



Jerusalem 4:16 Toronto 4:47

**ISRAEL NEWS**  
*A collection of the week's news from Israel*  
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Our policy is a policy of peace and of increasing trade connections with all countries. A result of this policy is an improvement in our relations with a number of countries, and the conclusion of a number of agreements for trade, technical assistance, and so forth. We shall continue to pursue this policy of peace with all our might and with all the means at our disposal. We do not want a single foot of foreign territory.

**Events...**

**Tuesday, January 18, 7:30pm**  
Jerusalem journalists David Bedein, Dr. Michael Widlanski and Dr. Arnon Gross will offer their views on the Palestinian and Arab media at Toronto Zionist Centre, 788 Marlee.

**Tuesday February 8, 8:00pm**  
Rav Mordechai Elon, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat HaKotel, will lecture in Hebrew on Parshat Hashavua at B'nai Torah.

These were not empty words. Stalin did largely keep to this program - until 1939, when he felt strongly enough to go on the offensive, at which point he initiated an unparalleled half-century's campaign of aggression, which ended only with the Soviet state's collapse.

For Mr. Abbas, it is 1930. He understands the need to cool things down. As someone who can realistically appraise circumstances and quietly respond to them, he is potentially a far more formidable enemy to Israel than the one-note, blindly violent, and flamboyantly evil Arafat. (New York Sun Jan 11)

**Commentary...**

**Which Way Will Abbas Go?** By Daniel Pipes

There's some puzzlement about Mahmoud Abbas, the new chairman of the Palestinian Authority. Does he accept Israel's existence or want to destroy it?

Matthew Kalman of Canada's Globe and Mail discerns "an apparent campaign flip-flop" in this regard. A Jewish Exponent story is titled "He Wants It Both Ways: Palestinian front-runner: Anti-terror, but pro-'return'." An Australia Broadcast Corporation title acknowledges its mystification, writing that "Abbas's election tactics confuse analysts."

The press dwells on the same apparent contradiction: One moment Mr. Abbas demands that Palestinian Arab terrorists stop their attacks on Israel and the next he (literally) embraces them, calling them "heroes fighting for freedom." Also, he talks of both stopping the violence and of the "right of return" for more than 4 million Palestinian Arabs to Israel, a well-known way of calling indirectly for the elimination of the Jewish state.

What gives?

Actually, there is no contradiction. By insisting on a "right of return," Mr. Abbas signals that he, like Yasser Arafat and most Palestinians, intends to undo the events of 1948; that he rejects the very legitimacy of a Jewish state, and will strive for its disappearance. But he differs from Arafat in being able to imagine more than one way of achieving this goal.

No matter what the circumstances, Arafat persisted, from 1965 to 2004, in his reliance on terrorism. He never took seriously his many agreements with Israel, seeing these rather as a means to enhance his ability to murder Israelis. Arafat's diplomacy culminated in September 2000 with the unleashing of his terror war against Israel; then, no matter how evident its failure, it went on until his death in November 2004.

In contrast, Mr. Abbas publicly recognized in September 2002 that terror had come to harm Palestinian Arabs more than Israel. Intended to prompt demoralization and flight from Israel, this tactic in fact brought together a hitherto fractured body politic, while nearly destroying the Palestinian Authority and prostrating its population. Mr. Abbas correctly concluded that "it was a mistake to use arms during the intifada and to carry out attacks inside Israel."

Mr. Abbas shows tactical flexibility. Unlike Arafat, who could never let go of the terrorist tool that had brought him wealth, power, and glory, Mr. Abbas sees the situation more cogently. If stopping the violence against Israel best serves his goal of eliminating the sovereign Jewish state, that is his program.

He no more accepts what he so charmingly the other day called the "Zionist enemy" than Arafat did (or Hamas, or Palestinian Islamic Jihad), but he is open to a multiplicity of means to destroy it. As he announced after his electoral victory this week, "the lesser jihad is over and the greater jihad is ahead." The form of jihad must change from violent to nonviolent, but the jihad continues.

