley run by the militant <u>Hezbollah</u> organization.

<u>Hezbollah</u>, which runs a vast social-welfare network in Lebanon but is better known for its military exploits against Israel, initially was wary of submitting its teachers for training by a foreign NGO with offices in Washington and Brussels.

"They took a month to think about it," says Ms. Shouman. "But afterward, they were so happy with the experience that they want us to train teachers at all their schools - and they are willing to pay for it, too."

The trainers, from Lebanese civil society groups and from groups linked to the SFCG project, are from as religiously and politically diverse backgrounds as the schools to which they are sent. Training was carried out in Cyprus by Valerie Dovey, a South African peace educator who worked in postapartheid South Africa.

"The way we all communicated with each other was very nice," says Noha Chahine, a trainer who is a teacher at a Beirut school. "It was challenging, but it showed that we all have a common goal despite our different backgrounds."

On a recent morning, Ms. Chahine and her fellow trainer, Tarek Abu ZeinÂ-Â-ab, held a session for eight <u>women</u> teachers at the public school in Joun, a village with a mixed Shiite and Christian population. It's surrounded by olive groves on rolling chalky hills near the port of Sidon. The school has some 200 5-to-13-year-olds.

The women - Shiites and ChrisÂ-tians, reflecting the village - sat attentively at their pupils' desks.

"One form of expression is art or drawing, which children can use to express peace or conflict," says Chahine. "Art helps break the ice between students. A way of reducing anger is to let them draw."

Much of the instruction is rooted in common sense and good manners, such as listening to others and accepting differences. When the teachers break into chatter, the burly, goateed Mr. Abu Zeinab stands at the head of the class with his arm raised, his fist clenched. Slowly, the **women** stop talking and look up.

"You see? A way of getting children to stop talking is to stand and raise your hand," Abu Zeinab says. "If you scream at children, you achieve nothing but create a climate of conflict."

The <u>women</u> are asked to break into two groups and draw something that makes them happy. All sketch themselves with their husbands and children. One woman in a full-length black chador depicts her family as stars that she gazes at from the beach. Another draws her family eating lunch together. Another has her family walking through trees, expressing her love for a clean environment.

Abu Zeinab asks them to explain their pictures, reminding them to speak clearly and maintain eye contact. Such skills would be taken for granted in the West, but educational training remains underfunded here.

"We have a lot of conflicts because we suffer from social and economic problems here," says Hanna Haidar, a trainee who teaches English at the school. "But I am learning many things ... which will be helpful to us."

Hopes to expand the program

If the pilot program proves successful, SFCG hopes to expand it to another 100 schools in the next three years. The NGO also produces a children's TV program called "Kilna Bil Hayy" ("All of Us in the Neighborhood") in which six children - an Armenian, Christian, Druze, Palestinian, Shiite, and Sunni - live in the same apartment building. Broadcast by Lebanon's LBC International channel, the show teaches children to embrace their unity and accept their differences.

While Lebanon has been fairly calm since 1990, when the 16-year civil war ended, a durable peace remains susceptible to sectarian divisions, disparities between rich and poor, external meddling, and factionalism.

Life lessons for Lebanon 's children

In May last year, Lebanon teetered on the edge of civil conflict once more during street fighting that pitted Shiite factions against Sunnis and Druze. While peaceful parliamentary elections were held in June, forming a coalition government has been stymied by political squabbles.

"Politics here tends to be divided between anti-West and pro-West, and unfortunately, politicians have Â-cemented those divisions in Lebanon," says Abu Zeinab, who has several years of experience in Lebanese civil society groups.

"That's why this type of project is very important," he concludes. "It brings people from all over Lebanon together. What we teach to the schools is that you are all Lebanese and that you are all one."

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Free elect ions in Iran4 Don't make me laugh; LEADER

Sunday Express

June 21, 2009 Sunday

U.K. 1st Edition

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Section: LEADER; 47 Length: 998 words

Byline: Christopher Hitchens

Body

; OR A fl vour of the olitical atmosphere in Tehran last week, I quote from a young Iranian comrade who furnishes me with regular updates:

"I went to the last major [President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad rally and got the whiff of what I imagine fascism to have been all about. Lots of splotchy boys who can't get a date are given guns and told they're special."

It's hard to better this, either as an evocation of the rancid sexual repression that lies at the nasty core of the "Islamic republic" or as a description of the reserve strength that the Iranian parastate, or state within a state, can bring to bear if it ever feels itself even slightly challenged.

There is a theoretical reason why the events of the past month in Iran (I am sorry but I resolutely decline to refer to them as "elections") were a crudely stage-managed nsult to those who took part in them and those who observed them, and then there is a practical reason. The theoretical reason, though less immediately dramatic and exciting, is the much more interesting and important one.

Iran and its citizens are considered by the Shiite theocracy to be the private property of the anointed mullahs. This totalitarian idea was based on a piece of religious quackery promulgated by the late Ayatollah Khomeini and known as "velayat-e faqui". Under this edict, which originally put the clerics in charge of the lives and property of orphans, the indigent and the insane, the entire population is now declared to be a childlike ward of the black-robed state.

Thus any voting exercise is, by defi nition, over before it has begun because the all-powerful Islamic Guardian Council determines well in advance who may or may not "run". Any newspaper referring to the subsequent proceedings as an "election" (sometimes complete with "rallies", "polls", "counts" and all the rest of it) is the cause of helpless laughter among the ayatollahs ("They fell for it? It's too easy!").

Shame on all those media outlets that have been complicit in this dirty lie. Shame also on the pathetic US Secretary of State who said before the result that she hoped that "the genuine will and desire" of the people of Iran would be refl ected in the outcome. Surely she knows that any such contingency was deliberately forestalled to begin with.

In theory, the first-choice candidate of the ayatollahs might not actually "win" and there could even be divisions among the Islamic Guardian Council as to who constitutes the best nominee. Secondary as that is, it can still lead to rancour.

Free elect ions in Iran 4 Don't make me laugh LEADER

After all, corrupt systems are still subject to fraud. This like hypocrisy is the compliment that vice pays to virtue. Perhaps that explains the claims of vote rigging to keep the current president in office.

With near-incredible brutishness and cruelty, then, before the election the guardians moved to cut off mobile phone and text message networks and announced through their storm-troop "revolutionary guards" that only one form of voting had divine sanction. ("The miraculous hand of God, " announced Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, had been present in the polling places and had announced a result before many people had even fi nished voting. He says that sort of thing all the time.) Aside from the obvious evidence of fi xing, fraud and force, there is another reason to doubt that an erate fundamentalist like Ahmadinejad could have increased even a state-sponsored plebiscitetype majority. Everywhere else in the Muslim world, in every election in the past two years, the tendency has been the other way. In Morocco in 2007, the much-ballyhooed Justice and Development Party wound up with 14 per cent of the vote. In Malaysia and Indonesia, the predictions of increased market share for the pro-Sharia parties were likewise proved wrong.

In Iraq this last January, the local elections penalised the clerical parties that had been making life a misery in cities like Basra. In neighbouring Kuwait last month, the Islamist forces did poorly and four <u>women</u>, including the striking figure of Rola Dashti, who refuses to wear any headgear, were elected to the 50-member parliament.

Most important of all, perhaps, Iranian-sponsored <u>Hezbollah</u> was convincingly and unexpectedly defeated last week in Lebanon after an open and vigorous election, the results of which were not challenged by any party. From all I hear, if the Palestinians were to vote again this year, as they were supposed to do, it would be highly improbable that Hamas would win.

Yet somehow a senile and fanatical religious clique that has failed to condition the vote even in a country like Lebanon, where it has proxy and surrogate parties under arms, is able to reward itself by increasing its "majority" in a festering, bankrupt state where it controls the media and enjoys a monopoly of violence. I think we should deny it any offi cial recognition of this consolation. (new fi m by Cyrus Nowrasteh, The Stoning Of Soraya M, will soon show how those who dare to dissent in other ways are dealt with by Ahmadinejad's "grassroots" fanatics.) Mention of the Lebanese elections impels me to pass on what I saw at a recent <u>Hezbollah</u> rally in south Beirut, Lebanon. In a large hall that featured the offi cial attendance of a delegation from the Iranian Embassy, the most luridly displayed poster of the pro-Iranian party was a nuclear mushroom cloud! Underneath this telling symbol was a caption warning the "Zionists" of what lay in store.

We sometimes forget that Iran still offi cially denies any intention of acquiring nuclear weapons. Yet Ahmadinejad recently hailed an Iranian missile launch as a counterpart to Iran's success with nuclear centrifuges and <u>Hezbollah</u> has certainly formed the idea that Iranian reactors may have nonpeaceful applications. This means that the vicious manipulation by which the mullahs control Iran can no longer be considered their "internal affair". Fascism at home sooner or later means fascism abroad. Face it now or fight it later.

Meanwhile, give it its right name.

Graphic

OUTRAGE: Iran's disputed election result has lead to bloody protests in Tehran

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Free elect ions in Iran4 Don't make me laugh; LEADER

Sunday Express

June 21, 2009 Sunday

U.K. 1st Edition

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Section: LEADER; 47 Length: 998 words

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In Iraq this last January, the local elections penalised the clerical parties that had been making life a misery in cities like Basra. In neighbouring Kuwait last month, the Islamist forces did poorly and four <u>women</u>, including the striking figure of Rola Dashti, who refuses to wear any headgear, were elected to the 50-member parliament.

Most important of all, perhaps, Iranian-sponsored <u>Hezbollah</u> was convincingly and unexpectedly defeated last week in Lebanon after an open and vigorous election, the results of which were not challenged by any party. From all I hear, if the Palestinians were to vote again this year, as they were supposed to do, it would be highly improbable that Hamas would win.

Yet somehow a senile and fanatical religious clique that has failed to condition the vote even in a country like Lebanon, where it has proxy and surrogate parties under arms, is able to reward itself by increasing its "majority" in a festering, bankrupt state where it controls the media and enjoys a monopoly of violence. I think we should deny it any offi cial recognition of this consolation. (new fi m by Cyrus Nowrasteh, The Stoning Of Soraya M, will soon show how those who dare to dissent in other ways are dealt with by Ahmadinejad's "grassroots" fanatics.) Mention of the Lebanese elections impels me to pass on what I saw at a recent <u>Hezbollah</u> rally in south Beirut, Lebanon. In a large hall that featured the offi cial attendance of a delegation from the Iranian Embassy, the most luridly displayed poster of the pro-Iranian party was a nuclear mushroom cloud! Underneath this telling symbol was a caption warning the "Zionists" of what lay in store.

We sometimes forget that Iran still offi cially denies any intention of acquiring nuclear weapons. Yet Ahmadinejad recently hailed an Iranian missile launch as a counterpart to Iran's success with nuclear centrifuges and <u>Hezbollah</u> has certainly formed the idea that Iranian reactors may have nonpeaceful applications. This means that the vicious manipulation by which the mullahs control Iran can no longer be considered their "internal affair". Fascism at home sooner or later means fascism abroad. Face it now or fight it later.

Meanwhile, give it its right name.

Graphic

OUTRAGE: Iran's disputed election result has lead to bloody protests in Tehran

Load-Date: June 23, 2009



NEW ROCKET ATTACKS FUEL ISRAELI WARNING

Daily News (New York)
February 2, 2009 Monday
SPORTS FINAL EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 18

Length: 233 words

Byline: BY HELEN KENNEDY

Body

THE FRAGILE GAZA ceasefire was teetering last night after Israel's prime minister threatened a "sharp and disproportionate" retaliation to rocket attacks from Gaza.

At least three rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel yesterday, but they caused no damage or injuries.

Israel's Military Intelligence Chief Amos Yadlin said this time, the rocket fire should not be blamed on Hamas.

"Terrorists that are not Hamas are challenging Hamas and carrying out attacks for a renewed escalation," Yadlin said.

"Hamas, for its part, has been deterred and is honoring the ceasefire."

The constant firing of Hamas rockets prompted Israel to launch a three-week blitz against Gaza last month that killed 1,300 Palestinians, many of them *women* and children.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the war could start again at any time.

"We will not warn the terrorist elements in advance as to how, where and when we will respond, but we will respond," Olmert said in his weekly cabinet meeting.

"We need a response, and the response won't be a light one, because we cannot afford an escalation similar to what we had before."

Israelis were also warned of a "concrete, high-level threat" from <u>Hezbollah</u>, which is seeking to mark the first anniversary of the Feb. 12 assassination of the militia's deputy leader Imad Mughniyah.

Likely attempts include killing a top Israeli minister, the counterterrorism bureau said.

Load-Date: February 2, 2009

NEW ROCKET ATTACKS FUEL ISRAELI WARNING

End of Document



From Iran's hard-liners, tough talk - but pragmatism as well

Christian Science Monitor February 18, 2009, Wednesday

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 4

Length: 1115 words

Byline: Scott Peterson Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: Tehran, Iran

Body

Senior conservatives in Iran are raising the bar for US-Iran engagement, reinforcing positions that leave little room for compromise as the Obama administration searches for ways to talk to the Islamic Republic.

After 30 years of high-octane animosity, such voices appear to rule out change. But analysts say they may reflect a maximalist opening bid, as Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei - the man who will make the final decision on any US ties - weighs the advice.

Among those reaching the ear of the leader is Hossein Shariatmadari, the editor of the hard-line Kayhan newspaper, who is also an official representative of Ayatollah Khamenei. He draws a grim conclusion from past American actions against Iran, beginning with the CIA-orchestrated coup in 1953 to the US Navy downing of an Iranian civilian airliner in 1988, which killed all 290 on board.

"After that, [the US] would create a new problem every day until now, when they put their hands on the nuclear issue," says Mr. Shariatmadari in an interview. "This is an excuse. We say they will find another thing [to accuse us of]. With all this, the US has been an enemy of ours, so there exists no room for friendship."

Shariatmadari's unwavering views prompted one commentator to label him Iran's Rush Limbaugh. But analysts say that Khamenei has often acted pragmatically to preserve his country's Islamic system. He has authorized Iranian assistance to the US in the past, for example, most recently in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

Indeed, Richard Holbrooke, the US envoy to Afghanistan, said this week on a visit to the war-torn nation that it was "absolutely clear that Iran plays an important role in Afghanistan," and that Iran had "a legitimate role to play in this region" - comments certain to be well received in Tehran.

On the Iran side, a more pragmatic voice comes from Ali Larijani, the conservative parliamentary speaker who is close to Khamenei. "In the past, the United States has violated Iranian rights," the former nuclear negotiator said on Saturday in Tehran. "It has to change its attitude regarding the Iranian people. [It] has to play chess, not box."

The worst scenario are these hardline voices to the leader," says a veteran observer. "Some believe Iran has never been more strong, and Iran's enemies have never been more weak, so now is not the time to compromise."

"Delusions are in fashion," adds this person, noting that after launching its own satellite this month - a feat that put Iran into a club of just nine nations - President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared Iran "officially" a superpower.

"[Ahmadinejad] is reflecting that sentiment. You are at your [peak], and when you are at your best, you demand, you even intimidate."

Mr. Ahmadinejad has listed several conditions for talks, including US acceptance of Iran's nuclear program, which Tehran vows is solely for peaceful purposes, acceptance of it as a regional power, and an apology for past "imperial" behavior. But the archconservative has also spoken in friendly terms of "dialogue" with the US.

"What have we not done to have relations with the US?" asks Ahmad Tavakoli, the influential conservative head of the Parliamentary Research Center. "Our president sent a letter, invited US scholars. He asked for a debate [with former President George Bush]. We are always trying to have relations, but not with imperialism."

"Mutual respect" is key, says Mr. Tavakoli, though he acknowledges he "would not be happy" if roles were reversed and 10,000 Americans took to the streets in Washington to chant "Death to Iran."

"We didn't do anything against the people of the US. We never launched a coup. We never shot down their plane. We never blocked their wealth. We never supported a war against them," says Tavakoli. "So when we say [Death to America] we almost have a right to say this. But when we speak of the people of America, we honor them."

These conservatives argue that US actions against Iran are facts, while countercharges from Washington - of Iran's role in 1983 attacks on US Marines and the US Embassy in Lebanon, for example, and a hand in the 1996 destruction of a US military barracks in Khobar, Saudi Arabia - are "accusations."

Current events also color the picture. The muted US reaction to Israel's offensive in Gaza and to its high Palestinian death toll was a test that Iran's right wing says President Obama failed, though he was not yet in office. Shariatmadari has two maps of Israel and Palestine on his wall, one covered with arrows showing Israeli military moves.

"Over Gaza, a lot of people were unhappy; in Britain, 100,000 people protested," he says. "Mr. Obama did not take any stance on this or condemn [it]. The people of the world see what is happening, and see Mr. Obama's silence, [so] how can they expect any change?"

The leader's representative linked the fate of the US <u>women</u>'s badminton team - which Iran invited to a tournament starting Feb. 6, and which flew to Dubai only to be told its visas weren't ready - to Gaza.

Iranian spokesmen claimed that there was not time to process the team's visas. Iranian sources say Ahmadinejad was keen for the visit, but suggest the US announcement of it was earlier than had been agreed, causing a spike in US media interest that would have been hard to control.

This was the first such occasion under Obama, and was seen on both sides as an initial confidence-building measure.

Still, Shariatmadari says Gaza complicated any shuttlecock diplomacy. "With what happened in Gaza and no US [censure], if the badminton team had come, this would have been a desecration of [Palestinian] blood," he says.

Tehran realizes the US is unlikely to slacken support for Israel, analysts here say. Iran, likewise, does not expect to stop supporting <u>Hezbollah</u> or Hamas. "They accuse us of supporting terrorism and mention ... <u>Hezbollah</u> in Lebanon and the resistance in Gaza," former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani told <u>Hezbollah</u>'s Al-Manar TV. "Are these terrorists? These are oppressed people who are resisting."

The US "committed all these crimes in Iraq, spied for the former ... regime, and killed many" Iraqis, said Mr. Rafsanjani, according to a MideastWire.com translation. "Are we or they the terrorists?"

Iran and the US say they are watchingfor positive signs, but expect the other to change first - or cave in. And Shariatmadari says close ties are no panacea. "Sanctions have caused some damage. But the price they want us to pay to get rid of sanctions is higher than the damage," he says. "Iran cut ties [with the US], and even so reached space and nuclear technology, and more power in the region."

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Load-Date: February 17, 2009



Faith in arms

The Jerusalem Post March 30, 2009 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 15

Length: 1244 words

Byline: SGT. S

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

Body

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

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

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

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

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

I learned this from my Torah.

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

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

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

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

Faith in arms

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

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

That too, I learned from my religious upbringing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faith in arms

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Graphic

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

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



World journal

The Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick)
November 5, 2009 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; NEWS; Pg. A6

Length: 711 words

Body

Memorial

Friends honour Manitoba ball player

BRANDON, Man. - Friends and former teammates of Ashley Neufeld have held an impromptu memorial service in her hometown of Brandon, Man. Dozens of people marked the life of the star softball player at a local ball diamond, drawing a large heart in the infield dirt and placing flowers at second base. One of the organizers, Jim Nay, coached Neufeld, and says she was a determined player who also had a positive attitude and was well-liked. Neufeld was one of three young <u>women</u> who died after the jeep they were in got submerged in a farm pond in North Dakota. Neufeld and her two friends, Kyrstin Gemar and Afton Williamson of California, played softball for Dickinson State University.

Afghanistan

Policeman kills 5 British soldiers

KABUL, Afghanistan - An Afghan policeman opened fire on British soldiers in the volatile southern province of Helmand, killing five before fleeing, authorities said Wednesday, raising concerns about discipline within the Afghan forces and possible infiltration by insurgents. The attack Tuesday afternoon came a month after an Afghan policeman on patrol with U.S. soldiers fired on the Americans, killing two. Training and operating jointly with Afghan police and soldiers is key to NATO's strategy of dealing with the spreading Taliban- led insurgency and, ultimately, allowing international forces to leave Afghanistan. Attacks such as these will heighten concern about the effectiveness of the Afghan forces.

Diplomacy

New ambassador visits White House

WASHINGTON - Canada's newest ambassador to the United States met Wednesday with President Barack Obama to present his diplomatic credentials, but it wasn't all handshakes, good wishes and a handful of M&Ms - the thorny issue of Buy American was also on the agenda. Gary Doer, accompanied by his wife and daughters, said the controversial U.S. trade policy was at the centre of a brief discussion with the president, despite Obama's apparent weariness of the subject. Obama has downplayed the effects of Buy American on Canadian exporters and manufacturers, referring to it on several occasions - including during Harper's visit to the Oval Office in September - as a minor kerfuffle in the Canada-U.S. trade relationship. On Wednesday, Doer said, the president was more keen to discuss family rather than politics.

Crime

At least 11 victims found in U.S. home

CLEVELAND - Authorities say they have confirmed a total of at least 11 victims whose remains were found in the Cleveland home of a sex offender. The Cuyahoga County coroner's office said Wednesday that a skull found in a bucket in Anthony Sowell's basement belonged to a body they have not yet found. Authorities also say they have identified one of the victims as 52-year-old Tonia Carmichael, who disappeared a year ago. Police Chief Michael McGrath says her remains were buried in the back yard and had marks indicating she was strangled.

Israel

Ship with 60 tons of weapons seized

JERUSALEM - Israeli defence officials say a ship the navy has confiscated in waters off Cyprus was carrying more than 60 tons of weapons. They say the cargo included missiles, antitank weapons and mortars. The officials said the weapons were coming from Iran and were bound for <u>Hezbollah</u> guerrillas in Lebanon. The pre-dawn seizure early Wednesday was a rare interception of a suspected arms shipment by Israel, which has long accused Iran of arming its enemies. Israel offered no evidence to support its claim that the weapons were meant for <u>Hezbollah</u>.

Health

H1N1 flu scams warning issued

OTTAWA - Health Canada and the Competition Bureau have issued a new warning about H1N1 flu scams. They are urging Canadians not to purchase products claiming to fight or prevent swine flu. Health Canada said on its website late Wednesday it is working with the Competition Bureau and the RCMP "to address unauthorized products, including those with fraudulent claims to treat or prevent the H1N1 flu virus."

Health Canada said it has only authorized three products - the H1N1 vaccine Arepanrix, and the antiviral drugs Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (zanamivir). As well, it said the distribution of 200,000 doses of unadjuvanted H1N1 vaccine Panvax from Australia has been authorized for use in pregnant <u>women</u>.

Load-Date: November 5, 2009



Off Piste - Digging deeper

The Times Higher Education Supplement September 24, 2009

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Section: FEATURE; Pg. 40; No. 1915

Length: 2249 words

Byline: Judith Weingarten

Body

Tourists can now visit even the most far-flung destinations, but Judith Weingarten believes that one must settle in for a long stay to get a real sense of foreign lands.

You might be thinking that I'm not going off-piste at all - that I am, in fact, on a well-trodden piste as an archaeologist writing about living and working in the Middle East and North Africa. Just part of the job, really. But no, it's not like that. When I go to strange lands, I'm far removed from my own digging grounds. And the ruins of caravan cities that lure me year after year serve to switch on my aesthetic, rather than my professional, passions.

Yet today, when anyone can travel anywhere, and when everyone with a fondness for archaeological souvenirs can be a cultural tourist, it may be difficult to understand what I mean by my travels. They are certainly not visits to Petra or Palmyra for the day, with perhaps a night or two spent at a comfortable new hotel just off site; nor hardship journeys into remote areas still untravelled or hardly explored (usually with good reason). Rather, they examine the somewhat unfashionable notion that if you spend months at a time at one place, you can dig deeper, reaching beyond the tourist image towards its genius.

The reality of this travelling does mean accepting, if not especially seeking, the unpleasantness of an oftenuncomfortable billet. But it's a fair trade-off to be on site in the empty moonlight, walking through temples in the utter stillness of the night and coming close to the unsayable.

There are some travelling rules, though, that I've learnt from living in Mediterranean lands - my own near-abroad - for more years than I ever lived at home.

"There are two things you don't need in an Arabian land," the Dutch Ambassador once told me. "Your heavy winter coat and the word why. Hang them both on a coat rack and leave them behind."

Despite the high authority of His Excellency, the former ambassador to Bahrain, Beirut and Tehran, I have never listened to this advice. Perhaps because the why of things is a driving force in my life - it underlies my urge to travel, to cross chancy borders and to plonk myself down at the edge of another society, daring myself to become part of those bewitching lands: Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Libya.

Never have I asked why as often or as wistfully as in Libya. The question received an answer of sorts in a huge concrete block of a hotel sited in an overgrown village, 800km from Tripoli and almost as far as you can get from the inhabited world. Larger-than-life portraits of the Great Leader, Muammar Gaddafi, covered the walls. Lunch was

Off Piste - Digging deeper

in a monstrously grand dining hall with rococo chairs, plastic flowers on every table and bowing waiters. For whom? Not a soul sat there but a Dutch artist, an archaeologist and our driver.

"Why was this hotel built here?" I asked.

The driver replied knowingly: "Just in case."

This cryptic statement became my travelling leitmotiv. In the Arab world, you never know if you'll get your visa, if a minister will grant permission, or if the smiling colonel will always smile with you over tea. Never knowing, you'll be ready for anything, just in case.

"Pass the condiment tray," I said to the Dutch artist, my travelling companion, as I looked at the brown sludge quivering on my plate. It was Egypt during the winter of 1983-84. We had made ourselves at home at the Hotel Habu (now lamentably closed), in two rooms on a terrace overhanging the massive enclosure walls of Medinet Habu in a deserted West Thebes. From this height, I spent hours trying to catch the reliefs of Rameses III in the shifting of the light. The sharp sun made these walls dark; and out of this darkness, new forms constantly emerged.

Never travel without a condiment tray. However dispiriting the boiled camel meat or quivering sludge, there's nothing that can't be improved with a condiment tray: abundant garlic, sambal oelek (Indonesian chili and lime sauce), sambal udang (chili, oil, garlic and crushed shrimp), sambal badjak (the darkest there is, just like it sounds), and lime oil pickle. And Dutch water. Wherever you go, bring Dutch water (also known as genever). Even to Libya. Especially to Libya! But also for a nip at the roadside stalls with burnt unspeakable bits on the fire - when you need all three sambals and an added slug of crystal-clear NL H2O.

Once, just outside Petra, we celebrated having survived three months alone in Nazal's Camp, a wonderful crumbling edifice, monastic in austerity and a good deal dirtier - a memorable winter of paraffin stoves, snow on the hills and distant wolves. A new restaurant was still in the project stage and would open, the owner averred, as soon as they fixed the plumbing; but for us, anything! So we ate roast lamb seated at a table and on real chairs, while on either side open sewers went sloshing through the soon- to-be dining room. This was nothing that NL H2O couldn't fix, and I still don't remember how we made it back to camp.

That was 1990. We had moved to Nazal's Camp to escape the goats. I needed to remind myself of the goats whenever, as was often, the generator sputtered and the lights went out. The previous year, we had rented a house in the Bedouin village of Umm Sehun, high above Petra. Instead of rent, we paid the village chief, the muktar, to repair the roof and walls and install kitchen and sanitary facilities - the latter a contradiction in terms as the bathroom was the preferred cooling-off spot for the muktar's goats; there was no glass in the windows. As a rule, too, they were fed, loudly farting as goats will, on the terrace outside the bedrooms.

So we were now alone all winter at the end of the Roman road, nearly dwarfed by the massive Kasr el-Bint, temple of the god Dushara. We sat on his vast altar in companionable silence while the guards emptied the site of visitors, and twilight came.

When the Nabataeans began to build in Petra, they hacked the fabric out of the hillsides in such a way that the structures emerge from the sandstone as if they are part of the mountains themselves. Their theatres, houses, palaces, temples, tombs and the columns and pillars of their antechambers are all carved out of the same living rock.

It is a city of many colours. You walk over veins of red, white, yellow and blue, with stripes of purple or violet here and there. Small wonder that the Nabataeans knew their city as Raqmu, "the many-coloured"; it was the Greeks who called it Petra, "the rock". Both names are truths.

Two millennia ago, for the briefest historical moment, caravans came down these roads on their interminable way from China to Rome. The caravans arrived on the fringes of Western history only after taking to the sea off the Indian coast: two drawn-out routes of silks and spices, one coming to embellish Petra, the other to make the desert bloom at Palmyra.

In Palmyra, we found ourselves at the archaeological dig-house within the sanctuary of the Temple of Bel. This, too, had once been a muktar's dwelling, a handsome building surrounding a courtyard planted with date palms and terebinth trees; from the terrace the ruins spread out in front of us, and its other side looked out over the remains of the oasis.

We were lucky. When we first arrived in February, we were the only visitors and so could take all three rooms over the courtyard facing west, keeping the afternoon sun for ourselves. In the dig-house, we had a house servant who spent his days watering the garden and spying on our every move. This was a time when faxes were forbidden in Syria because the mukhabarat (secret police) hadn't figured out how to read them, as they were required to do with all foreign letters. Of course, our servant knew no Dutch - it was our secret language. In English, we used codes. We would never refer to the unmentionable Zionist entity by name - that could cause trouble - but to "Dixie" (the other side of the Mason-Dixon line) or "across the big J".

Occasionally, there were other guests, classicists or archaeologists. Grateful as we were for conversational company, we nonetheless put a lock on our shower and toilet door; yes, we expropriated it. It was Dutch- cleaned, and I have stayed in too many dig-houses to be charitable.

On 6 April 1996, the ancient Babylonian New Year, with a full moon looking down on us, we sat in the Temple of Bel reading aloud from the Epic of Creation: "When skies above were not yet named/Nor earth below pronounced by name."

Illuminated by our candles, we sat in the high south chapel, reached by means of a purloined ladder.

The next year was remarkable for the two-tailed comet that hovered every night over the Temple of Bel until the very last weeks of our stay. Sitting on the terrace of the dig-house, staring out at the utterly dark and silent temple, it was easy to think of portents, and how the cosmic indifference of Hale-Bopp would once have foretold the death of kings and the fall of empires. We could almost reach out and touch that ancient world, when every sign was meaningful.

Leaving Palmyra in late 1998, as once freight-laden camels began the next lap of the Silk Road, we climbed up the Beq'a Valley to the temple city of Baalbek, set in a wide valley beneath snow-capped mountains, with cool rivulets of water and perpetually bubbling springs. The city of the Sun: Heliopolis. The vast temples of Baalbek, constructed in the course of the first two centuries of our era, were given over to Roman gods - Jupiter, Venus, Mercury - strangely transplanted to the highest ridge of the Beq'a. It is remarkable that, even after 1,000 years of Greek and Roman rule, Baal's name and dignity would return to his ancestral city.

In the end, a journey matters for the friends we meet - warm friendships that do not grow from dropping in, but from returning. At Baalbek one night, our friend Haris exclaimed about our staying there: "Just a few of us stayed on in the years of war when almost nobody was here: drug dealers; some arms dealers; everybody else who could went to Europe or America; a few come back now, but *Hezbollah* ... you know."

Of course Baalbek, after 25 years of Lebanon's civil war, has added a strange tone to its beauty, like the light of a dead star. We are not fools. Baalbek is the headquarters of <u>Hezbollah</u>, and renting a house and staying there, two <u>women</u> alone, warranted careful consideration. But learned Western <u>women</u> and artists in the Middle East have the status of honorary men, seen as strong but aberrant - a third gender, possibly. Nonetheless, whether empresses or charladies, whatever <u>women</u> do, in the Orient they are still <u>women</u>. So our good friend Hikmet, a journalist with an inside track to <u>Hezbollah</u>, would be our early-warning system ("just in case"): if we were no longer safe, we would expect a telephoned "pack up and get out quick".

We always listened to the BBC World Service. "No news is good news" when it comes to Baalbek, Lebanon or even Dixie for that matter. We may have been listening to "world radio", but the BBC programmes were sporadically interrupted by flashes of a male voice reciting over and over: "Charlie, Bravo, Charlie, Bravo, Tango, Charlie, Bravo, Tango." Perhaps that was why, when the attack finally came, we were taken by surprise.

Off Piste - Digging deeper

We had rented a house in what was once the Christian quarter of the town, overlooking some still-standing columns of the garbage-strewn Roman forum. Big and airy, but badly decayed, a house left to rot since its sale for a peppercorn when the Christians packed up and left. We made it habitable.

Work and study were punctuated by distant shellfire. I learnt willy-nilly to identify that famous artillery "crump", and the Israeli Air Force's retaliatory "ga-boom". Bombs fell one night in the Beq'a, about 25km from us, outside a Jesuit monastery, over the walls from its agricultural college, where they teach the care and feeding of 195 Dutch cows. Ten <u>Hezbollah</u> fighters were killed when Israeli smart bombs hit their base, so close that the cows stopped giving milk. Sensible animals! If only others would go on strike against such tit-for-tat slaughter - a kind of mooing Lysistrata.

One night we were shaken out of bed by explosions. Grasping a bottle of French cognac, we sat outside on the terrace hearing the Israeli jets on their way to the electricity plant 1km outside the town. The house shook when they hit their target and fireworks lit up the sky as <u>Hezbollah</u> responded with wild anti-aircraft fire from weapons everyone knew were hidden in the city's garbage dump. The display went on for an hour or more. The cognac finished, we went to bed. The Dutch Ambassador was not pleased that we had watched the show outdoors. "Young ladies," he scolded, "what goes up can come down."

A few days later, we drove past <u>Hezbollah</u> headquarters, a dim complex of buildings with black flags flying, next door to an ice-cream shop in the centre of town.

"Why?" I asked the Dutch artist.

"Put it back on the coat rack," she said.

Cicero says somewhere that there is nothing whatsoever so beautiful that our imagination and our mind cannot conceive of something still more beautiful. And he is right: We surely can, and it's over that hill ... and in the next country.

Judith Weingarten is an Aegean archaeologist and member of the British School at Athens. She is the author of a number of books, including Sign of Taurus: The Archaeological Worlds of Gerti Bierenbroodspot (1998), which describes some of her travels with the Dutch painter.

Load-Date: September 25, 2009



Turkey: Retired military prosecutor calls for probe into suspicious suicides

Right Vision News
November 28, 2009 Saturday

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Length: 608 words

Dateline: Pakistan

Body

Pakistan, Nov. 28 -- Former Chief Prosecutor of the General Staff Col. Saim Ozturk has called for an in-depth investigation into the alleged suicides of four members of the military, whose deaths have raised concern in society."All incidents are suspicious when you look at them from outside. They have sparked concern in society. They should be investigated thoroughly. That would produce results to ease public concerns," Ozturk remarked.

He also said he was ready to testify if prosecutors conducting an ongoing probe into a clandestine criminal organization known as Ergenekon summon him."If a probe is launched into the suicides of the members of the military, I am ready to testify as part of the investigation," he stated. The suspicious suicides of the army personnel were brought back to Turkey's agenda last week after a retired colonel, Belgutay Var?ml?, reportedly killed himself by jumping off the balcony of his apartment in ?stanbul's Kad?koy district on Nov. 20. Var?ml? threw himself off his balcony while his wife and mother were at home. He hit the concrete pavement below and died at the scene.

His body was taken to the Goztepe Teaching and Research Hospital after police and prosecutors examined it. Var?ml?'s suicide sparked suspicion because he was known to be a devout Muslim and would not condone the idea of killing oneself since suicide is one of the biggest sins in Islam. Retired Lt. Col. Tevfik Diker, a close friend of the late officer, claimed that Var?ml? played a significant role in the exposure of the Ergenekon terrorist organization and had informed former Chief of General Staff Gen. Hilmi Ozkok of previous failed coup plans. Var?ml? was also a key part of the trial of former Naval Forces Commander Adm. ?lhami Erdil, causing the admiral to be demoted to the rank of private after the investigation. Ozturk also said the ambiguity surrounding the suicide of retired navy Col. Tanju Unal had not been dispelled. "The investigation into the suicide was completed; however, the suicide may be investigated again for public satisfaction," he said.?amil Tayyar, a Star daily columnist, devoted his column on Wednesday to the mysterious suicides of the four members of the military. According to Tayyar, prosecutors will fail to satisfy the questions in people's minds if they cannot give satisfactory answers with investigations they conduct.

"There were claims that Col. Var?ml? had provided confidential military documents to prosecutors. His death left those claims flat. According to his friends, the colonel had important information about the Ergenekon investigation," Tayyar remarked. Touching on Col. Unal's suicide, the columnist said the colonel was believed to have had immense and confidential information on the <u>Hizbullah</u> terrorist organization, the Western Study Group and Ergenekon. Tayyar went on to mention the alleged suicide of naval Capt. Olgun Ural, who was found dead in his house on March 24, 2009. The colonel had sent confidential documents about an anti-democratic formation within the Turkish military to Ergenekon prosecutors, according to claims. The columnist also mentioned the suspicious death of Lt. Col. Nursal Gedik, who was found dead on Nov. 11, 2007. Gedik was serving in a biochemistry laboratory at the Kas?mpa?a Military Hospital. He reportedly had knowledge of drug smuggling and the trafficking of <u>women</u> in Turkey. "It sounds strange, doesn't it? Or, is ambush called 'suicide'?" Tayyar asked in his column.

Turkey: Retired military prosecutor calls for probe into suspicious suicides

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Load-Date: November 28, 2009



Israel probes possible abduction of soldier

AlArabiya.net

August 12, 2009 Wednesday

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Length: 266 words

Body

Israeli authorities said on Thursday they were investigating the possible abduction of a soldier in the center of the country, where police put up roadblocks.

"It's under investigation," a military spokeswoman said when asked about media reports a soldier may have been abducted near Ben Gurion International Airport.

The army later issued a statement that said: "A <u>female</u> soldier said she saw a soldier who was hitch-hiking being forced into a car by two people. We are verifying this rumor." A Palestinian news agency quoted a little-known fighting group, al-Quds Army, claiming it had captured a soldier. But the military insisted however that none of its soldiers were listed as missing.

However, police set up dozens of checkpoints on all roads leading to the West Bank, stopping and searching cars, causing long traffic jams across central Israel.

The massive security operation launched after the soldier's report highlights Israel's fears of having soldiers kidnapped.

Palestinian fighters have in the past abducted soldiers at hitch-hiking stations.

From the West Bank city of Bethlehem, the Maan news agency reported it received a statement from al-Quds Army in which the group said it was holding a soldier seized near the airport, Israel's main international gateway. Al-Quds is the Arabic name for Jerusalem.

A Palestinian security official said the al-Quds army, while fairly obscure, was believed to have links to the Lebanese armed group *Hezbollah*, a foe of the Jewish state.

The Palestinian security official could not immediately confirm that such a claim of responsibility had been made.

Load-Date: August 13, 2009



Mideast dream needs more than eloquence

The Jerusalem Post June 5, 2009 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 630 words

Byline: GERALD M. STEINBERG

Highlight: ANALYSIS. Prof. Gerald M. Steinberg is the executive director of NGO Monitor, and chairman of political

science at Bar-Ilan University.

Body

President Barack Obama's Cairo speech was first and foremost an affirmation of the American dream, both in terms of his own story, and also of the broader national ethos.

History, he told his Arab and Muslim audience, was an obstacle to be overcome, and no differences were too great to prevent understanding and cooperation to achieve common objectives. Obama preached the virtues of freedom, religious tolerance, including for persecuted Copts in Egypt, and equal educational opportunities for <u>women</u> - all major problems in Arab societies.

This optimism was also an integral part of his framework for ending the long and violent Arab-Israeli conflict, based on the "land for peace" formula. Here, Obama is on shaky ground. After the lofty words that accompanied the Oslo process ended in mass terror, Israelis are less willing to assume that the gap between rhetoric and reality can be overcome in a few years.

The American president may believe that he has articulated the principles of mutual acceptance that "everyone knows to be true," but this is a stretch. His "everyone" ignores the army of propagandists who promote the anti-Israel narrative, label every act of self-defense a "war crime" and a "human rights violation," and reject the right of Jewish self-determination.

The call for Hamas - the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood - to act responsibly to "put an end to violence" and "recognize Israel's right to exist" is extremely far fetched, even for Obama. Hamas belongs in the first part of the speech, which focused on confronting "violent extremism in all of its forms," including al-Qaida and the Taliban.

In promoting his peace plan, including the demand for a freeze in Israeli settlements, Obama has imagined a false and highly dangerous symmetry. Israelis are far more vulnerable to American pressure than the Palestinian leaders (Hamas and Fatah) or the dictatorships that control Egypt or Syria. No Israeli leader can afford to ignore or reject American coercion, particularly as Iran continues efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. But if Netanyahu accepts Obama's demands, and there is little or no change in the hatred, violence and rejectionism on the Arab side, the "land for peace" exchange will fail, and Israel will have neither.

The call to further develop the Arab Peace Initiative, "to recognize Israel's legitimacy; and to choose progress over a self-defeating focus on the past" also needs to be quickly translated into concrete action.

Mideast dream needs more than eloquence

Every speech that trashes Israel delivered by an Egyptian, Saudi, Syrian or Palestinian official, whether at the United Nations, a university campus, a mosque or a church fuels the conflict. The same is true for editorials in official newspapers, and for television series based on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion that have become so popular. Maps that omit the word "Israel" have the same result. All of these insults were ignored by the Clinton peace team during the Oslo process - will the Obama administration do any better?

To succeed in this extremely complex political design, Obama will need much more than eloquent speeches and "courage to make a new beginning." The fundamental reform of Arab and Muslim countries is necessary to end the social, political and economic gridlock, and remove the support for violent extremists and rejectionists - including Hamas, a weakened but still functioning PLO, and *Hizbullah*.

And Iran must be stopped short of the atomic finish line. The skepticism resulting from a history of unfulfilled promises is not simply an obstacle to be overcome - it is also an important reflection of the lessons that have been learned at great cost, particularly for the Jewish people.

Obama's American optimism is refreshing, but it is a long way from Middle Eastern realities.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



New development in Schalit case is small but important step, says Peres. French ambassador pledges to work for soldier's release and 'move quickly' on Iran sanctions

The Jerusalem Post
October 1, 2009 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 568 words

Byline: GREER FAY CASHMAN

Body

The newest development in the case of abducted soldier Gilad Schalit is "a small but important step," President Shimon Peres said on Wednesday, after receiving the news that a video on Schalit's state of health would be made available in exchange for 20 Palestinian prisoners.

The president's comment came immediately after he received the credentials of French Ambassador Christophe Bigot, the last of five new ambassadors who presented their credentials to him throughout the morning.

It was a small advancement in the negotiations for Schalit's release, said Peres, adding that he was very proud of the way the Schalit family has maintained its strength in the face of such prolonged and indescribable suffering.

He also expressed appreciation to the Egyptian and German mediators for all their efforts in attempting to secure Schalit's release from Hamas captivity.

Early in the morning, Peres who is in frequent contact with the Schalit family, held a working meeting with Hagai Hadas, Israel's special liaison on matters related to Schalit.

Peres later conveyed a personal message via Bigot to French President Nicola Sarkozy, expressing appreciation for the manner in which France has stood by the Schalit family.

Peres also thanked Sarkozy for the "courageous and clear position" that he has taken with regard to the Iranian nuclear threat.

If Iran continues in the manner that it has to date, said Peres, "the world will pay an enormous price in security and loss of life."

Peres was scathing in his remarks about the Goldstone Report, reiterating previously expressed outrage and noting that Israel cannot be considered an occupier of Gaza because Israel left Gaza and handed it over to the Palestinians.

Hamas could have easily put a stop to terrorist activities instead of perpetrating them, Peres contended, noting that both Hamas and *Hizbullah* were supported by Iran.

New development in Schalit case is small but important step, says Peres. French ambassador pledges to work for soldier's release and 'move quickly' on Iran sanc....

As for the Human Rights Council, Peres suggested that before criticizing Israel, its members examine their own countries for human rights violations.

Noting that Gilad Schalit is both a French and an Israeli citizen, Bigot - who visited the Schalit family very soon after his arrival here - said that he had come to Beit Hanassi with special greetings from Sarkozy and French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, who have a clear position regarding Iran's development of nuclear arms.

The time frame for negotiations with Iran must be limited, and then, if there is no change in Iran's attitude, severe sanctions against Teheran must be imposed, Bigot said.

"We are determined to move quickly," he said, adding that France is also determined to continue to assist Israel in its attempts to renew negotiations with the Palestinians and equally determined to bring about Schalit's freedom.

"We will do our utmost towards his release," said Bigot. "We are in close contact with the Egyptian and German mediators and with relevant people in Israel. President Sarkozy spoke about this to Prime Minister Netanyahu in New York and he has also spoken about it to President Peres."

"President Sarkozy and the French administration are playing an important role in the Middle East by finding a way in which we can all march together," said Peres, who noted the historic relationship between France and the Jewish people and France and Israel.

France was ahead of other nations in giving rights to its Jews, he said, and it had been supportive of Israel. Ê Ê

Graphic

Photo: HAMAS MEMBERS speak to the press in Gaza City, where the deal that will bring Israel a videotape of Gilad Schalit in exchange for the release of 20 Palestinian <u>women</u> prisoners was announced. (Credit: Hatem Moussa/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



OFW protection up in talks

BusinessWorld

March 25, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: Pg. S1/11 Length: 292 words

Byline: Bernardette S. Sto. Domingo

Body

Sto. Tomas, Pangasinan - Manila will negotiate a memorandum of agreement with Beirut aimed at protecting the rights of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) before lifting a three-year deployment ban to Lebanon.

Labor Secretary Marianito D. Roque yesterday said the Philippines will also ask Lebanese officials to increase workers' minimum salary to \$400, or about P19,200 a month, from \$200.

A technical team will be sent to Lebanon composed of Labor and Foreign Affairs officials to discuss the agreement, the Labor chief said.

"We have not yet lifted the ban. But the assessment is that there is no more security risk in Lebanon for our OFWs," he told Palace reporters.

The Philippines, he said, is negotiating labor standards with Lebanon.

"Without this agreement, we cannot agree to lift the deployment ban. We have to agree first on employment standards, which means we want to make sure that the protection of our workers is put in place first," Mr. Roque said.

At least 70,000 Filipinos based in Lebanon, mostly employed as domestic helpers, receive only \$200 a month and are not entitled to legal protection.

The deployment ban was imposed in 2006 after violence between <u>Hezbollah</u> and Israeli forces escalated. Lebanese honorary consul to Manila Joseph Assad claimed the ban only resulted in the illegal entry of at least 45,000 <u>female</u> OFWs on top of the 25,000 who opted not to return during the war.

Presidential envoy to the Middle East Roy V. Cimatu, who was sent to Lebanon last month to assess the security situation, has said it is now safe to resume the deployment of OFWs.

Vice-President Manuel "Noli" L. de Castro, presidential adviser on OFWs, said Lebanon could be an alternative destination for workers who will be retrenched in other countries.