And count the many ways to undo the Jewish state: nuclear weaponry, invading armies, mega-terrorism, plain old terrorism, Palestinian demographic fertility, the "right of return," or confusing Israelis to the point that post-Zionist leftists cause the population unilaterally to crumple and accept a dhimmi (subservient) status within "Palestine."

For an instructive parallel to Mr. Abbas' having concluded that violence is inappropriate, consider Stalin in the decade before World War II. Aware of his weakness, he announced in 1930 an intention for the Soviet Union to be a good international citizen:

**The Problem with Mahmoud Abbas** By Jeff Jacoby

The outcome of today's election for president of the Palestinian Authority was never in doubt. Mahmoud Abbas, Yasser Arafat's longtime accomplice -- the two men co-founded Fatah, the largest terrorist faction within the PLO, in 1965 -- was always going to win in a landslide. The three other candidates were never going to get more than a sliver of the vote. That they got any votes at all was impressive, given the virtual news blackout on their campaigns by the Fatah-controlled Palestinian media and the bullying of the army tempted to support them. The New York Sun described some of the arm-twisting on Dec. 31:

"One of the reasons none of the three candidates has received much support is intimidation by the PA [Palestinian Authority]. People are afraid to be seen even reading their campaign literature," says one Palestinian.... The message that the people have received from various leaders of the PA is that if they vote for a candidate other than Mr. Abbas, they will either lose jobs they already have in the PA or will not be hired by the PA in the future. Since the PA is the largest employer in the West Bank and Gaza, the threat carries a great deal of weight.

"Physical intimidation has also played a role. . . . On Wednesday, shots were fired at [candidate Bassam el] Salhi's offices in Ramallah . . ."

Surely this isn't what President Bush had in mind when he said, in his seminal June 2002 address on the Arab-Israeli war, that the United States would support the creation of a Palestinian state if the Palestinians would first "build a practicing democracy, based on tolerance and liberty." Nor can Abbas, who spent decades at Arafat's side and who has been unyielding in his refusal to crack down on Palestinian gunmen and bombers, be what Bush meant when he insisted that Palestinians "elect new leaders, leaders not compromised by terror." So why has the administration bent over backward to support the election and give its blessing to Abbas?

On Dec. 29, the State Department transferred \$23.5 million to the Palestinian Authority -- a mark, said assistant Secretary of State William Burns, of American "confidence in the direction of the PA's reform program." The absurdity of such confidence was made clear one day later, when Abbas brazenly campaigned with members of the al-Aksa Martyrs Brigade in Jenin. A picture of Abbas riding on the shoulders of Zakaria Zubeidi -- a notorious terrorist and one of Israel's most wanted men -- was published around the globe.

Yet when Colin Powell was asked about it, he shrugged. The photo is "disturbing," he conceded, but "I don't think it reflects Mr. Abbas's overall approach to governing."

Please. The embrace of Zubeidi was no anomaly. Abbas is sometimes described as a "moderate" opposed to terrorism, but his opposition is purely tactical. He has no \*moral\* problem with blowing up buses and cafes, he simply thinks such methods are, for now, counterproductive. Last week, Abbas hailed Palestinian gunmen in Gaza, but urged them to stop firing rockets at Israeli towns. Because deliberately targeting civilians is wrong? No. "Because this is not the proper time for such actions." Hardly the words of a moderate.

Again and again, Abbas has expressed his solidarity with violent extremists. Last month he traveled to Damascus to meet with some of the region's most implacable terror groups, including Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front For the Liberation of Palestine-General Command.

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Afterward, Abbas's "foreign minister," Nabil Sha'ath, declared that between the Palestinian Authority and the other groups, "there are no differences over the objectives."

And what are those objectives? About that, Abbas has been explicit. In recent weeks he has promised to shelter terrorists from Israeli arrest and vowed that there will be no PA crackdown on Palestinian terrorism. He hews unswervingly to Yasser Arafat's hardline positions -- an Israeli retreat to the 1949 armistice lines, Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital, the elimination of every Jewish settlement, the dismantling of Israel's security fence, and no limit on the "right of return" -- code for the abolition of Israel as a Jewish state.

Abbas is no moderate. His election is not a step toward peace. What was true in Afghanistan and Iraq is true in the Palestinian Authority as well: Without regime change, freedom and democracy are impossible. Just as the defeat of the Taliban and Ba'athists were a prerequisite to elections, so the dismantling of the corrupt Fatah autocracy is essential to Palestinian reform. President Bush got it right in 2002: The Palestinians need "new leaders . . . not compromised by terror." They still do. (Boston Globe Jan 9)  
*The writer is a columnist for The Boston Globe.*

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### **Palestinians: A Fractious 'Family'** By Asaf Romirowsky

With tomorrow's election for new prime minister of the Palestinian Authority, the question of a societal division in the Palestinian population becomes more crucially relevant: The animosity between Gazans and West-Bankers has drastically increased since Yasser Arafat's death.

The so-called "right of return" of Palestinian refugees of the 1948 war and their descendants has again becoming the sticking point, with various camps attempting to garner support among Palestinians in the Gaza and West Bank. The Palestinians know that this issue will not be resolved soon.

Socially, West Bankers see themselves as the upper echelon of Palestinian society; they are educated and come from money.

And, there are geopolitical and economic differences between the two societies. As journalist Nicholas Jubber writes, "the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are divided by their unequal economies, distinct dialects, and cultural animosities forged by their pre-1967 experiences under separate regimes - Nasser's Egypt and King Hussein's Jordan."

In terms of an extended social network, West Bankers do not rely on their "Palestinian brothers" in Gaza but rather on families and friends in Jordan. And Gazans do the same with Egypt.

Jonathan Schanzer points out that there is little intermarriage between the two sectors of Palestinian society, a factor that he calls "another dividing line."

Argues Schanzer, "While traditional marriages arranged between tribal chiefs are no longer popular among Palestinians, one study notes that 'kinship-based marriage arrangements now exist as a way to preserve the continued identity of dispersed communities.' These communities derive from specific, smaller areas of the former Palestine and, by nature, do not cross the West Bank-Gaza divide."

This multifaceted and fundamental divide will be tested at the polls on Sunday. Abu Mazen's expected victory will only be an actual triumph if he shows that he can truly bridge the two sectors of Palestinian society.

From a leadership standpoint, Abu Mazen's weakness is his lack of real control over Palestinian society. For all of Arafat's shortcomings (and he had many), he was the acknowledged authority for both Gazans and West Bankers. Arafat was the figure who put the Palestinians on the map, becoming a living symbol of their cause and making the PLO the representative body of the Palestinians recognized by the majority of the Arab world.

Abu Mazen has no such gravitas. Hence, we are hearing more and more statements about Abu Mazen continuing Arafat's ways. Tayeb Abdel Rahim, Abu Mazen's campaign manager and former Arafat aide, said of Abu Mazen that he "stood next to Abu Amar [Arafat] to achieve the peace of the brave."

Old habits are hard to break. Abu Mazen was an Arafat crony and comes from the Palestinian elite. He has consistently held the hard-line anti-Israel agenda since his years as a student. His doctoral dissertation was a full-blown foray into Holocaust denial and aimed to prove that Zionism and Nazism are branches of the same tree.

These are all question marks over his sincerity when he makes his claims to the Western press about wanting to bring about reform and create a civil Palestinian society.

Abu Mazen may wear a suit while Arafat wore fatigues but much of their world view is still the same - the destruction of Israel remains on the "to-do" list.

To be a true reformer, any Palestinian leader has to accept Israel as a Jewish state, and convince the Palestinian masses that this is clearly in their interests. Otherwise all we will see, and all the Palestinians can expect, is a continuation of the colossally failed Arafat system and yet another leader too cowardly to take a different path.