Load-Date: March 24, 2009



Guardian Weekly: UK news: News in brief

Guardian Weekly March 13, 2009 Friday

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*The*GuardianWeekly

Section: Pg. 15

Length: 310 words

Body

- * Policy on a key Middle East issue was overturned when a Foreign Office minister, Bill Rammell, told MPs that the government would authorise "carefully selected" contacts with the political wing of <u>Hezbollah</u>, the Lebanese Shia movement that fights Israel and is banned as a terrorist organisation by the US.
- * The Environment Agency is to be given powers to seize planes from airlines that break the rules of the European Emissions Trading Scheme to limit flights' carbon emissions, following an announcement by transport secretary, Geoff Hoon, and climate change secretary, Ed Miliband.
- * The armed forces need a "step change" in the way they deal with allegations of bullying and harassment, the services' new complaints watchdog, Susan Atkins, warned in her first report.
- * A government booklet offering advice to <u>women</u> on how to deal with recession-related domestic violence and discrimination from employers has been issued, reflecting official concern that <u>women</u> are to be worst hit by the economic crisis.
- * A multimillion-pound computer project, Scope, designed to give key government officials speedy access to secret intelligence on terrorism and other threats has been scrapped due to technical problems, in a move described as "appalling" by a parliamentary watchdog.
- * Government plans to sell a stake in Royal Mail were in disarray after it emerged that the company's chief executive, Adam Crozier, is at loggerheads with TNT, the Dutch company that is the frontrunner to take a 30% share in the business, over accusations that TNT is trying to poach customers from the Royal Mail's European parcels subsidiary, General Logistics Service.
- * Peter and Penelope Duff, who were 80 and 70 and had terminal cancer, became the first British couple to be helped to die at Zurich's Dignitas clinic. Police in Britain said they will not investigate their deaths.

Load-Date: March 12, 2009



Hamas: Swap of Schalit video for 20 women prisoners is first phase of an exchange agreement. Tape to be handed over Friday * Germans and Egyptians broker deal to provide Israel with 'updated and unequivocal proof' of Schalit's well-being * First release of Palestinian prisoners since

Netanyahu became PM

The Jerusalem Post
October 1, 2009 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1356 words

Byline: KHALED ABU TOAMEH and HERB KEINON

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

The decision to swap a videotape of captive IDF soldier St.-Sgt. Gilad Schalit for 20 Palestinian <u>female</u> prisoners held by Israel is the first phase of a prisoner exchange agreement, Hamas said on Wednesday.

Hamas also boasted that Israel had "finally succumbed" to the demands of Schalit's captors.

In Jerusalem, the security cabinet on Wednesday approved the release of the 20 prisoners and detainees in exchange for an up-to-date videotape of Schalit, in what could be the first concrete move toward freeing the soldier since he was kidnapped over three years ago.

This will be the first release of Palestinian prisoners since Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu took office on March 31, and those to be released - according to government sources - were the type of prisoners generally released as goodwill gestures for Ramadan and various Muslim holidays.

Unlike in years past, this year Israel did not release any prisoners for Ramadan.

The decision to release the Palestinians came at the recommendation of the team working for Schalit's release, headed by Hagai Hadas, and was unanimously approved by the 15-member security cabinet.

The release of the Palestinians, and receipt of the tape, are scheduled to take place on Friday.

According to a suggestion that came from the German mediating team headed by Ernst Urlau, working together with the Egyptians, Israel will get "updated and unequivocal proof" of the well-being and status of Schalit in the form of a videotape filmed in the last few weeks. A Hamas Web site reported that the video was about a minute long.

Netanyahu congratulated Hadas and his team for their "professional work" away from the spotlight, and said, "It is important that the whole world will know that Gilad Schalit is alive and well, and that Hamas is responsible for his fate and well-being."

Hamas: Swap of Schalit video for 20 women prisoners is first phase of an exchange agreement. Tape to be handed over Friday * Germans and Egyptians broker deal t....

A statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office said the cabinet decided to respond positively to this initiative as a "confidence-building measure within the framework of the indirect negotiations" with Hamas over Schalit.

The statement said the move came "ahead of the decisive stages in the negotiations for Gilad Schalit's release and on the basis of the government of Israel's determination to bring him back home quickly while upholding Israel's vital interests."

The names of the Palestinians to be released were posted Wednesday afternoon on the Israel Prisons Service's Web site. A statement on the Web site said the list of prisoners was examined by legal and Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) authorities and that the prisoners had been "found suitable for release from the aspect of their danger to the public and the charges against them."

Nineteen of the 20 prisoners are from Judea and Samaria, and only one is from Gaza. The vast majority had already served two-thirds of their sentence and were scheduled to be released within the next two years.

None of the <u>women</u> were directly involved in the killing of Israelis, although a few were indirectly involved. A number of others were arrested for offenses such as carrying knives.

A senior source in the Prime Minister's Office said Hadas was in constant contact with the Schalit family, and that they were informed of the developments.

"The negotiations are still expected to be long and hard," the source said, "and we will continue to take concrete steps to bring Gilad home as guickly as possible."

The sources cautioned that this development did not mean the sides were on the cusp of an agreement, but that this was part of a larger agreement that was still a long way off.

Urlau has had experience with this type of move in the past. In late 2003, to get a "sign of life," he visited kidnapped Israeli Elhanan Tannenbaum, who was being held by <u>Hizbullah</u> in Lebanon, in exchange for the return of two **Hizbullah** bodies.

Three months later, Tannenbaum and the bodies of three IDF soldiers killed along the Lebanese border were returned in exchange for 435 prisoners.

Once the names of the Palestinian <u>female</u> prisoners were placed on the Internet Wednesday afternoon, the public - as was the case in similar prisoner releases in the past - was given 48 hours to appeal their release. After that period, the prisoners could be released once Urlau hands the tape over to Israel.

Urlau has already seen the video.

If a final deal is agreed upon for Schalit's release, these 20 prisoners will come off the final number of prisoners that the Palestinians are demanding in exchange. It is not clear whether these names were on the list of prisoners that was originally drawn up by Hamas.

Vice premier and security cabinet member Silvan Shalom said the decision to free the prisoners was "not simple."

But, he said, it was important to keep in mind that the move was an "important step toward the overall deal."

At the same time, Shalom added, a vote in favor of this release did not automatically ensure a vote in favor of an overall deal if one is reached.

"I voted in favor today, but there is no doubt that before the overall deal we will need to think again. That decision is likely to set criteria for situations that might, God forbid, occur in the future."

Another member of the security cabinet, Industry and Trade Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, welcomed the decision, saying that first and foremost it gave hope to the Schalit family.

Hamas: Swap of Schalit video for 20 women prisoners is first phase of an exchange agreement. Tape to be handed over Friday * Germans and Egyptians broker deal t....

"We will continue all efforts to bring about a breakthrough," he said. "This government is doing everything possible so that we not only get a sign of life, but also bring him safely home."

Palestinians said that a prisoner swap was likely to boost Hamas's popularity at the expense of the Palestinian Authority.

"The fact that the Palestinian resistance managed to hold on to the soldier for three years is a major achievement," said Ahmed al-Bahr, a senior Hamas official in the Gaza Strip. "For the past few years, Israel had recruited its military and intelligence machine to locate the solider, but to no avail."

Calling on Israel to accept all the demands of the captors, Bahr praised Egyptian and German mediators who helped strike the deal.

He added that the agreement over the release of the 20 inmates in return for a videotape of Schalit "proved that the path of resistance was the only option to restore Palestinian rights."

Osama al-Mazini, the Hamas official in charge of the "Schalit Portfolio," credited Germany for reaching the agreement. However, he cautioned against "excessive optimism," saying there were still some obstacles that needed to be overcome before reaching a comprehensive agreement.

Mazini did not elaborate on the nature of the obstacles, but he said that despite the role Egypt had played in the mediation efforts, the breakthrough was achieved only following the intervention of the Germans.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri pointed out that Schalit's captors had demanded the release of prisoners belonging to various Palestinian groups and not only to Hamas. He said that the captors had also insisted that the prisoners be from both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"The Palestinian resistance groups that are holding the soldier consider all prisoners to be members of one people and one homeland," Abu Zuhri explained. "We reject any attempt to discriminate between the prisoners on the basis of their geographic location or political affiliation."

He said that the current deal demonstrated Hamas's "moral, religious and national obligation to end the case of the prisoners in Israeli jails."

He added that Hamas's decision to give priority to the <u>women</u> in the prisoner swap reflected the movement's appreciation for the role these <u>women</u> have played in the struggle against Israel.

The Hamas official said that his movement wanted to pursue indirect negotiations with Israel on a daily basis to reach an agreement over the case of Schalit.

Hamas officials in the Gaza Strip and Syria hailed the agreement as a huge achievement for their military wing, Izaddin Kassam.

Abdel Sattar Qassem, a political analyst closely affiliated with Hamas, heaped praise on Schalit's captors for succeeding in hiding him for over three years. He said that the performance of Izaddin Kassam was "professional and secretive."

Graphic

2 photos: PALESTINIANS IN the Jabalya refugee camp flash V signs in front of a wall painting showing captive soldier Gilad Schalit (pictured at right) who has been held in Gaza since 2006. (Credit: AP)

Hamas: Swap of Schalit video for 20 women prisoners is first phase of an exchange agreement. Tape to be handed over Friday * Germans and Egyptians broker deal t....

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



MR. PRESIDENT, STAND WITH THE PEOPLE OF IRAN

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

June 20, 2009 Saturday

SOONER EDITION

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. B-6

Length: 789 words

Byline: Charles Krauthammer

Body

Millions of Iranians take to the streets to defy a theocratic dictatorship that, among its other finer qualities, is a self-declared enemy of America and the tolerance and liberties it represents. The demonstrators are fighting on their own, but they await just a word that America is on their side.

And what do they hear from the president of the United States?

Silence. Then, worse. Three days in, the president makes clear his policy: continued "dialogue" with their clerical masters.

Dialogue with a regime that is breaking heads, shooting demonstrators, expelling journalists, arresting activists. Engagement with -- which inevitably confers legitimacy upon -- leaders elected in a process that begins as a sham (only four handpicked candidates permitted out of 476) and ends in overt rigging.

Then, after treating this popular revolution as an inconvenience to the real business of Obama-Khamanei negotiations, the president speaks favorably of "some initial reaction from the Supreme Leader that indicates he understands the Iranian people have deep concerns about the election."

Where to begin? "Supreme Leader"? Note the abject solicitousness with which the American president confers this honorific on a clerical dictator who, even as his minions attack demonstrators, offers to examine some returns in some electoral districts -- a farcical fix that will do nothing to alter the fraudulence of the election.

Moreover, this incipient revolution is no longer about the election.

Mr. Obama totally misses the point. The election allowed the political space and provided the spark for the eruption of anti-regime fervor that has been simmering for years and awaiting its moment. But people aren't dying in the street because they want a recount of hanging chads in suburban Isfahan.

They want to bring down the tyrannical, misogynist, corrupt theocracy that has imposed itself with the very baton-wielding goons that today attack the demonstrators.

This started out about election fraud. But like all revolutions, it has far outgrown its origins. What's at stake now is the very legitimacy of this regime -- and the future of the entire Middle East.

MR. PRESIDENT, STAND WITH THE PEOPLE OF IRAN

This revolution will end either as a Tiananmen (a hot Tiananmen with massive and bloody repression or a cold Tiananmen with a finer mix of brutality and co-optation) or as a true revolution that brings down the Islamic Republic.

The latter is improbable but, for the first time in 30 years, not impossible. Imagine the repercussions. It would mark a decisive blow to Islamist radicalism, of which Iran today is not just standard-bearer and model, but financier and arms supplier. It would do to Islamism what the collapse of the Soviet Union did to communism -- leave it forever spent and discredited.

In the region, it would launch a second Arab spring. The first in 2005 -- the expulsion of Syria from Lebanon, first elections in Iraq and early liberalization in the Gulf states and Egypt -- was aborted by a fierce counterattack from the forces of repression and reaction, led and funded by Iran.

Now, with *Hezbollah* having lost elections in Lebanon and with Iraq establishing the institutions of a young democracy, the fall of the Islamist dictatorship in Iran would have an electric and contagious effect.

The exception -- Iraq and Lebanon -- becomes the rule. Democracy becomes the wave. Syria becomes isolated; **Hezbollah** and Hamas, patronless. The entire trajectory of the region is reversed.

All hangs in the balance. The Khamenei regime is deciding whether to do a Tiananmen. And what side is the Obama administration taking? None.

Except for the desire that this "vigorous debate" (press secretary Robert Gibbs' disgraceful euphemism) over election "irregularities" not stand in the way of U.S.-Iranian engagement on nuclear weapons.

Even from the narrow perspective of the nuclear issue, the administration's geopolitical calculus is absurd. There is zero chance that any such talks will denuclearize Iran. On Monday, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared yet again that the nuclear "file is shut, forever." The only hope for a resolution of the nuclear question is regime change, which (if the successor regime were as moderate as pre-Khomeini Iran) might either stop the program, or make it manageable and nonthreatening.

That's our fundamental interest. And our fundamental values demand that America stand with demonstrators opposing a regime that is the antithesis of all we believe.

And where is our president? Afraid of "meddling." Afraid to take sides between the head-breaking, womenshackling exporters of terror -- and the people in the street yearning to breathe free. This from a president who fancies himself the restorer of America's moral standing in the world.

Notes

Charles Krauthammer is a syndicated columnist for The Washington Post (letters@charleskrauthammer.com)./

Load-Date: June 20, 2009



Time to sup with the 'devil'

The Sun Herald (Sydney, Australia)

March 29, 2009 Sunday

First Edition

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Section: EXTRA; Books; Pg. 10

Length: 733 words

Byline: Reviewed by Ross Southernwood

Body

The Devil We Know: Dealing With The New Iranian Superpower

Robert Baer

(Scribe, \$32.95)

AS THE Middle East's conflicts continue, there comes a revealing analysis of perhaps the most crucial local player of all: Iran.

Written by former CIA operative in the Middle East and now author and journalist Robert Baer, who has been following Iran's rise for 30 years from anarchy to statist power, it is an enlightening and at times disturbing account. And one many Westerners, because of their preconceptions and misunderstandings, may find disturbing.

One of the most important aspects of Baer's book in considering Iran - and the Middle East in general - is his elaboration on the differences between Shia (Shi'ite) and Sunni Islam. For centuries Sunni has tended to dominate in the region but now, largely due to Shia Iran's rise and Sunni-controlled Iraq's fall, the Muslim tide is turning.

Another is that 51 per cent of Iran's 69 million people are ethnic Persian, with the largest minority Azeris, people of Turkish origin, the rest a mix, including Arabs. And Iran, whose borders have remained largely intact since ancient times, sees itself as Persian.

Baer writes that when Americans - and one would guess many other Westerners - think of Iran, they picture the "black-turbaned, long-bearded, scowling Ayatollah Khomeini, a dark spectre bent on vengeance".

Since Khomeini's 1979 revolution deposed the Shah, and the consequent taking of hostages in the US's Tehran embassy, America has convinced itself Iran is a "historical aberration, a medieval throwback harbouring an irrational hate for the West". Not true. "They simply hate what they consider [the US's] occupation of large swaths of the Middle East."

Baer's picture of today's Iran, "a country that's deeply pious, yet desperately trying to modernise", may surprise: Iranians watch US films, listen to its music, and Persian is now the most common internet language after English and Mandarin; the average age of marriage for <u>women</u> is 25, while during the Shah's last year in power it was 13; and in Tehran, young unmarried girls and boys share hookahs at outdoor restaurants.

Time to sup with the 'devil'

The Iran that has risen to political and military prominence is what the US and the West will have to deal and come to terms with. Baer sees Iran as the "most politically stable" country, besides Israel, in the Middle East.

Having eschewed blunt and indiscriminate terrorism - including aimless suicide bombings (but not those it considers strategic) - Iran has turned to guerilla warfare and conventional military means, nuclear weapons seemingly of secondary interest.

It perhaps could not beat the US in a traditional war but could "make America's long-term presence in the Middle East untenable", Baer thinks. He is probably right: visualise once Sunni-controlled Iraq, where, he shows, Iran is now fighting the US (and its allies, including Australia) through Shia proxies. Likewise, Shia <u>Hezbollah</u> is Iran's effective proxy in Lebanon.

"For too long now, the West has looked at Iran through a prism that distorts the country beyond recognition," Baer writes. Iran, he says, wants to be treated fairly, to be recognised as a stable country, the most powerful in the Persian Gulf, a major oil producer, a regional economic power and a major influence in Islam. It is time to see this is the new Iran, one changed from that of Khomeini's revolution.

Baer believes the only realistic option for the US is to end its ostracism of Iran and sup with this "devil", negotiating to discover if there is a confluence of interests. He suspects there is, suggesting several quid pro quos.

Among them: that the 30-year economic sanctions on Iran be eased if it halts arms shipments to <u>Hezbollah</u> (he notes that trade continues despite sanctions); in return for negotiating an Israeli-Palestinian settlement, Iran should help impose a ceasefire on the Palestinians; joint US-Iran naval patrols in the Gulf be instituted, with Iran agreeing to stop challenging American ships, it being in both countries' oil interests to keep the Gulf open; and the US grant Iran a defined security role in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Such a seemingly far-reaching scenario may not sit well with some of America's Western or Middle-East allies, particularly Israel, or the US's Israel lobby and the country's conservatives. Yet the astronomical cost of maintaining its current stance may be the deciding factor.

Graphic

PHOTO: View from the top ... Baer elaborates on the differences between Shia (Shi'ite) and Sunni Islam in Iran. Photo: Reuters

Load-Date: March 29, 2009



The 'Harem Revolution'

Pittsburgh Tribune Review
June 14, 2009 Sunday

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Length: 728 words

Body

WASHINGTON

Back from his foreign travels, President Barack Obama now faces worries ranging from manipulating a new health-care system and growing immigration issues to increasing unemployment and home foreclosures. He has to design new foreign policies and take care of the minutiae that elevate the White House to an appearance of being the power structure of the West.

There is, however, a bright spot. Somewhat to many's surprise, the U.S.-backed coalition won the Lebanese elections on June 7. It obtained 68 votes in the new parliament. <u>Hezbollah</u> won only 57 seats. (Dear old Jimmy Carter was there as an "observer," bleating praises for the process.)

Had the terrorist group won, the United States would have had to quickly decide whether to recognize the validity of the elections or continue to use the terrorist moniker. The president would have had to implement the wonderful encouragement that he gave to the Islamic world in Cairo.

An immediate result: Israel no longer could be an ally of the West but firmly would be in the Russian camp. This, in turn, would have changed the political landscape in every energy-producing and resource-rich nation in the Mideast and Africa.

With the American coalition winning over the Syrian- and Iranian-backed <u>Hezbollah</u>, there is time to develop and demonstrate that the United States can be trusted and that a peace process, from Lebanon to Somalia, is workable.

Obama was elegant in his Cairo appearance and hit a near-perfect note after George Bush's expeditions into the Muslim world. He managed to retain the support of many Americans and dazzle his audience.

Judging by the body language shown on television, the president did less well with the heads of the German and French governments. But the people of Paris more than made up for their government with their joyful welcome of the Obamas.

(use drop cap here) Meanwhile, Michelle Obama quietly achieved a harem revolution in the East Wing quarters.

Overnight, the first lady's chief of staff, a very political and potentially highly vocal lady from Iowa, Jackie Norris, was "promoted" to a new job. Her replacement is a longtime Michelle friend, Susan Sher, who had worked with Michelle Obama since the early 1990s, first in the Chicago mayor's office and later at the University of Chicago Medical Center.

Sher, educated at George Washington and Loyola universities, followed the Obamas to Washington and was associate counsel to the president, working on health-care issues and leading Jewish outreach.

The 'Harem Revolution'

Susan Sher also can be termed a protege of Valerie Bowman Jarrett, one of the three senior advisers to the president, with particular responsibilities for intergovernmental relations and public liaison.

Jarrett is a Chicago businesswoman and powerful civic leader with degrees in psychology and law. She has a longtime record working in the mayor's office and is credited with hiring Michelle Obama and, subsequently, vetting and approving of her then-boyfriend Barack.

The third member of the triumvirate around the president is the first lady's social secretary, Desiree Rogers, a prominent Chicago businesswoman and Harvard MBA. As the first black White House social secretary, she lives in the same Georgetown building as Sher and Jarrett.

Friend of the family, major fundraiser and a leader in Chicago corporate and civic circles, Rogers completes the simultaneously offensive and defensive circles that protect the presidency. Not an organizer of afternoon teas, she is a powerhouse of organizational skills.

Our preoccupation with the four ladies in the East Wing was triggered because the <u>women</u> of 2009 appear to have the brains and the skills so sadly lacking among us mere males.

The first lady has the potential to be today's Rosie the Riveter.

The first lady is strong, feminine and combative. Her great-great-grandfather Jim Robinson was a slave on the Friendfield Plantation in South Carolina until at least the Civil War. She went from Princeton to Harvard and then to the White House.

There can be no doubt in our minds that Michelle Obama and her three close friends have an agenda for turning the ideology of the president into a meaningful strategy for successful change now lacking in our government.

Let's hope that we at least find it agreeable.

Dateline D.C. is written by a Washington-based British journalist and political observer.

Load-Date: June 14, 2009



WOMEN DESERVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES

The Capital Times (Madison, Wisconsin)
February 2, 2009 Monday
ALL EDITION

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Section: OPINION; Pg. WEB

Length: 1188 words

Body

Dear Editor: I cannot believe that in the year 2009 I still have to write to you to protect the health of <u>women</u> and families. But I feel I must.

I am not pro-abortion as the pro-life folks tend to think. I am pro-<u>women</u>. I am pro-family (I have three daughters and a grand-daughter) I am pro-choice.

All <u>women</u> deserve access to health care services. My family and I are grateful to the Madison Surgery Center and Planned Parenthood for providing these services to all who need them in the Madison area. Thank you!

Amy Payne Madison

Vote for Todd Price for state superintendent

Dear Editor: I'm supporting Todd Price for Wisconsin superintendent of public instruction because he understands the importance of public education, is willing to rightly call No Child Left Behind a bad law, and is dedicated to fixing Wisconsin's broken school funding formula.

In addition, he advocates for green schools and is dedicated to seeing the idea actually funded. The latter point is a critical distinction and demonstrates Price's real dedication to sustainability and clean air and clean water.

Please vote for Todd Price on Feb. 17.

Lukas Diaz Madison

Israel striving to prevent its own annihilation

Dear Editor: I personally have no problem with people like John Costello disagreeing with my opinions, but I do take offense when I am misquoted and that it is used as proof of my being wrong-minded. I never said, "Unlike the Palestinians, European Jews and Israelis didn't bomb themselves to kill their neighbors people who never provoked them in another way than having a religion different than their own." His coalescing parts of two sentences I used gives it a different meaning, in addition to his leaving out parts of what I said that didn't fit his obvious anti-Israeli rhetoric.

While it is true that the original Ten Commandments did not contain "Love thy neighbor as thyself," those words are found in both the Bible and the Torah. I am confident that Moses, who brought down the Ten Commandments from

WOMEN DESERVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES

the Mount Sinai, understood as most people do that in war killing is necessary to preserve our freedoms, as was done in WWII. The Israeli "refuseniks" as Costello calls them are just like the pacifists in America who opposed our getting involved in WWII, and unfortunately they will be some of the first to be slaughtered by Hamas and **Hezbollah** when they run to them waving their white flags.

Unfortunately, Costello doesn't understand the meaning of annihilation when he thinks the refuseniks don't want to see their country annihilate their neighbors. It is not and has never been the purpose of the Israeli defense forces to cause their neighbors to cease to exist, something that cannot be said for Hamas, <u>Hezbollah</u> and Iran, which supports and supplies them. The Israelis' intention is to kill those who want to annihilate them, not the innocent Palestinians who are used as human shields by the actions of Hamas and **Hezbollah**.

Ernie Pellegrino Madison

Editor's note: When Pellegrino pointed out to The Capital Times that Costello did not quote Pellegrino exactly (partly because of a software error), we substituted Pellegrino's exact words into Costello's letter.

Story misstated my opinion on skin care

Dear Editor: I truly am fit to be tied. I cooperated fully when interviewed by Shawn Doherty for the story that ran Jan. 28 in the Cap Times about my willingness to be open about the fact that I've had facial care (although not "work") including Botox injections. I was at pains to say that I was NOT in favor of cosmetic surgery, had not had facial surgery, and employed the painless and curative methods employed by Kim Schuthardt at Lasting Skin Solutions to avoid consideration of cosmetic surgery. I told her that Kim, who is not a cosmetic surgeon but a nurse practitioner, had helped me use a series of cleansing and moisturizing products that had given me skin as good as I had in my 30s. I repeated the name of my skin care specialist carefully so that the reporter would understand that I do not see a surgeon.

Instead, Doherty described me as an enthusiastic "fan" of cosmetic surgery. Receiving Botox injections is not surgery in anyone's book.

I never got away with that kind of sloppy reporting when I worked for The Capital Times. What's changed?

Jacquelyn Mitchard Oregon

Madison Surgery Center should get OK to offer mid-trimester abortions

Dear Editor: We must applaud the consciousness and compassion of the health care providers and professionals who took the initiative in making sure abortion services remain available and accessible to <u>women</u> in south-central Wisconsin. We must also thank Meriter Hospital and the UW Medical Foundation for already voting to provide second-trimester abortion care at their Madison Surgery Center.

The final vote of the UW Hospital and Clinic's Authority Board is scheduled for Wednesday. As a community we must urge the vote to be in support of **women**'s health and safety.

Only 1 percent of abortions in Wisconsin happen after the 20th week of pregnancy; however, the accessibility of this procedure is crucial. Ninety-seven percent of rural counties in the United States have no abortion provider; therefore <u>women</u> are already traveling, taking days off work, and finding child care and a place to stay when they are vulnerable and making one of the most difficult decisions of their lives. Let's ensure that this procedure can take place as close to home as possible, in a safe medical setting like our very own Madison Surgery Center.

Sara Eskrich Verona

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5 UW student groups support abortion options

WOMEN DESERVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Dear Editor: Five University of Wisconsin-Madison student groups -- Sex Out Loud, College Democrats of Madison, UW Students for Choice, Medical Students for Choice, and Wisconsin Law Students for Reproductive Justice -- commend the UW Hospital and Clinics and the Madison Surgery Center for demonstrating their commitment to <u>women</u>'s health care. We would like to take this opportunity to further urge the UW Hospital and Clinics and the Madison Surgery Center to fully incorporate second-trimester abortion procedures into their health care services.

We applaud their stance at the forefront of <u>women</u>'s health care despite the aggressive, misleading, and inflammatory rhetoric put forth by anti-choice individuals and groups. We are proud to represent a university system which believes meeting the needs of <u>women</u> and families is more important than placating ill-informed organizations and the politicians who pander to the small minority of their constituencies.

Limiting access to these procedures denies <u>women</u> their rights to privacy, autonomy, and potentially life. We thank the UW Hospital and Clinics and the Madison Surgery Center for expanding our access to these vital health care services, and we thank them for upholding this university's image as a progressive, pioneering institution which works to improve the health and quality of life for every person in this state.

With gratitude and pride, Sex Out Loud College Democrats of Madison UW Students for Choice Medical Students for Choice Wisconsin Law Students for Reproductive Justice

The Capital Times - 2/02/2009 5:35 pm

Load-Date: February 4, 2009



Lebanese Parliament lowers voting age to 18, delays other legislation

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

March 20, 2009 Friday

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Length: 675 words **Byline:** Therese Sfeir

Body

Lebanon's Parliament on Thursday approved a draft-law to lower the voting age from 21 to 18, but the measure will not come into effect in time for the June elections. Parliament convened in a session attended by more than 100 deputies, who showed strong support for the proposal, which calls for amending Article 21 of the Constitution.

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Parliament on Thursday approved a draft-law to lower the voting age from 21 to 18, but the measure will not come into effect in time for the June elections. Parliament convened in a session attended by more than 100 deputies, who showed strong support for the proposal, which calls for amending Article 21 of the Constitution to lower the voting age.

Speaking on behalf of the Democratic Gathering bloc, MP Marwan Hamadeh said: "In this bad situation, the best thing to offer our youth is this proposal."

MP Elias Atallah, for his part, said: "Today, we should all be proud of this proposal."

Lebanese Forces MP George Adwan said the draft-law was the right of the youth who had "made the Cedar Revolution and the Resistance"

Speaking on behalf of <u>Hizbullah</u>, MP Hassan Fadlallah called for "passing the proposal as soon as possible and transferring it to the Cabinet."

The law needs to be approved by the Cabinet within four months before being ratified.

Lebanon's electoral law was amended last September but MPs at the time refused to adopt some amendments, including lowering the voting age and introducing a quota for **women** in Parliament.

The Central News Agency reported that Speaker Nabih Berri, when asked by some MPs about the reason why he waited until now to call for a vote on the proposal, said: "Now that the emigrants were given the right to vote, there are no longer concerns that this law might stir confessional disputes."

A delegation from a youth campaign to lower the voting age and another from the civil campaign for electoral reform were also present at the session.

Lebanese Parliament lowers voting age to 18, delays other legislation

Parliament also discussed other issues, including a proposal related to Palestinian resettlement, submitted by MP Boutros Harb.

Harb's proposal did not receive the requisite number of votes for ratification.

In addition, a proposal to amend Article 70 of the Constitution in order to allow for the impeachment of presidents and house speakers also fell through as it was rejected by Berri because of complaints by a large number of MPs.

Meanwhile, a proposal to abolish taxes on the prices of gasoline and another to grant amnesty for crimes committed prior to April 27, 2005, put forth by Lebanese Forces MP Antoine Zahra, were not discussed by legislators.

Another proposal on granting the government the authority to pass laws pertaining to customs did not receive the requisite number of votes for ratification due to lack of quorum.

In remarks during the session, Harb asked about the measures adopted by the government and the Interior Ministry to organize the electoral process.

He also criticized what he called government's failure to facilitate the travel of Lebanese living abroad to Lebanon to participate in the elections.

Prime Minister Fouad Siniora also replied to several questions raised by the MPs. He said that no information was announced so far on the abduction of MEA employee Joseph Sader.

Fifty-year-old Sader worked as an Information Technology expert for MEA and was abducted on February 12 on his way into work at Beirut International Airport, allegedly by three unidentified assailants who bundled him into a sport utility vehicle.

Meanwhile, as MPs debated the proposed laws, the General Federation of Labor Unions held a protest outside Parliament building to call for abolishing taxes on gas and fuel.

Contracted public school teachers and workers, as well as electricity bill collectors joined the unions' protest.

The Lebanese Democratic Youth Union also held a demonstration in front of Parliament, calling for lowering the voting age by amending Article 21 of the Constitution.

Berri postponed the Parliament session to March 26 due to a lack of quorum to discuss other items on the agenda.

Load-Date: March 19, 2009



World Report

Windsor Star (Ontario)

November 12, 2009 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. B2; World Report

Length: 1606 words

Byline: Star News Services

Body

EUROPE

BRITONS AMONG THE 'UGLIEST PEOPLE'

LONDON - Britons are among the ugliest people in the world, according to a dating website that says it only allows "beautiful people" to join.

Fewer than one in eight British men and just three in 20 <u>women</u> who have applied to BeautifulPeople.com have been accepted, an e-mailed statement from the website showed.

Existing members of the "elite dating site" rate how attractive potential members are over a 48-hour period, after applicants upload a recent photo and personal profile.

Swedish men have proved the most successful, with 65 per cent being accepted, while Norwegian <u>women</u> are considered the most beautiful with 76 per cent accepted, the website said.

The way that BeautifulPeople.com accepts new members is simple. A potential member applies with a photo and a brief profile. Over 48 hours, existing members of the opposite sex vote whether or not to admit them, the site said.

Options are: "Yes definitely," "Hmm yes, OK," "Hmm no, not really" and "No, definitely not."

The site was founded in 2002 in Denmark and went live across the globe last month. Since then, the site has rejected nearly 1.8 million people from 190 countries, admitting just 360,000 new members.

"I would say Britain is stumbling because they don't spend as much time polishing up their appearance and they are letting themselves down on physical fitness," Beautiful People managing director Greg Hodge said. "Next to Brazilian and Scandinavian beauties, British people just aren't as toned or glamorous."

PILOT CHARGED WITH BEING DRUNK

LONDON - A United Airlines pilot has been charged after being arrested at London's Heathrow Airport on suspicion of being drunk shortly before he was about to fly a transatlantic airliner, police said on Wednesday.

World Report

Erwin Washington, 51, from Lakewood, Colo., was charged with "being aviation staff, performing an aviation function whilst exceeding the proscribed alcohol limit," a London police spokesman said.

Washington was arrested Monday before he was due to fly a Boeing 767 with 124 passengers and 11 crew to Chicago.

United, a unit of UAL Corp, said he had been suspended pending a full investigation.

ISRAEL READY TO TALK PEACE WITH SYRIA

PARIS - Israel is ready to restart peace talks with Syria without conditions, a senior Israeli official said Wednesday after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Paris.

Telephone talks arranged by Turkish mediators between the arch foes were broken off last year during Israel's offensive in Gaza, closing a promising diplomatic channel towards a broader Middle East settlement.

Following talks in Paris with France's President Nicolas Sarkozy, a senior Israeli travelling with the prime minister said: "Mr. Sarkozy raised the issue of the Syrian track.

"The prime minister said he is willing to meet with the Syrian president at any time and anywhere to move on the peace negotiations on the basis of no preconditions," he added.

MONUMENT TO RAID VICTIMS PROFANED

WARSAW - A monument dedicated to thousands of German victims of Allied bombing raids on a Baltic Sea island in 1945 has been desecrated, Polish news agency PAP reported on Wednesday.

Seven Polish resistance symbols from the Second World War were discovered early Wednesday on the memorial in a cemetery on the island of Usedom, which is on the Polish-German border and is divided between the two countries, PAP said.

Janusz Zmurkiewicz, mayor of Swinoujscie on the Polish part of the island, condemned the vandalism as "dreadful."

"As residents of both Swinoujscie and the shared Polish-German island of Usedom, we condemn with the utmost severity the desecration of the monument," the mayor said, cited by PAP. "It has profaned a place aimed at reminding us of the cruellest of wars which claimed millions of victims."

"I ask our German friends... to accept my sincere apologies and my firm condemnation of this act."

AFRICA

AT LEAST 20 DIE IN TANZANIA FLOODS

DAR ES SALAAM - Floods and landslides after three days of torrential rains killed at least 20 people and left 10 missing in northern Tanzania's Kilimanjaro region, officials said.

Seven schoolchildren were among the dead in the village of Goha, according to local official Ibrahim Marwa.

Seven houses in the village were engulfed by mud and water, the official said. Eighteen bodies were retrieved from damaged houses in Goha Wednesday and two bodies were later seen floating in a nearby river.

"We are still looking for more bodies or missing people," he added.

"There were heavy rains for three days that led to floods and landslides," said Tanzania Meteorological Agency official Philbert Tibaijuka.

GUNMEN KILL TWO SOMALI OFFICIALS

World Report

MOGADISHU - Gunmen shot and killed two Somali officials in the breakaway state of Puntland on Wednesday, police and witnesses told AFP.

Mohamed Abdi Aware, a Supreme Court judge in Puntland was gunned down in the region's commercial capital Bossaso while lawmaker Ibrahim Elmi Gab was killed minutes later in the administrative capital Garowe.

"Aware was killed by unidentified gunmen when he left a mosque in the town after performing his evening prayers," Col. Mohamed Warsameh, a Bossaso police officer told AFP.

In a separate incident gunmen killed Ibrahim Elmi Gab, a long-serving Puntland lawmaker as he left a tea shop.

"The MP left friends at a tea shop when gunmen opened fire on him, he died and the police are still investigating the incident," Ahmed Moalim Nur, a police officer in Garowe, told AFP.

MIDDLE EAST

AID WORKER HELD OVER BOY'S SHOOTING

KABUL - An American aid worker in northern Afghanistan is being held by Afghan authorities over the fatal shooting of an Afghan teenager at his home, a provincial police chief said Wednesday.

Mohammad Bilal Niram, chief of police in the northern Sar-i-pul province, said the aid worker had killed his landlord's 16-year-old son with three gunshots, possibly suspecting a burglary when the boy tried to enter his home.

"He is in Afghan government custody for investigation. He has not been charged," Niram said.

The man worked for GP he said, referring to Global Partners, a U.K.-based aid group which says it has run programs in Afghanistan since 1993. Staff at the organization's London headquarters declined to comment on the incident.

HEZBOLLAH CHIEF: 'AVOID BIG ISSUES'

BEIRUT - <u>Hezbollah</u> chief Hassan Nasrallah vowed on Wednesday to co-operate with Lebanon's new unity government but warned that it should avoid the "big issues," in allusion to his group's weapons.

"Success for this government, its prime minister and ministers will mean success for Lebanon and <u>Hezbollah</u>," Nasrallah said in a televised address to mark <u>Hezbollah</u>'s martyrs' day.

"But I call for patience in dealing with the big issues," he added, alluding to demands by the UN Security Council and his local rivals for the disarmament of his Shiite militant group. "If we start with this now, we are headed straight for problems."

SOUTH AMERICA

LULA REBUFFS CRITICISM

BRASILIA - Brazil's president rejected criticism on Wednesday over the president of Iran's upcoming visit to the South American country, saying all sides needed to be involved to achieve peace in the Middle East.

"One does not build the peace necessary in the Middle East if one doesn't speak to all the political and religious factions," President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva told reporters during a visit by Israeli President Shimon Peres.

Peres' visit to the Latin American giant comes two weeks before Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is due to come to Brazil on Nov. 23.

Jewish leaders have criticized Brazil's plans to receive the Iranian president, urging it to condemn his denial of the Holocaust and "support of international terrorism."

World Report

Peres has urged Brazil to use its growing voice on the international stage to help curb Iran's nuclear ambitions and support for militant Palestinian groups. He attacked Iran as a "global danger" bent on destroying Israel in a speech Tuesday to Brazilian Congress.

KILO OF METAL FOUND IN STOMACH

LIMA - Doctors in northern Peru have removed almost a kilogram of nails, coins and scrap metal from a man's stomach, a surgeon that operated on him said Wednesday.

"The patient came in with severe abdominal pains. After examinations we discovered that he had hundreds of nails in his stomach," Carlos Delgado, a surgeon at the hospital in the town of Cajamarca, told AFP.

Requelme Abanto Alvarado was admitted to the hospital on Friday. After a two-hour operation doctors removed 900 grams (two pounds) of nails, coins and scrap metal from his stomach, as well as a small knife.

"I have never had a case like this," the surgeon said. "I have operated on plenty of patients, but so many things in a stomach, it's really extraordinary."

Alvarado was in a stable condition following the operation, Delgado said, adding that he was now being examined by mental health specialists.

ASIA

NORTH KOREA SAYS SEA CLASH STAGED

SEOUL - North Korea accused South Korea's military today of staging this week's naval clash to raise tensions, as Seoul sent a destroyer to reinforce the tense Yellow Sea border.

Rodong Sinmun, the newspaper of the ruling communist party, said Tuesday's clash was not accidental but stemmed from a conspiracy by Seoul's military "to turn inter-Korean relations towards tension through military provocation."

Each side has blamed the other for the exchange of fire near the disputed border, which came just over a week before a scheduled visit to Seoul by U.S. President Barack Obama.

The South has sent one of its newer destroyers equipped with torpedoes and guided missiles closer to the border, military sources told AFP, in addition to two extra patrol boats.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Paula Bronstein, Getty Images; REMEMBERING FALLEN COMRADES: A view of the British Cemetery where British military and embassy personnel took part in a Remembrance Day ceremony on Wednesday in Kabul, Afghanistan. So far the U.K. death toll in Afghanistan is 232. Armistice Day traditionally marks the end of the First World War when Germany and the allied forces signed the armistice signalling the end of hostilities on the Western Front. The cessation of the war officially took effect on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month and is marked annually by services of remembrance for all those who have fallen in wars and a two-minute silence.;

Load-Date: November 12, 2009



There's more anti-Christian hate speech around

The Star (South Africa)
July 27, 2009 Monday
e1 Edition

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Section: Pg. 9

Length: 285 words

Body

I READ AK Mia's letter ("Christians are full of hatred, not Muslims", The Star, July 21) and wish to enlighten him, because his letter shows how misinformed he is.

Mecca and Medina are no-go areas for non-Muslims as these are the sacred cities of Islam. But that does not apply to the Vatican or any other sacred Christian site.

St Peter's is a Catholic shrine and only Catholic Masses are held there. But that does not mean that Muslims, Protestants, Jews, members of other faiths or even atheists are forbidden from entering.

Mr Mia, while you will be welcomed at any Christian church service - even in the Vatican - neither I nor any other non-Muslim will be extended this courtesy in any mosque or in Mecca or Medina.

You said the pope hated Muslims. Well, you are wrong. John Paul II and Benedict XVI have tried to reconcile Catholics with members of other faiths, and the pontiff has never once made anti-Muslim remarks. But I have heard more anti-Christian hate speech from Hamas and <u>Hezbollah</u> clerics in Lebanon. Even Osama bin Laden has said both Jews and Christians are to be wiped out. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has made anti-Christian remarks and denied that the Holocaust happened.

John Paul II prayed at the Wailing Wall, a holy site for Jews, and even attended the opening of a mosque in Rome. Would the Saudi king allow him to worship in Mecca? I doubt it. Please don't compare the Vatican or Italy with Saudi Arabia. Italy's human rights record is better than Saudi Arabia's. There is no death penalty and <u>women</u> are treated with dignity.

The Saudi royal family rule like dictators. In Italy, freedom of speech is enshrined in the constitution, as is freedom of religion.

Paul Pompa

Boksburg

Load-Date: July 26, 2009



Obama appeals for fresh start between US and Muslims

The Irish Times

June 5, 2009 Friday

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Section: FRONT PAGE; Pg. 1

Length: 634 words

Byline: MARY FITZGERALD, Foreign Affairs Correspondent

Body

US PRESIDENT Barack Obama yesterday called for a new beginning in relations between his country and the world's Muslims, and argued that the cycle of suspicion and discord between Islam and the West must end.

Seeking to both repair the damage caused by his predecessor George W Bush and change Muslim perceptions of the US, Mr Obama, recalling a speech he gave in Turkey earlier this year, said: America is not and never will be at war with Islam.

Mr Obama s address to a 1,000-strong crowd gathered at Cairo University fulfilled a pledge he made during his inauguration to deliver a major speech aimed specifically at Muslims.

Acknowledging that his address came at a time of tension between the US and Muslims around the world tension rooted in historical forces that go beyond any current policy debate Mr Obama nevertheless appealed for a fresh start.

I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect, he said. America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition.

In a wide-ranging speech that alternated between addressing the grievances many Muslims hold against the US, and stressing the need to jointly tackle issues such as violent extremism, Mr Obama struck a respectful, conciliatory, and at times firm, tone.

He opened with a traditional greeting in Arabic and frequently quoted from the Koran, drawing raucous applause and cheering from the audience.

He referred to his own Muslim father and recalled his childhood in Indonesia, the world s most populous Muslim nation.

So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, he said.

Mr Obama told his audience of millions watching and listening from across the world that he did not want a permanent US troop presence in Iraq or Afghanistan, and he repeated his wish to resolve differences with Tehran on the basis of mutual respect. It will be hard to overcome decades of mistrust, but we will proceed with courage, rectitude and resolve, Mr Obama said.

Obama appeals for fresh start between US and Muslims

He affirmed his commitment to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, saying it was in the interests of all concerned, but announced no specific changes to US policy in the region.

While he referred to America s unbreakable bond with Israel, he also strongly rebuked Israel for building illegal settlements.

He described the Palestinians life under occupation as intolerable but added that they must abandon violence and acknowledge Israel s right to exist.

Despite addressing issues such as democracy, human rights and <u>women</u> s rights, Mr Obama offered few specifics, and his failure to mention offending regimes by name disappointed many activists, particularly in the Arab world.

He decried negative stereotypes of Islam but said some Muslims were also guilty of stereotyping the US and its citizens.

Mr Obama himself admitted one speech would not make much of a difference, and he said many were opposed to the idea of a fresh start.

Some are eager to stoke the flames of division, and to stand in the way of progress.

Some suggest that it isn t worth the effort that we are fated to disagree, and civilisations are doomed to clash.

There is so much fear, so much mistrust. But if we choose to be bound by the past, we will never move forward.

Reaction to the much-anticipated speech was mixed. In Damascus, Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal praised Mr Obama s new language but echoed the feelings of many in the Middle East when he said he was looking for more than just mere words .

Mohammed Habib, deputy leader of Egypt s Muslim Brotherhood, described the speech as a public relations address.

Iranian officials criticised it, as did representatives of *Hizbullah* in Lebanon.

Load-Date: June 5, 2009



<u>Mideast gets mediator in the form of an ex-spy; Former British agent uses</u> backdoor meetings to reach out to Islamists

The International Herald Tribune
May 2, 2009 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 782 words

Byline: Andrew Jacobs - The New York Times

Dateline: BEIJING

Body

Talking to Islamists is the new order of the day in Washington and London. The Obama administration wants a dialogue with Iran, and the British Foreign office has decided to reopen diplomatic contacts with <u>Hezbollah</u>, the Shiite militant group here.

But for several years now, small groups of Western diplomats have been making quiet trips to Beirut for confidential sessions with members of Hamas, *Hezbollah* and other Islamist groups they did not want to be seen talking to. In hotel conference rooms, they would warily shake hands, then spend hours listening and hashing out accusations of terrorism on one side and imperial arrogance on the other.

The organizer of these backdoor encounters is Alastair Crooke, a quiet, sandy-haired man of 59 who spent three decades working for MI6, the British secret intelligence service. He now runs a research organization here called Conflicts Forum, with an unusual board of advisers that includes former spies, diplomats and peace activists.

Mr. Crooke has spent much of his career talking to Islamists. In the 1980s, as a young undercover agent in Pakistan and Afghanistan, he helped funnel weapons to jihadists fighting the Soviets. Later, he spent years working with Hamas and Fatah as a negotiator for the European Union and helped broker a number of cease-fires with Israel from 2001 to 2003. He earned a reputation for courage and tenacity, but in person he is disarmingly polite and mild-mannered, a slight-figured man with a beaky, impish smile.

The mission of Conflicts Forum, which he created in 2004, resembles a kind of blueprint for the Obama administration's outreach efforts: to "open a new relationship between the West and Muslim world" through dialogue and mutual understanding.

Yet Mr. Crooke, who is legendary for his deep network of contacts among Islamist groups across the Middle East, is not sanguine about the prospects for mere dialogue, especially with Iran.

"I think there is a real fear there will be a process of talking past each other," he said. "The Iranians will say, 'We want to talk about justice and respect.' The U.S. will say, 'Are you willing to give up enrichment or not?"

To get past that impasse with Iran, and with Islamist groups generally, the West will need to change its diplomatic language of threats and rewards, Mr. Crooke said, and show more respect for their adversaries' point of view.

Mideast gets mediator in the form of an ex-spy Former British agent uses backdoor meetings to reach out to Islamists

Mr. Crooke has spent the past few years trying to explain that to suspicious Westerners, in a stream of articles, speeches and conferences. Although not an Arabist by training, he has developed a deep knowledge of modern Islamist movements and launches easily into analyses of Palestinian politics, or even of medieval Islamic philosophy.