True co-existence between Palestinians and Israelis won't happen until Palestinian society experiences a breakthrough in democratic thought and values, one that accepts Israel's permanence and also allows for a middle class to grow, acknowledging that honest relations between Israel and Palestinians is normal and natural. (Philadelphia Daily News Jan 8)

*The writer is a Campus Watch Associate Fellow for the Middle East Forum.*

### **Why We've Chosen Civil Disobedience** By Pinchas Wallerstein

In the wake of Monday's confrontation between the IDF and residents of Yitzhar, I've been asked: "What are the red lines beyond which the settlement movement will not go in defending its position?"

The answer is straightforward: Our red line is lifting a hand in violence against another Jew -- whether it be a soldier, policeman, or anyone else. Our red line is calling on soldiers to disobey orders.

Those are our red lines.

So how are we responding to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's bulldozing tactics, which have destroyed any legitimacy his plans might have held?

We've set up a protest camp near the Prime Minister's Office. It's the centerpiece of a determined opposition against Sharon's immoral transfer plan.

Our demand is that the citizens of Israel decide what to do about the disengagement plan, that it be put to a democratic vote -- either by means of a referendum, or through national elections.

The camp will close up only when this goal has been accomplished.

Given the opportunity to speak with the citizens of Israel to clarify the issues, we have no doubt that the majority will vote against disengagement.

Moves critical to Israel's future that threaten the very fabric of society should only be taken with the clear approval of a majority of Israelis.

Were anyone to suggest a transfer of Arabs from the tiniest of villages for the most important of security reasons, there would be an immense outcry, shaking the very heavens.

But those who consider themselves the guardians of human rights seem to exempt Jews in Judea, Samaria and Gaza from their patronage.

I've called "The Evacuation and Compensation Law" immoral. Let me explain why.

This draconian law was pushed through the Knesset using Stalin-like methods. It provides for refusing compensation to any Jews who protest being uprooted from their homes; it calls for three years' imprisonment for anyone who remains in his or her home once the evacuation call has been made.

This law is immoral, first and foremost, because it attempts to legalize a crime which should never be repeated: the expulsion of Jews from their homes.

It is part of the Israeli tragedy that not one member of the Left has risen up to protest against this shocking infringement of human rights -- who has shouted, "Yes, I am in favor of disengagement, but not in this undemocratic manner."

Were such a cry to be heard, it might help prevent the upcoming upheaval in the very firmament of our society.

It is against this irresponsible disregard for human rights that I have called for civil disobedience. Many thousands, throughout Israel and abroad, Jews and non-Jews, have expressed solidarity and support.

Thousands in Israel have already pledged their commitment to the Council of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. They have pledged to physically and determinedly resist any attempt to evacuate Jews from Gush Katif or Northern Samaria -- and pay the price of going to jail for their resistance.

Only in this way, it seems, will the government comprehend the gravity of its actions.

I have no qualms about going to jail for the sake of this pivotal issue in our people's history.

Furthermore, it is my fervent prayer that the huge response I've received will manifest itself further in a similar decision among those who, in their hearts, believe in the rightness of our cause.

It is not by accident that I refrain from calling on soldiers to disobey orders in this matter.

I recognize such action would be too heavy a price to exact from Israeli society.

Still, it is over-simplistic to believe that my instructions, or the instructions of the Yesha Council, can be the deciding factor in the minds of young men and women serving in the IDF.

It is their conscience, and their conscience alone, which we will see play out should they be called upon to force Jews from their homes.

It is my opinion that thousands of soldiers will not find it within themselves to be partners in this endeavor. The damage Sharon and his government will have inflicted on Israeli society by placing them in this untenable position will require decades to repair.

Nonviolent civil protest against immoral actions on the part of our government is the democratic right of all those privileged enough to live in a democratic country. It is this right that I fully intend to exercise. And I will continue in my call for others to take their place by my side.

One thing, and one thing alone, can prevent mass arrests, a crippling of the IDF and divisive chaos within Israeli society: letting the people decide.

Should the majority of the citizens of Israel decide on unilateral withdrawal -- without an agreement between Israel and its Arab foes in sight, without any pretense of peace -- we will protest in order to provide history with that essential, educational tool; but the entire nature of the protest will be different. (Jerusalem Post Jan 7)

*The writer is chairman of the Binyamin Regional Council and a leader of The Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.*

## **Avoiding Civil War** By Caroline Glick

In his testimony before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Tuesday, Shin Bet director Avi Dichter described some short-term threats inherent in carrying out Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to pull the IDF out of the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria. "In a situation where Israel is not in control of the Philadelphi corridor [which separates Gaza from the Sinai Peninsula]," Dichter warned, "terrorists arriving from Lebanon are liable to infiltrate through it into the Gaza Strip and there is the distinct possibility that in a short while the Gaza Strip will turn into south Lebanon."

Dichter also cautioned that the current "trickle" of arms smuggling through the corridor is liable to turn into a "river." As to northern Samaria, Dichter said that "Samaria is an area with terrorist potential that already proved itself in the past. Therefore nothing should surprise us. If we evacuate the area and turn it into Area A, under complete Palestinian security control, we are liable to get an area there that operates by the Gaza model."

Dichter presented us with real cause for concern over Sharon's plan, but his analysis was far from exhaustive. He limited his remarks solely to the realm of terrorist warfare. Since the 1967 Six Day War, the view of the leaders of the IDF's General Staff has been that in a conventional war with Egypt and Jordan participating, Palestinian forces can wreak havoc on Israel's lines of communications moving from west to east and north to south. As a result, until 1993, the view of Israel's defense establishment had always been that from a strategic perspective, the establishment of a Palestinian state in the territories constituted too great a threat to Israel's national security to be an acceptable option.

This week the International Atomic Energy Agency reported that Egypt has been secretly advancing a nuclear armament program. Apparently aided by Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan, Egypt reportedly was experimenting with uranium as recently as last year. Then, too, two months ago the IAEA found plutonium particles near an Egyptian nuclear facility. A nuclear-armed Egypt would no doubt feel much more comfortable opening conventional hostilities against Israel, which, given an Egyptian nuclear threat, would be hard-pressed to use its own nonconventional arsenal to deter an Egyptian offensive.

Dichter also did not speak of the demographic threat that a Palestinian state would constitute to Israel. The reason we are given by Sharon and his underlings and allies for the withdrawal from Gaza and northern Samaria, and, as Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told The Jerusalem Post recently, for further withdrawals from Judea and the rest of Samaria in the near future, is demography. The Palestinians, we are told, are so numerous that if we don't give them a state they will overwhelm Israel and either turn the country into a racist regime where a Jewish minority controls an Arab majority or Israel will cease to be a Jewish state altogether. That is, we are told, the choice is among a democratic Jewish Israel, a theocratic, racist Israel or a non-Jewish democracy.

There are three main problems with this view. First, it makes no sense numerically. During the decade since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the number of Jews in Israel rose by around one million. The Arab population in Israel has also grown significantly so that Arab citizens of Israel still make up roughly 20 percent of the population. Additionally, the Palestinian population has risen significantly, mainly as a result of the thousands of foreign Arabs who entered the areas with the PLO. If past experience is a guidepost for future developments, it is reasonable to assume that the number of Arabs, like the number of Jews, will continue to grow significantly after the establishment of a Palestinian state in the territories. The demographic argument, therefore, is not about numbers but about intentions. The view is that if a Palestinian state is established, Arabs will no longer wish to overrun Israel and create a "one-state solution," happy as they will be to live under their own leaders.

Yet this assumption ignores what the Palestinian leadership is telling us will happen. In his recent jaunt through Syria and Lebanon, PLO chairman and soon to be "elected" PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas vowed that there will be no peace until millions of foreign Arabs (referred to as "Palestinian refugees"), who have been forced to live in UN internment camps (referred to as "refugee camps") for the past 56 years, are allowed to move to Israel. US President George W. Bush announced last April that the US would not support a Palestinian demand to have these people enter into Israel as part of a peace deal. So we can assume relatively safely that in the initial period of statehood, these Arabs in Lebanon, Syria and elsewhere will instead move to the Palestinian state.