Now he has taken his explanatory efforts a bit further. In a book, "Resistance: The Essence of the Islamist Revolution," he deliberately avoids the most controversial subjects, like Israel and the status of <u>women</u> in the Islamic world. Instead, he focuses on what he calls the core of the Islamist revolution, which he defines as a metaphysical resistance to the West's market-based definition of the individual and society.

Not surprisingly, the book has received some stinging reviews and renewed accusations that Mr. Crooke has gone native. Even some of his fellow board members at Conflicts Forum say they are a little baffled.

Mr. Crooke said the book grew out of his own efforts to find common ground with Islamists and to look beyond the usual stumbling blocks.

"It seemed to me there was a real need to understand what was happening inside Islamism better, and to valorize what they were saying in ways that could be understood in the West," he said.

That project seems inseparable from his broader argument about dialogue. To illustrate it, Mr. Crooke describes an episode from the conflict in Northern Ireland in which the British put two opposing factions into a room for talks, "naïvely imagining that talking would help." It did the opposite, reinforcing their anger.

So the negotiators tried another approach: They asked both sides to write down their histories and their visions for the future. After three more years of talks, the factions finally reached the point at which they acknowledged the legitimacy of the other side's positions.

"George Mitchell once said to me, 'You don't even have a political process until you accept that the other side has a legitimate point of view," Mr. Crooke said, referring to Mr. Mitchell's landmark 1998 Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland and relating it to the many obstacles between the United States and Iran.

"Does America have the will and the patience for that?" he said. "I'm not sure we're there yet."

Load-Date: May 19, 2009



Obama stands idly by while Iranians fight for liberty

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

June 21, 2009 Sunday

Copyright 2009 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 816 words

Byline: Charles Krauthammer

Body

WASHINGTON? Millions of Iranians take to the streets to defy a theocratic dictatorship that, among its other finer qualities, is a self-declared enemy of America and the tolerance and liberties it represents. The demonstrators are fighting on their own, but they await just a word that America is on their side. And what do they hear from the president of the United States?

Silence. Then, worse. Three days in, the president makes clear his policy: continued "dialogue" with their clerical masters. Dialogue with a regime that is breaking heads, shooting demonstrators, expelling journalists, arresting activists. Engagement with ? which inevitably confers legitimacy upon ? leaders elected in a process that begins as a sham (only four handpicked candidates permitted out of 476) and ends in overt rigging. Then, after treating this popular revolution as an inconvenience to the real business of negotiations between President Barack Obama and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the president speaks favorably of "some initial reaction from the supreme leader that indicates he understands the Iranian people have deep concerns about the election." Where to begin? "Supreme leader"? Note the abject solicitousness with which the American president confers this honorific on a clerical dictator who, even as his minions attack demonstrators, offers to examine some returns in some electoral districts? a farcical fix that will do nothing to alter the fraudulence of the election. Moreover, this incipient revolution is no longer about the election. Obama totally misses the point. The election allowed the political space and provided the spark for the eruption of anti-regime fervor that has been simmering for years and awaiting its moment. But people aren't dying in the street because they want a recount of hanging chads in suburban Isfahan. They want to bring down the tyrannical, misogynist, corrupt theocracy that has imposed itself with the very baton-wielding goons that today attack the demonstrators. This started out about election fraud. But like all revolutions, it has far outgrown its origins. What's at stake now is the very legitimacy of this regime? and the future of the entire Middle East. This revolution will end either as a Tiananmen (a hot Tiananmen with massive and bloody repression or a cold Tiananmen with a finer mix of brutality and co-optation) or as a true revolution that brings down the Islamic Republic. The latter is improbable but, for the first time in 30 years, not impossible. Imagine the repercussions. It would mark a decisive blow to Islamist radicalism, of which Iran today is not just standard-bearer and model, but financier and arms supplier. It would do to Islamism what the collapse of the Soviet Union did to communism? leave it forever spent and discredited. In the region, it would launch a second Arab spring. The first in 2005 ? the expulsion of Syria from Lebanon, first elections in Iraq and early liberalization in the Gulf states and Egypt? was aborted by a fierce counterattack from the forces of repression and reaction, led and funded by Iran. Now, with <u>Hezbollah</u> having lost elections in Lebanon and with Iraq establishing the institutions of a young democracy, the fall of the Islamist dictatorship in Iran would have an electric and contagious effect. The exception? Iraq and Lebanon? becomes the rule. Democracy becomes the wave. Syria becomes isolated; *Hezbollah* and Hamas, patronless. The entire trajectory of the region is reversed. All hangs in the balance. The Khamenei regime is deciding whether to do a Tiananmen. And what side is the Obama administration taking? None. Except for the desire that this "vigorous

Obama stands idly by while Iranians fight for liberty

debate" (press secretary Robert Gibbs' disgraceful euphemism) over election "irregularities" not stand in the way of U.S.-Iranian engagement on nuclear weapons. Even from the narrow perspective of the nuclear issue, the administration's geopolitical calculus is absurd. There is zero chance that any such talks will denuclearize Iran. On Monday, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared yet again that the nuclear "file is shut, forever." The only hope for a resolution of the nuclear question is regime change, which (if the successor regime were as moderate as pre-Khomeini Iran) might either stop the program or make it manageable and nonthreatening. That's our fundamental interest. And our fundamental values demand that America stand with demonstrators opposing a regime that is the antithesis of all we believe. And where is our president? Afraid of "meddling." Afraid to take sides between the head-breaking, women-shackling exporters of terror? and the people in the street yearning to breathe free. This from a president who fancies himself the restorer of America's moral standing in the world. Charles Krauthammer's e-mail address is letters@charleskrauthammer.com Washington Post Writers Group

Load-Date: June 21, 2009



Obama is all for hope and change; But apparently, not for Iranians

Charleston Gazette (West Virginia)

June 20, 2009, Saturday

Copyright 2009 Charleston Newspapers **Section:** EDITORIAL; Pg. P5A

Length: 795 words

Byline: Charles Krauthammer

Body

WASHINGTON - Millions of Iranians take to the streets to defy a theocratic dictatorship that, among its other finer qualities, is a self-declared enemy of America and the tolerance and liberties it represents.

The demonstrators are fighting on their own, but they await just a word that America is on their side.

And what do they hear from the president of the United States?

Silence. Then, worse. Three days in, the president makes clear his policy: continued "dialogue" with their clerical masters.

Dialogue with a regime that is breaking heads, shooting demonstrators, expelling journalists, arresting activists.

Engagement with - which inevitably confers legitimacy upon - leaders elected in a process that begins as a sham (only four handpicked candidates permitted out of 476) and ends in overt rigging.

Then, after treating this popular revolution as an inconvenience to the real business of Obama-Khamanei negotiations, the president speaks favorably of "some initial reaction from the Supreme Leader that indicates he understands the Iranian people have deep concerns about the election."

Where to begin?

"Supreme Leader"? Note the abject solicitousness with which the American president confers this honorific on a clerical dictator who, even as his minions attack demonstrators, offers to examine some returns in some electoral districts - a farcical fix that will do nothing to alter the fraudulence of the election.

Moreover, this incipient revolution is no longer about the election.

Obama totally misses the point. The election allowed the political space and provided the spark for the eruption of anti-regime fervor that has been simmering for years and awaiting its moment.

But people aren't dying in the street because they want a recount of hanging chads in suburban Isfahan. They want to bring down the tyrannical, misogynist, corrupt theocracy that has imposed itself with the very baton-wielding goons that today attack the demonstrators.

This started out about election fraud. But like all revolutions, it has far outgrown its origins.

Obama is all for hope and change But apparently, not for Iranians

What's at stake now is the very legitimacy of this regime - and the future of the entire Middle East.

This revolution will end either as a Tiananmen (a hot Tiananmen with massive and bloody repression or a cold Tiananmen with a finer mix of brutality and co-optation) or as a true revolution that brings down the Islamic Republic.

The latter is improbable but, for the first time in 30 years, not impossible.

Imagine the repercussions. It would mark a decisive blow to Islamist radicalism, of which Iran today is not just standard-bearer and model, but financier and arms supplier.

It would do to Islamism what the collapse of the Soviet Union did to communism - leave it forever spent and discredited.

In the region, it would launch a second Arab spring. The first in 2005 - the expulsion of Syria from Lebanon, first elections in Iraq and early liberalization in the Gulf states and Egypt - was aborted by a fierce counterattack from the forces of repression and reaction, led and funded by Iran.

Now, with <u>Hezbollah</u> having lost elections in Lebanon and with Iraq establishing the institutions of a young democracy, the fall of the Islamist dictatorship in Iran would have an electric and contagious effect.

The exception - Iraq and Lebanon - becomes the rule. Democracy becomes the wave. Syria becomes isolated; *Hezbollah* and Hamas, patronless.

The entire trajectory of the region is reversed.

All hangs in the balance. The Khamenei regime is deciding whether to do a Tiananmen.

And what side is the Obama administration taking?

None - except for the desire that this "vigorous debate" (press secretary Robert Gibbs' disgraceful euphemism) over election "irregularities" not stand in the way of U.S.-Iranian engagement on nuclear weapons.

Even from the narrow perspective of the nuclear issue, the administration's geopolitical calculus is absurd. There is zero chance that any such talks will denuclearize Iran.

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And where is our president?

Afraid of "meddling." Afraid to take sides between the head-breaking, <u>women</u>-shackling exporters of terror - and the people in the street yearning to breathe free.

This from a president who fancies himself the restorer of America's moral standing in the world.

Krauthammer may be reached by e-mail at letters@charles krauthammer.com.

Load-Date: June 22, 2009



Lebanon's power-distribution method 'inherently discriminatory' - US report

The Daily Star (Lebanon)
October 28, 2009 Wednesday

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Length: 730 words **Byline:** Patrick Galey

Body

Lebanon's method of distributing political power based on religion is "inherently discriminatory," according to the US State Department. America's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor released its annual International Religious Freedom report on Monday, which criticized many aspects of Lebanese sectarianism, despite declaring.

BEIRUT: Lebanon's method of distributing political power based on religion is "inherently discriminatory," according to the US State Department. America's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor released its annual International Religious Freedom report on Monday, which criticized many aspects of Lebanese sectarianism, despite declaring that the Constitution provided "freedom of religion and the freedom to practice all religious rites."

Throughout 2009, there was no change in the respect of religious freedom in Lebanon, although the report cited Interior Minister Ziyad Baroud's decision in February to allow citizens to opt out of naming their faith on identification papers as one positive step toward transcending sectarianism.

"It's a common opinion in Lebanon that the confessional system has inherent problems and that by compartmentalizing people there is no way of having proper representation," said Paul Salem, of the Carnegie Middle East Institute in Beirut.

"At the same time this is a system that is trying to balance a delicate situation."

The report said that by permitting officially recognized political groups to administer personal status laws, the government risked perpetuating social inequality.

"Many of these laws discriminate against <u>women</u>," the report said. It pointed to the Sunni inheritance law - wherein a son gets twice as much as a daughter - as an example of gender-rights disparity, although many sects have similar inequity.

Of Lebanon's 18 officially recognized sects, four are Muslim and 12 are Christian. Druze and Judaism are also constitutionally incorporated.

The report concluded that tensions among religious groups persisted, largely as a result of Lebanon's 15-year Civil War. It added that although the 1989 Taif agreement ought to be commended for equalizing Muslim and Christian

Lebanon 's power-distribution method 'inherently discriminatory' - US report

representation in government, little progress had been made in the accord's stated goal of eventually eliminating political sectarianism.

"This [elimination of sectarianism] has not occurred and it should have occurred," explained Salem.

The Taif agreement stipulates that parliamentary seats be divided "proportionately bet-ween the denominations of each sect" and reaffirms the "National Pact" arrangement wherein the president, prime minister and speaker be Maronite Christian, Sunni Muslim and Shiite Muslim respectively.

The report was also critical of Lebanon's system of political representation based on faith.

"The constitutional provision for apportioning political offices according to religious affiliation may be viewed as inherently discriminatory," it said.

The report mentioned "periodic reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief or practice," particularly toward Jewish residents.

The 2006 war with Israel had contributed to "greater political tension among religious groups" and media outlets such as <u>Hizbullah</u>-controlled Al-Manar and NBN TV, affiliated with Amal Movement leader Nabih Berri, had "broadcast anti-Semitic material and drew no government response."

The report also highlighted the issue of official governmental documents referring to Jewish Lebanese citizens as Israelis, "even though they are not Israeli citizens."

In April this year Baroud submitted a proposal to the cabinet urging this practice to cease. Jews living in Lebanon should be referred to as "Jewish Leba-nese" rather than Israeli, according to the interior minister.

There is a significant minority of unrecognized faiths in Lebanon, including Bahais, Buddhists, Hindus and some Christian Protestant groups. The report concluded these groups "are disadvantaged under the law in that their members do not qualify for certain governmental positions."

Under the current law, members of such faiths may not marry, divorce or inherit property in Lebanon.

The report stressed the need for greater studies on religious freedom among displaced peoples, many thousands of whom have flocked to Lebanon in recent years after "fleeing religious mistreatment and discrimination in neighboring states."

Load-Date: October 29, 2009



Khatami is just as rigid as the rest

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

March 23, 2009 Monday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Opinion; Pg. 9

Length: 787 words

Byline: COLIN RUBENSTEIN Colin Rubenstein is executive director of the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council

and taught Middle East politics at Monash University.

Body

The visit to Australia by the former Iranian president Mohammed Khatami has already sparked controversy. But the issue is not whether Khatami should be allowed in, or whether the groups sponsoring his visit have the right to do so. They do.

Rather, it is whether Khatami can be seen as a "reformer" and "moderate" seeking a genuine "dialogue of civilisations". The answer rests in Khatami's record rather than his rhetoric.

He was elected president in May 1997 in an Iran frustrated by a lack of personal freedoms. On "personal status" issues - such as wearing Western dress, <u>women</u> wearing make-up in public and listening to music - Khatami was indeed a reformer. He certainly presents a better image than the current president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Yet Khatami left office in 2005 having accomplished relatively little reform: pro-democracy protests were brutally suppressed under his watch, and newspapers and journals were banned. He advocated the death penalty for homosexuals, continued the punishment of stoning for adulterers, opposed <u>women</u>'s rights, and repressed minority religious and ethnic groups, such as the Baha'i.

Unsurprisingly, Khatami also believes firmly in the supremacy of clerics over Iran's political system - a bedrock principle of the theocratic regime. Otherwise the Guardian Council - a group of senior clerics who determine which candidates may stand for office - would have disqualified his candidacy.

Khatami's foreign policy fell squarely within the regime's consensus: pursuing nuclear weapons, supporting terrorists and decrying the United States, the West and Israel.

Iran's covert illegal efforts to enrich uranium were exposed in 2002, during Khatami's presidency. Its nuclear program actually advanced under him - partly because he used his moderate image as a smokescreen to deflect attention from continuing nuclear activities.

As a one of his former spokesmen bragged recently, "We had one overt policy, which was one of negotiation and confidence building, and a covert policy, which was continuation of the activities."

Iran remained the largest state sponsor of terrorism during Khatami's presidency, including its efforts - which Khatami supported - to fund and arm the Lebanese terrorist group *Hezbollah*. Khatami himself said that "we love

Khatami is just as rigid as the rest

<u>Hezbollah</u>", and referred to it as "a shining sun that illuminates and warms the hearts of all Muslims and supporters of freedom in the world".

Despite his prominent calls for a "dialogue of civilisations" between Iran and the West, Khatami was prepared to go only so far. While he wanted a dialogue with the US at the people-to-people level, he repeatedly rebuffed US attempts for a government-to-government dialogue. But as the Iranian people are among the most pro-American in the Middle East, rapprochement between the two governments was the more important dialogue.

Khatami's call for dialogue does not even extend to the people level if they are Israelis. At a conference in Kazakhstan in 2007, he reportedly refused to speak to Israeli reporters, telling them to "go to hell!", and skipped a subsequent panel discussion because an Israeli was also to speak.

His views on Israel - which mirror those of the current regime - further undermine his credibility in calling for a dialogue among peoples and faiths. He has reportedly called Israel "an old, incurable wound on the body of Islam, a wound that really possesses demonic, stinking, contagious blood". And on another occasion, he said: "If we abide by human laws, we should mobilise the whole Islamic world for a sharp confrontation with the Zionist regime . . . If we abide by the Koran, all of us should mobilise to kill."

He defended Iran's opposition to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process by arguing that Israel is a "racist, terrorist, and expansionist regime". He said: "We hope that the roots of problems in the region and the world [ie, Israel] will be destroyed."

This is not just Khatami being critical of Israeli policies or supporting the Palestinians. He is clearly calling for Israel's destruction, in much the same way that Ahmadinejad calls for Israel to be "wiped off the map".

What credibility can Khatami maintain in calling for a dialogue of civilisations when he excludes Israel and Israelis? Or when he argues there is no anti-Semitism in the Muslim world, when under his presidency Iran became a sanctuary for Holocaust revisionists?

His record shows there is no substantive difference between Khatami and Ahmadinejad or the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Calls for a "dialogue of civilisations" sound appealing, but one must question how one can have a constructive dialogue with someone who holds such extreme positions that are so widely deplored.

Load-Date: March 22, 2009



Angry over Gaza, Turkey storms out of Davos forum

Charleston Gazette (West Virginia) February 4, 2009, Wednesday

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. P4A

Length: 795 words **Byline:** Trudy Rubin

Body

DAVOS, Switzerland - In the 12 years I've been attending Davos, I've never seen anything like it.

An extraordinary, emotional debate over Gaza took place between Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Israeli President Shimon Peres at the World Economic Forum on Thursday. It ended with Erdogan storming off stage and saying he would never return to Davos, after the moderator refused him more time to respond.

What made the exchange even more astounding was that Turkey has deep relations with Israel - it is her closest Muslim ally. Moreover, Peres is known for his efforts at peacemaking and Erdogan had been mediating talks between Israel and Syria.

The drama between these two peacemakers laid bare the white-hot tensions unleashed by Israel's invasion of Gaza. Their confrontation also showed how difficult it will be for the Obama administration to renew any peace process.

It was clear that the Turkish leader took the Dec. 27 Gaza invasion very personally. On Dec. 23, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had visited Ankara for the fifth round of indirect talks with Syria.

"The goal was to see if we could move to the next phase, direct talks," Erdogan told the audience. He said he had called Syrian President Bashar al-Assad during the Olmert visit. He had also suggested that Turkey try to mediate with Hamas for the release of kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

"He [Olmert] said he would respond the next day, but we got no answer. Four days later, Israel was in Gaza," Erdogan said. The Turkish leader was humiliated. Members of his party accused him of collusion with Israel, assuming Olmert had warned him of the coming invasion.

Erdogan blames the continuing violence in Gaza on the fact that the strip is still effectively occupied by Israel, which controls airspace, sea space and territorial borders. And he was furious about Israel's "disproportionate response" to Hamas rocket attacks that left hundreds of innocent Palestinian <u>women</u> and children dead, and Gaza's infrastructure shattered.

"Hamas are not the only people in Gaza," Erdogan shouted, his voice rising, as he decried the difficulty of getting humanitarian aid through Israeli checkpoints into Gaza. "We should not be judging anyone by race or religion if they are in distress."

Angry over Gaza, Turkey storms out of Davos forum

But Peres was equally furious at Erdogan's inference that his, and Israel's, reputations were sullied by the Gaza carnage. He said Hamas had fired 5,500 rockets and 4,000 mortars toward Israel over the last five years.

Peres feels the world fails to understand the psychological and economic trauma of Hamas rocket fire on cities, which kill only a few, but totally disrupt normal life.

"One million people slept in shelters. What would you do?" he demanded, blaming Iran for supplying the rockets. "People who never demonstrated against thousands of missiles [fired against Israeli civilians] are demonstrating now."

Peres also resents the fact that past Israeli peace efforts have been forgotten, including, in his view, the 2005 pullout from Gaza. His own prime ministership was destroyed in 1996 when Palestinian bus bombs murdered dozens of civilians and undercut Israeli faith in the peace process. As a consequence, the dovish Peres was defeated by the hawkish Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Israeli president insists the Gaza invasion was forced on Israel by Hamas. "For us, victory is peace, not war," he said.

But Peres was not apologetic about striking back at those who rocket Israel. "<u>Hezbollah</u> has learned a lesson," he said, a reference to Israel's 2006 bombing of Lebanon; <u>Hezbollah</u> hasn't fired rockets at Israel since then. "We hope Hamas will learn a lesson."

So what exactly is the lesson of this Davos psychodrama for the future of peace talks?

Obama's new peace emissary, former Sen. George Mitchell, will find an Israeli public that believes that Hamas deserved to be punished, never mind the staggering cost to innocent Palestinians. Most Israelis are convinced that if they give back more land they will get more missiles on their heads, so they will probably return Netanyahu to power in this month's elections.

Mitchell will also find an Arab, and Turkish, world that shares Erdogan's anger and was horrified by TV scenes of dying Palestinian children, which decimated any remaining belief in the peace process.

The good news is that moderate Arab leaders want to give peace talks one last shot. And Erdogan told journalists that, although Turkish mediation is now "shelved," Turkey would be willing to resume it if it was requested by the parties.

But Mitchell, who visits the Middle East this week, will have to overcome a boiling anger that runs deep in Israel, Turkey and Arab countries. That rage was in full view on stage in Davos last week.

Rubin is a columnist the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Load-Date: February 4, 2009



Worldview: Debacle in Davos: Turkey storms out

The Philadelphia Inquirer February 1, 2009 Sunday CITY-D Edition

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Section: CURRENTS; Inq Currents; Pg. C01

Length: 810 words

Byline: By Trudy Rubin

Inquirer Columnist

Body

DAVOS, Switzerland - In the 12 years I've been attending Davos, I've never seen anything like it.

An extraordinary, emotional debate over Gaza took place between Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Israeli President Shimon Peres at the World Economic Forum on Thursday. It ended with Erdogan storming off stage and saying he would never return to Davos, after the moderator refused him more time to respond.

What made the exchange even more astounding was that Turkey has deep relations with Israel - it is her closest Muslim ally. Moreover, Peres is known for his efforts at peacemaking and Erdogan had been mediating talks between Israel and Syria.

The drama between these two peacemakers laid bare the white-hot tensions unleashed by Israel's invasion of Gaza. Their confrontation also showed how difficult it will be for the Obama administration to renew any peace process.

It was clear that the Turkish leader took the Dec. 27 Gaza invasion very personally. On Dec. 23, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had visited Ankara for the fifth round of indirect talks with Syria.

"The goal was to see if we could move to the next phase, direct talks," Erdogan told the audience. He said he had called Syrian President Bashar al-Assad during the Olmert visit. He had also suggested that Turkey try to mediate with Hamas for the release of kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

"He [Olmert] said he would respond the next day, but we got no answer. Four days later, Israel was in Gaza," Erdogan said. The Turkish leader was humiliated. Members of his party accused him of collusion with Israel, assuming Olmert had warned him of the coming invasion.

Erdogan blames the continuing violence in Gaza on the fact that the strip is still effectively occupied by Israel, which controls airspace, sea space and territorial borders. And he was furious about Israel's "disproportionate response" to Hamas rocket attacks that left hundreds of innocent Palestinian <u>women</u> and children dead, and Gaza's infrastructure shattered.

Worldview: Debacle in Davos: Turkey storms out

"Hamas are not the only people in Gaza," Erdogan shouted, his voice rising, as he decried the difficulty of getting humanitarian aid through Israeli checkpoints into Gaza. "We should not be judging anyone by race or religion if they are in distress."

But Peres was equally furious at Erdogan's inference that his, and Israel's, reputations were sullied by the Gaza carnage. He said Hamas had fired 5,500 rockets and 4,000 mortars toward Israel over the last five years.

Peres feels the world fails to understand the psychological and economic trauma of Hamas rocket fire on cities, which kill only a few, but totally disrupt normal life.

"One million people slept in shelters. What would you do?" he demanded, blaming Iran for supplying the rockets. "People who never demonstrated against thousands of missiles [fired against Israeli civilians] are demonstrating now."

Peres also resents the fact that past Israeli peace efforts have been forgotten, including, in his view, the 2005 pullout from Gaza. His own prime ministership was destroyed in 1996 when Palestinian bus bombs murdered dozens of civilians and undercut Israeli faith in the peace process. As a consequence, the dovish Peres was defeated by the hawkish Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Israeli president insists the Gaza invasion was forced on Israel by Hamas. "For us, victory is peace, not war," he said.

But Peres was not apologetic about striking back at those who rocket Israel. "<u>Hezbollah</u> has learned a lesson," he said, a reference to Israel's 2006 bombing of Lebanon; <u>Hezbollah</u> hasn't fired rockets at Israel since then. "We hope Hamas will learn a lesson."

So what exactly is the lesson of this Davos psychodrama for the future of peace talks?

Obama's new peace emissary, former Sen. George Mitchell, will find an Israeli public that believes that Hamas deserved to be punished, never mind the staggering cost to innocent Palestinians. Most Israelis are convinced that if they give back more land they will get more missiles on their heads, so they will probably return Netanyahu to power in this month's elections.

Mitchell will also find an Arab, and Turkish, world that shares Erdogan's anger and was horrified by TV scenes of dying Palestinian children, which decimated any remaining belief in the peace process.

The good news is that moderate Arab leaders want to give peace talks one last shot. And Erdogan told journalists that, although Turkish mediation is now "shelved," Turkey would be willing to resume it if it was requested by the parties.

But Mitchell, who visits the Middle East this week, will have to overcome a boiling anger that runs deep in Israel, Turkey and Arab countries. That rage was in full view on stage in Davos last week.

Contact Trudy Rubin at trubin@phillynews.com. To read her blog from Davos, visit http://go.philly.com/trudyrubinblog

Load-Date: February 1, 2009



The Jerusalem Post April 10, 2009 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 24

Length: 2287 words

Byline: DAVID HOROVITZ

Highlight: Are we losing the capacity to distinguish between what we know from our own experiences to be true or

credible and what others would have the world believe about us? EDITOR'S NOTES

Body

In a Jerusalem Post supplement that will appear next week to mark the end of Pessah, Esther Wachsman, whose son Nachshon was kidnapped by Hamas in 1994 and killed in a Palestinian village not far from Jerusalem as the IDF tried to come to his rescue, describes poignantly how the family came to choose his name.

The family's third son, he was born at Pessah time in 1975, and they decided to name him in honor of Nachshon the son of Aminadav, the man who had the guts to trust God and test the waters, the man who leapt into the Red Sea confident that his people would be able to cross, the man who showed the children of Israel the path to their destiny.

Israel cries out for such a figure today... or such a mindset: the confidence to set a path of national destiny, to unify behind it, and to pursue it for our own benefit and that of like-minded nations, leaving our enemies helpless in our wake.

Israel has faced, and faced down, more daunting hostile challenges in its brief modern history than those posed today by the toxic mix of demonization and violence championed by Iran and offshoots such as Hamas and <u>Hizbullah</u>. Surviving the first moments of statehood in 1948, when a few hundred thousand pioneering Israelis prevailed against armies drawn from surrounding populations in the tens of millions, was only the first of many improbable victories.

It was a series maintained through the decades, notably including the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War, all the way through to the second intifada, when the Palestinians dispatched suicide bombers in a calculated, strategic onslaught that was designed to terrorize our nation and encourage us to take the only sensible course of action - to flee. Yet even with buses and cafes and shopping malls blown up week after week, and much of a watching world branding us the architect of our own misery because we had resisted suicidal terms for Palestinian independence, the people of modern Israel did not flee; we stayed, we rethought, and we learned to protect ourselves more effectively.

But in the years since then, those who seek our demise have rethought as well. We sought to construct hermetic physical barriers to the suicide bomber onslaught. From south Lebanon and Gaza, <u>Hizbullah</u> and then Hamas simply cleared those obstacles by firing missiles over them, and every effort is being made to do likewise from the West Bank.

Protecting Israel cannot now be achieved by walls and fences and defensive measures; the rockets have to be stopped at source - and the source of the rockets, as ruthlessly determined by the Palestinians who manufacture and launch them, lies in the heart of the civilian populace. By cynical design, those who would kill our citizens thus ensure that their people are killed when we try to thwart the attacks - so that we are forced to fight not only to protect ourselves, but to protect our good name and our legitimacy as we do so.

This creates a somewhat complex reality - in which war footage and death tolls emphatically do not tell the full story of our conflicts, and yet that story is told, and is misunderstood, largely in a mix of misleading images and statistics. Still, internalizing the true picture - of an Israeli nation seeking to defend itself against a cynical, dishonest Palestinian terror leadership whose religiously inspired loathing for us far outweighs its concerns for the well-being of its own people - is not impossibly challenging, not for those with the earnest will to look a little more carefully.

Operation Cast Lead, Israel's turn-of-the-year military effort to halt the rocket fire from Gaza, however, seems to have marked something of a turning point as regards the willingness to look a little more carefully, to probe beyond the daily images of war and the casualty tolls.

Indeed, the furor surrounding purported testimonies from a small group of soldiers back from the war - the soldiers whose stories were compiled by the Rabin pre-army program's Danny Zamir - would suggest that a growing proportion even of our own people, we Israelis, are losing the capacity to distinguish between what we know from our own experiences to be true or credible and what others would have the world believe about us.

THE IDF is a people's army which directly touches us almost all of us. We all serve in it ourselves, and/or have relatives and friends and colleagues who do.

Almost all of us knew soldiers who directly experienced the Second Lebanon War, and came home with sorry tales of inadequate training, equipment and supplies. Almost all of us know soldiers who served in Operation Cast Lead. And what we didn't hear directly was supplemented by what we saw and heard and read about in the media.

We knew that the IDF was drawn into a civilian theater of war by an enemy that had placed rockets inside mosques, booby-trapped schools and deployed snipers in apartment buildings. We knew, too, because IDF commanders were permitted to say so publicly, that the army had changed tactics in the wake of events such as the ambush in Jenin refugee camp in 2002, in which 13 soldiers lost their lives, and that there was a readier resort to fire power in areas of military operation.

We knew, for instance, that the IDF leafleted areas where it was tackling Hamas, and urged Palestinian civilians by radio and in countless phone calls to leave. If it then came under fire from a particular building in such an area, we heard commanders detail, rather than send in soldiers to their possible deaths, it called for air support and, if necessary, took the building down.

We knew that mistakes were made - how could they not be in so densely populated an area at a time of war? Somewhere amid the self-flagellation of the Zamir soldiers' stories, we seemed to forget that the IDF killed several of its own soldiers in the bloody chaos of conflict. Inevitably, there were Palestinian noncombatants, many Palestinian noncombatants, killed in error in a conflict in which teenagers and the elderly were known to be potential suicide bombers, in which Hamas gunmen fought out of uniform and sometimes fired from within civilian crowds, in which any notion of Palestinian fighters following rules of war was nonsensical.

Credible sources, furthermore, suggest that, post-war, there has been considerable debate within the IDF about the difficulties of reconciling traditional IDF military ethics with the problematics posed by the nature of the civilian-theater conflict <u>Hizbullah</u> and Hamas have concocted: Where is the correct path between safeguarding troops and minimizing harm to civilians, and was it followed this time?

This newspaper, when news broke of the Rabin academy graduates' "testimonies," sought to measure their credibility by traditional journalistic standards. How dependable was the source? Were the testifying soldiers named? Could they be contacted to verify their accounts?

By definition, such assessments have to be made rapidly, decisions taken against the pressures of deadlines, and all newspapers inevitably get some of them wrong. But since the soldiers themselves were not named and not contactable, and since doubts about the accuracy of their accounts surfaced almost immediately, it was rapidly decided to carry those initial stories on the inside pages of the paper.

Danny Zamir's unexpected declaration to this newspaper on Tuesday that he had been horrified by the worldwide controversy sparked by his soldiers' accounts was, to put it mildly, hard to reconcile with his earlier stance and expressions. Now, Zamir says that the IDF "tried to protect civilians in the most crowded place in the world. There were no orders to kill civilians or any summary executions or things like that. There were problems, but problems the army can deal with."

The narrow focus in his own op-ed article (reprinted on Tuesday in the Post) on The New York Times in particular and the international media in general is disingenuous, too; it was parts of the Hebrew media, notably Haaretz and Ma'ariv, that first splashed the damming accusations he had compiled of permissive rules of engagement producing specific incidents in which civilians were deliberately shot dead. It was a Haaretz reporter who flatly stated that "the soldiers are not lying, for the simple reason that they have no reason to... This is what the soldiers, from their point of view, saw in Gaza."

Except, it turns out, they didn't. Their "testimony" was hearsay, and untrue.

FROM ISRAEL'S front-pages, in the sadly predictable rat-pack world of what passes for global journalism these days, Zamir's compilation became the most prominent story on earth for a few days - headlining major newspapers, leading global newscasts, demolishing yet more of Israel's legitimacy, turning Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi's insistence that the IDF is a "moral army" into an international bad joke.

With newspapers closing down, resources evaporating and reporters' buckling under ever-heavier pressures of work, it should be understood, there is no profound process of evaluation that determines whether a story like this will dominate the global agenda. What happens, rather, is that a hostile-to-Israel story in the Hebrew press is deemed credible simply by virtue of its having appeared in the Hebrew press: The Israelis are saying nasty stuff about themselves. Networks such as Al-Jazeera have an ideological interest in pumping up any such stories. Rival networks don't want to be left behind. Once the story is running on TV, in turn, the print news agencies feel obligated to cover it, because otherwise their clients will complain that it's on TV but not on the wires. Hey presto. World headlines.

The highly dubious nature of this and certain other items that made world headlines relating to the Gaza conflict, I have been told, prompted considerable unrest in the newsrooms of several international news organizations, with some staffers loudly protesting the apparent suspension of more rigorous journalistic standards - to no avail and, I suspect, to no lasting effect.

Entirely unsurprisingly, infinitely less global media attention has attended Zamir's contention to the Post this week that "the international media turned the IDF into war criminals," that he had no way of knowing whether the alleged shooting incidents ever took place, and that "Operation Cast Lead was justified; the IDF worked in a surgical manner. Unfortunately, in these types of operations, civilians will be killed."

FROM THE Israeli perspective, among the more troubling aspects of this dismal affair was emblemized by a letter we received, and published in Wednesday's paper, from a reader in Tel Aviv who took the Post to task for believing that "the IDF 'investigation' [of the purported killings] is gospel truth" and for ostensibly ignoring what he called "the flood of testimonies coming from Gaza - almost on a daily basis - about IDF soldiers shooting innocent men, women and children fleeing their homes, about killing medical personnel, about a civilian death toll much higher than Israel claims, all backed with strong evidence.

"No, the Palestinian side of things will always remain a lie for you," the letter writer concluded, "and evidence [of] grave wrongdoing is not for a once-honorable paper that is rapidly becoming a mouthpiece for the propaganda of the most moral army in the world."

Far more worrying than the criticism of this newspaper was the assertion of a "flood of testimonies" backed by "strong evidence" that IDF soldiers shot the innocent, and the cynical description of the IDF as "the most moral army in the world."

Skepticism is an essential tool in the armory of any journalist, and indeed of any member of the public in assessing what is presented as fact. Again, the IDF is itself agonizing about the ethical parameters within which to wage war in Gaza.

What was so sad about this reader's letter was the mix of elevated skepticism regarding what the army has to say about its own practices, and the suspension of such skepticism as regards the worst allegations being leveled against it. And what is so dismaying is the degree to which that skewed mix was widely manifest not only in this episode, but in much of the way that Israel is generally viewed from afar and, increasingly I fear, in the way we are coming to view ourselves.

WE ISRAELIS need to constantly ensure that our actions are moral and just. In that context, Zamir's allegations emphatically should have been - and indeed were - carefully investigated and handled as he told the Post this week he'd hoped they would be: His soldiers had "talked about what was difficult and painful in the war," and he took their accounts "to the army because I expected them to deal with the issues raised."

More broadly, with the dilemmas posed by Gaza as with all challenges to our capacity to live here securely, we need to shape military and diplomatic tactics and strategy to best ensure that we can both hold true to our core values and survive.

We live in a region where hostility and hatred are not easily redirected toward conciliation. We are battling in a largely unsympathetic international climate and must defend ourselves, physically and intellectually, against those who seek our demise. Critically, we cannot afford to become the prisoners of others' distorted sense of our reality, our behavior and our challenges.

These are national imperatives and they require a cohesion of purpose that Israel has yet to achieve. Internally riven and all-too intolerant, we remain as far as ever from a consensus over what our goals should be and the means we should employ to realize them.

We have left Egypt and reached the promised land, but not yet fulfilled our destiny. We await our Nachshon.

Graphic

Photo: COMING BACK from Gaza. Somewhere amid the self- flagellation of the Zamir soldiers' stories, we seemed to forget that the IDF killed several of its own soldiers in the bloody chaos of conflict. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Thousands gather in Beirut to honor Hariri

AlArabiya.net

February 13, 2009 Friday

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Length: 331 words

Body

Thousands of people converged Saturday on central Beirut to mark the fourth anniversary of the assassination of former Lebanese premier Rafiq Hariri after United States President Barack Obama vowed to help bring his killers to justice. Waving Lebanese flags and carrying pictures of the slain leader, men, <u>women</u> and children gathered under sunny skies in Martyr's Square where members of the parliamentary majority were to address the crowd.

The rally comes as the country prepares for legislative elections in June that will pit Western-backed political parties against a *Hezbollah*-led alliance backed by Syria and Iran.

Turnout for Saturday's rally is seen by many observers as an indicator of voters' mood ahead of the legislative elections on June.

"Their ability to rally people will be carried over at the ballot box," said Osama Safa, head of the Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies.

UN tribunal

The rally also comes as final preparations are underway in The Hague for the launch of the international tribunal set up to bring Hariri's killers to justice.

The United Nations tribunal to try Hariri's alleged killers is due to open its doors on March 1, housed in the former headquarters of the Dutch intelligence service on the outskirts of The Hague.

The tribunal will also try those presumed responsible for a series of attacks on other Lebanese political and media figures.

Hariri died in a massive car bombing on Feb.14, 2005 that also killed 22 others. The assassination was widely blamed on then Lebanese power-broker Syria, which has denied any involvement.

The attack on the Beirut seafront was one of the worst acts of political violence to rock Lebanon since the 1975-1990 civil war, and led to the withdrawal of Syrian troops after a 29-year presence.

In a White House statement the United States said it shared its grief with the Lebanese people and vowed to support the Special Tribunal "to bring those responsible for this horrific crime and those that followed to justice."

Load-Date: May 5, 2009



Lebanon honors Hariri four years after murder

AlArabiya.net

February 13, 2009 Friday

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Load-Date: May 5, 2009



Israel and Hamas deal: 20 prisoners for a video of Shalit; Israel has agreed to release 20 female Palestinian prisoners in exchange for a video of Cpl. Gilad Shalit, who is being held in Gaza.

The Christian Science Monitor September 30, 2009 Wednesday

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Length: 815 words

Byline: Joshua Mitnick Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Body

Israel said it will release 20 <u>female</u> Palestinian prisoners Friday in return for a video of a soldier held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip for more than three years, calling it a confidence building measure ahead of "decisive" negotiations on a prisoner exchange. "It is important that the entire world know that Gilad Shalit is alive and well and that Hamas is responsible for his well-being and fate," read a statement from the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. A masked spokesman from Hamas's military wing confirmed the deal during a hastily called news conference in Gaza. The announcement marks the first tangible sign of progress in drawn-out talks to free Israeli Defense Forces Cpl.

Gilad Shalit in return for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, many of whom were convicted of participating in attacks on Israeli civilians. The abduction of Shalit in June 2006 and the failure of the sides to reach a deal has contributed to instability along the Gazan-Israeli border, where a war erupted earlier this year for several weeks. "It will help bring down the tension between Israelis and Palestinians and open the door to talks about a [cease-fire] rather than conflict," says Mohammed Dajani, a political science professor at Al Quds University in Jerusalem. "It will facilitate getting back to the peace table." A win for Hamas? Winning the freedom of large numbers of prisoners could provide a major political dividend to Hamas, which has seen support among Palestinians sag in recent months in the aftermath of the Gaza war. Though many Palestinians will undoubtedly praise the Islamic militants for the prisoner swap, others have quietly questioned whether the price - siege, economic devastation, and thousands of war casualties - was justified. While Shalit's freedom would remove a central justification for Israel's economic blockade of the coastal strip of 1.5 million Palestinians, some analysts say that such a deal could also spur efforts to reconcile the two-year rift between Hamas in the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Netanyahu's asymmetric swap In Israel, Mr. Netanyahu will likely come under criticism from his conservative wing, who argue such asymmetric swaps only encourage new abductions. Still, such swaps are not unusual. And polls indicated that most Israelis will support the prime minister paying a high price for Shalit's release. "Shalit has become such a major symbol and a major element in Israel's psyche. He is a symbol of the responsibility of the state to all its soldiers," says Yaron Ezrahi, a Hebrew University of Jerusaleum political science professor. "Netanyahu expects to gain a lot of emotional public support for the exchange." Any deal for Shalit's freedom would also mark a major achievement for Egyptian and German mediators between Israel and Hamas, which don't recognize one another. Still, Israel's government said in its statement today that the talks are likely to be "long and arduous." Shalit's family, who have led a national campaign to pressure Israel's government for a deal, released a statement today calling the agreement a "meaningful achievement" and a "first step in the right direction to the release of Gilad," the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported. A book recently published by the Gaza correspondent of Israel Channel 2 television news detailed allegations about the mental and physical stresses faced by Shalit while in Israel and Hamas deal: 20 prisoners for a video of Shalit Israel has agreed to release 20 female Palestinian prisoners in exchange for a video of Cpl. Gilad Sha....

Hamas captivity. A report by United Nations investigator Richard Goldstone on the recent Gaza war also called on Hamas to release Shalit. In the past, Hamas has released a letter and a video of Shalit, but has not allowed any humanitarian groups to visit the soldier. Israel has cited the abduction as a justification for its ongoing sea and land trade blockade of the Gaza Strip. Dan Scheuftan, a professor of political science at Haifa University in Israel, says the deal announced on Wednesday marks a "capitulation to emotional terrorism" and lacks strategic vision. Freeing the *female* prisoners will send a message to would-be Palestinian *women* militants that they could eventually be released from jail. Nohi Eyal, the director of the Land of Israel Forum, told Haaretz that Netanyahu shouldn't engage in an asymmetric swap. "For a soldier of ours, they need to release one soldier," he said. "A genuine government must look beyond the eyes of the Shalit family and into the eyes of the future kidnap victims, which, to our regret, such a deal will only encourage." However, Netanyahu would not be the first Israeli prime minister to conclude a controversial asymmetric swap with a militant Arab group without direct ties to Israel. In 2008 former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert released several hundred *Hezbollah* fighters in return for the bodies of three soldiers. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon also conducted a similar exchange with *Hezbollah*.

Graphic

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip's Jebaliya refugee camp flash V signs Wednesday in front of a wall painting showing Israeli Sgt. Gilad Schalit, who has been held by Hamas-linked militants in Gaza since 2006. Hatem Moussa/AP

Load-Date: February 19, 2010



UN Ambassador calls Palestinian Solidarity Day 'one- sided narrative'

The Jerusalem Post

December 2, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 790 words

Byline: E.B. SOLOMONT, Jerusalem Post correspondent

Body

NEW YORK - Israel's top official at the United Nations charged the General Assembly on Tuesday with undermining efforts toward a two-state solution by embracing a one- sided condemnation of Israel during the UN's "Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People."

In response to bruising speeches against Israel at the United Nations during the two-day event on Monday and Tuesday, Israeli Ambassador to the UN Gabriela Shalev recalled the 1947 vote that paved the way for the creation of two states.

"Thirty-three for. Thirteen against. Ten abstentions. The resolution was approved," she said.

While the Jewish population in the region accepted the resolution, the Arab side rejected UN Resolution 181, launching a war against Israel and setting the stage for the current conflict.

"Today, the Arabs' historic mistake of rejecting Resolution 181 is also measured in lives lost in war, parents who bury their children and pain that has touched us all - Israelis and Arabs alike," Shalev said.

Reiterating Israel's desire for peace, she lambasted the UN's harsh criticism of Israel.

"How can it be, then, that the debate in these halls embraces a one-sided narrative that promotes and maintains an obsessive and condemnatory focus on Israel?" she asked. "Today's debate undermines the endorsement of the two-state solution. It reflects the reality of an automatic majority that ensures that any debate on the situation in the Middle East shall be unfruitful, destructive, cynical and hateful."

The two-day solidarity event, held annually since 1977, generated several resolutions sharply critical of Israel. In speeches before the Assembly, many member states condemned Israel and its treatment of Palestinian civilians, citing both alleged war crimes during Operation Cast Lead 11 months ago, as well as Israel's policy on settlements.

Shalev cited Israel's recent announcement of a policy of settlement restraint as an indicator of Israel's desire to resume peace talks, its commitment to peace and its willingness to take "painful and effective" steps toward that end.

"Israel wants to reach a historic peace agreement and will discuss peace at any time, anywhere and without preconditions," she said. "We want to hear the Palestinian Authority say that it, too, will discuss peace any time, anywhere, without preconditions."

She concluded by reminding the Assembly about the Iranian threat.

"Iran funds, trains and supports global terrorism, including Hamas' and <u>Hizbullah</u>'s relentless attacks on Israeli men, <u>women</u> and children," she said. "Iran must be stopped."

A day earlier, the Palestinian representative to the UN, Riyad Mansour, delivered a harsh attack on Israel in a speech accusing Israel of humanitarian violations and collective punishment against Palestinian civilians. He also called on the Security Council to take immediate action against Israel.

"Israel's daily actions on the ground prove that it does not want to take one step towards a comprehensive agreement, and is realizing its settlement scheme in the West Bank and Jerusalem in blatant violation of international law," Mansour said.

He alleged severe humanitarian violations by Israel, emphasizing the plight of Palestinian civilians during Israel's military operation in Gaza last winter.

Mansour said Israel's policies, particularly on settlements, were hindering peace negotiations. "Israel, the occupying power, continues to deny the rights of the Palestinian people and to breach international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law," he said. "At the same time, it continues its illegal colonial settlements through the construction and expansion of settlements.

"There will be no peace and security in the Middle East as long as the question of Palestine remains unsolved," he said. "It cannot be achieved as long as Israel defies the law."

He concluded by noting that Palestinians were committed to peace, and calling on UN bodies and the Security Council to take immediate action against Israel.

"The international community's failure to hold Israel accountable has reinforced Israel's impunity and lawlessness against defenseless Palestinian people," he said.

In a series of harsh speeches against Israel on Monday and Tuesday, other envoys of UN member states criticized Israel and its settlement policy.