The question is: What will they do there? The PA has received more foreign aid per capita in constant dollars over the past decade from the international community than Western European citizens received in the Marshall Plan, and yet the Palestinian economy is in far worse condition by every indicator than it was before the Oslo process was instigated. Yasser Arafat and his minions, who now surround Abbas, systematically stole, diverted and misappropriated some \$6.5 billion in international aid. This impoverishment of the Palestinians was done by design. The purpose was to cultivate rage and extremism throughout Palestinian society as Arafat and his minions like Abbas understood that a happy, prosperous populace does not extol the virtues of suicide bombing to its children.

Given Abbas's statements in recent days and weeks in praise of terrorism and in condemnation of "the Zionist enemy," as well as his deep involvement in Palestinian corruption and terror financing, it strains credulity to believe that

he will oversee a process of reform over PA budgets and militias. Rather, it is safe to assume that, under his leadership, Palestinian society will continue to be characterized by destitution and rage.

If this situation is further exacerbated by the entry of millions of destitute Arab immigrants into the rump Palestinian state, what does Israel think will happen? Since Abbas, and the rest of the PA leadership, not to mention Hamas and Islamic Jihad, have all proclaimed consistently that their demand is for these Arabs to move to Israel, can there be any doubt that they will point to their economic desolation and blame it on Israel's "obstinate refusal" to allow these hostile foreigners to live inside its borders? And what does our leadership think that Europe's response to this demand will be, given the European view, passively supported by the US, that the current terror war is Israel's fault?

The public debate regarding the soundness of Sharon's withdrawal and expulsion plan has been completely silent on these issues. Indeed, Dichter's remarks about the specter of a massive escalation in the terror threat to Israel received but a yawn, as it was discounted as an "alarmist, gloom-and-doom scenario" by the major newspapers and broadcast media.

The only issue that interests the Israeli media today is the threat manifested by a tiny number of Israeli opponents to Sharon's withdrawal and expulsion plan (Dichter placed it as a few dozen), who may use violence against soldiers sent to throw them out of their homes and communities in Gaza and northern Samaria.

In Wednesday's papers covering Dichter's remarks at the Knesset, his statements about the threat of increased terrorism after the withdrawal plan received less than one hundred words of coverage in both Ma'ariv and Yediot Ahronot. At the same time, both papers devoted five pages, including their cover pages, to the issue of Israeli opponents to the pullout plan.

On the radio and television, there has been saturation coverage of the prospect that thousands of soldiers may refuse to participate in the expulsion of Jews from their homes, while the strategic implications of the program have been systematically ignored by everyone. Major cultural icons like Yair Lapid have demonized the settlers, extolling the virtues of a civil war. Lapid argues that such a war would not be a war between brothers because, as far as he's concerned, anyone who wants to stay in Gaza, Judea and Samaria and opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state is no longer to be considered a "real" Israeli and hence is no longer part of the family.

Old-guard military establishment types like Labor MK and (res.) Brig.-Gen. Ephraim Sneh are openly calling for a civil war. In an opinion column published in Ma'ariv two weeks ago, Sneh wrote, "85 years after its establishment, the United States of America was drawn into a cruel and destructive civil war, but the results of that war formed the democratic character of the giant country. The confrontation among [Israelis] is also unpreventable." Totally ignoring the threats emanating from Palestinian society today and those likely to arise in the coming months and years, Sneh wrote, "Even if the confrontation will be bloody, the toll will be minuscule in comparison to the blood and sacrifice that more decades of conflict with the Palestinians will extract from us."

If we can be brought to believe that the dangers that Sharon's plans manifest relate only to the pesky, overwhelmingly religious Israelis who live in the areas he wishes to empty of Jews, rather than to the country as a whole, then there can be little doubt that there will be bloody confrontations (provoked mainly by the Left) between Jew and Jew. On the other hand, if we are willing to recognize that the dangers inherent in his plans relate to the entire state, then not only would such internecine violence be consummately avoidable, we would also be able to craft policies that would ensure the wellbeing and security of Israelisociety as a whole for decades to come. (Jerusalem Post Jan 7)

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## **Genuine Alarm** By Nadav Shragai

Civil war is no longer a theoretical possibility. The subject is not a matter of hollow threats or baseless horror scenarios. True, there have been an abundance of these, up until a few weeks ago, whose sole purpose was to deter the prime minister from uprooting the settlements of Gush Katif. But now it is a genuine alarm. Some of the nightmare scenarios are now based on reality, even if it may be masking tactics of intimidation and deterrence.