"The fact that after all these years the question of Palestine awaits peaceful settlement weighs heavily on the United Nations," said GA President Ali Treki of Libya on Monday. "This day should also remind us that the human cost of the Middle East conflict is borne by the Palestinian people, [and] the suffering will continue until the question of Palestine is resolved and the right of the Palestinian people to their land is realized."

Graphic

Photo: Gabriela Shalev

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



The week in blood

The Jerusalem Post October 30, 2009 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 738 words Highlight: Editorial

Body

It's been another dreadful week in the war of civilizations. On Sunday, 153 people were killed and more than 500 wounded in back-to-back car bombings in Baghdad. On Tuesday in Kabul, five UN staffers and three Afghans were killed in an attack on a UN guesthouse. And on Wednesday in Pakistan, 100 people - mostly <u>women</u> and children-were killed and 160 wounded in a shopping district bombing in Peshawar. The week also saw 24 American service personnel killed in Afghanistan, making 58 fatalities for the month - the deadliest since 9/11.

This is a war of civilizations in the sense that Muslim extremists with imperial ambitions are engaged in a zero-sum struggle against the values associated with modernity - liberty, enlightenment and tolerance.

For now, the battle is being played out mostly in Muslim-majority lands, though New York, London, Madrid and Israel's cities have also been killing fields. Western elites have tended to deny, downplay or reject outright the systemic nature of the Islamist menace. Under these circumstances, there has been no real will to mobilize Western publics for the sacrifices ahead.

IN THIS context, a policy review by the Obama administration is now under way, aimed at developing a strategy for Afghanistan. The mission is to keep the country from again becoming a staging area for attacks against Western targets.

Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, who commands the 100,000 US and NATO forces on the ground, is asking for an additional 44,000 troops in order to create a string of Taliban-free zones. But regardless of how many more troops are inserted and how they are deployed, no one suggests the Taliban can be defeated militarily or politically.

This week also saw Washington stunned by news of the poignant resignation of Matthew Hoh, a 36-year-old State Department Foreign Service officer and former Marine captain, out of exasperation over the Afghan war.

"I have lost understanding of and confidence in the strategic purposes of the United States' presence in Afghanistan," he wrote to his superiors. "I have doubts and reservations about our current strategy and planned future strategy, but my resignation is based not upon how we are pursuing this war, but why and to what end."

Hoh continued: "If honest, our stated strategy of securing Afghanistan to prevent al-Qaida resurgence or regrouping would require us to additionally invade and occupy western Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, YemenÉ"

Hoh's well-founded fear is that a troop presence in xenophobic landscapes fuels indigenous support for the Islamists.

The week in blood

While each front in this global war has its own set of historical, ethnic and religious circumstances, any approach that requires permanently holding territory, combined with an open-ended commitment to nation-building, will prove so costly as to sap what little resolve the American and other Western publics have for the fighting.

Arguably Osama bin Laden launched the 9/11 attacks to draw the US into an Afghan quagmire that had chastened the British Empire in the late 1800s and contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Empire in the late 1900s. Then-president George W. Bush wisely avoided falling into that trap, but tragically fell into another: Iraq.

AN ALTERNATIVE approach, workable in many theaters, is to employ advanced technologies, preemptive strikes and overwhelming firepower to make it hard for the enemy to organize attacks against Western targets. Of course, this would mean disregarding the whinging of the UN Human Rights Council's Philip Alston, who this week took the Obama administration to task for its policy of targeted assassinations of terrorist chieftains.

Israelis have demonstrated that it is possible to defend their country with precisely the means Alston finds so distasteful against an enemy that is driven by an unfortunate - some would say perverted - reading of Islam. Like other Islamist groups, both Hamas and <u>Hizbullah</u> have no compunction about launching attacks from behind their civilian populations. Yet contrary to the mendacious assertions of the Goldstone Report, our army has protected us without losing its soul.

IT IS too early to say whether the attack on two members of a California synagogue early Thursday was the work of a Muslim extremist. But Thursday's shootout between FBI agents and the imam of a jihadi sect in Detroit can legitimately be tallied together with the week's litany of mayhem - in a war some deny is taking place.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Elections still a display of democracy other countries dream of

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

June 20, 2009 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; International News; Pg. 13

Length: 968 words

Byline: Jason Koutsoukis

Body

In many Middle Eastern regimes political opposition simply doesn't exist, reports Jason Koutsoukis in Jerusalem.

THE electoral fiasco in Iran has reinforced Western fears about the state of democracy in the Middle East. But at least people in Iran were given the opportunity to vote.

Despite the apparently defective result, Iran still proved itself capable of staging a genuine election campaign that had all the trappings of a US-style presidential race. Televised candidate debates, mass rallies and inspiring campaign rhetoric were all part of the show.

It was a display of freedom supporters of democracy in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates can only dream about. And a display that will have the rulers of those countries watching nervously.

The mere fact that opposition candidates were allowed to stand against the incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had seemed worthy of commendation.

In Syria, President Bashar al-Assad will only allow votes of confidence from the electorate when he is the only candidate standing. In many other Middle East regimes, political opposition of any sort even the cosmetic kind is banned.

Elections, if they are permitted, are mostly for legislative bodies that have no control over executive power and face having their decisions overturned at a moment's notice by the ruling monarch or dictator.

As Amnesty International noted in a recent report on challenging repression in the Middle East, the right to vote is not the only human right denied.

"Activists and journalists who seek to publicise human rights abuses face an array of repressive measures intended to silence them for exercising their right to freedom of expression," the report noted.

"Lawyers who try to uphold the rights of their clients not to be tortured or arbitrarily detained, to have access to legal counsel and to receive fair trials, often themselves face similar abuses. People who demonstrate peacefully in support of demands for improved rights for **women**, workers and minority communities risk arrest, imprisonment,

Elections still a display of democracy other countries dream of

beatings or even assassination by government security forces simply for exercising their right to freedom of assembly."

In November 2003, the US president, George Bush, spoke of his determination to remake the Middle East, asking the question of whether the peoples of the Middle East were somehow beyond the reach of liberty.

He declared the US had "adopted a new policy, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East". Four years later his policies have failed to sprout the new roots of freedom he hoped for.

And in some cases, where democracy was allowed to take root, Western interests faced the embarrassment of not getting the results they were hoping for such as in the Palestinian territories, where the Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas, was pushed into rushing parliamentary elections in 2006.

The Islamic resistance movement Hamas won a majority of seats in the elections. It touched off a chain of events that led to Hamas taking full control of the Gaza Strip, and that in turn led to a full-scale conflict with Israel that resulted in the deaths of more than 1300 Gazans in January.

In 2005, the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, allowed candidates other than himself to stand in presidential elections, but he made the rules of eligibility so tight that any real opposition was screened out and he ended up winning the poll with 88 per cent of the vote.

"Democracy is encouraged in particular countries in the Middle East at the convenience of the Western powers," says Dr Ayman Nour, a prominent Egyptian opposition political leader jailed in 2005 by Mr Mubarak's government on trumped charges of forging political signatures.

After four years in prison he was released earlier this year on health grounds.

"We cannot afford to have countries that know better trade justice and democracy because it is in their immediate short-term interest to do so." Dr Nour told the Herald.

"What we need in the Middle East is pressure from countries that know how to stick to their ideals of freedom, that know how to fight tyranny and injustice that is what I believe is the key to our long-term regional security."

Countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Bahrain rarely feel the opprobrium of the West, it would seem, because they offer secure supplies of vital resources, are willing to open their doors to foreign corporations or offer strategic advantage.

Not that the region is without hope of change. In Lebanon earlier this month, people voted peacefully in elections judged free and fair by thousands of international observers. And when the Iranian-backed Shiite movement <u>Hezbollah</u> did not end up the winner as many had expected, instead of reacting violently, <u>Hezbollah</u>'s leader, Hassan Nasrallah, pledged to respect the result.

WHO RULES WHERE

- * Bahrain Ruled by royal family. Upper house appointed by king.
- * Egypt Republic. Executive power rests with president elected in mostly single-candidate elections.
- * Iran Islamic theocracy. Ruled by supreme leader elected by an assembly of Islamic scholars.
- * Iraq Republic. President elected by parliament. Prime minister chosen by Presidency Council.
- * Israel Parliamentary democracy. President appointed by parliament. Prime minister elected by parliament.
- * Jordan Constitutional monarchy. Upper house chosen by king.
- * Kuwait Constitutional monarchy.

Elections still a display of democracy other countries dream of

- * Lebanon Confessional republic. President elected by parliament. President chooses prime minister.
- * Oman Absolute monarchy.
- * Qatar Absolute monarchy.
- * Saudi Arabia Absolute monarchy.
- * Syria Republic. President stands for elections unopposed.
- * Turkey Parliamentary democracy. Directly elected president.
- * United Arab Emirates Ruled by a federation of seven absolute monarchies.
- * Yemen Republic. Upper house appointed by president.

Graphic

PHOTO: Iranian reformist presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi waves after polls closed.

Load-Date: June 19, 2009



The Daily Star (Lebanon)
March 16, 2009 Monday

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Length: 1770 words **Byline:** Daily Star Staff

Body

The March 14 coalition announced its platform for the June 7 parliamentary elections during its second annual convention on Saturday. The 14-item platform emphasized the urgent need for the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which put an end to the summer 2006 with Israel, and commitment to the Taif Accord.

BEIRUT: The March 14 coalition announced its platform for the June 7 parliamentary elections during its second annual convention on Saturday. The 14-item platform emphasized the urgent need for the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which put an end to the summer 2006 with Israel, and commitment to the Taif Accord. The alliance said it was time tensions with neighbor Syria "be resolved provided that Lebanon's sovereignty and independence are preserved." The March 14 Forces also rejected the naturalization of Palestinian refugees in host countries and stressed the right of return to their homeland, as stipulated in the Arab Peace Initiative.

The March 14 Forces leaders, namely Future Movement chief Saad Hariri, head of the Democratic Gathering MP Walid Jumblatt, Lebanese Forces boss Samir Geagea, Phalange Party President Amine Gemayel and others attended the rally held at the Beirut International Exhibition and Leisure Center. US Ambassador Michel Sison also attended the rally, drawing criticism from the March 8 Forces.

<u>Hizbullah</u> lawmaker Qassem Hashem said, referring to Sison, "the presence of the March 14 Forces' muse was unnecessary."

An-Nahar daily reported Sunday that Hariri asked Jumblatt during Saturday's conference to sit next to him, saying "Why don't you sit next to us?" Jumblatt reportedly replied, "Let us stay on the left [side], it is more relieving to you."

The daily reported that both leaders hugged and exchanged smiles during the convention.

The head of the March 14 Forces General-Secretariat, former MP Fares Souaid, read out the alliance's political electoral statement.

"You will decide to whom you will cast your votes in 85 days based on this platform," he said.

Souaid added that the motto of the March 14 Forces campaign for the 2009 parliamentary elections was: "The Passage to the State of Lebanon."

He detailed the 14 items comprising the March 14 Forces political platform (see box).

Souaid said that Lebanon cannot be salvaged "without the efforts and commitment of all its citizens."

"In order to guarantee Lebanon's independence and to secure stability and prosperity, UN Resolution 1701 should be fully implemented," he said, adding that even the March 8 Forces agree to that.

Souaid said the March 14 Forces "stand united" in the spring parliamentary elections.

He added that elected members of March 14 will work to implement the themes mentioned in the 14-point platform.

"Let's forget about past conflicts among the Lebanese and set the foundations for a peaceful and democratic approach in political work," Souaid said.

He added that while his coalition extended a hand to the opposition, "they did not meet the call."

"Today, we renew this invitation, which verbally stated the following," he said.

Souaid said the liberation of Lebanese territories in 2000 after long years of Israeli occupation, and the withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005 following a 30-year presence, "should not be a source of conflict among the Lebanese."

"We can only build a state together," he added.

The coalition renewed its support to the Palestinian cause and called for the implementation of the Arab Peace Initiative.

"The Arab Peace Initiative should be at the basis of any peace talks with Israel and for resolving the Palestinian issue," Souaid said.

Commenting on the March 14 Forces platform, <u>Hizbullah</u> MP Hussein Hajj Hassan said that the Arab Peace Initiative, "did not ensure any rights for the Palestinians."

"It's high time they realize that only resistance will bring back the Arab's lost rights." - The Daily Star

Fourteen points in March 14's program

Following is the full-text of March 14's 14-item platform for the June 7 parliamentary elections:

- 1. Protect Lebanon from Israeli aggressions and recover the Shebaa Farms through the implementation of Resolution 1701 in all it clauses.
- 2. Impose the state's authority on all Lebanese territories in accordance with the Taif Accord, where "there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon except the weapons and authority of the state."
- 3. End the conflict with Syria and construct normal and amicable relations with Syria in accordance with the Taif agreement and on the basis of brotherhood, equality, and common interests. This calls for the end of Syrian interference in Lebanese affairs, and the exchange of ambassadors, as well as implementing the proper mechanisms for border control and demarcation starting with the Shebaa Farms in order to facilitate its retrieval. End to the issue of the Lebanese detainees in Syrian prisons, the abolition of military bases that are present outside the camps that are technically under the authority of the Syrian authority, and the review of the unfair agreements signed between Lebanon and Syria during the period of Syrian tutelage in Lebanon.
- 4. Provide harmony between Lebanon and the international community on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations and the international resolutions, and avoid pushing Lebanon to confront the international community. Also,

revive Lebanon's message of co-existence and cultural interaction through supporting the initiatives that make Lebanon "an international center for dialogue among civilizations and cultures, and a global laboratory for this dialogue," according to a suggestion by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

- 5. Restore Lebanon's role in the Arab world and its active contribution in achieving Arab solidarity which is the basic requirement to obtain Arab rights, and its commitment to support the struggle of the Palestinian people and their unity. Support the Palestine Liberation Organization in order to establish an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital in the context of the "two-state solution" and a just, comprehensive peace in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative. All this aims counter the escalation of extremism, especially Israeli extremism and the policy of settlement and expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland.
- 6.Strict adherence to prevent the settlement of our Palestinian brethren in Lebanon, and the adoption of the draft law submitted by MPs from the March 14 Forces regarding this issue. This requires a parliamentary consensus to amend the constitution clause that deals with the settlement of Palestinians.
- 7. Complete the building of the state and its institutions on the basis of the Charter of Co-existence and through the implementation of the Taif agreement and the Constitution. Building a civilized democratic state that ensures equality in rights and duties of individuals regardless of their religious affiliations, as well as ensuring free and active presence of communities, irrespective of any political or numerical consideration. Adopt a new electoral framework and reduce the voting age to 18 years, reform state institutions and departments, and liberate them from sectarian conflicts and political corruption through the implementation of expanded administrative decentralization, and the commitment of those in authority to the responsibilities specified in the Constitution in order to prevent the blocking actions from being repeated.
- 8. Commit to achieve the requirements of the International Tribunal for Lebanon whose purpose is to uncover the truth and achieve justice. This will fortify Lebanon's sovereignty and will put an end to the trend of political assassinations and impunity, and will give credit back to the law as a regulator of life among the people, in parallel with strengthening the independence and effectiveness of the judiciary. Provide the necessary funds to complete the return of all the displaced people and close the file.
- 9. Protect Lebanon and the Lebanese internally and abroad from the repercussions of the global financial crisis and maintain monetary stability. Also, keep inflation at low levels to protect the purchasing power for those with limited incomes, and develop an effective program for debt management and debt reduction. Ensure maximum benefit from the contributions of the Paris III donors' summit.
- 10. Commit to economic and financial policies that have balanced development dimensions in all productive sectors in all Lebanese regions, and remove the obstacles away from the investments. Reduce the cost of conducting business while giving priority to the sectors and the projects that provide suitable job opportunities for the Lebanese.
- 11. Develop the social contract that is binding for the state and the social partners, and expand the scope of health, educational, social, and relief services which commensurate with the needs and basic rights of the citizens. Activate the social safety nets for the poorest factions in collaboration with civil society groups.
- 12. Provide bigger and more effective participation for <u>women</u> in the political, economic, and social life, and in decision-making on the basis of equality in rights and in access to employment, education, health, and other community based opportunities and in owning and distributing resources. Empowering <u>women</u> through the amendment of unjust legislations and developing laws in this regard, especially the electoral law.
- 13. Commit to the cause of the Lebanese diaspora in order to provide a safety net in support of Lebanon's independence, stability, and prosperity. Guarantee the right to vote to all expatriates, and work on facilitating the restoration the Lebanese nationality to all descendants of Lebanese origin. Facilitate the acquirement of the civil register to the Lebanese without administrative or legal complications, and grant incentives and facilities for the expatriates to work and invest in Lebanon.

14. Put an end to the environmental deterioration through a national strategy for sustainable development that includes the issuance of regulatory decrees for the application of the environmental law, and implementing the environmental impact assessment decree. Offering economic incentives for firms that take into consideration the environmental component in their production process, as well as promoting the use of renewable sources of energy, biological agriculture, protect the water resources and water quality. Promoting eco- tourism that respects the ecological balance, preserve the wealth of forests, and provide treatment of solid, liquid, and gas wastes.

Load-Date: March 15, 2009



TV series strives to topple sectarian, ethnic animosity

The Daily Star (Lebanon)
August 26, 2009 Wednesday

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Length: 781 words **Byline:** Josie Ensor

Body

It was a fascinating social experiment as much as it was light afternoon television viewing. The acclaimed 13-part series "Kilna Bil Hayy," ("All of us in the neighborhood") that began in May, which, according to the program's website, featured six children from Armenian, Christian, Druze, Palestinian, Shiite and Sunni backgrounds who lived in the same apartment building.

BEIRUT: It was a fascinating social experiment as much as it was light afternoon television viewing. The acclaimed 13-part series "Kilna Bil Hayy," ("All of us in the neighborhood") that began in May, which, according to the program's website, featured six children from Armenian, Christian, Druze, Palestinian, Shiite and Sunni backgrounds who lived in the same apartment building, aimed at breaking down sectarian divides as part of a unique televised anthropological study.

With the last episode aired on Lebanon's LBC channel last weekend and the children having had a chance to reflect, what did they learn from the making of the show?

"I used to have a complex with Shiites," says Sally, who comes from a Druze family, thinking back just a few months, "[but] the program made me feel we are all people and we need to communicate with one another and talk to others because they are human beings just like us.

"People of different parties like <u>Hizbullah</u> and those with [Progressive Socialist Party leader MP Walid]Jumblatt will directly fight without looking at logic so this is a problem," she says. "We can tell them we are all the same despite our religions since we all worship God and that is all that matters."

Sally's family were involved in a row in the very first episode shown earlier this year when the mother accused her Palestinian neighbor who cleans her house of stealing her gold necklace. As it turned out Sally had borrowed the necklace from her mother without asking permission, and the incident was swiftly resolved when Sally explained what had happened, diffusing the situation and helping rebuild the two **women**'s relationship.

"We need to talk to adults and make them understand," Sally says, reflecting on the tumultuous times she had during filming, "this is all we can do."

TV series strives to topple sectarian, ethnic animosity

The creators of the series, Search for Common Ground, an international conflict transformation NGO, wanted to make the program to show that Lebanese people have far more productive and nuanced relationships with each other than people realize. "Far too long the squabbles of petty politicians and pundits have been perceived as emblematic of the sectarian divisions within Lebanese society," the organization says.

But they stress that this dialogue, or lack thereof, does not represent the real interaction within Lebanon.

Nader Noueiri, another one of the young actors, whose real name and accent were used in the show to authentically represent her community, believes the program achieved what the creators set out to do.

She says she experienced a true mix of children from other religious backgrounds for the first time, giving her a chance to really listen.

"[My participation in the show] changed me and changed my political attitudes."

Nader says that before it was difficult to even consider living side-by-side peacefully with people from different religions- "It was hard because of our parents' and political leaders' hatred: the inability of our parents to forget the memory of the war, and not being able to open a new page."

When asked in an interview after the show what she would put on a wish list now to give to political leaders, Nader said: "I just wish to put all political leaders on one airplane and take them away. I wish they would leave Lebanon and search for another country to destroy. I wish they leave us and the future youth to build Lebanon, we do not want war any more."

Critics of the program agree the initiative has proved to be very promising for future peace in the country. Cathie Glover, program officer of Lebanese group for human development Safadi Foundation, says: "These children who have grown up post-Taif recognize the tragedy of war and each of them made statements about their desires for peace in the country. If that isn't the definition of hope, I don't know what is."

However, Glover recognizes a common response among the show's children was to blame political leaders for the conflict. "While I find this recognition amazing and hopeful," Glover says, "I can't help but wonder if this view will prevent the children from future participation in the democratic process.

"Children should be taught to understand that a true democratic system needs their participation and ignoring a country's political system because it has failed will not make the problem go away."

Load-Date: August 25, 2009



Former Iranian president attacked at rally

Weekend Australian
September 19, 2009 Saturday
1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 22

Length: 430 words

Body

TEHRAN: Iranian hardliners have attacked a reformist former president while he was marching with opposition supporters at an anti-government rally in Tehran.

A reformist website last night cited witnesses as saying the attackers pushed Mohammad Khatami to the ground.

It says opposition activists rescued him and quickly repelled the assailants.

Mr Khatami has sided with the opposition in the post-election crisis that has gripped Iran.

Another reformist website said his turban was dishevelled and he was forced to leave the march.

The reports came as tens of thousands of Iranian government supporters and dozens of opposition activists poured onto the streets of Tehran for coinciding marches marking an annual pro-Palestinian commemoration.

Baton-toting police and security troops, along with the pro-government Basiji militia that helped crush mass street protests against Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's re-election in June, were deployed along main squares.

Mr Ahmadinejad joined one of the government-sponsored marches heading to the Tehran University campus, where he was to address supporters before a Friday prayer service.

The opposition had announced it would hold its own protest yesterday, despite warnings by the clerical establishment against anti-government rallies.

There has not been a mass demonstration since July, when authorities cracked down heavily on the opposition. Both opposition leaders -- Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi -- were to appear at the rally, raising concerns for a showdown between security troops and opposition activists.

By mid-morning in central Tehran, dozens of opposition supporters in green T-shirts and wearing green wristbands -- a colour symbolising the opposition movement -- marched with fingers raised in the V sign for victory and chanted ``Death to the Dictator".

Others shouted for the government to resign, and carried small photos of Mr Mousavi, while some <u>women</u> marched with their children in tow.

Former Iranian president attacked at rally

There were chants of ``Neither Gaza nor Lebanon, but our life is for Iran" -- a slogan defying the regime's support for Palestinian militants in Gaza and Lebanon's *Hezbollah* guerillas.

Hundreds of metres away, on the main Keshavarz Boulevard, thousands of Ahmadinejad supporters marched carrying huge photographs of the president and also the country's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei.

Some in the government-sponsored rally chanted: "Death to those who oppose the Supreme Leader!"

The demonstrations mark Quds Day -- an annual event dedicated to condemning Israel and expressing support for the Palestinians.

Quds is Arabic for Jerusalem.

Load-Date: September 18, 2009



Terror trial suspect is described as 'a pleasant, quiet man'

Derby Evening Telegraph November 20, 2009 Friday

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Section: Pg. 4

Length: 405 words

Byline: SHAUN JEPSON

Body

A Mortgage adviser has told a jury how she found a suspected Derby terrorist to be a "pleasant natured" man.

Susan Barson said she believed there to be "nothing untoward" about Krenar Lusha when he successfully applied for a mortgage at NatWest's St Peter's Street branch in 2008.

Lusha, 30, of Moore Street, denies 10 counts of possessing articles which give rise to a reasonable suspicion they were for a terror-related purpose.

During yesterday's proceedings at Preston Crown Court, Ms Barson was asked by defence barrister Jeremy Baker QC about her experience with Lusha during a mortgage application.

She replied: "There was nothing untoward.

"He was quite quiet and accepted my apologies for having to spend so much time on the phone between me and the mortgage centre because of problems with a computer system."

Earlier in the trial, the court heard that counter-terrorism officers found 71.8 litres of petrol in a cellar and more than two kilograms of potassium nitrate - a constituent of gunpowder - in a bedroom at Lusha's home.

Documents found on computers or drives included <u>Hezbollah</u> military instruction manuals, Middle Eastern Terrorist Bomb Design, Improvised Radio Detonation Techniques, Radnar's Detonators, a car bomb recognition guide, the Mujahideen Explosives Handbook and the Bomb Book.

A video entitled "mobile detonators" was discovered, as well as 14 mobile phones.

Yesterday, Mr Baker told the jury that "a small minority" of the items did not belong to Lusha.

The court had previously heard Lusha had told <u>women</u> on chat programmes on the internet that he was a "very good sniper" and said he wanted revenge after the British Government put a very good friend of his in prison.

Mr Baker told the jury these words were only "edited highlights" and that the court was yet to hear Lusha's explanation.

Mr Baker said in the 10 years Lusha had been in the UK, he had "worked very hard".

He said: "At the time of his arrest, he was living in Derby. He was a hard-working young man."

Terror trial suspect is described as 'a pleasant, quiet man'

Yesterday, the court heard that Lusha - a failed asylum seeker from Albania - had worked for Denby-based HL Plastics.

He had secured a 100% mortgage with NatWest to buy the Moore Street address for £92,300, and previously lived at addresses in Netherclose Street and Sale Street.

Ms Barson told the court Lusha had previously been successful in securing a mortgage loan with NatWest but that he chose not to take it up.

The trial continues.

Load-Date: November 21, 2009



Barak to Rabin camp: We're carrying on in his tradition

The Jerusalem Post February 5, 2009 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 682 words

Byline: SHELLY PAZ

Body

Dozens of activists who worked in former prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's elections campaign in the early 1990s met on Wednesday evening in Tel Aviv to pay tribute to him and to show Defense Minister and Labor Party Chairman Ehud Barak their support.

The Rabin camp, comprised of former ministers and MKs, activists who worked on his election campaign, and their children attended the event, which has been held before every general election since Rabin was murdered in 1995.

"We don't know if it's over in the South or not, but for eight years Kassam rockets were fired on the Gaza-belt communities and three governments hadn't dealt with the situation until we came and brought the six-month long cease-fire," Barak said.

"I don't regret the quiet we brought and the international legitimacy we had gained for the day we needed to act. We hit Hamas badly and it is busy picking up the pieces," he said.

"We saw Iran launching a satellite into space - a small one, but a country that is capable of launching a satellite must have advanced rockets that can reach Europe," he continued.

"We have the Syrians who are a challenge, but also an opportunity, <u>Hizbullah</u> that has gotten stronger even if it lost its appetite to launch another offensive, Mughniyeh, the smuggling of weapons into the Gaza Strip. In short, it's never boring in the Middle East and this is why we need a brave leadership that knows when to act and when to stop," he added.

Barak admitted that the Labor Party wasn't perfect.

"We make mistakes but we always try hard to do the right thing. We carry on Rabin's tradition, we are proud of it and want to continue doing what is right for Israel," Barak said.

Barak asked for the support and the assistance of the members of the Rabin camp in convincing the undecided voters.

"The greater mass of undecided voters belong to our camp and they are deliberating [either] between us and Hatnua Hahadasha-Meretz, or between us and Kadima on the other hand," he said.

Barak to Rabin camp: We're carrying on in his tradition

"Voting for Meretz interferes with our ambitions to get bigger and more effective, and voting for Kadima is voting for a party without an identity; many of its members who might defect back to the Likud a day after the elections. We know that they are capable of defecting from their party because they have already done it in the past," he added.

Barak said that in a country like Israel, inexperience is a privilege one cannot afford.

"Here, every incident on the border turns into a national problem within 10 minutes, a regional problem within a couple of hours and sometimes into a global problem. It is not an easy task to lead our country and it is too important for us to make mistakes," he said.

National Infrastructures Minister Binyamin Ben- Eliezer, who spoke before Barak, expressed his deepening concern that the next Israeli leaders would be a group of extreme right-wing politicians.

"Each one of us needs to look at his children, his house, his country and to understand what we are putting at risk," Ben-Eliezer said.

"The Labor Party has great people, experienced in all fields, and today it is almost to be or not to be. We better wake up and understand that this country is en route to an internal intifada and that we need to regain our sanity," he said.

Erez Orion, an attorney who worked on Labor's election campaign in 1992, brought his two daughters, Arielle (17) and Ophir (15), whom he described as "second generation in Rabin's tradition."

Though he was still committed to Rabin's legacy, despite the criticism he had of the Labor Party, "something is missing," Orion said.

"I think we have lost the compassion we had and we could see it in Operation Cast Lead. If we continue like this, three more military operations like this one and the world would consider us an apartheid country," he said.

Earlier on Wednesday, Esther Bitan, a veteran Labor supporter, announced her decision to leave the party and support Kadima and its chairwoman, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

"I have reached the conclusion that the Labor Party does not encourage <u>women</u> and I don't believe in its present path today," Bitan said.

Graphic

Photo: LABOR PARTY Chairman Ehud Barak gets a 'Blue Box' from Efi Stenzler, chairman of the Jewish National Fund, at the Herzliya Conference yesterday evening. After 30 years of absence, the boxes will be distributed once again to the nation's schools, to be used as an educational tool to promote community activism. (Credit: Courtesy)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Of limits and Ahmadinejad

The Jerusalem Post May 4, 2009 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 708 words **Byline:** LAURA KAM

Highlight: Not only does the Iranian leader deny the Holocaust, he sponsors terrorist organizations and calls for the

killing of innocents. The writer is a senior adviser at The Israel Project.

Body

Yesh gvul is Hebrew for there is a limit - and I reached mine sitting in the UN Plenary in Geneva listening to Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

I am a daughter of two Holocaust survivors. My grandparents (the ones who survived) and all of my aunts and uncles were Holocaust survivors. Their friends were almost all Holocaust survivors as well. I too, in my way, have lived the Holocaust and on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day, listening to Ahmadinejad question the veracity of the Holocaust offended me to the very depths of my soul in a way that was shocking, even to myself.

That the Iranian president had the audacity to use the platform afforded him at the UN to refer to the Holocaust as "the pretext of Jewish suffering... in order to establish a totally racist government in occupied Palestine" was a moral travesty in and of itself. Given the background of my own family and the history European Jewry, such a statement can hardly be exceeded in the depth of its insidiousness. It is one thing to read Ahmadinejad's blatant and outrageous layout of historical facts in the news, but it definitely is a different experience seeing this man walking up a stage in close proximity and talking literally to the world.

Suddenly my heart pounded widely and I almost felt suffocated knowing that the president of Iran, whose nation is working furiously to develop nuclear weapons that will target the very place where half of the world's Jewish people now reside, was dismissing the veracity of Israel's existence.

It is needless to mention the irony behind the fact that Iran is in the forefront of countries where human rights abuses routinely take place, where there is no freedom of speech or religious belief, where people are routinely abused and have no individual rights, where <u>women</u> and gays are routinely denied their humanity and even their lives.

AFTER THE MOVING walkout by European delegates as a sign of their disgust over Ahmadinejad's remarks, as the representatives of dozens of nations listened quietly or applauded, I could not take it anymore. I decided to take "action" as a sign of symbolic solidarity with the many men, <u>women</u> and children who never had the chance to speak up against the world's biggest human atrocity as they were silenced to death by gas chambers and crematories and with those murdered in terrorist attacks in Israel and abroad.

For not only does Ahmadinejad deny the Holocaust, he also actively sponsors terrorist organizations carrying out suicide attacks against Israel and other Western democratic nations. He advocates martyrdom and global jihad - in

Of limits and Ahmadinejad

fact he pursues a death-loving approach to life that calls for the killing of innocents. That is why I picked up a sign I was carrying for a demonstration later on and held up the truth: "Iran funds Hamas and *Hizbullah*."

When he said: "World Zionism personifies racism that falsely resorts to religions and abuses religious sentiments to hide its hatred and ugly face," no one said a word. When he questioned the right of my adopted country to exist, he was threatening not only my home, but also the lives of my children. He said of Israel that it is a "Zionist regime" of "ugliness and crimes" and that "we should try to put an end to the misuse of international means by the Zionists and their supporters." Ahmadinejad showed his pure anti-Semitic polemic on full display.

Shortly after my little "act of bravery," I was asked to leave the plenary hall and had my credentials revoked. It was however absolutely worth it: a small sign before the international community but definitely a giant triumph for me and for those who were deprived of ever being heard again.

I had always believed that the ethics of the United Nations was to bring nations together to strengthen international peace and security. This was supposed to be the very DNA on which the UN was built, was it not? But sitting in the middle of the UN celebrating this virulent anti-Semite, giving him legitimacy to publicly speak in front of an international audience, only showed hypocrisy and the failure to do what should have been done - deny Ahmadinejad, who has repeatedly called for Israel to be wiped off the map, the opportunity to be welcome at an anti-racism conference.

Graphic

Photo: IN SOLIDARITY with the many who never had the chance to speak up against the world's biggest human atrocity, and with those murdered in terrorist attacks. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Lebanon capital of Mideast Fashion

Daily News Egypt July 31, 2009 Friday

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Length: 998 words

Body

The gowns are cut low in the front, slashing down to the navel, or low in the back, swooping below the waist, inset with delicate see-through fabric. They couldn't be further from the modest dress generally worn by <u>women</u> in the Arab world.

Yet these fashions come from Lebanon, a tiny Arab country of 4 million on the Mediterranean. This nation better known for military conflicts than the arts has produced an impressive crop of designers, such as Reem Acra and Elie Saab, whose work is showcased at celebrity events such as the Oscars and the Golden Globes.

"Lebanon's name has always been synonymous with war, but when it comes to fashion ... these designers really make us proud," said Laura Seikaly, 39, who was among a recent crowd of bikini-clad sunbathers on a beach north of Beirut. "I guess it comes from the society itself, the way Lebanese <u>women</u> dress. They're very courageous, even more than Europeans."

Perhaps best known among the long list of couturiers is Saab, a Lebanese icon. He catapulted to fashion superstardom in 2002 when Halle Berry accepted an Academy Award sheathed in a dazzling Saab burgundy gown - a first for a Lebanese designer.

The list also includes Zuhair Murad, Robert Abi Nader, George Chakra, George Hobeika, Abed Mahfouz and New York designer Acra, best known in the US for her bridal designs and dressing such celebrities as Eva Longoria, Kate Beckinsale and Jill Biden, the wife of the US vice president.

Lebanese fashion is shaped by the country and its people. Unlike many other Middle East countries, Lebanon is an open, pluralistic society with 18 different religious sects and a parliament split equally between Christians and Muslims. It is also the only Arab country with a Christian head of state.

The country is believed to be roughly 60 percent Muslim and 40 percent Christian. It is a favorite travel destination because of its European flavor, a legacy of French colonial influence, as well as the stark contrast between <u>women</u> with barely-there clothes and others covered from head to toe. While there is sometimes tension, religious tolerance generally prevails, and that tolerance translates into fashion.

Lebanon capital of Mideast Fashion

The country has a huge diaspora - an estimated 8 million people of Lebanese descent, or twice the country's current population, live in countries as distant as Brazil and Australia. The hundreds of thousands of Lebanese who work abroad also contribute to the openness.

"The Lebanese people are well educated, modern, they travel everywhere ... all of this contributes to their talent in many fields, not just designing clothes," said designer Murad, who has quickly become one of Hollywood's favorites. His clients include country singer Carrie Underwood, teen star Miley Cyrus and Paris Hilton, who wore a custom-made Zuhair Murad electric blue silk chiffon gown to this year's Golden Globes.

Murad said it's hard to assert oneself on the international scene when coming from a small nation plagued by conflict. Lebanon has survived the 1975-90 civil war, a 1982 Israeli invasion as well as a fierce monthlong war between Israel and *Hezbollah* two years ago.

"It's difficult to present ourselves to the press, the customers, the new markets like the Americans and Europeans," he said, sitting among his gowns at his seaside Beirut showroom. "It was a dream even to do a fashion show, to create a collection and to present it to the public."

The Lebanese have a reputation for being among the most fashion-conscious people in the Middle East, and liberal in the amount of skin they show.

Lebanese <u>women</u> often wear plunging necklines and tight clothes and spend a lot of time and money on their makeup, hair style and accessories. They'll wear dressed-to-kill attire even on the most casual occasion.

While it's mostly Christian women who wear revealing clothes, many Muslim women also sport daring,

edgy, fashion-forward attire. However, <u>women</u> tend to dress more conservatively in areas where religion is a stronger influence - such as southern Lebanon, dominated by <u>Hezbollah</u>, or the northern city of Tripoli.

Lebanese men are also generally smartly dressed and have a soft spot for flashy designer accessories - glasses, shoes, pens, lighters and wallets.

"Lebanese <u>women</u> are very elegant ... even men. They like fashion," said Robert Abi Nader, sometimes referred to as the king of Middle East couture.

The country itself is breathtaking, bordered by the Mediterranean and a mountain range, an hour's drive east that is high enough to offer skiing.

"I am inspired by the Middle Eastern culture, especially Beirut and the richness of its culture and scenery," said Elie Saab, "Hence my sensitivity to rich fabrics and warm colors."

Saab spent his free time as a kid sewing clothes for his sisters using his mother's tablecloths and curtains. He launched his own atelier in 1982 when Lebanon was in civil war.

He studied fashion in Paris and quickly climbed his way up. In May 2003 he was invited to become a member of the prestigious Chambre Syndicale de la Couture, joining the ranks of international designers such as Valentino and Versace who show officially as part of the French couture tradition.

Among his celebrity clientele are Beyonce, Elizabeth Hurley, Catherine Zeta-Jones and Angelina Jolie, who wore a black sweetheart-neck strapless gown by Saab for this year's Oscars. Jordan's Queen Rania, something of a fashionista herself, is known to be a loyal client.

Saab, 45, has big plans to put Beirut on the international fashion map, including a Beirut Fashion Week in the works. During the 2006 war, when Lebanon was under Israeli bombing, all the models parading the 55 outfits at his Paris 2007 spring collection were dressed in gold as a tribute to the "sun that shines over Beirut."

Lebanon capital of Mideast Fashion

Although he caters to an opulent Middle Eastern clientele and Hollywood stars, Saab remains deeply attached to Lebanon and Lebanese *women*.

"They have been my very first clients, and they still give me that drive of loving elegance around me," he said

Load-Date: August 2, 2009



British criticism of Israel is nothing special

The Jerusalem Post July 28, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 16

Length: 760 words

Byline: VIVIAN WINEMAN

Highlight: Operation Cast Lead has made putting the case for Israel all the more challenging for Diaspora communities. Right of Reply. The writer is president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and chairman of the

Jewish Leadership Council.

Body

Robin Shepherd's assertion in her July 21 article "New era as British hostility reaches crescendo" that "the darkness is closing in" on Israel's reputation in Great Britain is misguided and alarmist.

There is no doubt that Operation Cast Lead has made putting the case for Israel all the more challenging for Diaspora communities - and the UK is certainly no exception. But let's be clear, the "relentless, unremitting stream of anti-Israel invective" that Shepherd refers to is still propagated, as it has been for years, by a relatively small number of people with loud voices.

The appropriate response is not to declare that the situation has reached "critical mass" and that an irreversible anti-Zionist malevolence has descended on Britain; that is simply not the case. The correct response is to be realistic about the degree of the problem and move forward with the huge amount of work that has already been undertaken to ensure that Israel is getting the fair hearing it deserves.

THE UNSUCCESSFUL boycott campaigns at the University and College Union (UCU) for example, while troubling, do not mean that all British academics hate Israel. In fact, the majority of the UCU's 120,000-strong membership cherish academic freedom far beyond the antipathy to Israel harbored by a hard core of left-wing zealots, and have been thoroughly embarrassed that their trade union has been hijacked by hard-liners who devote so much time and resources to considering boycotts. Certainly, the various union-inspired anti-Israel motions require our response, but the clamor made by their proponents doesn't resonate with most British union members, let alone the population at large.

Equally, anti-Zionist polemic published in the Guardian will come as no surprise to those familiar with the British media. Intransigent leftist commentary has been the traditional fare of both its Web site and its print media. Similarly, War on Want, founded by members of a Socialist Worker faction, is simply reverting to type and far from "Israel-haters... going in for the kill." The usual suspects are simply using Operation Cast Lead as a pretext.

THE POLITICAL landscape, while affected by these things, has benefited hugely from the relentless work done by our community in several areas. The UK leads the way in Europe in calling for sanctions against Iran, and we are the only country to have had a parliamentary inquiry into anti-Semitism, which specifically considers the effects and implications of anti-Zionism. Each of the leaders of our major political parties has made clear statements against

British criticism of Israel is nothing special

boycott campaigns focusing on Israel, and earlier this month Shahid Malik, the minister for cohesion, launched a unique report which recommended measures to prevent the use of Nazi analogies in anti-Israel discourse.

It was only a year ago that our prime minister addressed the Knesset on Israel's Diamond Jubilee and professed his friendship - a friendship substantiated during the conflict in Gaza, as it had been by Tony Blair during the war with <u>Hizbullah</u> in 2006. Britain continues to cultivate strong economic relations with Israel. It is the UK's largest individual export market and trading partner in the region, and has boasted annual bilateral trade exceeding £2 billion for the past five years, which is likely to reach £3 billion by 2012.

In July 2008, Gordon Brown announced the launch of the Britain-Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership (BIRAX), a new program to enhance research and academic cooperation. The 'BI ARTS' scheme encourages arts training for professionals from the UK and Israel. The British Council continues to broker contacts between Israeli and British professionals and policy-makers in several areas, including conflict resolution, <u>women</u> in governance and human rights.

The list could go on.

CERTAINLY, there has been increased criticism of Israel in recent months, but no more than anywhere else in the world. The suggestion that British opinion formers are "among the most hostile to Israel in the Western world" is simply misleading.

Let's not forget that it was in South Africa where the deputy minister of foreign affairs was forced to apologize for "conflating Zionist pressure with Jewish influence." It was in America where the president of Iran was hosted by Columbia University, and it is in France where some of the most serious and violent anti-Israel protests to date have been seen.

There's still a lot of work to be done, but let's make no mistake about it, criticism of Israel in Britain is not novel, unique, or endemic.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Britain expels two Iranian diplomats in tit-for-tat response

Guardian.com

June 23, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 815 words

Body

ABSTRACT

Brown announces move after Tehran expels UK envoys, as Obama condemns 'unjust actions' against protesters

FULL TEXT

Britain has ordered the expulsion of two Iranian diplomats, in a tit-for-tat response to the expulsion of two British diplomats from Tehran.

News of the expulsions came as Barack Obama for the first time condemned the violence in Iran, saying the international community was "appalled and outraged" by Tehran's crackdown on protesters.

Going well beyond his previous expressions of sympathy with the demonstrators, he said: "I strongly condemn these unjust actions, and I join with the American people in mourning each and every innocent life that is lost."

The Iranian government told Britain yesterday it was throwing out two UK diplomats, who have not been named, for "activities incompatible with their diplomatic status" - a claim Gordon Brown described as "unjustified".

This morning the Iranian ambassador to London, Rasoul Movahedian Attar, was summoned by the permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Peter Ricketts, and informed of Britain's response. The Iranian diplomats, who have also not been identified, have been given a week to leave the country.

"I am disappointed that Iran has placed us in this position but we will continue to seek good relations with Iran and to call for the regime to respect the human rights and democratic freedoms of the Iranian people," Brown told the House of Commons.

The prime minister said Britain expected Iran to "meet its obligations to the international community", and said "the onus is on Iran to show the Iranian people" that the presidential elections this month were credible.

The Foreign Office said: "The government of Iran is seeking to blame the UK and other outsiders for what is an Iranian reaction to an Iranian issue. This has a potential impact on our staff's safety and is unacceptable."

In Washington Obama said people around the world had witnessed the "timeless dignity of tens of thousands of Iranians marching in silence".

Britain expels two Iranian diplomats in tit-for-tat response

Addressing a White House press conference, he said: "In 2009 no iron fist is strong enough to shut off the world from bearing witness to the peaceful pursuit of justice. Despite the Iranian government's efforts to expel journalists and isolate itself, powerful images and poignant words have made their way to us through cell phones and computers, and so we have watched what the Iranian people are doing.

"Above all, we have seen courageous <u>women</u> stand up to brutality and threats, and we have experienced the searing image of a woman bleeding to death on the streets. While this loss is raw and painful, we also know this: those who stand up for justice are always on the right side of history."

Obama left open to the Iranian government his offer to engage in direct negotiations on the nuclear issue and Iran's support of *Hizbullah* and other groups in the Middle East.

Iranian media reported today that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad <u>would be sworn in again as president by mid-August</u>. IRNA, the official Iranian news agency, said Ahmadinejad, who won a "closely contested and disputed 10th presidential election", would be sworn in before parliament between 26 July and 19 August.

The news will sharpen the dilemma for the defeated reformist candidate, Mir Hossein Mousavi, who maintains that the 12 June vote was fraudulent and that he was the true winner. He must now decide whether to accept an apparent fait accompli or keep up the protest movement that has brought hundreds of thousands out on to the streets of Tehran.

The British embassy began evacuating staff family members yesterday, and this afternoon there was a short demonstration outside the embassy compound in Tehran by Ahmadinejad supporters, who threw eggs over a wall.

Tensions have been rising in recent days as Iranian officials singled out the British government and the BBC, accusing them of instigating and orchestrating the election protests.

The parliamentary speaker, Ali Larijani, yesterday called for bilateral relations with the UK to be reviewed. Mahmoud Ahmadi, an Iranian parliamentarian, said Iran would temporarily recall its ambassador to London.

On Sunday the Iranian foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, summoned European diplomats and accused their countries of fomenting unrest - an accusation quickly rejected by European governments, including Britain. However, allegations against Britain resonate in Iran because of a long history of distrust dating back to the colonial era, during which it took over the Iranian oil industry.

The Foreign Office said: "We have always been clear that we seek a constructive bilateral relationship with Iran based on mutual respect. Iran's decision to try to turn what are internal matters for Iran into a conflict with the UK - and others - is deeply regrettable and without foundation in fact. Whether a constructive relationship is possible depends on Iran."

Load-Date: June 24, 2009



Most Israelis distrust Palestinian intentions and international security guarantees, survey finds

The Jerusalem Post
November 4, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 808 words

Byline: HAVIV RETTIG GUR

Body

A majority of Israeli Jews distrust Palestinian and general Arab willingness to make peace, and have a similar distrust for the efficacy of multinational forces as guarantors of a future agreement, according to a survey published this week.

The survey tried to gauge Israeli Jewish responses to a series of assertions expressing skepticism over issues that included the possibility for negotiations with the Palestinian Authority in light of its support for the report, and the effectiveness of international, Egyptian or Jordanian forces as guarantors of future agreements.

In their responses to these assertions, Israelis tended to agree - sometimes strongly - with the skepticism expressed.

The survey, commissioned by Independent Media Review and Analysis, was conducted last week by the respected Maagar Mohot polling company among 510 adult Jewish Israelis who constituted a representative sample of the Israeli Jewish demographic: 51% male to 49% *female*, 11% haredi, 18% new immigrant, with an average age of 42.

The survey dealt with general issues related to the peace process.

Asked whether the assertion that a complete withdrawal to the pre-1967 border would bring peace - the central plank of the Arab peace initiative - was "simplistic and naive" or "logical and correct," Israeli Jews responded 80% to 10% that this claim was simplistic and naive. This opinion was shared across much of the Israeli political spectrum, with a majority of Labor voters (60%) and overwhelming majorities of Kadima (85%), Likud (93%), haredi (80%) and right-wing (96%) party voters expressing this view.

The survey also brought to the fore what seems to be a deep Israeli distrust of multinational military forces as guarantors of a future peace agreement.

The poll asked respondents to comment on the following statement: "The failure of the multinational forces in Lebanon to prevent <u>Hizbullah</u> from importing rockets to South Lebanon... [should be a lesson for Israel] that it would be a mistake to agree to an Israeli-Palestinian peace [agreement] that looks to multinational forces to maintain security."

A significant majority (56% to 28%, with the rest undecided) agreed with this statement, expressing distrust of multinational forces.

Most Israelis distrust Palestinian intentions and international security guarantees, survey finds

Asked their opinion on the possibility of Jordan and Egypt assuming security responsibility in the West Bank and Gaza, which were previously controlled by these countries before 1967, respondents were divided. According to 38% of those polled, the "security risks" outweighed the "benefits" of such an arrangement, though 29% disagreed and fully 33% either didn't know or were undecided.

"This survey raises questions about some policies that policymakers have been throwing into the air," said Dr. Aaron Lerner, cofounder of Independent Media Review and Analysis.

"Serious people, both on the Left and Right, are making policy recommendations about, for example, handing over security in Gaza or the West Bank to Egypt and Jordan," he said. "So it's important for us to actually think and talk about whether it makes sense to have Jordanian troops deployed in Kalkilya."

Whatever the merits of the case, "nobody is talking about this," believes Lerner. Israel's policy debate is "shallow," and allows for "a whole slew of concepts [to be raised] that aren't getting any serious discussion."

The survey also gauged the effect of the Goldstone Report on public opinion, asking whether the Palestinians were "a real partner" to negotiations in light of the Palestinian Authority's efforts to bring international condemnation on Israel over the Goldstone Report. Fully 54% of Israeli Jews said they were not, while just 34% said the PA was a partner.

The skeptical majority included large majorities of Likud voters (70% expressed distrust), haredi voters (85%) and voters for right-wing parties (77%). Even voters for the center-left Kadima Party reported 50% to 25% that they distrusted Palestinian intentions in light of the PA's efforts. Only among Labor voters did trust slightly overtake distrust (40% to 37%).

The skepticism was highest among new immigrants, with 73% agreeing with the statement of distrust, versus just 13% disagreeing. By comparison, there was a much lower 45% agreement to 32% disagreement among native-born Israeli Jews and veteran immigrants.

Despite the majority who distrusted Palestinian intentions, there was no clear majority when it came to the assertion that "in light of the Palestinian efforts to [advance] the Goldstone Report... Israel does not need to negotiate" with the Palestinians.

The gap was slim - 39% said Israel did need to negotiate, while 37% said it did not - and seemed to reflect a distinction being made by many respondents between distrust of the PA and the need for negotiations. Fully 24% either did not know or could not decide on this question.

The margin of error was 4.5%.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



The Jerusalem Post October 16, 2009 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 24

Length: 1935 words

Byline: CAROLINE B. GLICK **Highlight:** COLUMN ONE

Body

Once the apotheosis of a pro-Western, dependable Muslim democracy, this week Turkey officially left the Western alliance and became a full member of the Iranian axis.

It isn't that Ankara's behavior changed fundamentally in recent days. There is nothing new in its massive hostility toward Israel and its effusive solicitousness toward the likes of Syria and Hamas. Since the Islamist AKP party first won control over the Turkish government in the 2002 elections, led by AKP chairman Recip Tayyip Erdogan, the Turks have incrementally and inexorably moved the formerly pro-Western Muslim democracy into the radical Islamist camp populated by the likes of Iran, Syria, *Hizbullah*, al-Qaida and Hamas.

What made Turkey's behavior this week different from its behavior in recent months and years is that its attacks were concentrated, unequivocal and undeniable for everyone outside of Israel's scandalously imbecilic and flagellant media.

Until this week, both Israel and the US were quick to make excuses for Ankara. When in 2003 the AKP-dominated Turkish parliament prohibited US forces from invading Iraq through Kurdistan, the US blamed itself. Rather than get angry at Turkey, the Bush administration argued that its senior officials had played the diplomatic game poorly.

In February 2006, when Erdogan became the first international figure to host Hamas leaders on an official state visit after the jihadist group won the Palestinian elections, Jerusalem sought to explain away his diplomatic aggression. Israeli leaders claimed that Erdogan's red carpet treatment for mass murderers who seek the physical destruction of Israel was not due to any inherent hostility on the part of the AKP regime toward Israel. Rather, it was argued that Ankara simply supported democracy and that the AKP, as a formerly outlawed Islamist party, felt an affinity toward Hamas as a Muslim underdog.

Jerusalem made similar excuses for Ankara when during the 2006 war with <u>Hizbullah</u> Turkey turned a blind eye to Iranian weapons convoys to Lebanon that traversed Turkey; when Turkey sided with Hamas against Israel during Operation Cast Lead, and called among other things for Israel to be expelled from the UN; and when Erdogan caused a diplomatic incident this past January by castigating President Shimon Peres during a joint appearance at the Davos conference. So, too, Turkey's open support for Iran's nuclear weapons program and its galloping trade with Teheran and Damascus, as well as its embrace of al-Qaida financiers have elicited nothing more than grumbles from Israel and America.

Initially, this week Israel sought to continue its policy of making excuses for Turkish aggression against it. On Sunday, after Turkey disinvited the IAF from the Anatolian Eagle joint air exercise with Turkey and NATO, senior officials like Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon and opposition leader Tzipi Livni tried to make light of the incident, claiming that Turkey remains Israel's strategic ally.

But Turkey wasted no time in making fools of them. On Monday, 11 Turkish government ministers descended on Syria to sign a pile of cooperation agreements with Iran's Arab lackey. The Foreign Ministry didn't even have a chance to write apologetic talking points explaining that brazen move before Syria announced it was entering a military alliance with Turkey and would be holding a joint military exercise with the Turkish military. Speechless in the wake of Turkey's move to hold military maneuvers with its enemy just two days after it canceled joint training with Israel, Jerusalem could think of no mitigating explanation for the move.

Tuesday was characterized by escalating verbal assaults on the Jewish state. First Erdogan renewed his libelous allegations that Israel deliberately killed children in Gaza. Then he called on Turks to learn how to make money like Jews do.

Erdogan's anti-Israel and anti-Semitic blows were followed on Tuesday evening by Turkey's government- controlled TRT1 television network's launch of a new prime- time series portraying IDF soldiers as baby- and little girl-killers who force Palestinian <u>women</u> to deliver stillborn babies at roadblocks and line up groups of Palestinians against walls to execute them by firing squad.

The TRT1 broadcast forced Israel's hand. Late on Tuesday, the Foreign Ministry announced it was launching an official protest with the Turkish Embassy. Unfortunately, it was unclear who would be coming to the Foreign Ministry to receive the demarche, since Turkey hasn't had an ambassador in Israel for three weeks.

TURKEY'S BREAK with the West; its decisive rupture with Israel and its opposition to the US in Iraq and Iran was predictable. Militant Islam of the AKP variety has been enjoying growing popularity and support throughout Turkey for many years. The endemic corruption of Turkey's traditional secular leaders increased the Islamists' popularity. Given this domestic Turkish reality, it is possible that Erdogan and his fellow Islamists' rise to power was simply a matter of time.

But even if the AKP's rise to power was eminently predictable, its ability to consolidate its control over just about every organ of governance in Turkey as well as what was once a thriving free press, and change completely Turkey's strategic posture in just seven years was far from inevitable. For these accomplishments the AKP owes a debt of gratitude to both the Bush and Obama administrations, as well as to the EU.

The Bush administration ignored the warnings of secular Turkish leaders in the country's media, military and diplomatic corps that Erdogan was a wolf in sheep's clothing. Rather than pay attention to his past attempts to undermine Turkey's secular, pro-Western character and treat him with a modicum of suspicion, after the AKP electoral victory in 2002 the Bush administration upheld the AKP and Erdogan as paragons of Islamist moderation and proof positive that the US and the West have no problem with political Islam. Erdogan's softly peddled but remorselessly consolidated Islamism was embraced by senior American officials intent on reducing democracy to a synonym for elections rather than acknowledging that democracy is only meaningful as a system of laws and practices that engender liberal egalitarianism.

In a very real sense, the Bush administration's willingness to be taken in by Erdogan paved the way for its decision in 2005 to pressure Israel to allow Hamas to participate in the Palestinian elections and to coerce Egypt into allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to participate in its parliamentary poll.

In Turkey itself, the administration's enthusiastic embrace of the AKP meant that Erdogan encountered no Western opposition to his moves to end press freedom in Turkey; purge the Turkish military of its secular leaders and end its constitutional mandate to preserve Turkey's secular character; intimidate and disenfranchise secular business leaders and diplomats; and stack the Turkish courts with Islamists. That is, in the name of its support for its water-downed definition of democracy, the US facilitated Erdogan's subversion of all the Turkish institutions that enabled liberal norms to be maintained and kept Turkey in the Western alliance.

As for the Obama administration, since entering office in January it has abandoned US support for democracy activists throughout the world, in favor of a policy of pure appeasement of US adversaries at the expense of US allies. In keeping with this policy, President Barack Obama paid a preening visit to Ankara where he effectively endorsed the Islamization of Turkish foreign policy that has moved the NATO member into the arms of Teheran's mullahs. Taken together, the actions of the Bush and Obama White Houses have demoralized Westernized Turks, who now believe that their country is doomed to descend into the depths of Islamist extremism. As many see it, if they wish to remain in Turkey, their only recourse is to join the Islamist camp and add their voices to the rising chorus of anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism sweeping the country.

Then there is the EU. For years Brussels has been stringing Turkey along, promising that if it enacts sufficient human rights reforms, the 80-million strong Muslim country will be permitted to join Europe. But far from inducing more liberal behavior on the part of Turkey, those supposedly enlightened reforms have paved the way for the Islamist ascendance in the country. By forcing Turkey to curb its military's role as the guarantor of Turkish secularism, the EU took away the secularists' last line of defense against the rising tide of the AKP. By forcing Turkey to treat its political prisoners humanely and cancel the death penalty, the EU eroded the secularists' moral claim to leadership and weakened their ability to effectively combat both Kurdish and Islamist terror.

At the same time, by consistently refusing to permit Turkey to join the EU, despite Ankara's moves to placate its political correctness, Brussels discredited still further Turkey's secularists. When after all their self- defeating and self-abasing reforms, Europe still rejected them, the Turks needed to find a way to restore their wounded honor. The most natural means of doing so was for the Turks writ large to simply turn their backs on Europe and move toward their Muslim brethren.

FOR ITS part, as the lone Jewish state that belongs to no alliance, Israel had no ability to shape internal developments in Turkey. But still, Turkey's decision to betray the West holds general lessons for Israel and for the free world as a whole. These lessons should be learned and applied moving forward not only to Turkey, but to a whole host of regimes and sub-national groups in the region and throughout the world.

In the first instance it is crucial for policy-makers to recognize that change is the only permanent feature of the human condition. A country's presence in the Western camp today is no guarantee that it will remain there in the future. Whether a regime is democratic or authoritarian or somewhere in the middle, domestic conditions and trends play major roles in determining its strategic posture over time. This is just as true for Turkey as it is for the US, for Iran and for Sweden and Egypt.

The loss of Turkey shows that countries can and do change. The best way to influence that change is to remain true to one's friends, even if those friends are imperfect. Only by strengthening those who share one's country's norms and interests - rather than its procedures and rhetoric - can governments exert constructive influence on internal changes in other states and societies.

Moreover, it is only by being willing to recognize what makes an ally an ally and an adversary an adversary that the West will adopt policies that leave it more secure in the long run. A military-controlled Turkish democracy that barred Islamists from political power was more desirable than a popularly elected AKP regime that has moved Turkey into the Iranian axis. So, too, a corrupt Western-dependent regime in Afghanistan is more desirable than a Taliban-al-Qaida terror state. Likewise an unstable, weakened mullocracy in Iran challenged by a well-funded, liberal opposition is preferable to a strong, stable mullocracy that has successfully repressed its internationally isolated liberal rivals.

Turkey is lost and we'd better make our peace with this devastating fact. But if we learn its lessons, we can craft policies that check the dangers that Turkey projects and prepare for the day when Turkey may decide that it wishes to return to the Western fold.

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Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Amnesty urges arms embargo against Israel, Palestinians. Israel: Report is a 'tendentious description of reality that doesn't rest on objective and professional criteria'

The Jerusalem Post February 23, 2009 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 882 words

Byline: TOVAH LAZAROFF and HERB KEINON, Rebecca Anna Stoil contributed to this report.

Body

The human rights group Amnesty International called on the United States to stop weapons sales to Israel and on all countries to impose an arms embargo on both Israel and the Palestinians.

"As the major supplier of weapons to Israel, the USA has a particular obligation to stop any supply that contributes to gross violations of the laws of war and of human rights. The Obama administration should immediately suspend US military aid to Israel," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty's Middle East director.

He also called on the "UN Security Council to impose an immediate and comprehensive arms embargo on Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups."

The London-based group, which operates in 150 countries, targeted both Israel and Hamas in the 38-page report it issued late Sunday night.

But the bulk of the text detailed Israeli actions against Palestinians in Gaza and US culpability for Israel's 22-day military operation in the Gaza Strip. Amnesty has been highly critical of Israel in past reports.

In this report, Amnesty focused on the issue of arms sales, and explained that due to a 10-year agreement lasting until 2017, the US was due to provide \$30 billion in military aid to Israel.

"To a large extent, Israel's military offensive in Gaza was carried out with weapons, munitions and military equipment supplied by the US and paid for with US taxpayers' money," said Smart.

Its use in Gaza was in violation of US and international law, the report charged.

"Israeli forces used white phosphorus and other weapons supplied by the US to carry out serious violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes. Their attacks resulted in the death of hundreds of children and other civilians, and massive destruction of homes and infrastructure," said Donatella Rovera, who headed Amnesty International's fact-finding mission to southern Israel and Gaza.

Amnesty researchers found fragments and components of munitions used by the IDF - including many made in the US - littering school playgrounds, in hospitals and in people's homes, according to the report.

Amnesty urges arms embargo against Israel, Palestinians. Israel: Report is a 'tendentious description of reality that doesn't rest on objective and profession....

They also found remnants of a new type of missile, seemingly launched from unmanned drones, which releases large numbers of tiny sharp-edged metal cubes, each between 2 and 4 square millimeters in size.

Rovera also charged that Hamas and the Palestinians had committed war crimes against Israel by firing rockets at Israeli civilians along the southern border.

Israel initially denied using white phosphorous during Operation Cast Lead but has since stopped denying it and is investigating the matter.

The Foreign Ministry issued a sharp attack on the report prior to its publication and said it was a "tendentious description of reality that doesn't rest on objective and professional criteria."

The statement stressed that the weapons Israel had used during Operation Cast Lead were compatible with international law.

The statement said Israel had never intentionally targeted civilians, and testimony to the contrary in the report had come from "interested parties, under Hamas influence."

The ministry took Amnesty to task for its comparison of the supplying of Earms to Israel to the supplying of arms to Hamas.

"Israel is a sovereign state obligated to use force to protect its citizens, while Hamas is a terrorist organization. Is it possible to compare the arms in al- Qaida's hands to the weapons in the hands of the NATO forces?" the statement read.

According to the Foreign Ministry, the report ignores the basic fact that Hamas is a terrorist organization that is so recognized by the US, the European Union and other countries.

"The organization systematically refuses to recognize Israel and any possibility of reaching peace with it, and publicly declares its yearning for its destruction," the ministry said.

The statement also took Amnesty to task for not mentioning Hamas's uses of civilian shields, something it knew would lead to civilian casualties during combat.

"Hamas openly and in an organized fashion uses <u>women</u> and children to protect military targets, and booby-traps homes and public buildings," the statement read.

While mentioning the rocket fire on Israel, the ministry said the Amnesty report ignored its scope - the fact that some 10,000 rockets and mortars had been fired at Israel over the last eight years.

In advance of the report, Gerald Steinberg, the executive director of NGO Monitor, said, "This report is clearly part of a campaign to deprive Israel of the means to defend itself. This is another example of Amnesty's double standards and anti-Israel bias exploiting the language of international law."

"Amnesty's reports on Israel are often based on inaccuracies, half-truths and unverifiable allegations from so-called eyewitnesses, and reflect a lack of serious credible research capabilities," Steinberg said.

"In 2002, an Amnesty 'expert' first confirmed the nonexistent Jenin 'massacre,' and in the 2006 conflict with *Hizbullah*, many of Amnesty's claims were later shown to be unsubstantiated.

The factual errors are amplified by inaccurate statements using the rhetoric of international law, using terms such as 'disproportionate' and 'war crimes,' which they apply far more to Israel than to groups such as Hamas. This ideologically biased pattern was repeated in the recent Gaza conflict."

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Amnesty urges arms embargo against Israel , Palestinians. Israel : Report is a 'tendentious description of reality that doesn't rest on objective and profession....



<u>Canada's Mideast conflict; Minister's threat crosses the line into wedge</u> politics - Correction Appended

The Toronto Star March 1, 2009 Sunday

Correction Appended

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Section: OPINION; Pg. A17

Length: 956 words

Byline: Haroon Siddiqui, Toronto Star

Body

Ripples from the Arab-Israeli conflict have always reached Canada. A war there usually meant a war of words here.

It was inevitable that the Israeli attack on Gaza would increase tensions between the Canadian supporters and critics of Israel.

This time, though, the debates seem nastier, and their impact wider on Canadian institutions and policies: universities, immigrant settlement programs, the issue of free speech vs. hate, etc.

As campuses gear up for Israel Apartheid Week starting tomorrow, there are fierce arguments over Israel's "right to defend itself" vs. its "war crimes," and also over what can or cannot be said on posters and T-shirts here. University officials are accused of muzzling speech or tolerating "intimidation."

Who's the greater culprit? That depends entirely on your view of the Middle East conflict.

Similarly, the solidly pro-Israeli stance of Stephen Harper and Michael Ignatieff has been applauded or condemned mostly on the basis of such polarized views. The two are either principled models of moral clarity, or they are "whores."

That appellation was used by Khaled Mouammar, head of the Canadian Arab Federation, at a Jan. 17 rally at the constituency office of Peter Kent, junior minister for foreign affairs, who had defended an Israeli attack on a UN-run school.

Mouammar said the Gaza conflict exposed two types of politicians: "Professional whores who support war, as (American author) Norman Finkelstein said in a speech at the U of T - people like Peter Kent and Jason Kenney and Michael Ignatieff ... who said that Israel has a right to defend itself by killing <u>women</u> and children" and those politicians "who have lost their tongues" and been silent about Gaza.

Among others, the comments were condemned by Kenney, the immigration minister. He was quoted by Elizabeth Thompson of Sun Media as threatening to withdraw \$447,000 from the Arab federation, funding that is used to teach immigrants English and job search skills. He said he had ordered his department officials to weigh the words of Mouammar. And that he had urged other ministers to do the same.

The reaction was swift.

The federation said cutting off funding would constitute the collective punishment of innocents who received its services. And it asked: "Is the muting of our voices now a condition for receiving funding?"

But two leading Jewish groups applauded Kenney.

B'nai Brith accused the Arab group of engaging in "inflammatory rhetoric" and promoting "anti-Semitic and proterrorist propaganda" for Hamas and *Hezbollah*.

Bernie Farber of the Canadian Jewish Congress said that while his group used to work with the Arab federation, it couldn't work with Mouammar. The latter had "lobbied Ottawa to remove <u>Hezbollah</u> from the list of terrorist organizations" and had once forwarded someone's email during the 2006 Liberal leadership race, saying Bob Rae's Jewish wife, Arlene, had worked with the Jewish Congress, etc.

Not everyone at the Arab group was happy with Mouammar, either.

There were murmurs that as dedicated as he was, he tended to get carried away and that his words helped those who want to muzzle criticism of Israel and weaken Arab organizations. Still, Kenney's tirades - there have been others - were too much.

Jehad Aliweiwi, former executive director (1996-2002) of the federation, wrote that Mouammar's words, "however irresponsible or objectionable, are neither hateful nor criminal." Thus the threats to cut off funding are "irresponsible and vindictive."

Addressing himself to Jewish groups, he said: "Combating anti-Semitism is an objective we all should be committed to, but it must never be a convenient tool to target Canadian Arabs who have the right to question their government's policy, actions and practices."

The same point was made more sharply by Independent Jewish Voices, a small group that fights for Palestinian human rights. It said Kenney attacked the Arab group because it "stands for justice for Palestinian people and expresses principled criticism of oppressive Israeli policies. (This) is an ethical imperative, which our government should support."

MPs Maurizio Bevilacqua (Liberal), Thomas Mulcair (NDP) and Nicolas Brisson (Bloc Quebecois) said that as inappropriate as Mouammar's words were, penalizing his group was wrong. Brisson added that Kenney was pouring oil on the fire of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He said he felt that Mouammar's comments were "more in the realm of an insult than of a hateful character."

That argument was further advanced by Fo Niemi, head of the Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations in Montreal. Not only should the Tories not be playing politics with funding, he said, but they had better define the difference between free speech and hate. "When we don't have a clear set of objectives and transparent criteria, there could be room for subjective or even arbitrary interpretations" in funding decisions.

What's happening is clear:

Mouammar uses intemperate language, a reflection of his personality and his people's anger and helplessness at what's happening to Palestinians and also at Ottawa's marginalization of Arab Canadians. His words are then used to try and further limit their political space.

Arguments and debates are the staple of democracy. Groups have a right to advance their causes, in a civil fashion.

But cabinet ministers, especially ministers of multiculturalism, usually try to stay above the fray.

Canada's Mideast conflict Minister's threat crosses the line into wedge politics

But not Kenney. He is using Republican-style wedge politics to advance Tory fortunes. He is injecting foreign conflicts into domestic politics to do so. And he is employing despicable tactics to malign those who dare question his government's policies.

Haroon Siddiqui's column appears Thursday and Sunday. hsiddiq @ thestar.ca

Correction

A March 1 column stated that Peter Kent, Canada's junior minister for foreign affairs, had defended an Israeli attack on a UN-run school. The column should have said that the minister defended an Israeli attack that occurred near a UN-run school.

Correction-Date: March 4, 2009

Graphic

STAR FILE PHOTOS Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, left, answered Khaled Mouammar's taunt by suggesting the Canadian Arab Federation 's funding might be cut.STAR FILE PHOTOS Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, left, answered Khaled Mouammar's taunt by suggesting the Canadian Arab Federation 's funding might be cut.

Load-Date: March 5, 2009



We may have to ignore deadline to halt al-Qaeda terror, general warns; Iraq

The Times (London)
April 10, 2009 Friday
Edition 2

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 35 Length: 1025 words

Byline: Deborah Haynes

Body

The activities of al-Qaeda in two of Iraq's most troubled cities could keep US combat troops engaged beyond the June 30 deadline for their withdrawal, the top US commander in the country has warned.

US troop numbers in Mosul and Baqubah, in the north of the country, could rise rather than fall over the next year if necessary, General Ray Odierno told The Times in his first interview with a British newspaper since taking over from General David Petraeus in September.

He said that a joint assessment would be conducted with the Iraqi authorities in the coming weeks before a decision is made.

Combat troops are due to leave all Iraqi cities by the end of June. Any delay would be a potential setback for President Obama, who has pledged to withdraw all combat forces from Iraq by August 2010 as he switches his focus to Afghanistan.

The ultimate decision on keeping or withdrawing troops would be taken by Nouri al-Maliki, the Iraqi Prime Minister, handing him a big dilemma, given the desire by most Iraqis for the US military to leave the country.

Tens of thousands of supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr, the anti-American Shia cleric, marched through Baghdad yesterday, the sixth anniversary of the fall of the capital, to demand the withdrawal of US forces.

General Odierno, 54, said that he was also concerned about the risk of renewed conflict between Arabs and Kurds in northern Iraq, where tensions are rising over the ownership of territory. He also cited the "very dangerous" threat posed by Iranian-funded militants, who appear to be styling themselves on Lebanon's *Hezbollah*.

General Odierno, a bald, imposing 6ft 5in, was speaking as he sat outside the back of the Saddam-era mansion that he calls home, next to a manmade lake on a military base in Baghdad. Touching on a range of issues, he said that he was not worried by a recent spate of deadly bombings against Shia targets blamed on al-Qaeda. He said they were designed to coincide with key dates such as the anniversary of Baghdad's fall and rejected the idea that they signalled a fresh round of sectarian war.

We may have to ignore deadline to halt al-Qaeda terror, general warns Iraq

The general has long experience of Iraq: he arrived in April 2003, after the invasion, and led the US division that was ultimately responsible for capturing Saddam Hussein; he was No 2 to General Petraeus in 2007; and is now on his third tour in charge of the American withdrawal.

Under an agreement between Washington and Baghdad, all 140,000 US troops must be out by the end of 2011.

Despite the rise in the number of attacks, overall violence is still far below levels of two years ago when the surge of an extra 30,000 US forces - a strategy created and implemented by General Odierno and his boss, General Petraeus - was just getting started. That risk paid off, subduing a civil war that was killing thousands of Iraqi civilians and scores of American soldiers every month.

General Odierno said that his darkest days in Iraq were when he was in charge of day-to-day combat operations in 2007. During that 15-month tour he signed hundreds of letters of condolence to the parents of servicemen and **women** from the US, Britain and other coalition countries. "I always felt [the surge] would [succeed] but those were the times when you were wondering whether this will work or not," he said.

The war touched him more than most commanders. "The toughest day was the day I got called that my son was injured over here," he said. Tony Odierno, then an army lieutenant, lost an arm in a rocket attack in 2004.

The US commander was confident that the overall timetable for the US pullout would be met. But he added that US combat troops might have to stay beyond June 30 in Mosul and Baqubah, where al-Qaeda retains an active presence. "The two areas I am concerned with are Mosul and then Baqubah and [other] parts of Diyala province," he said. "We will conduct assessments and provide our assessments when the time is right." He added that over the next 12 months "we won't see a large reduction in any forces in Mosul or Diyala.

In fact we might see reinforcements in those areas if we continue to have issues". Another flashpoint is the ethnically divided city of Kirkuk, on the border of Iraqi Kurdistan, where Arabs and Kurds are at loggerheads.

Provincial elections were delayed there because of a disagreement over ownership of the city, a row that also covers towns and villages scattered along the border.

The general agreed that there was a risk of conflict in those areas. "We can't allow politics, we can't allow pride, we can't allow ego to cause violence to occur when you can solve a problem with dialogue." He said that he was also keeping an eye on Iranian-backed Shia militants who are fewer in number compared with two years ago but restructuring into groups with a political and military wing, similar to *Hezbollah*.

6 President Barack Obama is seeking \$83.4 billion for US military and diplomatic operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, pressing for special troop funding that he opposed two years ago when he was a senator and George W. Bush was President. Mr Obama's request, including money to send thousands more troops into Afghanistan, would push the costs of the two wars to almost \$1 trillion since the September 11, 2001, terror attacks against the US, according to the Congressional Research Service.

Online

The 'Spaclel Forcas': on Deborah Haynes's blog timesonline.co.uk/insideiraq

A military leader who commands respect

"One of the most effective military leaders of his generation" Defence Secretary Robert Gates, speaking in February 2008 "He went through a complete metamorphosis. He educated himself and became the pre-eminent operational commander we have in conducting irregular warfare" Retired General Jack Keane, who worked closely with General Odierno on the surge "He really just wanted to play football, serve his five years and get out of the army. But he hurt his knee and never got the chance" Linda Odierno, his wife, in an interview with the Baltimore Sun "I appreciate the fact that you really snatched defeat out of the jaws of those who were trying to defeat us in Iraq" George W. Bush, thanking General Odierno in March 2008 Source: Times database

Graphic

General Ray Odierno said that troop numbers in Mosul and Baqubah could rise rather than fall if violence continues MAURICIO LIMA / AFP

Load-Date: April 10, 2009



We may have to ignore deadline to halt al-Qaeda terror, general warns; Iraq

The Times (London)
April 10, 2009 Friday
Edition 1

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 35 Length: 1026 words

Byline: Deborah Haynes

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As well as the surge, he and General Petraeus created a Sunni militia from tribal chiefs who had either sympathised with or actively participated in the insurgency.

The Awakening Councils became a turning point in the war when they rebelled against al-Qaeda under the payroll of the US. Eighteen months on, responsibility for the movement has been transferred to the Shia-led Government, but a sense of mutiny is stirring among the ranks amid allegations that the men are being unfairly treated and no longer paid..

A military leader who commands respect

"One of the most effective military leaders of his generation" Defence Secretary Robert Gates, speaking in February 2008 "He went through a complete metamorphosis. He educated himself and became the pre-eminent operational commander we have in conducting irregular warfare" Retired General Jack Keane, who worked closely with General Odierno on the surge "He really just wanted to play football, serve his five years and get out of the army. But he hurt his knee and never got the chance" Linda Odierno, his wife, in an interview with the Baltimore Sun "I

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Online

Read Deborah Haynes's blog on 'Special Forces' timesonline.co.uk/insideiraq

Graphic

General Ray Odierno said that troop numbers in Mosul and Baqubah could rise rather than fall if violence continues

Load-Date: April 10, 2009



Wildcard in Iran election: Obama

Christian Science Monitor June 11, 2009, Thursday

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Section: USA; Pg. 6 **Length:** 840 words

Byline: Howard LaFranchi Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: Washington

Body

The verdict is in: Barack Obama's speech to the Muslim world last week has already had an impact, specifically in the surprise victory Sunday of a pro-Western coalition in legislative elections in Lebanon.

With the unexpected defeat of Lebanon's <u>Hizbullah</u>-led coalition, some regional analysts are wondering if Mr. Obama's approach - a respectful stance towards Islam, coupled with a firm rejection of the kind of violent extremism that has attracted some Muslims - might also have an impact in Friday's presidential elections in Iran.

Signs of an early impact don't stop there. Consider Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hastily called policy speech this Sunday, which some experts in Israeli affairs say would not be happening expect for the new American president's approach to the region - and many Israelis' attraction to it.

You might call it the Obama Effect.

"The Lebanese elections came out the way they did because of the Obama speech," says Edward Walker, a former assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs and member of the advisory council of the Israel Policy Forum, a group that advocates for Mideast peace. "The impact was particularly swift and strong in the Arab world."

With Obama's Cairo speech coming as it did just three days before voting in an election the US had been closely monitoring, the presidential discourse acted something like a campaign closer.

While other local factors were certainly at work in Lebanon, some analysts say Obama's less aggressive stance on democracy than George W. Bush's, along with his case for modernization of Muslim countries through international cooperation, made a pro-Western political perspective palatable again.

Result? A surprise win by Lebanon's pro-Western March 14 coalition.

Some of these same factors are at work in Pakistan, some analysts believe, where not just cosmopolitan Karachi businessmen but also humble villagers in culturally traditional areas are starting to take back ground lost to Taliban and pro-Al-Qaeda groups.

While Obama's speech was a high-profile act, some observers say any impact it has had can only be explained in the context of other Obama administration initiatives. Among them:

* Obama making one of his first official acts the naming of George Mitchell as his Mideast envoy;

Wildcard in Iran election: Obama

* The president's Nowruz (Persian New Year) message to Iranians in March;

* The administration's quick attention to the Pakistani refugees left homeless by fighting with advancing Taliban forces;

These factors and more laid the groundwork for Obama's words from Cairo to fall on receptive ears.

As important as Obama's speech was, "It was Joe Biden who carried the [Lebanese] election," says Steven Spiegel, director of the Center for Middle East Development at UCLA.

Referring to Vice-President Biden's March visit and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's earlier stop in Lebanon, he says that kind of sustained attention from a new administration helped Obama's words ring true to skeptical Muslims.

"Everybody was complaining about Biden and Clinton in Lebanon," that it would be seen as interference or heavy-handed, adds Mr. Spiegel. "But now everyone is saying it was a brilliant move."

Any "Obama factor" in Iran's presidential contest will be difficult to gauge, Iran experts say, because the overriding issue in the campaign is the economy and what is widely perceived domestically as President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's poor stewardship of it.

But even in that context, Iranians who see Obama's promise of closer international ties (as opposed to the threat of deeper economic sanctions) as one avenue to economic recovery may reject Mr. Ahmadinejad's confrontational style as better suited to the era of President Bush.

Still, even some regional analysts who found strong elements in Obama's speech say they are dubious of any short-term impact as concrete as influencing an election.

"It's hard for me to imagine a significant number of Lebanese voters changing their mind based on what President Obama said in Cairo a few days before," says James Phillips, a Middle East expert at the Heritage Foundation in Washington.

If anything, Mr. Phillips sees a better likelihood of some marginal influence in Iran. "The sanctions have had an impact on the Iranian economy, and the poor state of US-Iran relations is directly tied to that," he says.

Then there are some pro-reform forces who worry that any "Obama effect" may be the comfort the president's speech has been construed by some as offering to the Muslim world's entrenched powers.

"The reaction has been largely positive, but less so among the activists who would have liked to see stronger support for democracy and human rights and some condemnation of the Egyptian status quo," says Dina Guirguis, executive director of Voices for a Democratic Egypt in Washington.

Obama's speech "indulged" a traditional interpretation of Islam, she says, in particular as it pertains to <u>women</u>, that is not likely to encourage a wave of modernization across the region.

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Load-Date: June 11, 2009



Videos of explosions and assassinations of soldiers shown at trial

Derby Evening Telegraph November 19, 2009 Thursday

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Section: Pg. 6

Length: 470 words

Byline: Shaun Jepson

Body

Videos of explosions and assassinations of US soldiers have been shown to the jury in the trial of a suspected Derby terrorist.

Hundreds of clips were found on computers and storage devices when police targeted the Normanton home of Krenar Lusha.

The jury at Preston Crown Court was also told that Lusha had claimed to be a sniper when having conversations with *women* over the internet.

The 30-year-old, of Moore Street, denies 10 counts of possessing articles which give rise to a reasonable suspicion they were for a terror-related purpose.

During yesterday's proceedings, prosecuting barrister Nigel Godsmark QC showed the jury several video clips found at Lusha's address on August 26.

On a laptop, said Mr Godsmark, a clip lasting 26 minutes, detailing how to construct a suicide bomber belt, was discovered.

A video file called "AK-47" and one called "Detonators" were also found on the machine, said Mr Godsmark, along with a clip showing how to turn a mobile phone into a detonation device.

Other clips showed soldiers being shot by snipers and one of the apparent hanging of a Russian man by a group of Chechens.

The jury was shown another video featuring images of a man and three **women** being shot at close range.

A photograph file showing the "organisational chart" of the al-Qaeda was also found on a computer, said Mr Godsmark.

Mr Godsmark said Lusha had held a series of conversations - often with women - over internet chat programmes.

During one conversation in April last year, Lusha, under the web name Unity, said he wanted revenge after the British Government put a very good friend of his in prison.

In an exchange in May last year, he told one person he was a "very good sniper".

Videos of explosions and assassinations of soldiers shown at trial

Mr Godsmark said: "Mr Lusha regularly used this method to talk to people, usually ladies and usually Muslim ladies.

"He would tell them about himself and his views.

"As with many men trying to impress a lady, there may well be a degree of exaggeration and bravado in these conversations, but, even bearing that in mind, there are indications in the web chat that provide an insight into what makes Mr Lusha tick."

Earlier in the trial, the court heard that counter-terrorism officers found 71.8 litres of petrol in a cellar and more than two kilograms of potassium nitrate - a constituent of gunpowder - in a bedroom at Lusha's home.

Documents found on computers or drives included the <u>Hezbollah</u> military instruction manuals and details of Middle Eastern terrorist bomb design, improvised radio detonation techniques, Radnar's detonators, the Mujahideen explosives handbook and the Bomb Book.

A video film entitled "mobile detonators" was also discovered, along with 14 mobile phones.

Lusha, who is an Albanian Muslim, was flanked by an interpreter and two security guards throughout yesterday's proceedings.

The trial continues.

Load-Date: November 20, 2009



Pakistan: Israel, Hamas inch towards prisoner exchange

Right Vision News

December 13, 2009 Sunday

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Length: 899 words

Dateline: OCCUPIED-AL-QUDS

Body

OCCUPIED-AL-QUDS, Dec. 13 -- Sworn enemies Israel and Hamas seem equally eager to trade an Israeli soldier held in Gaza for Palestinian prisoners. Their dilemmas, fashioned by decades of conflict and symptomatic of the fear and lack of trust that will continue to shape the region, explain why three and a half years after guerrillas snatched Gilad Shalit on the Gaza-Israel border, the soldier and some of the 11,000 Palestinians held in Israeli jails are still uncertain whether they might soon be released. The 1.5 million people of the Gaza Strip are also watching keenly, aware that freedom for Shalit may be followed by Western pressure on Israel to ease a blockade that has blighted life in the coastal enclave since Hamas seized the soldier in 2006. Behind-the-scenes talks mediated by Egypt and, recently, by Germany have seesawed from optimistic assessments a deal was close, to reports the negotiations may have failed. Israel knows any deal will seem lopsided, as Hamas Islamists releasing their only prisoner demand freedom for hundreds of Palestinians. Hamas needs to bring home, or at least win freedom in exile for, big names and big numbers after losing over 3,000 Gazans, including hundreds from allied militant groups, in fighting with Israel since Shalit's capture, including in a war this year. The popular pressure is enormous and they are backing Hamas not to make concessions.

Hamas has no choice but to stick to its demands,' said Mustafa al-Sawaf, an Islamist writer in Hamas-ruled Gaza. For his part, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces contradictory pressures over Shalit, whose case is a national cause celebre due largely to a compulsory draft for 18-year-olds that relies on a sense of motivation and solidarity. Thousands have held protests demanding his freedom.But Netanyahu also faces demands, especially from right-wing Israelis, not to pay too high a price for the soldier by releasing key figures Hamas wants freed but whom Israel blames for masterminding suicide bombings that have killed hundreds. Israel has 'already surrendered' to Hamas, Israeli columnist Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in Maariv newspaper this week. He charged that freeing too many prisoners 'would encourage further violent conflict against Israel, and deal a serious blow to deterrence. Israel, citing public demands that it protect its conscript soldiers at almost any cost, has set precedents showing a readiness to swap hundreds of the enemy for one of its own. Among the most dramatic was in 1985, when it freed 1,150 prisoners for three soldiers held by Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanon. That precedent, however, is one that weighs on Netanyahu today, analysts believe, since it backfired on the government. Some militants freed in that swap played key roles in a Palestinian uprising that broke out two years later and the Labour party was voted out of office the following year. Analysts say that when a later Labour prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, was offered a swap in the 1990s for Ron Arad, an airman captured in Lebanon, he balked at repeating Labour's experience of the 1980s but was then criticised by Israelis for failing Arad, whose fate remains a mystery to this day. Still, since 2004 Israel has freed more than 400 prisoners in two separate swaps, for an Israeli businessman and the bodies of half a dozen soldiers. Three months ago, it freed 20 women prisoners in exchange for a 'proof of life' video of Shalit. Samir Kuntar, reviled in Israel for a 1979 attack in which four members of a family were killed, went free in a 2008 deal with Lebanon's Hizbullah for the bodies of two soldiers. Sources in Gaza said the talks hit

Pakistan: Israel, Hamas inch towards prisoner exchange

a snag a few days ago over some 50 names of leading militants whose freedom Hamas demands in exchange for Shalit, from a list said to top 400. Earlier Israel was said to have agreed to 160 names on the list.An Israeli political source said the army was concerned that militants previously released into the Israeli-occupied West Bank had managed to elude attempts to keep tabs on them. Controversial names on Hamas's list include Marwan Barghouthi, a leader of Hamas's secular rival Fatah whom Israel jailed for life for planning attacks that killed dozens. In a twist revealing how Gaza's fate is tied to poisonous internal Palestinian politics, supporters of Fatah leader and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas have had to deny Abbas is pressing Israel to keep Barghouthi, who has warmer relations with Hamas and could be a challenger to Abbas in elections next year. Israel, and its ally the United States, also share a disquiet that Barghouthi could meld the diplomatic approach taken by Abbas towards Israel with the armed confrontation favoured by Hamas. Another prisoner Israel doesn't want to set free is a Hamas leader it blames for one of its worst suicide bombings, a 2002 attack that killed 30 in a Netanya hotel. Yet another, Ahmad Saadat, was charged with the 2001 assassination of an ultranationalist Israeli cabinet minister. The deal is pending on Netanyahu's decision to agree to the full names in the Hamas list. So far there is no such decision and we have no indication Hamas is going to make any further concession, a diplomat familiar with the talks said. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Right Vision News. For more information on news feed please contact Sarabjit Jagirdar at httsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Load-Date: December 12, 2009



Reform from the bottom: How judiciary, civil society can loosen the sectarian grip from Lebanese citizens

The Daily Star (Lebanon)
October 1, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 1001 words

Body

I advocate in this article a fundamental change to the deadlocked Lebanese political system from the perspective of human rights, nothing less than liberating the citizens from their communal captors. A reform from the bottom needs determined actors, in the judiciary and in civil society, to resist the violence of political-sectarian speech.

First person by Georges Assaf

I advocate in this article a fundamental change to the deadlocked Lebanese political system from the perspective of human rights, nothing less than liberating the citizens from their communal captors. A reform from the bottom needs determined actors, in the judiciary and in civil society, to resist the violence of political-sectarian speech and the concomitant use of arms inside the country as did *Hizbullah* and other groups in May 2008.

Sensational measures - such as deleting the religious mention from identity cards or from the personal status files, or recognizing the right of individuals to choose not to be identified with reference to their religion, as in the legal opinion just issued by the Department of Legislation and Consultation at the Justice Ministry at the request of "The Civil State Initiative" led by former Speaker of Parliament Hussein al-Husseini, - highlight the incapacity of officials to discharge their tasks according to the Constitution. They are, however, inconsequential.

From a human rights perspective, we need to inject universal values under the form of norms and standards that are integrated in the national legal framework by ratifying and implementing international human rights treaties in everyday cases. This is a powerful vector of change in as much as it gives citizens recourse before national courts for their universally recognized rights. Its effectiveness depends on judicial activism, which remains timid in the Lebanese context, but brings serious added value to the power of bottom-up reform in Lebanon.

Invoking international human rights conventions before national tribunals collides however with the "consociative" political system as practiced in Lebanon.

The Lebanese legal system is unique in its duality, especially since the constitutional 1990 amendments to the 1926 Constitution.

Reform from the bottom: How judiciary, civil society can loosen the sectarian grip from Lebanese citizens

On the one hand the Constitution makes it an obligation for the state to effectively protect public freedoms and fundamental rights and to integrate in national law all the principles expressed by the UN Charter, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and various UN human rights conventions.

On the other hand, the Constitution imposes personal status laws of the historic communities of Lebanon and gives religious leaderships the right to challenge the constitutionality of laws which they deem to be contrary to their respective personal status laws.

For judicial activism in honoring international human rights conventions to be effective, it requires the adoption of an optional civil personal status law open to citizens irrespective of their religious belief, which is based on the constitutional guarantee of "freedom of conscience" as protected under the Constitution (Preamble. Section C and Article 9). It also requires the legal shaping of 'a civil law community' open to citizens who choose to free themselves from the grip of their respective religious communities.

Since 1951, attempts at enacting an optional personal status civil law have invariably failed, the most recent one in 1997. A draft law proposal adopted by the Cabinet was blocked by the late Prime Minister Rafik Hariri following the opposition of the Lebanese religious leadership across the board, especially the mufti.

Such a reform has long been mandated by the United Nations. In its consideration of the Lebanese Government National

Periodic Report of 2005 on the application of the 1995 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against **Women** (CEDAW), the CEDAW Committee urged the Lebanese state "to adopt a unified personal status code which is in line with the convention and would be applicable to all **women** in Lebanon, irrespective of their religious affiliation."

This can be helped by the rebirth of the "civil law community" which was provided for by Legislative Decree LR 60 in 1936, but was suspended in 1939 following the outcry of the Sunni religious leadership in Syria and Lebanon then under French mandate.

The idea of a civil law community is the cornerstone of a plural political system of Lebanon. It accelerates the mutation of the system toward more equality between individuals at the expense of rights deriving from their mandatory membership in a particular sect and religion. This can be achieved without putting at risk equality between the historical communities of Lebanon and their time-honored recognition. To balance past and future, the reshaping of a nineteenth civil community law requires careful legal arrangements that need to be identified and put in place progressively in the process of the emergence of such a civil law community alongside the other eighteen 'official' ones.

Freeing Lebanon's citizens from the diktat of their sectarian captors, the reform commands a wider control by the Supreme Court (Cour de Cassation) over the civil aspects of family law as applied by religious courts, with due consideration to international human rights conventions applicable in Lebanon, together with a legislative reform for a common space for Lebanese citizens to express their political opinion independently from sectarian considerations.

Free choice of a common civil status regime constitutes the preliminary step toward a civil law community whose members will be able as such to participate to the political process as citizens rather than as religious subjects.

Dr Georges J. Assaf is a prominent human rights attorney in Lebanon. He founded the Human Rights Institute of the Lebanese Bar Association and was its director between 1997 and 2004. He is currently director of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre of Lebanon (PINACLE), which he founded in 2005.

Load-Date: September 30, 2009



LTTE propaganda machine worming into Aussie Parliament

Daily News (Sri Lanka)
September 29, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 491 words

Dateline: Sri Lanka

Body

Sri Lanka, Sept. 29 -- The Sri Lankan diaspora in Australia warned the shrewed LTTE propaganda machine was worming its way into the Australian Parliament through local sympathisers to distort the country's image and push for a human rights case against the Lankan Government.

Society for Peace Unity and Human Rights in Sri Lanka (SPUR), said the LTTE which was pushed under ground after its 'hard to swallow' military defeat, was very much active in its vicious propaganda campaign in Australia as well as elsewhere.

SPUR is a Victoria based LTTE counter propaganda group comprising Sinhala and Tamil diaspora.

SPUR President Jeanne Jayasinghe said: "These propaganda campaigns have taken the shape of seminars and conferences." Most of these conferences are held in the meeting rooms of the Parliament House where parliamentarians can drop in and listen. These meeting rooms can be rented out for private conferences.

"The ultimate goal of these invisible operatives are to take the Sri Lanka leaders before International Criminal Court demeaning the country's victory against one of the most ruthless terror outfits in the world."

The US Federal Bureau of Intelligence (FBI) in its website identified the LTTE as one of the most dangerous terrorist organisations in the world which has pioneered the use of <u>females</u> as human bombs, perfected the suicide bombers, an act it has drawn credit for, more than the Al Qida, <u>Hezbollah</u> or Hamas.