Thousands of Israelis are signing petitions in which they proclaim their refusal to abet the disengagement. Thousands more are declining to sign, but make it clear that they will not cooperate when the day of disengagement comes. They represent not only the religious public, which defers to rabbinic halakic authority, but also many others - religious and secular Jews - who wish to remain loyal to the dictates of their conscience. Immediate danger is posed by a handful of Yitzhar-type zealots, who are liable to strike at evacuating forces. Former head of the Central Command Yitzhak Eitan speaks of the possible use of live ammunition.

But the real rupture that is developing is the chasm between a significant group in the Israeli public and a regime that is perceived as illegitimate, as deceiving its voting public, as carrying out an expulsion and "transfer" of its citizens, without having received any mandate from the public.

The prime minister makes life easy for himself by throwing responsibility for the great conflagration that is arising before his eyes solely on the opponents of disengagement. He bears supreme responsibility for what is

unfolding. It is he who wrought a situation that has brought us to the brink of the abyss, where refusal to follow orders in the army has ceased to be a marginal phenomenon and is gradually becoming the mainstream view among opponents of disengagement.

This process occurred because Sharon has for months stubbornly refused to let the people make the historic decision, as is only right. Sharon could have neutralized this dangerous wave many months ago, and he can still cut it short simply by giving the people the right to decide.

This would not only be moral and right; it is also the smart move. The mainstream among opponents of disengagement - the Yesha Council of settlers and the majority of extra-parliamentary rightist organizations, including most of the rabbis - have already announced their readiness to accept whatever decision is made. They believe that they will be able to persuade the public that Sharon is making an awful mistake. They have to be granted the opportunity to prove it, not only because Sharon's style of governance - firing ministers, threatening MKs and ignoring decisions reached by the institutions of his own party and its members - is undemocratic, but mainly because he has deceived his voters.

Sharon - who declared prior to the elections that "so long as Palestinian terror continues, there will be no progress on even the beginning of an agreement," who promised "not to evacuate settlements when I am in office," who said that "any such withdrawal would only encourage terror," who spoke of "painful concessions only in exchange for true peace"; Sharon who showed Amram Mitzna the door, when the latter spoke of a unilateral evacuation of settlements - refuses to put his plan to the broad public test, for one simple reason: He is afraid of losing.

Somebody has to tell the prime minister - and the president of Israel would be a suitable candidate - that at a time when civil war threatens to break out among us, he should put aside his political accounts and do all he can to prevent it. If he loses, it means that there truly was no legitimization for the unilateral uprooting of individuals from their homes. If he wins, he can carry out his plan, without the danger of a civil war. It is so simple. In fact, the knights of democracy from the left should have subdued their burning passion to evacuate settlements and said this to Sharon.

Instead, supporters of Peace Now and the kibbutz movement, whose eyes are sometimes blinded by hatred, are now pouring oil on the burning campfire and enlisting battalions of volunteers for the evacuation. This draft, which Yoel Maharshak, one of the leaders of the kibbutz movement, says is being done with the blessing of the Prime Minister's Office, is a surefire recipe for civil war.

However, most worrisome of all, the prime minister who bears the supreme responsibility to prevent a civil war promises he will not let the opponents of disengagement "win" and does not understand that in the internal dispute between Jews, there are only losers. The past few days show that Sharon and his close aides are panicking when it comes to the opponents of disengagement. Evidence is provided by recent statements about "breaking hands and legs."

Logic also dictates that Sharon now maintain open channels of dialogue with the public that opposes the course he has taken, but Sharon, in his fervor to "disengage," has also been blinded by the light and has instructed the chief of staff and the defense minister to cease meeting with Jewish settlement leaders in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip.