Speaking to the Daily News in Colombo during a recent visit, Jayasinghe said LTTE operatives there went under ground soon after the military operations wiped out all its top rung leaders. But she said, despite their low profile the Tiger lobbying arm was still 'very destructive.'

"It's a shame that now they are using the IDPs as a cover to further their evil intentions."

These conferences, sometimes organised through prestigious universities, are intentionally blocked for moderates or for those who hold opposite views.

She said the propaganda rallies, protest marches which were very rampant during the last stages of the Eelam war IV, have almost died down now, but in its place there is the outcry for human rights violations in IDP camps. These are orchestrated through certain Parliamentarians, bias media institutions and known social figures.

"They operate like a cancer, invading every nook and corner."

LTTE propaganda machine worming into Aussie Parliament

The SPUR President said the former TRO head in Australia who was a economic adviser to the LTTE and who represented LTTE in the 2002 Geneva peace talks was a paid worker in the Australian state broadcasting service.

Some of the operatives run their own community radio programs in Tamil language, brainwashing the moderate Tamil community but there was very little being done on an official level to redeem the country's good name. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily News Sri Lanka. For more information on news feed please contact Sarabjit Jagirdar at https://doi.org/10.1007/jhtml.com/

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Load-Date: September 29, 2009



REFORMISTS ARE KEY IN IRANIAN ELECTIONS; AHMADINEJAD FACES CHALLENGE TODAY

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

June 12, 2009 Friday

SOONER EDITION

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A-4

Length: 527 words

Byline: Robert F. Worth, The New York Times

Body

TEHRAN, Iran -- Less than two months ago, it was widely assumed here and in the West that hard-line Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad would coast to another victory in the elections today. Many reformists who sat out the 2005 vote seemed dejected and unlikely to raise a strong challenge.

That picture has been transformed. A vast opposition movement has arisen, flooding the streets of Iran's major cities with cheering, green-clad supporters of Mir Hussein Moussavi, the leading challenger.

Mr. Ahmadinejad, seemingly on the defensive, has hurled extraordinary accusations at some of the Islamic republic's founding figures, but the tactic has served to unify a diverse and passionate body of opponents of his populist economic policies and confrontational approach to the West.

Some Iranians believe that the unruly democratic energies unleashed over the past few weeks could affect this country's politics no matter who wins. Mr. Ahmadinejad's radical policies and personal attacks, they say, have galvanized powerful adversaries, who will use his own accusations of corruption and mismanagement against him.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, who has the final say in affairs of state and prefers to avoid open conflict, may force Mr. Ahmadinejad to steer a more moderate course if he is re-elected.

"The elite will not let go of Ahmadinejad's neck" if he wins, said Muhammad Atrianfar, a journalist and former government official who supports Mr. Moussavi. "The official institutions will be in conflict with him, including the Parliament."

But hope has often outpaced reality in Iran, and similar democratic movements have been stifled in the past by the country's clerical leadership. In 1997, a burst of student demonstrations was followed by mass arrests, and a broader crackdown has taken place since Mr. Ahmadinejad succeeded his reformist predecessor, President Mohammad Khatami, in 2005.

And for all the hopes placed in him, Mr. Moussavi is no liberal. Another candidate, Mehdi Karroubi, is more closely associated with the Iranian reformist movement's core causes, including freeing political prisoners and backing **women**'s rights.

REFORMISTS ARE KEY IN IRANIAN ELECTIONS AHMADINEJAD FACES CHALLENGE TODAY

Moreover, there are limits to what any Iranian president can do. While Mr. Ahmadinejad has tried to augment the powers of the presidency, Ayatollah Khamenei, as supreme leader, controls foreign policy.

Still, Mr. Moussavi would clearly push for a less-confrontational stance toward the West. He implicitly criticized Iran's support for militant groups like <u>Hezbollah</u> and Hamas, saying the government should focus on domestic problems instead.

Perhaps more important to Iranians, Mr. Moussavi would change economic policy; Mr. Ahmadinejad has been criticized for economic stagnation, including rising inflation and unemployment. A former prime minister in the 1980s, Mr. Moussavi is given great credit for managing Iran's economy effectively during the war with Iraq.

Political and economic factors could also play a role. Iran's oil revenue has dropped precipitously over the past year. Iran is facing political challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan, and its allies in Lebanon lost an important election there Sunday.

Load-Date: June 12, 2009



Iran appoints bombing suspect as defence minister

Guardian.com

September 3, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 526 words

Body

ABSTRACT

General Ahmad Vahidi wanted by Interpol in connection with attack on Jewish centre in Argentina that killed 85

FULL TEXT

The Iranian parliament has approved the controversial nomination for defence secretary of a man wanted in connection with the murder of 85 people at a Jewish centre in Argentina.

General Ahmad Vahidi, who is wanted by Interpol, has been chosen for the post by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad despite international condemnation.

Vahidi faces charges in Argentina over his alleged role in masterminding the bombing of a Jewish centre in Buenos Aires in 1994. At the time, Vahidi was the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's al-Quds force.

The conservative-dominated parliament also approved Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi as health minister, the Islamic Republic's first *female* minister since the 1979 Islamic revolution. However, it rejected Ahmadinejad's nominees for the energy, education, as well as welfare and social security ministries - two of them *women*.

Vahidi's nomination triggered an uproar in Argentina, but the Iranian parliament, the Majlis, signalled its defiance yesterday as deputies chanted "death to Israel" when Vahidi addressed the chamber.

One member of parliament, Hadi Qavami, interrupted a speech by Vahidi to say he had initially opposed his nomination but had changed his mind after "the Zionists' allegations" and would now vote for him.

Under parliamentary rules, two MPs can take the floor to oppose a ministerial nominee. No one did in the case of Vahidi, a sign the legislature will back him.

Vahidi said his country faced numerous security challenges, including the Israeli military, and he would improve Iran's defences and modernise its military.

The Argentinian government condemned Vahidi's nomination as an affront to its legal system and to the relatives of the 85 victims and 150 wounded.

Iran appoints bombing suspect as defence minister

Vahidi has been on an Interpol "red notice" since November 2007, in connection with the car bomb attack on the Israeli-Argentine Mutual Association (Amia) building in Buenos Aires, the worst attack on a Jewish target outside Israel since the second world war.

Interpol's red notices are alerts to its 187 member nations. They are not arrest warrants but are sometimes interpreted that way. Vahidi is one of five prominent Iranians sought by Argentina over the bombing.

Guillermo Borger, an Amia spokesman, said the nomination was "shameful and insulting", according to La Nación newspaper.

The Argentinian prosecutor Alberto Nisman, who led the investigation into the bombing, said Vahidi was accused of being "a key participant in the planning" of the attack.

"It has been demonstrated that Vahidi participated in and approved of the decision to attack Amia during a meeting in Iran on 14 August 1993. Iran has always protected terrorists, giving them government posts, but I think never one as high as this one," he said.

A spokesman for the US state department described Vahidi's nomination as "disturbing".

The al-Quds force is known for orchestrating Iran's overseas operations, including working alongside Lebanon's *Hezbollah* militant group, which is accused of carrying out the Buenos Aires attack on the instigation of Iran.

Load-Date: September 3, 2009



IRELAND TRAVEL UPDATE

Sunday Mirror
October 4, 2009 Sunday
Eire Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 43

Length: 511 words **Byline:** JIM CLARKE

Body

AILING national airline Aer Lingus came under fire last week after it emerged it rewards current and former directors free first-class flights around the world.

The airline, which lost a staggering EUR93million in the first six months of this year, was criticised by politicians and shareholders after it emerged disgraced banker Sean FitzPatrick was entitled to the perk until 2012.

"I'm just simply amazed," Labour deputy leader Joan Burton said. "I think that it astonishes ordinary taxpayers that people in Aer Lingus are entitled to this. Given the financial circumstances we're in, it needs to be withdrawn."

A quarter of the airline is owned by the State. But its biggest shareholder, rival Ryanair, warned that it would be demanding an end to the perk.

"Ryanair is deeply concerned about free flights to fat cat directors, and will be writing to the chairman seeking a list of directors who qualify for free flights," Michael O'Leary said.

"Ryanair will also be seeking clarification on everyone who has received free flights in the past 12 months while Aer Lingus was losing over EUR100million."

The airline recently launched a winter sale from its British hubs in an attempt to boost sales at a traditionally slow time of the year for travel. However, it is still expected to cut wages in the coming months.

THE ISRAELI ambassador to Ireland has embarked on a nationwide tour to try to drum up more tourists to his country.

Zion Evrony visited Cavan last week as part of his mission to encourage more visitors from Ireland to the Jewish state.

IRELAND TRAVEL UPDATE

Comparing the 70,000 visits by religious tourists from Ireland to Cyprus with the mere 7,000 who visited Israel, he said: "Jesus was born in Bethlehem, not Nicosia."

However, the decline in visits to the Holy Land in recent years is in part due to the negative Press coverage Israel has received for the three-year siege of Gaza and the war with <u>Hezbollah</u> in Lebanon.

Irish tourists to the country have reported being harassed by Israeli defence forces, and two Irish <u>women</u> have been shot by the Israeli Defence Forces in recent years.

TOURISM Ireland and Failte Ireland are promoting Kildare to 200 million Chinese this month.

Filming for the Chinese Travel Channel took place last month, and locations including the National Stud and Kildare Retail Outlet will be included in the broadcast.

"Growth in travel from long-haul markets such as China will re-shape the global tourism landscape, with significant implications for tourism to the island of Ireland," Susan Li of Tourism Ireland's China bureau said.

The move to target more far-flung markets will be extended into India next year.

Both China and India now boast hundreds of millions of affluent middle-class consumers who consider European travel a status event in their lives.

But in the interim, Failte Ireland is focusing on the British market, with a promotion campaign aimed at attracting racing fans across the Irish Sea to six of our National Hunt fixtures.

British visits to Irish racing festivals last year were estimated to contribute EUR140million to our economy.

Load-Date: October 4, 2009



<u>Lebanon: Hariri makes statement following three-day parliamentary session</u> on Thursday

Right Vision News

December 12, 2009 Saturday

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Length: 496 words

Dateline: Pakistan

Body

Pakistan, Dec. 12 -- Prime Minister Saad Hariri made a statement on Thursday night before the vote of confidence was held after a three-day parliamentary session convened to discuss the Ministerial Statement. Hariri said that the MPs' comments on the document exhibited "our democratic parliamentary system." Hariri stressed that while the Ministerial Statement is used as a reference to resolve disputed issues, dialogue remains the main means to deal with settling controversial topics.

The PM emphasized that "these issues should not become a reason for division in the country.""We do not want to turn our Ministerial Statement into a list of promises. but a clear and responsible vow to all that we will not the repeat previous experiences of having the ruling party and an opposition within one cabinet," Hariri said. Hariri also said that the cabinet is one of national agreement, adding that "the moment the government turns into a cabinet of national disagreement and sectarian fronts, I will be the first one to withdraw the vote of confidence from my cabinet and myself. "He stressed that the government should not only work on implementing balanced development, but it should also seek having "balanced [national] belonging. We are born into our sects [and] we are affiliated with our parties, but we belong first and foremost to our state."He added that such an approach would turn the nationalconsensus government into a "national conciliation cabinet." In his speech, Hariri stressed on the following points: 1-We all agree on the need to confront Israel's threats and violations and to defend our national rights. That is what we have stressed on in Article 6 - that pertains to Hezbollah and its arms - and that does not annul the role of the state and the military institution in defending Lebanon. The government is fully committed to enhancing the army's capabilities so it can shoulder its national responsibilities.2- We have stressed in the Ministerial Statement that we should adopt Arab solidarity away from the politics of regional axes to better serve our national interests. As such, we will enhance our relationship with other Arab states, and we specifically look forward to establishing brotherly relations with Syria.3- I stress on our role to respect the constitution, democratic principles and implement the Taif Accord.4- The cabinet will focus on the people's priorities. Some parties described our program as ambitious, however, I can say that it remains feasible.5- People want to have electricity, a clean environment, clean water, equal access to education and health and a conclusion to the issue of those displaced by wars. People want a cabinet that can competently manage its public affairs and that allows the participation of youth and women in state administrations. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Right Vision News. For more information on news feed please contact Sarabiit Jagirdar at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Lebanon: Hariri makes statement following three-day parliamentary session on Thursday

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Ex-Spy Turned Negotiator Sits Down With Islamists and the West

The New York Times
May 2, 2009 Saturday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 5; THE SATURDAY PROFILE

Length: 1230 words

Byline: By ROBERT F. WORTH

Body

BEIRUT, Lebanon

TALKING to Islamists is the new order of the day in Washington and London. The Obama administration wants a dialogue with Iran, and the British Foreign Office has decided to reopen diplomatic contacts with <u>Hezbollah</u>, the Shiite militant group based here.

But for several years, small groups of Western diplomats have made quiet trips to Beirut for confidential sessions with members of Hamas, <u>Hezbollah</u> and other Islamist groups they did not want to be seen talking to. In hotel conference rooms, they would warily shake hands, then spend hours listening and hashing out accusations of terrorism on one side and imperial arrogance on the other.

The organizer of these back-door encounters is Alastair Crooke, a quiet, sandy-haired man of 59 who spent three decades working for MI6, the British secret intelligence service. He now runs an organization here called Conflicts Forum, with an unusual board of advisers that includes former spies, diplomats and peace activists.

Mr. Crooke has spent much of his career talking to Islamists. In the 1980s, as a young undercover agent in Pakistan and Afghanistan, he helped funnel weapons to jihadists fighting the Soviets. Later, he spent years working with Hamas and Fatah as a negotiator for the European Union, and helped broker a number of cease-fires with Israel between 2001 and 2003. He earned a reputation for courage and tenacity, but in person he is disarmingly polite and mild-mannered, a slight-figured man with a beaky, impish smile.

The mission of Conflicts Forum, which he founded in 2004, resembles a kind of blueprint for the Obama administration's current outreach efforts: to "open a new relationship between the West and Muslim world" through dialogue and better mutual understanding.

Yet Mr. Crooke, who is legendary for his deep network of contacts among Islamist groups across the Middle East, is not sanguine about the prospects for mere dialogue, especially with Iran.

"I think there is a real fear there will be a process of talking past each other," Mr. Crooke said. "The Iranians will say, 'we want to talk about justice and respect.' The U.S. will say, 'are you willing to give up enrichment or not?' "

To get past that impasse with Iran, and with Islamist groups generally, the West will need to change its diplomatic language of threats and rewards, Mr. Crooke said, and show more respect for their adversaries' point of view.

Mr. Crooke has spent the past few years trying to explain that to suspicious Westerners, in a stream of articles, speeches and conferences. Although not an Arabist by training, he has developed a deep knowledge of modern Islamist movements, and launches easily into analyses of Palestinian politics, or even of medieval Islamic philosophy.

Recently, he has taken his explanatory efforts a bit further. In a new book, "Resistance: the Essence of the Islamist Revolution," he deliberately avoids the most controversial subjects, like Israel and the status of <u>women</u> in the Islamic world. Instead, he focuses on what he calls the core of the Islamist revolution, which he defines as a metaphysical resistance to the West's market-based definition of the individual and society. He invokes European social critics like Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, endorsing their critiques of Western thinking and arguing that Islamism offers a more holistic model.

NOT surprisingly, the book has received some stinging reviews, and renewed accusations that Mr. Crooke has gone native. Even some of his fellow board members at Conflicts Forum say they are a little baffled -- not by his sympathy for Islamists, but by the book's broad philosophical themes.

Mr. Crooke says the book grew out of his own efforts to find common ground with Islamists, and to look beyond the usual stumbling blocks.

"It seemed to me there was a real need to understand what was happening inside Islamism better, and to valorize what they were saying in ways that could be understood in the West," he said.

That project seems inseparable from his broader argument about dialogue. To illustrate it, Mr. Crooke describes an episode from the conflict in Northern Ireland in which the British put two opposing factions into a room for talks, "naively imagining that talking would help." It did the opposite, reinforcing their anger. So the negotiators tried another approach: they asked both sides to write down their history and vision for the future on a piece of paper. After three more years of talks, the factions finally reached the point at which they acknowledged the legitimacy of the other side's piece of paper.

"George Mitchell once said to me, 'you don't even have a political process until you accept that the other side has a legitimate point of view,' " Mr. Crooke said, referring to Mr. Mitchell's landmark 1998 Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland and relating it to the many obstacles between the United States and Iran.

"Does America have the will and the patience for that?" he said. "I'm not sure we're there yet."

Patience, by all accounts, is something Mr. Crooke possesses. Mark Perry, the co-director of Conflicts Forum, describes an episode in Gaza in 2002 when the two men tried to establish a cease-fire between Israel and Palestinian factions. After weeks of negotiations, Israel dropped a bomb on the Hamas leader whose signature they needed, shattering their efforts.

"We were exhausted," Mr. Perry recalled. "The next day in the hotel room, I looked at Alastair and said 'what do we do now?' He just said, 'We try again.' "

It is not entirely clear where that steadfastness comes from. He is a little evasive about his own life and career, perhaps by training. Born in Ireland, he grew up mostly in Rhodesia, today Zimbabwe, and was educated at a Swiss boarding school and at St. Andrew's in Scotland, obtaining a degree in economics. Before joining MI6, he worked in finance in London.

"It's a dangerous area to work in," he said of his years as a banker, without apparent irony, "because it's so easy to get caught up in enrichment."

He is barred by law from discussing his service with MI6, which included years of diplomatic work on the Israel-Palestine issue. As a negotiator in the Palestinian territories, he is said to have traveled alone, by taxi, eschewing the armed security convoys of many Western diplomats. Colleagues who worked with him say Yasir Arafat and the leaders of Hamas trusted Mr. Crooke completely, as did some high-level Israeli officials.

Ex-Spy Turned Negotiator Sits Down With Islamists and the West

SOME Israelis, however, apparently complained that he was too close to Hamas. In late 2003, he was recalled to London -- he had reached retirement age -- and quietly ushered out of government service, with a commendation. He says he has no regrets, but some of his colleagues in Conflicts Forum say he retains some bitterness about the way he was treated.

In 2005, he moved to Beirut, where he lives with his partner, Aisling Byrne, and their 1-year-old child, Amistis, in an elegant, old French mandate-era apartment, working out of a home office.

Mr. Crooke smiles at the suggestion that Conflicts Forum may offer him a back-door route back to diplomacy, but does not entirely deny it. "We're not implementers," he said. "What we're trying to do is catalyze and create ideas. The second part is, how do you multiply something done by a small number of people in one room into something larger?"

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTO: ALASTAIR CROOKE (PHOTOGRAPH BY BRYAN DENTON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Load-Date: October 6, 2011



OTHER VIEWS

Charleston Gazette (West Virginia) July 19, 2009, Sunday

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. P2E

Length: 963 words

Body

Dignity in death

Knighted for his services to music, a child prodigy violinist and a conductor acclaimed across the world, Sir Edward Downes enjoyed a long, happy and fulfilling career, lovingly supported by Joan, a former ballet dancer, choreographer and his wife of 54 years. Illness, age and disability, however, were taking an increasing toll of both of them: Sir Edward was almost blind and was going deaf; Lady Downes had terminal cancer. Last week they traveled to Switzerland, and on Friday, alone together in a small clinic in Zurich, swallowed lethal doses of barbiturates.

They were not the first British couple to end their lives with the assistance of Dignitas, the nonprofit organization dedicated to helping those determined to commit suicide do so in dignity and tranquillity. ...

It is, however, absurd that on an issue so crucial attitudes are increasingly determined by a private clinic in Switzerland, one to which only the rich can afford to travel, and the piecemeal responses of British courts. ...

The Downes case is especially troubling as it raises the issue of suicide pacts when one person feels unable to face life without the other. The danger here is that a romanticized view of a joint death may make suicide attractive, rather than an alternative to unbearable pain. Every day thousands of dying people are eased toward death in quiet, moral, medical ways. Dignity is the watchword. But that dignity should be safeguarded at home: not in a distant Swiss clinic.

- The Times, London

Life imitates 'West Wing'

Will the American Senate approve the proposed judge Sonia Sotomayor for the U.S. Supreme Court? Yes, with a clear majority if you trust the TV series "The West Wing."

The series, which has been shown on SVT [Swedish television], has already predicted how an unknown Democratic presidential candidate with a minority background would beat a respected old senator. The message of hope would win the voters' hearts.

When President Obama now has appointed the liberally minded Sotomayor it seems like fiction will become real yet again. Like her counterpart on television she impersonates the American dream. The poor upbringing among Latin Americans in New York didn't stop her from reaching the top of society.

OTHER VIEWS

The Senate hearings are usually sweaty, but the 55-year-old judge is said to do well. The Democrats have 60 percent of the 100 seats in the Senate. The Republicans can grill her, but can hardly make her fall...

Where she stands in other sensitive issues, such as abortion, the death penalty, homosexuals' rights and national security is unclear. But Obama (who only interviewed <u>women</u> for the job) wouldn't have appointed her if she didn't share his, by American standards, liberal views.

Now, the U.S. will probably get its third woman ever in the country's highest judicial authority. That is about time.

- Dagens Nyheter, Stockholm, Sweden
- ... Three years have done little to erase the memories of that fierce 34-day conflict over a thousand Lebanese, mostly civilians, dead, hundreds of thousands displaced and billions of dollars in damage. ...

Commemorations of war are an invitation to mourn the fallen and honor their sacrifice, but also a rare opportunity to come to terms with the past and move forward. Lebanon does not want another war. The July War was not lost but it came at a great cost, and as normalcy returns to the country, no one wants to relive the horrors of that conflict.

The presence of UN peacekeepers in the south and Security Council Resolution 1701 have given us padding, a bit of comfort that the onslaught witnessed in 2006 will be difficult to repeat. In addition, Lebanese parties are aware that any offensive maneuvers against Israel, and the price they would incur, would hurt the entire nation and likely their own popularity. But this, unfortunately, is no protection against adventurism. ...

The Lebanese leadership, in conjunction with <u>Hizbullah</u>, should be working relentlessly to prevent another conflict, garnering diplomatic support and raising international awareness. This is not a sign of weakness, but of responsibility. Let others beat their war drums, while we work to build our country.

- Daily Star, Beirut
- ... During his six months in office, (President Barack) Obama has asked Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to accept the idea of a Palestinian state and to freeze construction in the settlements. In exchange, he promised to ask the Arab states to take steps toward a normalization of relations with Israel, such as opening diplomatic representations and flight routes. Netanyahu adopted the two-state solution, albeit while specifying certain conditions, but he continues to refuse to stop development in the settlements.

In "closed" talks with associates and foreign visitors, Netanyahu has blasted Obama, asserting that the president's pressure on Israel is aimed at placating the Arabs at Israel's expense. ...

Netanyahu is erring twice: by entering into an unnecessary and harmful conflict with the U.S. administration, and by rejecting Obama's fundamental desire to break through the stalemate in the peace process and complete the process of Israel's acceptance into the Middle East. The election of Obama and his popularity in the Arab world create a unique opportunity for a breakthrough in the peace process, and it would be a shame to miss it.

Now the U.S. administration must convince the Israeli public that it has a friend in the White House. ... After talking to the Arabs, the Muslims and the Iranians, in speeches and on television, it is only right that Obama address the Israeli public and persuade the people to support reviving the peace process with the Palestinians and Syrians and halting the destructive settlement enterprise in the West Bank.

- Ha'aretz, Tel-Aviv, Israel

Load-Date: July 21, 2009



An ex-British spy turns to mediation in Mideast

The International Herald Tribune
May 2, 2009 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1204 words

Byline: ROBERT F. WORTH - The New York Times

Dateline: BEIRUT

Body

Talking to Islamists is the new order of the day in Washington and London. The Obama administration wants a dialogue with Iran, and the British Foreign office has decided to reopen diplomatic contacts with <u>Hezbollah</u>, the Shiite militant group here.

But for several years now, small groups of Western diplomats have been making quiet trips to Beirut for confidential sessions with members of Hamas, *Hezbollah* and other Islamist groups they did not want to be seen talking to. In hotel conference rooms, they would warily shake hands, then spend hours listening and hashing out accusations of terrorism on one side and imperial arrogance on the other.

The organizer of these backdoor encounters is Alastair Crooke, a quiet, sandy-haired man of 59 who spent three decades working for MI6, the British secret intelligence service. He now runs a research organization here called Conflicts Forum, with an unusual board of advisers that includes former spies, diplomats and peace activists.

Mr. Crooke has spent much of his career talking to Islamists. In the 1980s, as a young undercover agent in Pakistan and Afghanistan, he helped funnel weapons to jihadists fighting the Soviets. Later, he spent years working with Hamas and Fatah as a negotiator for the European Union and helped broker a number of cease-fires with Israel from 2001 to 2003. He earned a reputation for courage and tenacity, but in person he is disarmingly polite and mild-mannered, a slight-figured man with a beaky, impish smile.

The mission of Conflicts Forum, which he created in 2004, resembles a kind of blueprint for the Obama administration's outreach efforts: to "open a new relationship between the West and Muslim world" through dialogue and mutual understanding.

Yet Mr. Crooke, who is legendary for his deep network of contacts among Islamist groups across the Middle East, is not sanguine about the prospects for mere dialogue, especially with Iran.

"I think there is a real fear there will be a process of talking past each other," he said. "The Iranians will say, 'We want to talk about justice and respect.' The U.S. will say, 'Are you willing to give up enrichment or not?"

To get past that impasse with Iran, and with Islamist groups generally, the West will need to change its diplomatic language of threats and rewards, Mr. Crooke said, and show more respect for their adversaries' point of view.

Mr. Crooke has spent the past few years trying to explain that to suspicious Westerners, in a stream of articles, speeches and conferences. Although not an Arabist by training, he has developed a deep knowledge of modern Islamist movements and launches easily into analyses of Palestinian politics, or even of medieval Islamic philosophy.

Now he has taken his explanatory efforts a bit further. In a book, "Resistance: The Essence of the Islamist Revolution," he deliberately avoids the most controversial subjects, like Israel and the status of <u>women</u> in the Islamic world. Instead, he focuses on what he calls the core of the Islamist revolution, which he defines as a metaphysical resistance to the West's market-based definition of the individual and society. He invokes European social critics like Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, endorsing their critiques of Western thinking and arguing that Islamism offers a more holistic model.

Not surprisingly, the book has received some stinging reviews and renewed accusations that Mr. Crooke has gone native. Even some of his fellow board members at Conflicts Forum say they are a little baffled

-

not by his sympathy for Islamists, but by the book's broad philosophical themes.

Mr. Crooke said the book grew out of his own efforts to find common ground with Islamists and to look beyond the usual stumbling blocks.

"It seemed to me there was a real need to understand what was happening inside Islamism better, and to valorize what they were saying in ways that could be understood in the West," he said.

That project seems inseparable from his broader argument about dialogue. To illustrate it, Mr. Crooke describes an episode from the conflict in Northern Ireland in which the British put two opposing factions into a room for talks, "naïvely imagining that talking would help." It did the opposite, reinforcing their anger.

So the negotiators tried another approach: They asked both sides to write down their histories and their visions for the future. After three more years of talks, the factions finally reached the point at which they acknowledged the legitimacy of the other side's positions.

"George Mitchell once said to me, 'You don't even have a political process until you accept that the other side has a legitimate point of view," Mr. Crooke said, referring to Mr. Mitchell's landmark 1998 Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland and relating it to the many obstacles between the United States and Iran.

"Does America have the will and the patience for that?" he said. "I'm not sure we're there yet."

Patience, by all accounts, is something Mr. Crooke possesses. Mark Perry, co-director of Conflicts Forum, describes an episode in Gaza in 2002 when the two men tried to establish a cease-fire between Israel and Palestinian factions. After weeks of negotiations, Israel dropped a bomb on the Hamas leader whose signature they needed, shattering their efforts.

"We were exhausted," Mr. Perry recalled. "The next day in the hotel room, I looked at Alastair and said, 'What do we do now?' He just said, 'We try again."

It is not entirely clear where that steadfastness comes from. He is a little evasive about his own life and career, perhaps by training. Born in Ireland, he grew up mostly in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, and was educated at a Swiss boarding school and at St. Andrew's in Scotland, with a degree in economics. Before joining MI6, he worked briefly in finance in London.

"It's a dangerous area to work in," he said of his years as a banker, without apparent irony, "because it's so easy to get caught up in enrichment."

An ex-British spy turns to mediation in Mideast

He is barred by law from discussing his service with MI6, which included years of diplomatic work on the Israel-Palestine issue. As a negotiator in the Palestinian territories, he is said to have traveled alone, by taxi, eschewing the armed security convoys of many Western diplomats. Colleagues who worked with him say Yasir Arafat and the leaders of Hamas trusted Mr. Crooke completely, as did some top Israeli officials.

Some Israelis, however, apparently complained he was too close to Hamas. In late 2003, he was recalled to London - he had reached retirement age - and quietly ushered out of government service, with a commendation. He says he has no regrets, but some of his colleagues in Conflicts Forum say he retains some bitterness about the way he was treated.

In 2005, he moved to Beirut, where he lives with his partner, Aisling Byrne, and their one-year-old child, Amistis.

Mr. Crooke smiles at the suggestion that Conflicts Forum may offer him a backdoor route back to diplomacy, but he does not entirely deny it.

"We're not implementers," he said. "What we're trying to do is catalyze and create ideas. The second part is, How do you multiply something done by a small number of people in one room into something larger?"

Load-Date: May 19, 2009



Ex-spy turns Mideast mediator; Former British agent uses backdoor meetings to reach out to Islamists

The International Herald Tribune
May 2, 2009 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 1180 words

Byline: Andrew Jacobs - The New York Times

Dateline: BEIJING

Body

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CAPTION:

Alastair Crooke at his home in Beirut. In his 30-year career at MI6, he developed a deep knowledge of modern Islamist movements and numerous contacts throughout the region.

Photo Credit: Bryan Denton for The New York Times

Load-Date: May 19, 2009



The War on Terror goes on, whatever we call it; Binyam Mohamed may have been maltreated, but that doesn't mean that the threat from Islamic theocracies is not real

The Times (London)
February 24, 2009 Tuesday
Edition 1

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 22

Length: 1106 words

Byline: David Aaronovitch

Body

George Bush is gone, Binyam Mohamed is home from Guantánamo, and the War on Terror is no more. Rejoice. It was all a bad dream.

Should even a fraction of Mr Mohamed's story of physical and psychological abuse in various prisons from Morocco to Afghanistan turn out to be true, he has been appallingly treated. His activist lawyer, Clive Stafford Smith, is quoted as saying that Mr Mohamed was "a victim who has suffered more than any human being should ever suffer".

Of course, it would be easier to demand that security heads should roll if we knew that Mr Mohamed had been wrongfully detained in the first place and that he was not, and had never been, a jihadi. I have longed to have this question put directly to Mr Stafford Smith in one of his hundreds of interviews, but in vain. He did once tell an interviewer that his hypothesis was that the detainees "actually didn't do much of anything down in Afghanistan or they were aid workers, humanitarian people ..." Mr Mohamed's story is that, as a young Ethiopian denied asylum in Britain but permitted to remain, he led an unsatisfactory life and became a drug addict. In June 2001, in an effort to kick the habit, he went first to Pakistan, then to Taleban-ruled

Afghanistan, where he thought he'd take a look at how Islamic rule was working out. In April 2002 he was arrested in Pakistan, attempting to return to Britain.

The US alleges, partly as a result of Mr Mohamed's own confessions (he claims, made under duress), that he had attended an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan, and had been plotting a Richard Reid-type attack in the West. But no charges have been, or will be, brought.

I can't honestly say that I believe Mr Mohamed's account, partly because it was a long way to travel for drug rehab, and partly because it reminds me of the case of the Tipton Three, whose odd journey through the Afghan war to American prison was supposedly chronicled in Michael Winterbottom's 2006 film, The Road to Guantánamo.

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In that movie the three young men were depicted travelling to Pakistan for a wedding, getting bored, becoming part of a humanitarian relief column to Afghanistan, sitting around Kabul eating naan bread, taking the wrong taxi and ending up in a war zone. I noted at the time that the film had obscured both the timeline and the nature of the places visited by the Tipton boys, but still had to agree that their story could be true. Wrong. A year later one admitted to Channel 4 that they had indeed had weapons training in a jihadi camp. The humanitarian, accidental stuff was lies.

Nor is it the case that everyone held at Guantánamo could either be charged or was guiltless. Three weeks ago two former inmates turned up as senior al-Qaeda figures in Yemen, one of whom had subsequently been involved in bombing a US embassy..

I make this point because, in my view, Guantánamo was wrong despite there being a real problem of terrorism, and not because that threat was overblown by George Bush and his evil neocon advisers.

But the war is over. Yesterday, shortly before Mr Mohamed landed in Britain, I listened to one of those fashionable voices that calls for more understanding of political Islamism and less confrontation. The former MI6 agent Alastair Crooke, who has become a kind of Dr Dolittle of Islamist movements, was discussing his new book, Resistance: The Essence of the Islamist Revolution with Andrew Marr.

Crooke's point seemed to be that we in the West could learn a lot from Islamism, since it was, in some ways, morally superior to our fly-blown, materialist, individualist societies. Islamism, as practised by <u>Hezbollah</u>, Hamas and President Ahmadinejad, was saying something profound "about the essence of man".

He went on: "It is not just about violence or a whimsical reaction to modernity, it is a new way of seeing our existence ..." Islamists wanted "a society based on compassion and justice".

Sure, Marr said, but what about the position of <u>women</u>, persecution of gays and the tendency towards blowing stuff up. "There is a part that is dangerous and ugly," Crooke agreed, before adding, bewilderingly, "but that is largely something the West has created itself." Then a piece of apologia that would have impressed any old Communist: "There are many mistakes ... the Iranians would admit this isn't the finished article." I believe that, as a matter of pragmatism, it will be necessary to enter into a dialogue with the likes of Hamas and the Iranian Government, but Crooke's failure to see that a theocracy is very unlikely to lead to a world of "compassion and justice" is stunning. The institutionalised inequality of <u>women</u>, backwardness and sexual hypocrisy that it entails is no accident, it is intrinsic. So is the disqualification of "ungodly" candidates and the persecution of apostates. Since God declines actually to come among us and make his wishes clear, it must be left to a council of bearded clerics to tell us what he wants. And once they do . .

All theocracies are coercive, as are most Islamist movements, and where they are not (as in Turkey) it is because they have been forced to change. Crooke's Hamas and <u>Hezbollah</u> are still the organisations that pour out hour after hour of poisonous anti-Jew racism on their TV channels, and have a rough way with dissent in their own areas.

In the Pakistani region of Swat, whence the Akond has long fled, the local Taleban were blowing up schools, attacking schoolgirls with acid, murdering journalists and assassinating human-rights activists.

On November 26 Bakht Zeba was dragged from her home, flogged and shot dead for the crime of criticism.

Last week the Pakistani authorities reached a ceasefire with the insurgents, part of which is to agree that girls will no longer have the right to go to school in Swat. Where are the student occupiers and the calls for sanctions? And lest we thought that the problem would stay in the valley, yesterday, as Binyam Mohamed came home to Britain damaged but alive, the body of a 17-year-old French girl was being flown to Paris from Cairo, where she had died in a bomb attack.

The War on Terror goes on, whatever we call it Binyam Mohamed may have been maltreated, but that doesn't mean that the threat from Islamic theocracies is not re....

But there is no more War on Terror. Except, as my friend Professor Norman Geras has been pointing out, Barack Obama has found phrases that mean exactly the same thing, such as this from the inauguration: "Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred." Or this: "The United States intends to prosecute the ongoing struggle against violence and terrorism ..." Professor Geras calls it "the struggle formerly known as the War on Terror".

So Binyam may be back, Barack may be in the White House, but the truth is that the problem remains.

Graphic

The Road to Guantánamo was not quite the journey described

Load-Date: February 24, 2009



Iranian vote offers glimmers of hope

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)

June 16, 2009 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: OPINION; Pg. A16

Length: 568 words

Byline: Edmonton Journal

Body

Two things to keep in mind as you're watching the postelection riots in Tehran: Iran isn't a Western-style democracy; and the substantive outcome of the election is anything but clear. The country is not governed by the winner of the presidential election but by a council of unelected Shiite clerics headed by an appointed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Even if the protesters' choice, opposition candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi, had been declared the winner over incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, it's unknown if much would have changed beyond the promise of progress held so dear by thousands. Notably, Iran's nuclear program would still be on a collision course with the West.

Yet clearly the results of the election do matter to thousands of furious Iranians who, feeling cheated by the suspicious results, have defied armed police and ignored government edicts against public demonstrations. Iranian democracy might be thin gruel compared with more meatier versions, but it is obvious from the vigour of Iranian protesters they have developed a taste.

That is one of the few glimmers of optimism in Iran's gloomy election results. The people aren't quietly rolling over and accepting it as they did in 2005 when Ahmadinejad won his first presidential race with suspicious election results. Opposition supporters were voting, as everyone seems to be doing these days, for "change." What they got was more of the same --a buffoon of a leader who has impeded the nascent <u>women</u>'s movement in Iran while outraging much of the world with his anti-Israeli rants and denial of the Holocaust. We should be out in the street protesting in sympathy.

Another glimmer of hope is that Ayatollah Khamenei has been forced to bow ever so slightly to the public mood. After initially declaring the election results a "divine assessment," the supreme leader has ordered an investigation into last week's election that gave a lopsided two-to-one victory to Ahmadinejad even though by most accounts the race had been neck and neck. Especially galling for those claiming electoral foul were the results showing Mousavi lost in his own hometown. So did all the other candidates except Ahmadinejad. And this during an economic slump.

Nobody who watches Iranian politics expects Khamenei and his Council of Guardians to overturn the election. If it was indeed fixed they would likely be the ones who did the fixing.

The all-male council, which refused to allow <u>women</u> to run for office, is hardly a bastion of progressive or open politics.

Iranian vote offers glimmers of hope

After the controversial election results were posted, the government did its best to silence dissent by shutting down opposition web-sites, cutting off text messaging and interfering with cellphone service. Fortunately for protesters, the social network, Twitter, has ever-changing proxy servers that foiled government censor and allowed demonstrators to organize.

The election might not be overturned, but Iran's governing council discovered it cannot ignore growing daily protests just as it cannot ignore the progressive results of recent elections in the middle east where, for example, <u>women</u> were voted into office in Kuwait and Iraq. More troubling, perhaps, for Ayatollah Khamenei is the Lebanese election where Iran's proxy, <u>Hezbollah</u>, lost.

Change is coming to the Middle East, whether Iran's ruling elite likes it or not, whether Iran's suspicious election results reflect that or not.

Load-Date: June 16, 2009



Poland's hooligans export violence

Guardian.com April 1, 2009

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theguardian

Length: 529 words

Highlight: Aleksandra Lojek-Magdziarz: Rioting by Polish 'pseudo fans' under a republican flag threatens to

entangle Belfast's Poles in sectarian violence

Body

Rioting of the kind provoked by Polish football hooligans in Belfast at the weekend is a sadly frequent occurrence in Poland. Now I fear these people may do a great deal of damage to relations between Northern Irish and Polish communities in the city.

The Polish police use tough measures to control hooligans: water cannons are routinely deployed around football stadiums before the games. Stop and search powers are widely used. Public transport is usually surrounded and monitored by armed policemen and dogs. Before one derby fixture I witnessed in Krakow, the police confiscated axes, knives and other weapons. Fans transported by special cars became so furious that they pushed out the windows from the inside. Then they jumped out of the vehicles and started to tear up the pavement and hurl missiles at rival fans and police. After the game, shop windows were smashed, trams and buses were vandalised, a number of people were beaten up and police officers were injured.

When sanctions against a football team in Krakow were imposed, fans became so enraged that they demolished the city centre. Gangs of hooligans do not just beat up rival fans: they occasionally kill them. <u>Women</u> are more or less immune from attack, but men will avoid certain areas of Krakow on the night of a match.

Not all Polish football fans are violent, of course, the majority are ordinary people who love football, but an aggressive minority are loud and highly dangerous. I have great respect for the Police Service of Northern Ireland, but they seem to have been ill-prepared for the influx of thugs.

"Pseudo fans", as we call them in Polish, use various thoughtless symbols to underscore their rebellious attitude. In Northern Ireland they used a republican flag to provoke people in Belfast. It revealed their absolute ignorance: they do not support dissident republicans in the slightest, mainly because they have no idea who they are. Back in Poland, some of the hooligans call themselves "*Hezbollah*" and proclaim "jihad" on other teams. You can bet they know nothing about Middle Eastern politics.

In Krakow, graffiti depicting Jewish symbols hung on gallows is common, which understandably shocks Jewish visitors. Fans of Cracovia, an old local team that originated before the second world war, are often dubbed "the Jews" because Wisla, the rival team, did not accept them.

Poland 's hooligans export violence

Unfortunately, however, Polish migrants living in Belfast are being tainted by the hooligans' actions. Polish houses are being attacked, shop windows smashed and abuse hurled at them.

The government and NGOs have been doing their best to ease tensions with grassroots projects such as Frank Higgins's Thin End of the Wedge. The vulnerability of the economy, and the fact that many Poles are staunch Catholics, can lead to problems. The good work of people like Higgins could be ruined thanks to the brainless thugs who came to Belfast, often ticketless, to start the violence. Suddenly Poles have become entangled in the longstanding political and sectarian conflict. I hope that the communities will come to their senses and will realise that the hooligans were not local, integrated Poles. But it could take a while.

Load-Date: April 1, 2009



Police 'found bomb-making videos on computer'

Asian Image

November 17, 2009

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Section: UK NEWS (UK)

Length: 541 words

Body

A man was caught downloading videos on how to make explosives, a missile and a suicide bomber belt when police raided his home, a court has heard.

Krenar Lusha, 30, of Derby, was also said to have boasted on web chats that he "loved" to see Jews and Americans killed and to watch films showing the deaths of US soldiers.

A jury of six men and six <u>women</u> at Preston Crown Court were told that counter-terror officers searched his home on August 26 last year and the items they discovered were the subject of the trial.

Nigel Godsmark QC said: "Rather a lot of petrol," 71.8 litres was found in his cellar along with two kilograms of potassium nitrate, a constituent part of gunpowder, which was located in his bedroom.

In the defendant's lounge was a laptop connected to the internet in which material was visibly being downloaded, he said.

"What he had downloaded was a folder entitled 'Archive of <u>Hezbollah</u> Military Instruction manuals'," Mr Godsmark said.

"The folder contained a number of videos which had been saved on to his laptop. The videos are in Arabic and they are instructional videos on how to make detonators, explosives, a missile and a suicide bomber belt.

"It also contained instructions on landmine placement and how to field, strip an AK-47 automatic rifle.

"All of this freshly downloaded a few hours before the police arrived and went into the "

Not surprisingly, he said, the police then looked at what else was on a total of three computers at the in Moore Street where the Albanian national, who had moved to the UK in 2000, was living.

There was a range of ideological material found of video clips produced by organisations undertaking fundamentalist, violent Jihad in Iraq, Afghanistan and Chechnya. These included exerts of US military vehicles and personnel being blown up and of US soldiers being shot.

The prosecutor said there was also gruesome footage on his computer hard drives of live beheadings by extreme Islamic groups.

He said the defendant clearly used his computer a lot and would spend a lot of his time talking to girls in foreign countries via MSN and other instant messaging systems.

Police 'found bomb-making videos on computer'

Mr Godsmark told the jury: "He would tell them about himself and his views - all of this conversation was being recorded on the computer which was retrieved.

"We will have a look at what he said in some detail. At the moment it is enough to say that during some of that conversation he described himself as a terrorist, that he was a sniper, that he loved to see Jews and Americans killed, and to watch his videos of the killings of US soldiers.

"In short he made his sympathies plain and they were with violent fundamentalist Islam."

Documents found on his computer carried various titles such as Car Bomb Recognition Guide, Middle Eastern Terrorist Bomb Design, Improvised Radio Detonation Techniques and The Mujahedeen Explosives Handbook.

A video clip entitled Mobile Detonators was also in his possession and was an instructional video on how to turn a mobile phone into a bomb trigger.

Lucha had 14 mobile phones at his address when police called at about 7.30am and found him in bed.

Lucha denies 10 counts of possessing articles which give rise to a reasonable suspicion that they were for a terror-related purpose.

By Kim Pilling,

Load-Date: November 17, 2009



Who was really cheated in Iran's vote? Women.

Christian Science Monitor June 15, 2009, Monday

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. 8

Length: 534 words

Byline: the Monitor's Editorial Board

Body

What is striking about the Iranians protesting fraud in the June 10 "election" is the number of <u>women</u> on the front lines. Among all those cheated at the polls, they may feel the most denied.

For the first time in one of the Islamic Republic's controlled presidential campaigns, the <u>women</u>'s movement was able to raise its demands clearly and independently - even though the unelected, 12-member, all-male Guardian Council did not allow any <u>female</u> candidates to run.

The movement's courage to confront the patriarchal theocracy (in which "morality police" still roam the streets looking for <u>women</u> with make-up) may have been a big reason why the regime rigged the vote count - and why supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was forced to make a show of ordering a probe of the fraud.

Iranian <u>women</u> do enjoy privileges that <u>women</u> in many Arab countries do not. But Iran's powerful clerics know that democracy's advance and the liberation of <u>women</u> go hand in hand. They've seen <u>women</u> recently elected in Kuwait and in Iraq's new democracy, while their proxy group in Lebanon, <u>Hezbollah</u>, lost an election. So they are trying to stop both the <u>women</u>'s movement and open democracy in Iran in order to maintain their Shiite "revolution" and their own rule.

Yet the ballot fraud was done with such audacity and clumsiness that the "landslide winner," President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, will likely find it difficult to rule. And the West should hesitate before cozying up to a regime with fading legitimacy and which so openly suppresses half its population and sees <u>women</u> as a security threat. What country would have faith in signing a deal with a regime that cheats its own people, especially <u>women</u>, at the ballot box?

During the campaign, Iran's feminists found a voice in the popular opposition candidate, Mir Hossein Mousavi, a former prime minister. He promised to disband the morality police, reform the many laws that treat <u>women</u> unequally, and appoint <u>women</u> to high posts. He campaigned with his wife, Zahra Rahnavard, a prominent academic and author of 15 books. The two appear to be a loving couple, displaying a modern equality to Iranian **women**. But he "lost" the vote - even in his hometown, which was yet another sign that the fix was in.

Mr. Ahmadinejad, on the other hand, has a strong record against <u>women</u>. He changed the name of the government's "Center for <u>Women</u>'s Participation" to the "Center for <u>Women</u> and Family Affairs." He limited <u>women</u>'s access to higher education and proposed laws that would allow men to divorce their wives without informing them and not to pay alimony.

Who was really cheated in Iran 's vote? Women.

Most of all, the regime has jailed dozens of <u>women</u> involved in the One Million Signatures Campaign, a grass-roots movement that began in 2006 to reform the legal system and to end gender discrimination. The group has been harassed in their homes and branded as illegal.

It is of little surprise, then, to see images of <u>women</u>, only slightly veiled, confronting the regime in postelection protests. While Ahmadinejad's false victory may have toughened the clerics' foreign posture with the West, they've only exposed their weakness at home.

Eventually, Iran's women will not be denied.

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Load-Date: June 15, 2009



Israel blasted over drone strikes on Gaza civilians

Times of Oman

July 1, 2009 Wednesday

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Length: 581 words

Byline: AFP

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

But the rights group, which reports on dozens of conflict zones across the world, said Israeli authorities did not respond to a list of detailed questions on each incident sent to them in March and reprinted in the report. Israel

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prevented media or human rights monitors from entering Gaza during and immediately after the war and has declined to meet with Human Rights Watch.

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

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

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

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

Meddling

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

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Load-Date: July 1, 2009



Tehran opposition takes to streets

Irish Examiner
September 19, 2009 Saturday

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Section: WORLD

Length: 613 words

Body

Opposition protesters, chanting "death to the dictator", hurled stones and bricks in clashes with security forces firing tear gas.

The opposition held its first major street protests since mid-July, bringing out thousands in demonstrations in several parts of the capital. In some cases only several blocks away, tens of thousands marched in government-sponsored rallies marking an annual anti-Israel commemoration.

The commemoration, known as Quds Day, is a major political occasion for the government - a day for it to show its anti-Israeli credentials and its support for the Palestinians. Quds is the Arabic word for Jerusalem. During a speech for the rallies, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad railed against Israel and the West, questioning whether the Holocaust occurred and calling it a pretext for occupying Arab land.

But the opposition was determined to turn the day into a show of its survival and continued strength despite a fierce crackdown since the disputed June 12 presidential election.

Top opposition leaders joined the protests, in direct defiance of commands by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who barred anti-government demonstrations on Quds Day. That could provoke an escalation in the crackdown: hard-line clerics have been demanding the past week that any leader backing the protests should be arrested.

Tens of thousands joined the government-organised marches, starting in various parts of the capital and proceeding to Tehran University. Police and security forces, along with pro-government Basij militiamen, fanned out along main squares and avenues and in many cases tried to keep nearby opposition protesters away from the Quds Day rallies to prevent clashes.

Opposition supporters poured on to main boulevards and squares, wearing green T-shirts and wristbands and waving green banners and balloons - the colour of the reform movement.

They waved their fingers in the air in V-for-victory signs along with pictures of opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi, chanting "death to the dictator."

Tehran opposition takes to streets

Others chanted, "Not Gaza, not Lebanon - our life is for Iran" - a slogan directly challenging the government's support for anti-Israeli Palestinian militants in Gaza and Lebanon's <u>Hezbollah</u> guerrilla. Some shouted for Ahmadinejad's government to resign. Some <u>women</u> marched with their children in tow.

But at one of the several opposition rallies around the city, a group of hard-liners pushed through the crowd and attacked former President Mohamad Khatami, a cleric who is one of the most prominent pro-reform figures, according to a reformist Web site. The report cited witnesses as saying the opposition activists rescued Khatami and quickly repelled the assailants.

Another reformist Website said Khatami's turban was dishevelled and he was forced to leave the march.

Hard-liners tried to attack the main opposition leader, Mir Hossein Mousavi, when he joined another march elsewhere in the city, a witness said.

Supporters rushed Mousavi into his car when the hard-liners approached, and the vehicle sped away as his supporters pushed the hard-liners back, the witness said. He and other witnesses spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of government retaliation.

Another pro-reform leader, Mahdi Karroubi, who also ran in the presidential election, also joined protests elsewhere in the city.

In one of the main Tehran squares, Haft-e Tir, security forces wielding batons and firing tear gas tried to break up one of the opposition marches, and were met with protesters throwing stones and bricks. Several policemen taken away with light injuries. At least 10 protesters were seized by plainclothes security agents in marches around the city, witnesses said.

Load-Date: September 19, 2009



WORLD DIGEST

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

August 22, 2009 Saturday

THIRD EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A15

Length: 556 words

Byline: From news services

Dateline: 0

Body

Iraqis call for review of security leaders

Senior Iraqi officials and lawmakers recommended a review of security leadership, better coordination on intelligence and firmer treatment of detainees Friday as anger mounted over truck bombings against key government institutions that killed nearly 100 people.

Lawmakers also called for an emergency session of parliament next week to address the security concerns, the deputy parliament speaker said.

Bill reaches Bermuda - Hurricane Bill slammed punishing waves into Bermuda's coastal seawalls as it spun Friday over the open Atlantic, spreading big swells across the Bahamas and the southeast coast of the U.S.

The Category 2 hurricane had maximum sustained winds of 105 mph, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami. Forecasters said the hurricane could regain intensity over the weekend as its center passes between Bermuda and the eastern U.S. seaboard.

Georgia backs off claim - Georgia's defense minister asserted that U.S. training for his Afghanistan-bound troops could also be put to use in any new flare-up with Russia, then retracted the statement amid American handwringing.

Georgian Defense Minister Vasil Sikharulidze said that the training his troops would receive from the U.S. military before heading to Afghanistan could also be used in another war with Russia, then hours later retracted his comments, which had sparked immediate alarm among U.S. military officials who said they were not giving Georgian troops any training aimed at fighting Russia.

Ahmadinejad's nominee is a wanted man - The man Iran's president has named to be defense minister is wanted in the 1994 bombing of a Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires, and his nomination drew an outcry Friday from Argentina and Jewish groups.

Ahmad Vahidi, who commanded a unit of Iran's Revolutionary Guard known as the Quds Force at the time of the attack, was nominated by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad Wednesday along with others named to fill Cabinet

WORLD DIGEST

positions. The Quds Force is involved in operations abroad, including working with Lebanon's <u>Hezbollah</u> militant group, which is accused of carrying out the Buenos Aires attack.

8 arrested over freighter - Russian news agencies say a Moscow court has formally arrested eight people suspected of hijacking a freighter at the center of a monthlong high-seas mystery. The Arctic Sea left Finland on July 21. Nearly two weeks after it was to have docked in Algeria it was found thousands of miles away near West Africa.

U.S. targets Taliban leader - A U.S. missile strike targeted a Taliban commander blamed for masterminding ambushes on American troops in Afghanistan, the latest assault by unmanned aircraft in northwestern Pakistan, intelligence officials said. It was unclear if Siraj Haqqani, who also has close ties to al-Qaida, was among the 12 people killed in the house in North Waziristan near the Afghan border, the officials said, adding that three <u>women</u> were among the dead. Haqqani is known to have sometimes visited the house.

Pope's cast removed - Doctors removed Pope Benedict XVI's cast five weeks after he broke his right wrist in a fall and said they were pleased with how the fracture has healed. Benedict, 82, has been staying in the papal palace there since returning in late July from the Alps, where he fractured the wrist on July 17.

Load-Date: August 22, 2009



The Saudis are ready for peace - right after pigs fly

The Jerusalem Post

September 17, 2009 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 16

Length: 922 words

Byline: DOUGLAS M. BLOOMFIELD

Highlight: A pro-Western Arab ambassador once said that every Arab country may make peace with Israel some

day, but never the Saudis. Washington Watch

Body

Had the United States not turned back Saddam Hussein in Kuwait, it's likely he would have marched into Saudi Arabia. The Saudis essentially sat back and watched the American-led forces protect and defend their enormous wealth, basking in the protection before and since of the American nuclear umbrella.

The billions they've spent on the latest weapons we have made them no less dependent on our protection; they were unable to stand up to Saddam in 1990, and today, after historic arms buying sprees, they are unable to defend themselves against their cross-Gulf rivals in Iran.

A senior Saudi prince once told an American defense secretary, "You're just a salesman and we pay cash." That sounded a lot like shut up and do as you're told, because the customer is always right.

After so many years of American presidents of both parties kowtowing to the Riyadh royals who by accident of geology sit on great lakes of oil, it is no wonder they have such high regard for themselves and such low esteem for the US.

THAT WAS in full display on the op-ed page of Sunday's New York Times in an article by Turki al-Faisal, the former ambassador to Washington. His message was clear: Despite Saudi talk about wanting peace, we shouldn't take them so literally. The 2002 Saudi peace proposal was essentially an ultimatum, he confirmed, noting that until all demands are met, there will be no talking to Israel.

As "the world's energy superpower and the de facto leader of the Arab and Muslim worlds," Saudi Arabia "holds itself to higher standards of justice and law," he said. Thus the Saudis refuse to engage Israel until it "ends its illegal occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights" - and here he takes up the agenda of
Hizbullah">Hizbullah - "Shaba Farms in Lebanon." Until these and other Saudi demands are met, he insists, any steps toward normalization "would undermine international law and turn a blind eye to immorality."

This piety comes from a man who for 25 years headed one of the most brutal security forces in the world on behalf of a corrupt and autocratic monarchy which tolerates slavery, has been condemned for human trafficking, enforces and teaches and preaches religious bigotry, suppresses the rights of <u>women</u>. It is a country where homosexuality is subject to the death penalty and thieves have their hands cut off.

Saudi respect for human rights is like a bracha(blessing) for kosher pork on Yom Kippur.

No one will know how much money and other support Turki helped deliver to the PLO, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other terror groups. He has admitted meeting repeatedly with Osama bin Laden and the Taliban, but says that stopped after September 11, 2001. And don't forget that 15 of the 19 hijackers on September 11 were, like bin Laden, Saudis.

Anyone except possibly a fund-raiser for Human Rights Watch will attest that the kingdom is a serial abuser of human rights with no right to lecture anyone on the subject, particularly Israel. Israel's human rights record is by no means perfect, it just tends to look that way next to Saudi Arabia's. In fact, Israeli Arabs have dramatically greater freedom in Israel than Saudis do in their own country.

MALCOLM SMART, Amnesty International's director for the Middle East and North Africa, said recently that in the name of fighting terrorism, the kingdom has undertaken "severe repression of all forms of dissent" to the point where "there is now an almost complete lack of protection of freedoms and human rights."

Turki rejected calls by President Barack Obama, the crown prince of Bahrain and others for "greater communication with Israel" by Arab states and moves to revive the peace process. Instead he insisted on adopting the all-ornothing Saudi 2002 initiative and offered his own formula for peace: In Turki's view there could be no talks with Israel until it meets all Saudi demands. Step one would be "immediate removal of all Israeli settlements in the West Bank." Simultaneously "the international community must pressure Israel to relinquish its grip on all Arab territory." It is not clear whether he refers only to that land captured in 67 or more.

He dismisses criticism of the Hamas charter calling for destruction of Israel as "outdated," although Hamas, which the Saudis help finance, insists its position is unchanged.

Turki said Obama's Cairo speech "heightened expectations" in the Arab and Muslim worlds, and his call for an Israeli settlement freeze was "a welcome development." But he also seems to be telling the president to keep the pressure on Israel and don't call for Saudi help until you can deliver 100 percent of our demands. Until then any normalization with Israel amounts to a reward for the "theft" of Arab land, and we won't do that, he wrote.

Also this weekend, the Saudi ambassador to Washington, Adel al-Jubeir, rebuffed a bipartisan plea from more than 220 members of Congress for the Saudi king to "assert a strong leadership role" by making "a dramatic gesture toward Israel." He rejected all "incremental" moves in favor of a "final settlement" approach as proposed by his government.

In another recent article, this one in Foreign Policy, Turki accused Obama of "demagoguery" in advocating energy independence and said such calls are "political posturing at its worse" and aimed at demonizing his country.

A number of years ago a pro-Western Arab ambassador told me that every Arab country may make peace with Israel some day, but never the Saudis. If Turki's latest outpourings are any indication, that is truer than ever.

Graphic

Photo: US PRESIDENT Barack Obama greets Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah at the G-20 summit in April. Despite Saudi talk about wanting peace, the Arab kingdom has largely rebuffed Obama's calls for it to make overtures to Israel. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Israel blasted over drone strikes on Gaza civilians

Times of Oman

June 30, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 581 words

Byline: AFP

Body

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Load-Date: June 30, 2009



Around the world: Journalists given 12 years in secretive North Korean trial

Edinburgh News

June 8, 2009 Monday

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Length: 511 words

Highlight: NORTH Korea has sentenced two US journalists to 12 years in prison.

Body

The move intensifies the reclusive nation's confrontation with the United States.

The Central Court tried American TV reporters Laura Ling and Euna Lee and found them guilty of a "grave crime" against the nation, and of illegally crossing into North Korea, the country's state-run Korean Central News Agency said.

Ling and Lee, who were working for former vice president Al Gore's California-based Current TV, cannot appeal because they were tried in North Korea's highest court, where decisions are final.

The circumstances surrounding the arrest and trial of the two journalists have been shrouded in secrecy.

The trial was not open to the public or foreign observers.

US officials and others working for the reporters' release have said they have received no information about the defendants.

There have been fears that the woman were being used as bargaining chips in its standoff with South Korea and the US.

The journalists were arrested while reporting on the trafficking of <u>women</u>. It is unclear if they strayed into the North or were grabbed by border guards who crossed into China.

Seven killed in Baghdad minibus bomb

Iraq: At least seven people were killed in the bombing of a minibus today.

Police and hospital officials say the bomb was planted under the minibus in a mainly Shia area in Baghdad. Another 24 were wounded.

Gabon: A top government official in the West African country denied news reports that the country's long-time president is dead.

Around the world: Journalists given 12 years in secretive North Korean trial

Several French media outlets, including TV station France 24, reported yesterday that President Omar Bongo had died

A STATUE of the Cristo Negro (Black Christ) is carried by parishoners during a procession in the town of Masatepe in Nicaragua.

Musical dances off with awards

BILLY ELLIOT danced away with a host of Tony Awards today, including the title for best musical.

The story of a schoolboy in a northern mining town who dreams of dancing was the ceremony's big winner, with its haul reaching double figures. Angela Lansbury, pictured, also became only the second actress in history to win five Tonys.

Pro-Western coalition wins

LEBANON'S pro-Western coalition declared victory at the polls early today, as local TV stations reported it had fended off a serious challenge by *Hezbollah* and its allies to grab the majority in parliament.

Ships find air crash bodies

SEARCH ships worked through debris from a doomed Air France jet, recovering 15 more bodies near the spot where the plane is believed to have gone down.

Two bodies were recovered on Saturday, and Brazilian and French ships picked up the others yesterday after pilots participating in a grid search reported additional sightings.

The bodies have been found about 45 miles from where the jet sent out failure messages.

Family's fears as filmmaker held

THE family of a British filmmaker being held in prison off the coast of west Africa have said they are "beside themselves" with worry.

Graham Hughes, 30, contacted his relatives in Liverpool to inform them he had been arrested and imprisoned on Santiago, the largest of the Cape Verde islands.

Load-Date: March 14, 2011



<u>Israel, Hamas inch toward prisoner swap deal</u>

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

December 12, 2009 Saturday

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Length: 1005 words **Byline:** Daily Star Staff

Body

GAZA/OCCUPIED JERUSA-LEM: Sworn enemies Israel and Hamas seem equally eager to trade an Israeli soldier held in the Gaza Strip for Palestinian prisoners, but anxious to avoid political backlashes at home over the terms of any swap. Their dilemmas, fashioned by decades of conflict and symptomatic of the fear and lack of trust that will continue to shape the region.

Analysis

Allyn Fisher-Ilan and Nidal al-Mughrabi

Reuters

GAZA/OCCUPIED JERUSA-LEM: Sworn enemies Israel and Hamas seem equally eager to trade an Israeli soldier held in the Gaza Strip for Palestinian prisoners, but anxious to avoid political backlashes at home over the terms of any swap.

Their dilemmas, fashioned by decades of conflict and symptomatic of the fear and lack of trust that will continue to shape the region, explain why three and a half years after guerrillas snatched Corporal Gilad Shalit on the Gaza-Israel border, the Israeli soldier and some of the 11,000 Palestinians held in Israeli jails are still uncertain whether they might soon be released.

The 1.5 million people of the Gaza Strip are also watching keenly, aware that freedom for the Israeli soldier may be followed by Western pressure on Israel to ease a blockade that has blighted life in the coastal enclave since Hamas seized the soldier in 2006.

Behind-the-scenes talks mediated by Egypt, and more recently by Germany, have seesawed from optimistic assessments that a deal was close, to reports that the negotiations may have failed.

Israel knows that any deal will seem lopsided, as Hamas Islamists - releasing their only prisoner - demand freedom for hundreds of Palestinians.

Hamas needs to bring home, or at least win freedom in exile for, big names and big numbers after losing over 3,000 Gazans, including hundreds from allied militant groups, in fighting with Israel since Shalit's capture, including in a war this year.

"The popular pressure is enormous and they are backing Hamas not to make concessions. Hamas has no choice but to stick to its demands," said Mustafa al-Sawaf, an Islamist writer in Hamas-ruled Gaza.

For his part, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces contradictory pressures over the captured soldier, whose case is a national cause celebre due largely to a compulsory draft for 18-year-olds that relies on a sense of motivation and solidarity. Thousands have held protests demanding his freedom.

However, Netanyahu also faces demands, especially from right-wing Israelis, not to pay too high a price for the soldier by releasing key figures Hamas wants freed but whom Israel accuses of masterminding suicide bombings that have killed hundreds of people.

Israel has "already surrendered" to Hamas, Israeli columnist Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the Maariv newspaper this week.

He charged that freeing too many prisoners "would encourage further violent conflict against Israel, and deal a serious blow to deterrence.

"Yet the shame is already a fact," Yemeni added.

Israel, citing public demands that it protect its conscript soldiers at almost any cost, has set precedents showing a readiness to swap hundreds of the enemy for one of its own.

Among the most dramatic was in 1985, when it freed 1,150 prisoners for three soldiers held by Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanon.

That precedent, however, is one that weighs on Netanyahu today, analysts believe, since it backfired on the government.

Some militants freed in that swap played key roles in a Palestinian uprising that broke out two years later - and the Labor party was voted out of office the following year.

Analysts say that when a later Labor prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, was offered a swap in the 1990s for Ron Arad, an airman captured in Lebanon, he balked at repeating Labor's experience of the 1980s - but was then criticized by Israelis for failing Arad, whose fate remains a mystery to this day.

Still, since 2004 Israel has released more than 400 prisoners in two separate swap deals, for an Israeli businessman and the bodies of half a dozen Israeli soldiers.

Three months ago, Israel freed 20 women prisoners in exchange for a "proof of life" video of Shalit.

Samir Kuntar, reviled in Israel for a 1979 attack in which four members of a family were killed, went free in a 2008 deal with Lebanon's *Hizbullah* for the bodies of two soldiers.

Both Israel and the Hamas Movement are keeping the negotiations under wraps.

Sources in the Gaza Strip said the talks hit a snag a few days ago over some 50 names of leading militants whose freedom Hamas demands in exchange for Shalit, from a list said to top 400. Earlier Israel was said to have agreed to 160 names on the list.

An Israeli political source said that the army was concerned that militants previously released into the Israelioccupied West Bank had managed to elude attempts to keep tabs on them.

Israel, Hamas inch toward prisoner swap deal

Controversial names on Hamas' list include Marwan Barghouthi, a leader of Hamas' secular rival Fatah whom Israel jailed for life for planning attacks that killed dozens.

In a twist revealing how the fate of the Gaza Strip is tied to poisonous internal Palestinian politics, supporters of Fatah Party leader and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas have had to deny Abbas is pressing Israel to keep Barghouthi, who has warmer relations with Hamas and could be a challenger to Abbas in elections next year.

Israel, and its ally the United States, also share a disquiet that Barghouthi could meld the diplomatic approach taken by Abbas toward Israel with the armed confrontation favored by Hamas.

Another prisoner Israel doesn't want to set free is a Hamas leader it blames for one of its worst suicide bombings, a 2002 attack that killed 30 in a Netanya hotel. Yet another, Ahmad Saadat, was charged with the 2001 assassination of an ultranationalist Israeli Cabinet minister.

"The deal is pending on Netanyahu's decision to agree to the full names in the Hamas list. So far there is no such decision and we have no indication that Hamas is going to make any further concessions," a diplomat familiar with the talks told Reuters.

Load-Date: December 14, 2009



Peres proves a hit in Azerbaijan

The Jerusalem Post July 7, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 16

Length: 1002 words

Byline: ALEXANDER MURINSON

Highlight: The Shi'ite Caspian Sea nation fends off Irianian objections to his visit. LOOKING EASTWARD. The writer is an independent researcher; his book Turkey's Entente with Israel and Azerbaijan: State Identity and

Security in the Middle East and Caucasus will be published by Routledge in September.

Body

During the first leg of his unprecedented four-day trip to the two former Soviet Muslim republics of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, President Shimon Peres stopped over for a weekend visit in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan. His visit sent a clear message to neighboring Iran, negating assertions of groups like al-Qaida and representatives of Muslim countries that Jews and Muslims are doomed to perpetual conflict.

Even before embarking on his visit, Peres set the tone by telling Azerbaijani news agency Trend News that tolerance for other religions typifies both countries.

"A lot of things unite us," he said. "Azerbaijan manifests tolerance and respect to the point where Jews, Muslims and Christians can live without hatred and fanaticism. That is why [Azerbaijan] for me is a special country which I can trust. This country has its own cultural roots. Oil can be bought, but culture needs to be created.

"Azerbaijan is a small nation. Both Azerbaijan and Israel face the same problem: how can a small nation become great? You can become great regardless of the size of your territory if you accept all the riches of modern science and technology."

Peres also emphasized the desire of the Israeli leadership to share technological and scientific assets with Azerbaijan. He continued his interview by saying that "Israel does not possess significant territory, water, natural gas or petroleum. That is why we have to rely on our brainpower and our science. We will share everything we possess with Azerbaijan in the areas of common interest."

Well-briefed about the paternalistic nature of the Aliyev regime, Peres paid tribute to Heydar Aliyev, the late father of current Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. He mentioned that he had met Heydar Aliyev twice and was impressed with this "highly educated man, who respected tradition."

To further endear himself to his Azerbaijani hosts, Peres pointed to the established democratic tradition in this secular country. He mentioned that Azerbaijani <u>women</u> gained suffrage before such Western countries as Switzerland and the United States.

Peres also focused on the shared experience of living in a hostile neighborhood. Pointing to the Armenian occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and unfriendly activities of the Iranian state apparatus, he said: "I am aware that

Peres proves a hit in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan faces a difficult problem emanating from your neighbors. In politics, it is impossible to choose neighbors, as it is impossible in the family to choose one's parents. Such is life. Israel fully supports the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan."

Calling for full diplomatic representation and the opening of an embassy in Israel, Peres intimated that Israel expresses its support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity in international forums. For Azerbaijan to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh issue positively, Peres called upon its authorities not only to get closer to Israel, but also to strengthen ties with American Jewry.

THIS VISIT represents the consummation of a trend begun in 1992 to deepen and expand bilateral cooperation in economics, agriculture, science and military affairs.

Peres was accompanied by Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer and National Infrastructures Minister Uzi Landau, the director-general of the Defense Ministry, top executives of Israel Military Industries, and 60 businessmen seeking to tighten economic ties with both Azerbaijan and nearby Khazakstan, two Caspian Sea states.

Among other issues, energy security occupied pride of place. Plans for pipelines to deliver Azerbaijani natural gas to Israel via Georgia and Turkey were discussed. Ben- Eliezer, as the infrastructure minister in the previous government, was directly involved in negotiations about cooperation in energy and water management, and Landau was briefed about the details. On the first day of his visit, Peres met Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and other officials for talks on bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues, according to the Azerbaijani news agency Azertaj. This discussion touched on two interrelated issues - the unresolved conflict with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh and relations with Iran, which supports Armenia. Both leaders signed agreements boosting cooperation in culture, education, science and hi- tech. Concerned about threats emanating from their neighbors and improving the balance of power vis-^-vis Armenia, Azerbaijani officials also expressed interest in buying more Israeli arms, in addition to several previous multimillion-dollar deals.

Exploiting the common bond of Shi'ite Islam, Iranian secret services for years have been attempting to create secret pro-Iranian cells in Azerbaijan; they sponsor the Azerbaijani Islamic Party. On June 17, police briefly detained 19 members of the pro-Iranian party for protesting Peres's visit outside the Foreign Ministry in Baku. The Israeli delegation's arrival coincided with the trial of four Azerbaijanis and two Lebanese charged with plotting to blow up the Israeli Embassy in Baku last year. Azerbaijani authorities allege the suspects were connected with <u>Hizbullah</u> and al-Qaida.

Before Peres's visit, the Iranian leadership had tried arm-twisting in an attempt to force Azerbaijan to cancel it. That was the purpose of last month's visit by Iranian Chief of Staff Hasan Firuzabadi. According to Azerbaijani MP Gudrat Gasanguliev, the Iranian media fanned hysteria during the days of the Peres visit, claiming that there were mass rallies in Azerbaijan to protest the meeting. The final straw in this anti-Israeli campaign was the departure of the Iranian ambassador from Baku - allegedly as a sign of solidarity with the people of Azerbaijan - as Peres arrived in the airport.

Gasanguliev said in parliament on June 30 that "Azerbaijan extends friendly ties with Iran, while the Iranian authorities openly express their enmity." He concluded about the Israeli visit that "the majority of the population welcomed the visit and the further expansion of Azerbaijani-Israeli relations."

Graphic

Photo: AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENT Ilham Aliev and President Shimon Peres shake hands during their meeting in Baku on June 28. (Credit: AP)

Peres proves a hit in Azerbaijan

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Radically new strategy needed for deeply troubled region

The Irish Times

February 14, 2009 Saturday

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Section: OPINION; Opinion; Pg. 14

Length: 969 words

Body

WORLD VIEW: Afghanistan and Pakistan have long been shaping up as a security disaster zone, writes PAUL GILLESPIE

OBAMA S VIETNAM? ask Newsweek s Fareed Zakaria and John Barry. Pakistan in peril, writes William Dalrymple in the New York Review of Books. Bloody bewilderment in Kabul, reports the International Herald Tribune in its account of how an audacious suicide attack on the Afghan justice and education ministries killed 20 people and injured 57 on the eve of this week s visit to the city by Richard Holbrooke, Barack Obama s special representative to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Taliban certainly ensured he saw the crux of the greatest foreign policy challenge facing Obama. In Pakistan, Holbrooke visited the city of Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province just as another bomb killed a popular governor there.

He heard how the Taliban and its Pakistani allies have captured Swat after a long battle with the Pakistani army, confining *women* to houses, blowing up girls schools, silencing music and closing barbers shops.

This is a rich, strategic region far from the Afghan border, within three hours of the capital Islamabad, and with ready access to Kashmir.

Explaining the significance of these facts, the well-known Pakistani journalist and author Ahmed Rashid says he has never been so disheartened or depressed in his life about the state of his country. It has a vital lack of leadership politically and militarily, its political parties squabble about petty disagreements rather than dealing with this major setback in Swat, the disastrous attack on Mumbai which originated in the same area, or the rapidly deteriorating Pakistani economy.

Reviewing Rashid s new book, Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia, Dalrymple, an acclaimed writer on the region s history and current affairs, gives a graphic picture of disintegration and policy failure there.

Agreeing with Rashid s view that after the September 11th 2001 attacks on New York and Washington the US-led war on terrorism has left in its wake a far more unstable world than existed on that momentous day, he writes: The rise of Iran as a major regional power, the advance of Hamas and <u>Hizbullah</u>, the wreckage of Iraq, with over two million external refugees and the ethnic cleansing of its Christian population. And now the implosion of Afghanistan and Pakistan, probably the most dangerous development of all.

Radically new strategy needed for deeply troubled region

What a catalogue of failure it is. Writing from Mumbai and New Delhi in the Financial Times this week, the paper s Asia editor David Pilling asks which is the real Pakistan the seemingly moderate one represented by its president Asif Ali Zardari, Benazir Bhutto s playboy widower, or the one that denies Pakistan had anything to do with the Mumbai attack and last week released Abdul Qadeer Khan, father of its nuclear programme from jail.

This matters because the US pledge to triple its aid to Islamabad means that if the money ends up with the wrong people it could be feeding the beast responsible for so much trouble in the region.

Rashid is well-known to US policy makers and met Holbrooke in Lahore this week, and recently dined with Obama, according to the New York Times. He says of Holbrooke's appointment that this is a complete sea change in what Pakistan is used to.

There is a suspicion in the American establishment that the Pakistani army has found it easier to pull the wool over the eyes of the American military. It will be harder to do that with the civilians.

Holbrooke is to make proposals on Afghanistan to a Nato summit in April. European states are in no mood to boost their military involvement in such an uncertain political venture. At the Munich security conference last weekend observers detected a strong note of practical realism in the new administration s approach, including a readiness to talk to the Taliban. Rashid says Holbrooke must also engage with Iran on Afghanistan, where it has common interests with the US.

Afghan, Pakistani and Iranian journalists at a conference in Dubai this week were similarly concerned. The editor of an Afghan news agency in Kabul spoke of the endemic corruption and weakness of the Karzai regime, the power of regional warlords in the country, their financing of the booming opium trade, their links to neighbouring powers (including Pakistan) and the failure of the huge international aid effort to reach ordinary Afghans.

Access to the country through the Khyber Pass is now controlled by the Taliban and its allies, driving the US to make arrangements with the Russians over longer and more dangerous routes. The Taliban's allies now control over 70 per cent of the country, bringing rough justice but better order than Karzai can. They are winning the war and gradually closing in on Kabul.

That is explained by resentment of foreign armies and regional nationalisms angered by the use of US drones to attack their villages. As Newsweek s Zakaria puts it, many of them are accidental guerrillas, not fundamentalist extremists.

Zakaria argues that a radically changed strategy is required by Obama. It needs to do counter-insurgency right by making local populations feel secure. Talking to the Taliban is essential, based on a clear distinction between them and al-Qaeda, since not one Afghan was involved in 9/11.

And Pakistan must be pressured to yield up al-Qaeda, understanding that it originated in the US and Saudifinanced war against the Russians in Afghanistan in the 1980s, before being turned to advantage by the Pakistani military in the 1990s.

This was rational, since at low cost Pakistan was able to pin down the Indian army in Kashmir as well as chase the Russians out of Afghanistan. The beast then took on a life of its own.

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Load-Date: February 14, 2009



A Hamas victory in 2010?

The Jerusalem Post
November 18, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 915 words

Byline: FELICE FRIEDSON

Highlight: History can repeat itself if an optimistic stream is not introduced into the Palestinian psyche. The writer is president and CEO of The Media Line News Agency (<u>www.themedialine.org</u>).

Body

You cannot sit in Des Moines or Los Angeles or Washington for that matter, and think you know the streets of Ramallah, Gaza or Jerusalem.

In 2006, I wrote an op-ed suggesting that Hamas would win the Palestinian election by virtue of having studied the <u>women</u> of Gaza and the West Bank. Predictions that Hamas would "finish strong" in the polling were commonplace, but few, if any, shared the assessment that the faction would win outright. The <u>women</u> were a clear barometer, speaking openly and urgently against Fatah corruption and their reliance upon and respect for Hamas's social services.

At the time, the Bush administration was pressing hard in favor of facilitating elections, even though many analytical voices cautioned that there was a better-than- even chance that the result could complicate rather than improve the situation on the ground.

Now, the issue of elections is again before the Palestinian public: this time coming with Fatah and Hamas unambiguously bifurcated; the election date pushed-off to an as yet undetermined time; Mahmoud Abbas threatening not to stand for reelection; and leaders are openly suggesting that since the Palestinian Authority isn't accomplishing anything, it might as well be disbanded. So what's changed?

For one thing, the Fayad plan is resonating among Palestinians and throughout the international community. On the domestic front, frustration born of unfocused goals and unfulfilled expectations is showing signs of waning as hope replaces despair on the strength of the two-year timetable that seems both reasonable and within reach.

Economically, Salaam Fayad has brought a glimpse of hope to the Palestinians, built largely on the potential of private-sector entrepreneurs who are investing vast sums in projects that at once provide encouragement and complete the list of needed infrastructure and institutions Fayad has put into play. The absolute focus on a seemingly permanently-stalled peace process that is incapable of generating anything but despair is slowly being replaced by a cautious sense the prime minister described in another context as "a healthy sense of self-development."

This measured sense of optimism carries with it the need for Palestinians to boldly break from their sense of victimization. Reflexively shouting "occupation" is no substitute for the sort of self-sufficiency that is the

A Hamas victory in 2010?

underpinning of the policy switch that promises statehood when the infrastructure and institutions are in place, rather than when the state of negotiations permits. If ever.

BUT SINCE this is the Middle East, it would be negligent not to ponder the proclivity for missing the opportunity at hand. Prolonged West Bank-Gaza bifurcation is a deal breaker for statehood and is showing few signs of going away. The question of whether the inclusion of Hamas in a government will have a chilling effect on international cooperation is unclear, although an argument is being made that since the West has no problem with <u>Hizbullah</u> in Lebanon's government, why should Hamas in Palestine be a problem?

Yet, the problem grows if electoral results as in 2006 are in the cards. Can Hamas win? Of course. Palestinian pollster Dr. Nabil Kukali, of the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion, told The Media Line that while the numbers at the moment make a Hamas win doubtful, "elections are way off."

It's a sentiment reiterated by Lana Abu Hijleh, CHF's director for the West Bank and Gaza, who reminds that the <u>women</u> who tipped the election in 2006 were by-and-large voting their protests against Fatah corruption and in praise of Hamas social services. Lana looks to the streets, and suggests that the Abbas resignation is being viewed widely as "the result of a failing peace process," and that history can repeat itself if an optimistic stream is not introduced into the public psyche.

And as is always the case, the whole picture is not as it seems. Threats aside, Abbas is unlikely to step down, according to Dr. Feras Milhem, a legal expert from Bir Zeit University, because his departure would place Hamas member and Speaker of the Palestine Legislative Council Aziz Dweik atop the Palestinian Authority. This scenario trumps the optimistic view presented above and sets the stage for continued bifurcation, a sense of despair and a protest vote that results in dej^-vu all over again a la 2006.

So while the question of whether Abbas is fed up with a motionless process or has simply set a strategy of threatening to withdraw is open for debate, another Hamas victory - while unlikely - is not beyond the realm of reality.

Kukali points out that "for almost 50 years the Palestinians have not survived without the Israelis economically or culturally... It's beneficial for them to live in peace and security."

Perhaps, then, it's time that the Palestinians test Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's frequent call for aiding Palestinian economic development. Perhaps it's time to see exactly what he has in mind instead of focusing on the red line of settlement building that was not in play during previous Israeli administrations.

The result could be additional progress on the Palestinian economic front, the encouragement of visible growth and more than a modicum of cooperation that has been missing from the picture until now.

The same voices that so accurately described reality on the 2006 streets can be heard on the 2009 streets. Perhaps Messrs. Fayad, Abbas, Netanyahu and Barack Obama should listen more carefully.

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Graphic

Photo: PALESTINIAN PM Salaam Fayad. 'His plan for an independent state has brought a glimpse of hope to the Palestinians, on the strength of the two-year timetable that seems both reasonable and within reach.' (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



The option no one wants to think about

The Jerusalem Post
December 2, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 953 words

Byline: LAWRENCE HART

Highlight: Israel was once at the forefront of counter-terrorism, but it would do well to take a page from the Sri Lankan book. The writer lives and works in Los Angeles. He has a BA from California State University, Northridge in history, with an emphasis on the Middle East and is currently a graduate student at that institution. He is a father of three.

Body

Israel at one time was the world leader in combating terrorism. Military colleges studied the Entebbe raid of 1976. People marveled at the courage of storming a children's house on Kibbutz Misgav Am in 1980 and killing all five terrorists before they could slaughter the remaining children. Israel launched a daring commando raid against a particular terrorist in Lebanon, coming under cover of night, killing him and getting back out without losing a man - a perfect surgical strike.

Israel is responsible for declaring that terror can never be negotiated with, knowing that any such negotiations represent a slippery slope to defeat.

But Israel has been languishing in recent years, infected by the same political correctness that is drowning the rest of the Western world. It just doesn't seem to have what it takes to deal the proper blow to the terror in its midst. What with the 2006 debacle in Lebanon, and missing the opportunity to cut the head off one of these snakes in Gaza last year, Israel appears doomed to live with terror until it either destroys us or burns itself out - in 100 years or so.

ENTER THE Sri Lankans. I think they have an answer, and I think Israel should listen to what they have to say.

Sri Lanka used to be just like Israel. It had a perennial terrorist problem with its Tamil minority. For almost 30 years, organized bands from that community terrorized the nation, to the point where the country could not evolve. Navin Dissanayake, Sri Lankan minister of investment promotion, claims that it "could have been another Singapore if it had not been for that war." Terrorism in Sri Lanka, as it did in Israel, held that country from progressing - progress which would have been good for Sri Lanka and the world.

The Tamil Tigers, sometimes referred to by its full name, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), resembled Middle East terror groups. Actually, it is more correct to say that Middle East terror groups resemble the Tamil Tigers, as the Tigers introduced many of the techniques subsequently used by Israel's enemies. They invented the suicide belt and perfected the suicide bombing attack, turning it into a tactical device. They were the first to use **women** and children in these attacks. And they have been accused of using their own innocent civilians as human shields. They are a vicious crowd, and were implicated in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi of India in 1991. As we all know, the Palestinians have imitated these tactics with devastating brutality.

The option no one wants to think about

The Sri Lankans had more or less lived with this horror since 1983. Then 9/11 happened and a new dynamic, promoted by president George W. Bush and the United States, gave the Sri Lankans a new outlook. With a new administration elected on the promise of stopping the LTTE permanently, the country embarked on a full-scale military assault. It sent its army, much stronger than the Tamil tigers, into Tamil-occupied territory and began to take back town by town, going street to street in some cases, and killing anyone who resisted.

Jehan Perera of the Sri Lankan Peace Council said, "This government has taken the position that virtually any price is worth paying to rid the country of terrorism."

The price paid was indeed a heavy one. Many innocent people died. The Sri Lankan government deeply regrets the killing of innocent civilians, but most government officials believe they made a conscious choice to pay that price, and that the alternative status quo was simply no longer acceptable.

It was bloody and dirty, and they took a lot of criticism for it. The UN estimates that during the final months of fighting in Sri Lanka, at least 7,000 Tamil civilians were killed and 13,000 were wounded. But they also wiped out the scourge of terror, not stopping until total victory was declared last May. Today, Sri Lankans can once again walk the streets of their cities, visit the marketplaces and conduct business without the fear of being murdered in such gruesome ways that not even their loved ones can identify their bodies. It is a new dawn for Sri Lanka.

Israel can take a real lesson from this experience. The threat facing the Jewish state from the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon is no different than the threat to the north of Sri Lanka, and its coastline into the south that the Tamils occupied before the Sri Lankan army began its war of elimination.

THE TIME has come to admit that there might not be a solution to the Palestinian problem, but there is a way to end it. The next time terror forces Israel to take military action, this option should be considered. Israel must realize that there will be no peace with an intransigent enemy that refuses to act in good faith. Palestinian rejectionism and Iranian-backed <u>Hizbullah</u> threats to our existence will never be placated; they will not stop until Israel is destroyed. Once the population realizes this unfortunate reality, there is only one way to change it. Israel must take the Sri Lankan initiative and move into these areas one by one, cornering, enveloping and killing off all armed resistance.

Bending over backward to make peace with the Palestinians has proven fruitless. It's time to make the choice of a better life for all. More than 60 years of living with this is enough. When we have completely wiped out this enemy, a new dynamic will rise. Without the Muslim thugs holding their own people back, there will be nothing to stop them from negotiating genuine peace. There might be a Palestinian, a Lebanese, a Syrian, maybe even an Iranian peace partner which will transform the Middle East from a charnel house of hatred and bloodshed to a prosperous community of nations working together to make the daily lives of all their citizens better.

Graphic

Photo: A MAN waves the Sri Lankan national flag at the National Victory Parade in Colombo in June. The Sri Lankan government celebrated its victory over Tamil Tiger rebels with a military parade in the capital. (Credit: Bloomberg)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Goldstone's sorry search for symmetry

The Jerusalem Post September 30, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 1022 words

Byline: ELIHU RICHTER

Highlight: The judge neglected to apply the lessons of his Rwanda tribunals to incitement to genocide by Hamas and its enabler, Iran. Right of Reply. The writer is head of the Genocide Prevention Program at Hebrew University-Hadassah School of Public Health and Community Medicine and associate director at Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide, Jerusalem, and head of World Genocide Situation Room at Genocide Prevention Now (GPN).

Body

I can prove the phoniness of Judge Goldstone's claim in his Jerusalem Post op-ed September 22 in which he claimed that had the Israeli government submitted its case to his Commission, the latter could have been encouraged to move in a new direction, "beneficial to Israeli interests." The implication of Goldstone's statement is that Israel, not the Commission, is responsible for the latter's errors of omission and commission.

I personally submitted a nine-page, annotated and referenced brief to the Commission last July. Goldstone's claim that the Commission was driven by the evidence is refuted by the fact that the Mission ignored my brief and its attached evidence. Subsequently, I have published additional evidence showing that the high male-<u>female</u> ratio of fatalities among Palestinians in Gaza argues for the combatant status of many whom human rights organizations classified as non-combatants, and supports other investigations making the same point.

The punch lines of my brief were:

"Between June 1, 2008, and Jan 29, 2009, the UN's executive organs, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, remained silent in the face of [Hamas' and Iran's] incitement, [to genocide], ignoring their responsibilities under the UN Genocide Convention. This silence persisted despite the precedents from previous genocides, notably Rwanda, that such hate language is a warning sign, predictor, and catalyst of genocide....

If the Commission fails to call for criminal prosecution of the known facts concerning the cruel and inhuman mistreatment of Gilad Schalit, the Hamas rocket and terror attacks directed against civilians, and the incitement and hate language by Hamas and Iran, it will recycle the culture of impunity for such violations of human rights to life, respect for life and human dignity. By failing to pursue these actions, it will itself have become a complicit bystander to these crimes...."

IN SUPPORT of the above points, I submitted Elena Bonner's eloquent statement on behalf of Gilad Schalit, data on Israel providing more medical permits to Gazans during a period of increasing rocket attacks, and documentation of Hamas' and Iran's incitement to genocide using the dehumanizing metaphors of Mein-Kampf type hate language. Iran, as is well known, is a supplier, enabler, instructor and enabler of Hamas, and its government is now the world's epicenter for incitement to genocide.

Goldstone's sorry search for symmetry

The Goldstone Commission ignored all the above. In short, the Commission was not driven by the evidence, but by its preset agenda and rigged mandate.

Judge Goldstone, in his past capacity as Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal Rwanda (ICT-R), knows that incitement to genocide is a crime against humanity, as specified by the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide and the Rome Statute of the international Criminal Court.

The ICT-R presided over the trials of six Rwandan journalists and public figures who were found guilty of genocidal incitement on Rwanda's one radio station. Later, the Supreme Court of Canada upheld the conviction of Leon Mugasera, a Rwandan official who fled to Canada, even though his incitement preceded the genocide in Rwanda by several years - a noteworthy precedent for prosecuting Ahmadinejad and Hamas. In May, the UN Gazette reported the trial of Dominique Ntawukulilyayo, the former prefect of Butare, had opened before the ICT-R in Arusha. Ntawukulilyayo faced three counts of genocide, including incitement to genocide, and the charges included failing to prevent, aiding and abetting and, in some cases, even ordering genocidal killings in areas under his jurisdiction. This man was arrested in France in late 2007 and extradited to the ICT-R a year ago.

Just last week, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei repeated his statement that Israel is a cancerous tumor, and Ahmadinejad again used the UN as a platform to promote his demonization of Israel. Both over the years have repeatedly used dehumanizing metaphors of Mein Kampf and Nazi propaganda, e.g. cancer, microbes, filth, disease - the worst form of incitement.

Genocide scholars and experts on international criminal law recognize that state sanctioned incitement to genocide is an early warning sign, predictor, promoter and catalyst of genocide. But Goldstone, despite the Rwandan precedent, has been loudly silent on proposals such as the Responsibility to Prevent Petition of Professor of Irwin Cotler, calling for the indictment of Ahmadinejad for his incitement to genocide, Iran's illegal pursuit of nuclear weapons and brutal suppression of human rights, and he has been a bystander to Hamas incitement to genocide.

IN HIS search for the appearance of false symmetry between Israel - a society committed to life, live and let live, and Hamas - an authoritarian, repressive terror organization committed to death, Judge Goldstone has advanced the use of "asymmetric lawfare" on behalf of the asymmetric warfare waged by genocidal terrorists ("armed organizations" in his report). Judge Goldstone's ignoring of state-sanctioned incitement and hate language by Hamas and its benefactor, Iran, is the equivalent of a traffic cop ignoring radar evidence that a driver is doing 190 kph on a city street and has a blood alcohol concentration of 0.30%.

Judge Goldstone has been negligent in failing to apply the lessons of the Rwanda tribunals - his tribunals - to incitement to genocide by Hamas and Iran, its enabler. He should endorse the call of Michael Ignatieff, the leader of the Canadian Liberal Party, to indict all those Iranian leaders who are using Mein Kampf type language to incite to genocide, and do the same for Hamas and *Hizbullah*.

He has become a bystander - the worst thing one can say about a professional dealing with incitement to genocide - and the defense attorney for genocidal terror. My prediction is that infamy will be his destiny.

A last point: What counts is not whether the rulings of the Commission are or are not "beneficial to Israel's interests," but whether they serve justice, life and respect for life for all, everywhere, now and tomorrow.

They do not.

Graphic

Photo: JUDGE RICHARD Goldstone presents his report to the Human Rights Council in Geneva yesterday, urging the international community to end 'the culture of impunity' in the Mideast. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Princes and Imams

The New York Times
July 5, 2009 Sunday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section BR; Column 0; Book Review Desk; Pg. 10

Length: 634 words

Byline: By THANASSIS CAMBANIS

Thanassis Cambanis, a Ferris professor of journalism at Princeton, is writing a book about *Hezbollah*.

Body

THE MEDIA RELATIONS DEPARTMENT OF HIZBOLLAH WISHES YOU A HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Unexpected Encounters in the Changing Middle East

By Neil MacFarquhar

387 pp. PublicAffairs. \$26.95

In this engaging and fact-filled reporter's memoir, Neil MacFarquhar successfully walks a fine line. He offers something fresh and unexpected for readers steeped in a decade of news reports about suicide bombers, absolutist imams and tyrannical despots. Yet he never forgets that most of those readers care about the subject only because they have already decided, perhaps simplistically, that they are under threat from the Arab or Muslim world. He nods to the prejudices about Middle Eastern fanatics and then sets off merrily to dispel them.

Like many of us, MacFarquhar desperately wants to make sense of some burning questions: How come the flood of petrodollars in the Persian Gulf has produced so little intellectual innovation and sustainable development? How can political reform and economic liberalization coexist with resurgent Islamism? Can the United States act as a force for change in Iran and the Arab countries, or has it lost its leverage? "The Media Relations Department of Hizbollah Wishes You a Happy Birthday" is MacFarquhar's effort to write a funny (yet penetrating) account about real Arabs -- and a few Persians -- struggling against long odds to bring their societies into the modern age.

MacFarquhar is well positioned for the attempt. He grew up in the 1960s in Marsa Brega, a fenced-off expatriate oil outpost on the Libyan coast where local food was never served. After studying international relations at Stanford, he returned to the Middle East, spurred by a powerful curiosity. He covered the region in the 1980s for The Associated Press and was the Cairo bureau chief for The New York Times from 2001 to 2005.

He's a diligent reporter with eclectic interests. He drinks beer with a German brewer in Yemen. He is detained by regular police in Saudi Arabia and sips tea with the secret police in Egypt. He researches religious edicts against dogs at a reference library in Iran and questions an Egyptian cleric whose dial-a-fatwa service berates <u>women</u> reluctant to take the veil.

Princes and Imams

How, MacFarquhar wants to know, have Arab tyrants and dictatorial Iranian ayatollahs succeeded at smothering almost every effort at reform? And why has the United States failed so dramatically to promote greater freedom? He argues, convincingly, that despots have won Washington's backing on a platform of "apres moi, le deluge" -- if popular uprisings sweep out friendly dictators in Cairo, Riyadh and Amman, far worse authoritarian Islamist movements will take their place. Meanwhile, hard-line clerics intoxicated by power have extended their authority over every aspect of daily life, with rulings, based on the Koran, on whether Muslims can ski or get vasectomies. Taken together, the twin oppression of princes and imams has eliminated the space for even a modest reform movement. This book reminds us thatmultitudes of the ruled share many of their leaders' values and assumptions even if they resent their heavy-handed and corrupt ways. Any change in the Middle East's powerhouses is very likely to come with an Islamic pedigree and to advocate incremental reform.

In the end, MacFarquhar embraces a tempered optimism. The characters he introduces fight at great personal risk for civil liberties, political transparency, freedom of worship, even for genuine political pluralism. They give the lie to the misleading claim that democracy is somehow incompatible with Arab culture. For those who care about the Middle East and want to start listening to weak but growing voices calling for reform and modernization on local rather than Western terms, MacFarquhar's account is a fine place to begin.h

http://www.nytimes.com

Load-Date: July 5, 2009



Intolerance on the Temple Mount

The Jerusalem Post September 27, 2009 Sunday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 956 words

Byline: DAVID KIRSHENBAUM

Highlight: The site is large enough to accommodate people of all faiths - yet only Muslims are allowed to worship

there

Body

Last week, our synagogue in Beit Shemesh made its annual High Holy Day week visit to the Temple Mount. We began the tradition six years ago when the site was reopened to non-Muslims. During the first three years following the start of the September 2000 war launched against Israel by the Palestinian Authority, Hamas and <u>Hizbullah</u>, the government decided to reward Arab terror by barring all non-Muslims from even setting foot on the Temple Mount.

Visiting the Temple Mount is a schizophrenic experience. When standing there, it is impossible not to be awestruck by the magnitude of where you are and the enormity of the colossal events that took place there. It is on the Temple Mount that both the First and Second Temple stood for nearly 1,000 years, where millions of Jews from all over the Land of Israel and the Diaspora made the three festival pilgrimages and where, according to Jewish belief, the Third Temple, ushering in the days of the messiah, is destined to be built. Throughout history, whenever and wherever Jews were engaged in prayer, they faced Jerusalem. And when in Jerusalem, they pray in the direction of the Temple Mount.

It boggles the mind to imagine your family tree and to consider when the last time anybody in the family line had been on the Temple Mount. Might that ancestor have been one of the survivors of the fighting that took place there prior to the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE? Might it have been on Shavuot of that year, the final pilgrimage festival celebrated by the Jewish people prior to the destruction?

But now that I was standing in that holiest of places, which generations of Jews for 2,000 years could only dream of visiting, I was forbidden to pray. Simply moving my lips in whispered prayer could be grounds for removal. Why? Because I am a Jew. And only a Muslim can pray on the holiest site in Judaism. A Jew may not.

DURING THE War of Independence in 1948, the Old City of Jerusalem fell to the Jordanians. Nearly 1,500 Jews, including many <u>women</u> and children, were killed. While it was under Jordanian control, dozens of Jewish synagogues, many centuries old, were destroyed and the cemetery on the Mount of Olives, where Jews have been buried for 2,500 years, was desecrated. For 19 years, no Jew was allowed to set foot in the Old City or pray at the Western Wall, the retaining wall of the Temple Mount closest to where the Temples stood.

In June 1967, when Egypt, Syria and Jordan embarked on a war to annihilate the Jewish state, Israel recaptured Jerusalem's Old City. One of the most stirring announcements in Jewish history was the message transmitted from the front during the Six Day War: "The Temple Mount is in our hands."

Intolerance on the Temple Mount

But then, in a mind-boggling display of attempted appeasement of an enemy that just days before had sought Israel's destruction, defense minister Moshe Dayan decided to allow the Muslim religious council, the Wakf, to retain administrative authority over the Temple Mount. Thus, a truly bizarre and unacceptable situation developed.

Israel has scrupulously upheld Muslim worship at the Aksa Mosque, which was built just off the supposed site of the Temples, even when the site has been used to stone Jewish worshipers at the Western Wall and sermons are delivered calling for the demise of Israel and the US. Nor have Muslim prayer services been banned even in the worst periods of Arab terror attacks. During the just-completed Ramadan, hundreds of thousands of Arabs prayed at al-Aksa and held nighttime picnics on the Temple Mount breaking their fast. The garbage and leftover food items we saw strewn over the Temple Mount during our visit was appalling.

But in glaring contrast, Israel has, for the past 43 years, failed to challenge the Muslim ban on Jewish worship on the Temple Mount. On our visit, the number of Jews allowed up at one time was severely limited, we were checked for any religious items, which cannot be brought onto the Temple Mount by a Jew, and we were warned by the police not to even whisper a prayer.

THE STATUS quo is woefully offensive and intolerable. Never mind that at no time during the lengthy Muslim control over much of the Middle East did the Muslims ever designate Jerusalem as an imperial capital or even as a provincial or subprovincial capital. Even if we choose to overlook this very relevant history, the pattern of Islamic religious imperialism, exemplified by the Wakf's contemptible conduct on the Temple Mount, must not be ignored.

The problem is not simply that the Arabs have attempted to take as their own every site in Israel holy to Judaism, whether it be the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem or Joseph's Tomb in Nablus. But in doing so, they have consistently attempted to obliterate the historic Jewish connection and claim to each of those sites.

In the same manner, in the years following the Oslo Accords and Israel's withdrawal from Bethlehem, a concerted policy by the Palestinian Authority to Islamicize the city and terrorize the Christian population resulted in a reduction in the percentage of Christians living there from 60 percent to less than 15% today.

We pay a terrible price when we close our eyes to the trampling of human rights and religious freedom out of fear of enraging the Muslim world. The Temple Mount is a huge area. It is the length of nearly five football fields north to south, and nearly three football fields east to west. It is certainly large enough to accommodate the ancient call of the prophet Isaiah recited in fervent prayer by Jews on Yom Kippur: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations."

The sooner we take action to help bring this about, the better.

Graphic

Photo: Room for all. The Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski/The Jerusalem Post)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Obama gives hope for a final peace

The Courier Mail (Australia)

June 8, 2009 Monday

1 - First with the news Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 26

Length: 620 words

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

Obama gives hope for a final peace

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

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

Load-Date: June 7, 2009



German Mediator In Gaza For Prisoner Exchange Negotiations

RTT News (United States)

December 23, 2009 Wednesday

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Length: 637 words

Body

(RTTNews) - A German mediator involved in the indirect prisoner exchange negotiations between Israel and the Hamas militants visited the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, according to Hamas officials.

Officials said that the German mediator's Gaza visit was to deliver Israel's latest offer on the proposed prisoner exchange deal to a Hamas delegation. Hamas is expected to make a reply in the coming days after studying the Israeli offer carefully.

The development comes a day after media reports suggested that Israel and Hamas were moving closer to a prisoner exchange deal that would secure the freedom of Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier abducted by Palestine militants in 2006.

Israeli media reports indicated on Tuesday that Israel has responded to the Hamas offer for prisoner exchange and has forwarded a list of Palestinian prisoners it wants to deport to either Gaza or some foreign country as a part of the deal.

Gilad Shalit was captured by Hamas militants from Gaza in a cross-border raid in June 2006. Egypt has been mediating for his freedom in exchange for release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. The previous negotiations on the issue, which were held just before the term of the last Israeli government ended, concluded without any result.

Israeli government has been under tremendous pressure to secure Shalit's freedom from within after Hamas recently released a proof-of-life video of Shalit in exchange for the freedom of 20 Palestinian <u>women</u> prisoners held in Israeli jails.

Germany joined the prisoner exchange negotiations earlier this year as a mediator in a effort to hasten the release of the abducted Israeli soldier. The European country has a history of successfully negotiating several prisoner exchange deals between Israel and Lebanon's <u>Hezbollah</u> militants.

Earlier, Israel's seven-member security cabinet went through two days of intense discussions on Sunday and Monday over the prisoner exchange deal proposed by Hamas. The proposed deal calls for the release of some 1000 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails, including some senior Hamas officials responsible for planning or carrying out violent attacks against Israelis.

After the security cabinet meeting, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said Tuesday that efforts were progressing to secure the release of Shalit. He, however, added that his government's priority was to secure Shalit release, though "not at any cost, but in every possible and appropriate way".

German Mediator In Gaza For Prisoner Exchange Negotiations

"This is a sensitive time and it would be wrong to expound upon the topic, but we, as those who sent Gilad, feel a responsibility to make every feasible and worthy move to bring Gilad home, though not at any price," he said.

It is understood that the negotiations were deadlocked over Israel's refusal to release some of the most dangerous Palestinian prisoners to the West Bank. Israel wants to deport them to either a foreign country or to the Gaza Strip, where they would be confined because of the ongoing Israeli siege on the Palestinian territory.

Officials involved in the talks have indicated that the first part of the deal under consideration requires Hamas to hand over Shalit to Egypt, as Israel releases between 350 and 450 prisoners. It would be followed with the release of some 650 more prisoners when the freed soldier is being transferred to Israel.

Israel is currently holding about 10,000 Palestinians as prisoners on various charges. Previous Egyptian-mediated negotiations between Israeli officials and Hamas militants on a prisoner exchange scheme have ended dead-locked after the two sides failed to agree on the number of Palestinian prisoners to be released in exchange for the release of Shalit.

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Load-Date: April 18, 2010



World - World in brief

Morning Star
August 3, 2009 Monday

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Length: 623 words

Body

World news from Venezuela, Lebanon, the Canary Islands, Nigeria, Poland, Afghanistan, Iraq and Brazil.

Radio shutdown sparks demo

Venezuela: Some 200 protesters rallied outside the offices of Caracas broadcaster CNB 102.3 FM on Saturday after regulators ordered it to stop over-the-air transmissions.

The broadcaster is one of 34 stations which have recently had their licences revoked for failing to update their registrations.

International media groups and human rights activists accuse Caracas of trying to stifle dissent.

Life for Israeli man accused of spying

Lebanon: A military court has sentenced a man to life in prison for spying for Israel and giving it information about the *Hezbollah* resistance group.

The court also sentenced him for entering Israel and using forged documents.

Lebanon considers itself to be in a state of war with Israel and authorities have made dozens of arrests of people suspected of collaborating with Tel Aviv in recent months.

Fire devastating island of La Palma

Canary Islands: forest fire fanned by high winds has forced the evacuation of about 4,000 residents of La Palma.

Environmental worker Narciso Lorenzo said on Saturday that flames raging on steep hillsides south-east of the island's dormant San Antonio volcano have engulfed several houses and could damage wildlife habitats.

Virtually all the island's firefighting forces, including several aircraft, have been deployed to combat the blaze.

Clerics say state ignored warnings

Nigeria: Muslim clerics have alleged that authorities ignored dozens of warnings about an Islamist sect that last week attacked police stations and government buildings in a bloodbath that killed over 700 people.

Imam Ibrahim Ahmed Abdullahi says he and 50 other Muslim leaders repeatedly warned police, local authorities and state security services about the violent Boko Haram group.

World - World in brief

Human rights groups are urging an investigation into the death of sect leader Mohammed Yusuf, who was killed in police custody on Thursday.

Warsaw is silent for WWII heroes

Poland: Government chiefs and World War II veterans have paid silent tribute to the fighters of Warsaw's 1944 uprising against the city's nazi occupiers.

President Lech Kaczynski (pictured) and Prime Minister Donald Tusk, flanked by veterans, laid wreaths on a monument to the fallen guerillas at their mass grave in Warsaw's historic Powazki cemetery.

Some 250,000 civilians were killed in the revolt, which was crushed by the nazis after 63 days.

Three are killed in Kandahar ambush

Afghanistan: Resistance fighters have ambushed a US patrol in Kandahar province, killing three soldiers.

Elsewhere, a French soldier died in a gun battle north of Kabul and two other NATO troops were killed, but their nationalities were not immediately released.

July saw the highest number of foreign troop deaths since 2001, with 74 soldiers killed.

Fears for future after bombing

Iraq: A car bomb has exploded at an outdoor market in Haditha, killing at least five and wounding at least 20.

The attack is the latest in a series of blasts that have raised concerns about the ability of Iraqi forces to protect the population as US troops prepare to withdraw by the end of 2011.

Haditha is in Anbar province, which was one of the most dangerous areas for occupation troops in Iraq until the Pentagon bribed tribal leaders into changing sides.

Prostitution ring busted by police

Brazil: Police have announced they had busted a prostitution ring that allegedly sent 200 **women** in the last year to the United States, Europe and elsewhere.

Sao Paulo police official Leandro Daiello Coimbra said that nine Brazilians and one US citizen had been arrested in Brazil on Friday.

He said most of the **women** had been recruited through the internet or brothels.

Load-Date: August 3, 2009



Lebanese critics blast Israel director's "Lebanon"

Daily News Egypt September 22, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 620 words

Body

Israeli director Samuel Maoz's "Lebanon" may have won the Golden Lion at the Venice film festival but it has been given a hostile reception by critics and bloggers in the country it is named after.

"This film shows the Israeli point of view," wrote the Venice correspondent of the Lebanese daily An-Nahar, which is aligned with the US-backed parliamentary majority.

"It depicts an operation of self-defense where the 'Other' does not exist, where the enemy is hidden, absent, treated as 'terrorist'," the correspondent wrote.

Maoz's intensely personal film relives the director's own experience as a young Israeli soldier in Lebanon in 1982 through the viewpoint of the tank's gunner.

In the film, Israeli soldiers confined to their tank do not see the horrors and massacres they leave in their wake: a woman on the verge of insanity after the death of her child, an elderly man consumed by hate, the agony of a gutted donkey, and more.

And while the director has said his film was not political, many Lebanese journalists who saw the film during the Venice festival earlier this month are not convinced.

The daily Al-Mustaqbal said the film was an attempt to erase 40 years of "Israeli aggression."

"The public here in Italy mourned the four soldiers who suffered - and not the victims of war," it said.

"The film serves only to show the supposed humanity of the Zionist state, which wages war 'against its will' and 'in pain'."

The daily Al-Akhbar, which is close to the Syrian- and Iranian-backed opposition, also lambasted the film.

"Many thought it was an anti-war film that criticized the wars waged by the Israeli state and its military, but in reality it is nowhere near critical," it said.

"(Maoz) merely tells of the psychological crisis experienced by four soldiers inside a tank," the daily said.

Lebanese critics blast Israel director's " Lebanon "

"The film falls, as expected, into the logic that transforms the executioner into a victim or a quasi-victim," Al-Nahar wrote.

"Twenty-seven years after killing someone for the first time in his life, Maoz replaces the tank with a camera. The first is used to kill, the second to convince ... but the truth is lost."

Local critics have also drawn parallels with Israeli director Ari Folman's 2008 animation "Waltz with Bashir," which won a Golden Globe and earned an Oscar nomination.

"Maoz benefited from the wave started by Ari Folman at Cannes, and the Israeli trend of examining the tortured conscience continues with success." wrote Al-Akhbar, which ran the headline "Waltz with Samuel Maoz!"

Also a former Israeli soldier who took part in the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Folman tells the story of "Ari," who is haunted by the memories of the massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila and sets off on a quest for a past he cannot remember.

Lebanese entries on blogs and Twitter are also filled with bitter reactions to "Lebanon."

The blog "Angry Arab News Service" describes Maoz's film as "an Israeli war movie that paid tribute to killers and butchers of the Israeli army who specialize in killing **women** [and]children.

"So this Zionist clown dedicates this movie (I will review it once I get my unpurchased copy) to the warriors and not to the victims of the terrorist Israeli warriors," the blogger said.

"Great, another Israeli film about Lebanon that only humanizes Israeli soldiers and not Lebanese/Palestinians victims," said a tweet from Lebanon.

"Oh my God, the gall of this new Israel film 'Lebanon'- if it was <u>Hezbollah</u> with guns defending against Israelis would it be so acclaimed," said another tweet on the film by "RamsayShort."

Like Folman's "Waltz with Bashir" before it, "Lebanon" will not be screened in the tiny Mediterranean country due to a national policy of boycotting Israeli products.

Load-Date: September 22, 2009



Obama's challenge after tainted Iran election

The Toronto Star

June 14, 2009 Sunday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. A19

Length: 638 words

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

That's the mess Obama is trying to clear.

Obama's challenge after tainted Iran election

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

hsiddiqui @ thestar.ca

Load-Date: June 14, 2009



IDF dismisses 'unreliable' claims that soldiers killed Gaza civilians. Human Rights Watch report quotes Palestinians as saying army killed 11 people waving white flags

The Jerusalem Post August 14, 2009 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 5 Length: 1048 words

Byline: DAN IZENBERG and YAAKOV KATZ

Body

A Human Rights Watch report claiming IDF soldiers killed 11 Palestinian civilians holding white flags in the Gaza Strip during Operation Cast Lead is "based on unreliable witness reports," the IDF said in a statement released Thursday.

"Moreover," the statement continued, the international human rights organization "didn't bother to give the report to the IDF before releasing it to the public via the media, to allow for in-depth investigation."

The army stressed that soldiers were under orders to "honor the 'white flag' as a sign of surrender... and to avoid harming" anyone raising such a flag.

HRW presented its report at a press conference on Thursday morning, alleging that most of the 11 were <u>women</u> and children and that they were killed in seven separate incidents during Operation Cast Lead.

"In each case, the victims were standing, walking, or in a slow-moving vehicle with other unarmed civilians who were trying to convey their non-combatant status by waving a white flag," the 61-page report entitled "White Flags Death," said.

"All available evidence indicates that Israeli forces had control of the area in question, no fighting was taking place there at the time and Palestinian fighters were not hiding among the civilians who were shot."

According to Human Rights Watch, even if the victims had not been waving white flags, they were civilians who were not taking part in acts of war and should therefore not have been attacked, according to the laws of war.

Either the soldiers who took part in the shootings had failed to take necessary precautions, as required by the laws of war, to distinguish between civilians and combatants, or they deliberately fired at them, HRW charged. In the latter case, they had committed war crimes and should face criminal charges.

Human Rights Watch reported that it had not found in any of the incidents that the civilians were used as human shields and that in each case, at least one person had been waving a white flag.

IDF dismisses 'unreliable' claims that soldiers killed Gaza civilians. Human Rights Watch report quotes Palestinians as saying army killed 11 people waving whit....

In one of the cases mentioned in the report, on January 7, four days after the IDF land incursion into Gaza, Israeli soldiers shot and killed Amal Abd Rabbo, 2, and Su'ad Abd Rabbo, 7, wounded Su'ad Abd Rabbo, 54 and seriously wounded Samar Abd Rabbo, 4.

The grandmother, Su'ad, told HRW, "We saw one tank and we saw others behind. We were with the white flags in order to make them see that we were civilians. We spent seven to nine minutes waving the flags and we were looking right at them. And suddenly they opened fire and the girls fell to the ground."

HRW concluded that "eyewitness accounts, tank tracks, an ammunition box and bullet casings found at the scene, and an examination of the grandmother by forensic experts indicate that an Israeli soldier fired upon identifiable and unarmed *women* and children."

The organization called for an independent and impartial investigation into violations committed by Israel and Hamas during the fighting and charged that neither side until now had conducted credible investigations. Human Rights Watch has accused Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Gaza of committing war crimes by firing rockets and mortars at Israel's civilian population and said there was evidence that some terrorists committed war crimes by using Palestinian civilians as human shields.

It called on UN member states to establish a UN mechanism that would monitor and report on efforts by Israel and Hamas to conduct transparent and impartial investigations into war crimes and prosecute those responsible. If they failed to do so, the UN should press for international prosecutions, the group said.

HRW said it conducted extensive investigations into each of the incidents by visiting the sites of the attacks, examining ballistic evidence, collecting medical records and interviewing at least three witnesses, separately, for each attack. In one case, forensic pathologists examined a survivor.

The army, in its statement, stressed that "the IDF did everything in its power to warn the civilian population... by distributing more than two million announcements, including 300,000 phone calls to residential houses and media in the Strip, in order to keep civilians away from battle zones."

The IDF also said it was already investigating several similar allegations, including an incident that occurred on January 13 when four civilians were reportedly killed even though they were waving a white flag. Another incident took place on January 4, when a tank crew allegedly fired a shell at a group of civilians that were carrying white flags.

The incidents were brought to the IDF's attention by HRW as well as other NGOs, and even by Palestinians themselves.

The IDF is conducting more than 100 investigations of soldiers involved in Operation Cast Lead.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's spokesman Mark Regev responded to the report by saying, "Human Rights Watch's public admission that it raised money in Saudi Arabia in tandem with official representatives of that authoritarian government, raises serious questions concerning the organization's objectivity, professionalism, integrity and credibility."

Also responding to the HRW report was Gerald Steinberg, the director of NGO Monitor, who said there was a fundamental problem with HRW's methodology.

"HRW had no people in Gaza during the war, so therefore everything they have to say is by definition based on hearsay and speculation - it is all based on secondary and tertiary reports," he said.

"A Palestinian says he took a white flag out, and says Israelis shot him. We don't know if that was part of tactics Hamas used, like <u>Hizbullah</u> did in Lebanon. Remember, Hamas used ambulances to smuggle in and launch rockets. HRW doesn't know," Steinberg continued.

IDF dismisses 'unreliable' claims that soldiers killed Gaza civilians. Human Rights Watch report quotes Palestinians as saying army killed 11 people waving whit....

Steinberg noted that all the organization's reports on Gaza were based on what Palestinians said, or what other NGOs reported, or on what some journalists - who for the most part were also not in Gaza during the war - heard about afterward.

"This is a basic methodological problem," he said. "If you are looking for a target, you will find people who will tell you what you are looking for."

Steinberg said that after it ended, HRW made similar allegations about the IDF firing at people waving white flags during the Second Lebanon War, but that these turned out to be false.

Graphic

Photo: PALESTINIANS WALK through the Jabalya refugee camp during Operation Cast Lead holding white flags. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



<u>Iran: root of ME terrorism; Guest columnist Arnold Roth rebuts Gwynne</u> <u>Dyer's comparision of Israeli and South Korean reactions to the threat of nuclear attack, published in yesterday's Kalgoorlie Miner.</u>

Kalgoorlie Miner (Western Australia)

June 2, 2009 Tuesday

First Edition

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Section: KAL; Pg. 8 Length: 1007 words

Body

COMING of age in Melbourne during the 50s and 60s turns out to have been an invaluable precursor to living, as my wife and I and our children do, in the Middle East.

Our apartment is in the suburbs of Jerusalem. We moved here in the late 80s when our oldest was 10. Making our home here was and is literally the fulfillment of a dream.

My mother and father were among the statistical fly-speck of Europe's Jews who survived what the Nazis and their many helpers served up to them. But in saving their own lives, they lost almost everything else to the Third Reich's whirlpool of hatred: their parents, their homes, their freedom, their youth.

But not their future. Neither of them managed to spend a single day inside a high school. But they dedicated themselves as parents to ensuring my brother and I missed out on none of life's privileges.

They bestowed a powerful optimism, a willingness to love life and get on with it on us and - along with other Jewish survivors like them - on an entire generation of post-Holocaust children.

Life was too comfortable and safe for me at the time to see this for the extraordinary life-affirming bravery that it is.

Then in August 2001, our 15-year-old daughter died.

Malki was two when we moved to Israel. Though she had no time for or interest in politics, she grew up with a deep personal appreciation of her people's history, and of the dramatic grace and grandeur of its troubled, beautiful land.

She developed a passion for working with special-needs children, and grabbed every opportunity to be close to them. She embraced life, and faced it with a wide and lovely smile. During the summer between 10th and 11th grades, she volunteered at a camp on the shores of the Sea of Galilee that challenged children with disabilities. She adored the experience. We have some gorgeous photos that were given to us by her friends.

A day or two after returning home, she and her best friend and thirteen other people, most of them children and **women**, were blown to pieces by a powerful guitar-case bomb carried into a pizza restaurant in the centre of the city by a religious fanatic in the service of Hamas jihadism.

Iran: root of ME terrorism Guest columnist Arnold Roth rebuts Gwynne Dyer's comparision of Israeli and South Korean reactions to the threat of nuclear attack,

Israel, whose national consciousness was formed in large part by the horrifying experiences of my parents' generation, is grappling today with life-and-death threats funded, ideologically inspired and in large measure equipped by one source: the Islamic Republic of Iran. For people living far from these events, it must be hard to keep track of who Hamas, *Hizbullah*, Islamic Jihad, Fatah and the other terror organisations are and the differences among them.

Gwynne Dyer's smooth, confident tones are those of an informed observer. As a military analyst and published commentator on international relations, Dr Dyer must have reviewed the open-source intelligence on Iranian missiles, on years of Iranian disinformation in the face of nuclear watchdog inspections, on Iranian holocaust-denial. He must know of the central role Teheran plays today, this month, this morning, in equipping the terrorists of Gaza and Southern Lebanon with missiles and explosives whose sole function is to be lobbed anywhere in the direction of Israeli homes, shopping centres and schools.

Despite knowing these things, his slightly bizarre thesis is that Israelis like me have nothing to fear from the Iranians and their nuclear program, and if we think differently, it's because of our hysteria. We need to act more like the South Koreans, whose territory for decades has been patrolled and protected by tens (and sometimes hundreds) of thousands of American service personnel, so that the world can become a better, saner place.

The analysis looks and feels very different when it's happening to you and to those you love. Very much unlike South Korea, the land in which I live is regularly under attack from people driven by a religious or ideological (or both) indoctrination based on a profound and absolute hatred of everything that characterises my neighbours and me. So deep, so imponderable is this hatred, that they are willing to send human bombs into our midst, knowing this will cost the lives of some of their own children.

They do it, we have learned, because the joy of seeing their enemy suffer eclipses the pain of their losses.

Nothing I learned from my parents or from my murdered daughter has helped me understand that mentality. The gulf between the society we are building here in Israel and the one the jihadists want to create is expressed pointedly by a quotation ascribed to an Iranian mullah:

"We have the patience needed to destroy the Jews and spread Islam throughout the world. After all, we have been weaving carpets for thousands of years. The decadent West doesn't understand what patience is."

In the face of this kind of threat, you need to choose your role models and your values very carefully. Gwynne Dyer expresses disdain for Israeli concerns about a powerful, committed, exceedingly well-equipped enemy with a clear and explicit agenda.

On behalf of those of us living in the cross hairs, there are some lessons I wish he and some other experts like him would learn. Sometimes, as I have found, those insights can come from unlikely places.

Arnold Roth is general manager of an Israeli company developing a new hybrid-electric vehicle technology. He and his wife Frimet founded the Malki Foundation (www.kerenmalki.org) in their daughter's memory. It provides support for hundreds of Israeli families of all faiths who care at home for a special-needs child.

Load-Date: June 1, 2009

Iran : root of ME terrorism Guest columnist Arnold Roth rebuts Gwynne Dyer's comparision of Israeli and South Korean reactions to the threat of nuclear attack,



The politics of War

Sunday Business Post February 15, 2009

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Section: AGENDA **Length:** 687 words

Body

The most recent Israeli campaign against the Palestinians coincidentally also lasted weeks, but to write that may be anti-Semitic.

In fact, unless you have something nice to say about Israel, maybe you should say nothing at all. One thing is certain: Israel doesn't need unwelcome foreign attention on its ongoing struggle in the Middle East, unless of course that attention is in the form of military and financial aid from the US. Otherwise, non-Israelis should just mind their own business.

Following the election, the favourite to form the next government is Binyamin Netanyahu of the right-wing Likud party. He looks like he will beat Tzipi Livni of the more centrist Kadima party to the job. Both these parties ran on a 'Palestinians Are a Bad Lot' ticket.

The third most popular party in the election was the extreme right-wing Yisrael Beiteinu, which is led by Avigdor Lieberman. He ran his campaign on an 'Arabs Are a Bad Lot' ticket. In fourth place was Ehud Barak's Labor party, which ran its campaign on a 'Palestinians Are a Bad Lot But Would Talking to Them Kill Us?' ticket. Parties which failed to get any votes at all in the Israeli elections included Hamas, <u>Hezbollah</u> and the Give Peace a Chance party.

The election campaign was always going to be dominated by security issues. Knowing this, the Palestinians tried to sabotage the campaign in late December by provoking the Israeli government into bombing it to pieces for several weeks. This resulted in the deaths of more than 1,000 Palestinians, about 400 of which were <u>women</u> and children.

Coincidentally, aggressive action like this towards Palestinians increased the popularity of both Netanyahu and Livni during the campaigns.

However, to suggest that the bombing campaign was deliberately carried out in the run-up to an election would be very cynical. It would imply that Israeli politicians were willing to have Palestinian people killed in order to win votes. Whether this is true or not, it is undeniable that the more aggressive the war against the Palestinians, the more certain political parties in Israel benefited in terms of votes.

The politics of War

Coincidentally, the parties that are most hardline against Palestinians did well in the election. All of the major ones tried to get in on the act. Even Barak and Labor seemed to try to increase their popularity through escalating the conflict in Gaza.

These politicians must be aware that the campaign against Hamas was not viewed in a very positive light by the international community. Then again, who cares? The international community doesn't get to vote in Israel's elections. Most people in the world probably want to see peace in the Middle East.

They obviously realise that Hamas is not blameless in the ongoing fighting there. Many also believe that a good way to achieve peace is through dialogue, and that trying to kill as many Palestinians as possible is probably not going to help the peace process.

Indeed, if anything, Hamas and Arab opposition to Israel have probably grown stronger because of the Israeli campaign.

It is important to remember that Gaza is not exactly a thriving little economy with lots of resources. During the recent hostilities, it was deprived of food, water and medicine and described by the head of the Vatican Council for Justice and Peace as "a concentration camp".

Whoever does become prime minister of Israel will obviously have to deal with the Palestinians in some way. It seems unlikely that trying to wipe out Hamas will achieve peace. Presumably, despite the way leading Israeli politicians act and Israeli people vote, peace is what they all want. Maybe this is a crazy idea, but wouldn't it be nice if the new prime minister pushed for a peaceful solution?

This might be way out of left-field as a suggestion, but a two-state solution might be one way to work things out. Then, possibly, there could be Israelis and Palestinians co-existing peacefully in the Middle East.

Then again, maybe that's not what anyone on either side wants. It certainly seems as if leaders on both sides quite enjoy the slaughter of innocents, particularly if it's politically expedient.

Load-Date: February 15, 2009



<u>Feature - As we revert from denial to harsh reality; The bold campaign</u> against injustice may yet be won, observes Jeremy Corbyn

Morning Star July 30, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 649 words

Byline: Jeremy Corbyn

Body

Harry Patch, the oldest survivor of WWI, died at the weekend.

Predictably, the great and good of Britain trotted out the usual platitudes about how he'd served his country, fought for freedom and was a role model for all of us.

Prince Charles couldn't wait to get in on the act and Gordon Brown sounded more like a first world war politician than ever in praising the late Mr Patch.

What they conveniently ignored was that Patch's experiences in the filth, stench and death of WWI trenches prevented him from talking about it for nearly 80 years.

When he did finally give tongue, it wasn't to praise war but to mourn the loss of so many brilliant young men and express his view that wars didn't solve anything. He wanted to see an end to such conflicts.

Perhaps our schools should be teaching children about the life of working-class young men like Patch who were sent off by self-aggrandising and ignorant politicians to die for what they claim was a noble cause.

Wars are different now, with Western technology meaning fewer deaths for its soldiers but greater devastation for the civilian populations that it's launched against.

In Iraq, the combination of aerial bombardments, cluster bombs and depleted uranium, on top of years of sanctions, has cost the lives of well over 500,000 Iraqis. In contrast, 4,000 US soldiers and 167 British ones have died.

In Afghanistan, war has cost an unknown number of civilian lives and a rapidly increasing death toll among British and US soldiers.

Many others have suffered from horrific injuries and public opinion is rapidly turning against the Afghan conflict.

Governments on both sides of the Atlantic have been in denial about two crucial facts for a while now.

Firstly, the war in Afghanistan is unwinnable. Secondly, the public are now overwhelmingly aware of this and completely unclear about what the war is actually for.

Miliband's speech last Monday in Brussels was a mixture of self-delusion and practical politics.

Feature - As we revert from denial to harsh reality The bold campaign against injustice may yet be won, observes Jeremy Corbyn

He knows the truth about the war and the need for a brand new strategy, given that there is no sign of the success that Blair and Bush told us was just around the corner eight years ago.

The West has clearly stopped propping up Afghan President Hamid Karzai and recognises that it must open some sort of dialogue with the Taliban.

A very brave Afghan MP Malalai Joya is visiting Britain at the moment. She doesn't fit the stereotype of visiting Afghan politicians who trip over themselves in praising the war and the Western effort.

She strongly believes in <u>women</u>'s rights and equality but does not support the occupation of her country. She is getting a very significant hearing because she is so different and so bold.

Those who have spent their recent lives opposing the Bush strategy on terror must recognise that all the protests have had an effect.

British troops are now out of Iraq and the US presence is significantly depleted.

The turning point is rapidly approaching in Afghanistan, when months of denial will revert to reality as the troops are brought home.

The conflict in Palestine and the pressure that the US is now putting on Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu over settlements recognises both the dishonesty of the Israeli position and the injustice that has been meted out to the Palestinians.

But it also highlights the enormous influence that successive Israeli governments have had over the US.

As in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is clear once again that the policy of isolating those perceived to be the "extremists" does not work.

The foreign affairs committee has rightly recognised that conflicts in the Middle East cannot be resolved without involving *Hezbollah* and Hamas in talks.

The huge US diplomatic effort may well make some difference.

The Palestinian people have suffered like no other - 60 years of occupation, settlements, imprisonment and bombardment.

corbynj@parliament.uk

- Jeremy Corbyn is Labour MP for Islington North.

Load-Date: July 30, 2009



Stunning campaign performance could give Livni her turn in power

The Australian

February 12, 2009 Thursday

3 - All-round Metro Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 9

Length: 620 words

Byline: Abraham Rabinovich, Jerusalem

Body

LEADING analysts last night were foreseeing a rotational Israeli government in which Kadima's Tzipi Livni and Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu take turns as prime minister and foreign minister.

The clear majority held by a right-wing bloc of parties led by Mr Netanyahu makes it likely that he could form the next government by himself if he so chose, even though Likud won fewer mandates than Ms Livni's Kadima party.

But he has said that his major mistake during his previous term as prime minister was to base his government on a narrow, right-wing coalition. This consideration would be even more relevant now in dealing with a new US administration whose agenda calls for promoting a peace process in the Middle East.

Precedent was set for a rotational government in the 1980s when Likud's Yitzhak Shamir and Labour's Shimon Peres took turns as prime minister and foreign minister. Although Likud spokesmen dismissed the idea last night, Mr Netanyahu may in the endprove amenable, observers believe.

Despite taunts that ``she's just a girl", Ms Livni emerged from her scrap with the boys yesterday with a stunning personal victory, even if it does not win her the premiership.

With the country facing daunting challenges, including possible military confrontation with Iran, the Israeli electorate gave more votes to Ms Livni, a 50-year-old woman with limited political experience, than it gave to her rivals, including two former prime ministers.

Ms Livni's showing in the elections was hailed by the newspaper Ha'aretz as "not merely a surprise but a phenomenon".

Ms Livni's assertive performance as Foreign Minister, particularly during last month's war in Gaza, together with her forceful election campaign, gave those who voted for her the feeling that she is capable of leading the nation, even in times of crisis.

Ms Livni has been transformed by her proximity to the upper reaches of power since Ariel Sharon, then Likud's leader, made her a minister in 2001, just two years after she was elected to the Knesset, a virtual unknown. When Mr Sharon broke from Likud and formed Kadima, he placed her in the No 3 position on his Knesset list, just behind Ehud Olmert.

Stunning campaign performance could give Livni her turn in power

When Mr Sharon was felled by a coma, there was speculation that she might succeed him but she quickly threw her support to Mr Olmert in order to avoid a squabble. He in turn appointed her Foreign Minister.

Following the failed war with <u>Hezbollah</u> in 2006, in which Mr Olmert was a principal culprit, Ms Livni acted boldly when she publicly called on him to resign. But she did not resign herself, and continued to serve under him when he ignored her call.

This deference would fade in the coming years as she gained confidence.

Ms Livni drew steadily away from her right-wing origins once in office and publicly asserted that Likud's dream of a greater Israel had to give way to a two-state solution in which Israel lives alongside a Palestinian state.

During the Gaza war, she adopted an aggressive stance, pushing for a ground operation and objecting to a ceasefire which Defence Minister Ehud Barak proposed early in the clash. But she was also a principal advocate of peace talks with the moderate leadership of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

There is a precedent in Israel for a <u>female</u> prime minister, Golda Meir, who served in the 1970s -- but she reached that position after decades in the political trenches. Ms Livni was vulnerable to charges that she herself was still too inexperienced for the job.

During the campaign Likud ran advertisements saying ``too big for her". She seized on the slogan as crass chauvinism, a sentiment shared by many *women* voters.

``The job is not big for me and not too small for me, " she said. ``It's my size."

Load-Date: February 11, 2009



Women candidates sidelined in Lebanon vote

AlArabiya.net

May 28, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 674 words

Body

Although Lebanon prides itself as a pioneer of <u>women</u>'s liberty in the Arab world, it lags behind some of its more conservative neighbors as it readies for an election where at best just four out of 128 seats are likely to be won by <u>women</u>.

"Lebanese society is more patriarchal than we like to think," said Fahima Charafeddine, a sociology professor at the state-run Lebanese University. "It took us 50-plus years to get to 4.7 percent representation in parliament, and I can't imagine how long it will take to reach equality."

Half a century after <u>women</u> won the right to vote in Lebanon, they currently occupy only six seats in parliament while neighboring countries are witnessing a rapid rise in <u>female</u> participation and representation in politics. In Kuwait, for example, where 21 parliamentary seats were up for grabs this month, four <u>women</u> were elected. Syria, which has a 25 percent quota for <u>women</u>, currently boasts 31 <u>women</u> out of 250 MPs. Iraq too has a 25 percent quota for its 275-seat parliament.

A total of 587 candidates have thrown their hats into the ring for Lebanon's June 7 election, which pits the Sunni-led Western-backed parliamentary majority against a <u>Hezbollah</u>-led alliance supported by Syria and Iran. Family business

Only 12 candidates are <u>women</u> and in a country where political dynasties rule few are likely to cross the finish line. Three of the 12 are supported by the current Western-backed ruling majority, one by the opposition and eight are running as independents.

Those most likely to make it to the next assembly are the relatives or spouses of political leaders, such as current MP Sethrida Geagea, wife of right-wing Christian leader Samir Geagea, and education minister Bahia Hariri, sister of slain for Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

"In no way are Lebanese <u>women</u> represented fairly," said candidate Therese Rizkallah, one of the few <u>women</u> to have served in Lebanon's general security service and who holds the rank of colonel.

The mother-of-two said she was campaigning for Lebanese who have no political backing, and particularly for **women**.

Women candidates sidelined in Lebanon vote

"I don't want anyone to undermine <u>women</u> in my country, a civilized country where <u>women</u> are still marginalized," she told AFP. "I made it to the rank of colonel on my own and running for the election is at least a way to make our voices heard."

One of the most familiar faces among the candidates is Nayla Tueni, daughter of journalist and MP Gebran Tueni who was killed in a 2005 bombing.

Tueni, at age 26 the youngest candidate, is running for the same seat held by her father and is among the **women** most likely to make it to parliament.

Surrounded by pictures of her father in the offices of An-Nahar, the prominent newspaper founded by her grandfather, Tueni said it was for <u>women</u> like her to encourage others to take a more active role in politics. Road to politics

"There are a few self-made <u>women</u>, certainly, but it's true that many <u>women</u>-wives and daughters-arrive in parliament in mourning clothes," she told AFP. "But it's good that Lebanon has more <u>women</u> in parliament, it's really about time."

In 2005, a national commission tasked with drafting a fairer electoral law suggested a quota for **women** candidates be set at 30 percent but the article has yet to be passed.

Lebanese <u>women</u> were granted suffrage in 1953, but it was not until 1974 that they were allowed to travel without having to secure their spouses' permission.

Ten years later another law was passed letting them open businesses without the approval of their husbands, but **women** still do not have the right to grant citizenship to their children or spouses.

Charafeddine, an active feminist, says Lebanon has a long way to go before it overturns its age-old patriarchal traditions.

"Lebanon suffers from a kind of schizophrenia," she told AFP. "There is the facade of modernity which is reflected in appearances-go to any restaurant and the girls dress like they were in Europe."

Yet while Lebanese **women** are regular citizens in terms of responsibilities, she added, they are far from equal in terms of rights.

Load-Date: May 29, 2009



Stunning campaign performance could give Livni her turn in power - DEADLOCK IN ISRAEL

The Australian

February 12, 2009 Thursday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 9

Length: 625 words

Byline: Abraham Rabinovich

Body

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Stunning campaign performance could give Livni her turn in power - DEADLOCK IN ISRAEL

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Load-Date: February 11, 2009



Mayhem in Bangkok

The Star (South Africa)
April 14, 2009 Tuesday
e2 Edition

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Section: Pg. 4

Length: 670 words

Body

Thousands of Thai troops fired warning shots and teargas to turn back rampaging anti-government protesters last night, forcing retreating activists into one neighbourhood where a clash with residents left two people dead. The gunbattle came after a full day of clashes between the protesters - who are pressing Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva to resign - and soldiers across Bangkok.

An Irishman brought home to die after being beaten senseless on a street in Sydney, Australia, in August surprised his doctors and his family by coming back from the dead in a Cork hospital on St Patrick's Day, March 17. David Keohane, 29, came out of a coma eight months after sustaining serious head injuries in the attack, reports said yesterday. "He's awake, he's talking, he's recognising everyone," said a friend.

US President Barack Obama shouts encouragement to a little girl in the Annual Easter Egg Roll on the South Lawn at the White House in Washington yesterday.

Peru's Shining Path rebels killed 13 soldiers in an ambush of a military patrol in the remote south-east, Defence Minister Antero Flores Araoz has revealed. Dynamite and grenades were used in the weekend attack. The assault, one of the deadliest by the once-formidable guerrilla group in the past decade, also left one person missing and two others wounded.

Dozens of heavily armed Maoist rebels stormed a bauxite mine in eastern India and held about 100 mine employees hostage before police regained control of the facility yesterday. At least 11 police officers and four militants died in the nine-hour shootout in the Panchpatmali area of the state of Orissa. The militants were hoping to steal large quantities of explosives used for mining.

The Turkish state-run news agency says police searched a TV station and several branches of a secularist association as part of a widening probe into an alleged coup plot. More than 200 suspects have been detained since 2007 in the case, which highlights a rift between an increasingly powerful class of pious Muslims and secular elites who fear the government wants to impose religion on society.

The Israeli military says an unmanned Palestinian fishing boat has exploded off the Gaza coast in an apparent attempt to hit Israeli naval patrols in the area. There were no casualties. An army spokesman said the Palestinian boat was "a safe distance" from the nearest Israeli vessel when it blew up yesterday about 300 metres off the northern Gaza coast, near the border with Israel.

Mayhem in Bangkok

China released its first human rights action plan yesterday, pledging to improve the treatment of minorities and do more to prevent detainee torture and address concerns that have sparked international outcries. The two-year plan also promises the communist government will do more to boost the overall living standard of minorities, <u>women</u>, the unemployed and the disabled.

Egypt's attorney general has added espionage to the charges against 49 alleged <u>Hezbollah</u> agents, in addition to plotting to destabilise the country. Abdel-Meguid Mahmoud told Egypt's Mena news agency that the alleged agents, including Lebanese, Palestinian, Egyptian and Sudanese nationals, were spying for a foreign group intending to carry out terrorist attacks in Egypt.

The head of the Mauritanian junta has said during a live radio press conference that he would resign "before the end of the week" to launch his candidacy for presidential elections in June. General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, who took power in an August coup, has to quit before April 22 if he wants to contest the elections. He ousted the country's first democratically elected leader in August.

A passenger has landed a twin-engine plane in the US after the pilot died in flight with a total of six people on board. Federal Aviation Administration officials say the pilot died after take-off from an airport in Naples, Florida, on Sunday. An air traffic controller helped a passenger bring the plane down by calling a friend in Connecticut who knows the King Air plane and relaying instructions.

Load-Date: April 14, 2009



Female candidates sidelined in Lebanon vote

AlArabiya.net

May 28, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 674 words

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One of the most familiar faces among the candidates is Nayla Tueni, daughter of journalist and MP Gebran Tueni who was killed in a 2005 bombing.

Tueni, at age 26 the youngest candidate, is running for the same seat held by her father and is among the **women** most likely to make it to parliament.

Surrounded by pictures of her father in the offices of An-Nahar, the prominent newspaper founded by her grandfather, Tueni said it was for <u>women</u> like her to encourage others to take a more active role in politics. Road to politics

"There are a few self-made <u>women</u>, certainly, but it's true that many <u>women</u>-wives and daughters-arrive in parliament in mourning clothes," she told AFP. "But it's good that Lebanon has more <u>women</u> in parliament, it's really about time."

In 2005, a national commission tasked with drafting a fairer electoral law suggested a quota for **women** candidates be set at 30 percent but the article has yet to be passed.

Lebanese <u>women</u> were granted suffrage in 1953, but it was not until 1974 that they were allowed to travel without having to secure their spouses' permission.

Ten years later another law was passed letting them open businesses without the approval of their husbands, but **women** still do not have the right to grant citizenship to their children or spouses.

Charafeddine, an active feminist, says Lebanon has a long way to go before it overturns its age-old patriarchal traditions.

"Lebanon suffers from a kind of schizophrenia," she told AFP. "There is the facade of modernity which is reflected in appearances-go to any restaurant and the girls dress like they were in Europe."

Yet while Lebanese **women** are regular citizens in terms of responsibilities, she added, they are far from equal in terms of rights.

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