The prime minister, it turns out, has not plumbed the depths of the rupture taking place among broad sections of the public, who feel more insulted and bitter with every passing day. This large public is only a step away from the Yitzhar-type extremists, but Sharon the Disengager is widening the circles of fanaticism instead of narrowing them. The president of Israel, who has in the past expressed his support for turning the decision over to the people, is well aware of the danger of internal conflict, but awareness is inadequate. If he wishes to prevent bloodshed between brothers, he must immediately throw his full weight behind an attempt to refer the decision to the public. (Ha'aretz Jan 11)

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### What About 'Courage to Refuse'? By Evelyn Gordon

The domestic dissension in Israel took a decided turn for the worse last week. On the one hand, there was the violent behavior by settlers during the evacuation of an outpost near Yitzhar. On the other, there were troubling actions by the defense establishment and the Justice Ministry.

The difference between these two developments is that the events at Yitzhar boil down to a relatively simple law-enforcement problem: Those settlers who hit soldiers or policemen or vandalized army vehicles can and should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Unfortunately, hooliganism by "demonstrators" of every stripe - from settlers to union activists - has too often been treated leniently in the past.

But the security services believe that there are at most a few dozen major troublemakers and a few hundred minor ones among the 250,000-strong settler population; thus determined action in this and a few subsequent cases should be sufficient to quell the hooligan faction.

But when two leading state institutions, which are supposed to be strictly impartial, lay themselves open to accusations of political bias, the long-term damage is potentially far more serious - and far less easy to mend.

Unfortunately, that is what both the army and the state prosecution did last week - Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and anonymous members of the IDF's

General Staff by issuing strident demands via the media for legal action against those who urge soldiers to refuse to evacuate settlements; and Attorney-General Menachem Mazuz by opening criminal investigations on this count against Kedumim Mayor Daniella Weiss and Noam Livnat's Defensive Shield organization.

As regular readers of this column know, I strongly oppose military refusal. Nor, despite my general preference for maximum freedom of speech, do I believe that legal action against refusal advocates presents a free-speech problem: Refusal to serve happens to be illegal in Israel, and solicitation to commit a crime is illegal in any country.

However, the state cannot treat right-wing refusal differently from left-wing refusal. And that is what the army and the prosecution are doing.

The IDF, admittedly, has consistently spoken out against refusal of any political stripe, and has also taken consistent action against individual acts of refusal: Leftist officers who announced that they would not serve in the territories were stripped of their rank and/or ousted from the army, and Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon properly plans to do the same with 34 rightist officers who declared last week that they would not evacuate settlements. Never before, however, have the defense minister or senior IDF officers publicly demanded legal action against refusal advocates.

Nor has the prosecution previously ordered criminal investigations against refusal advocates.

YET LEFTIST groups have encouraged refusal every bit as publicly as rightist organizations do today.

Courage to Refuse, for instance, held periodic press conferences to urge soldiers not to serve in the territories; so did other groups, such as the "pilots' letter" signatories.

Courage to Refuse also maintains a pro-refusal Web site that lists all the signatories of its declaration to date; Livnat's organization, by contrast, has yet to prove that it has any signatories, since it declines to make them public.

Moreover, students and professors actively recruited for Courage to Refuse on university campuses; the involvement of professors was particularly problematic given their power over students' futures.

In Mazuz's case, at least, the pressure for action has undeniably been tremendous. The media, leftist MKs and many well-known jurists - all of whom argued that leftist refusal should be tolerated as a legitimate moral act - have vilified him for extending equal tolerance to rightist refusal.

Thus when the defense establishment joined the chorus last week, I can easily understand how the pressure could have become too much even for someone who genuinely believes, as Mazuz does, that refusal to serve is an issue better dealt with in the marketplace of ideas than in the courts.

Nevertheless, the end result is unacceptable.

Israel cannot long survive as one country if either side of the political spectrum comes to believe that key institutions, such as the army and the prosecution, are biased against it. And by treating rightist and leftist refusal differently, both institutions have lent credence to such a charge.

Such bias also has detrimental short-term consequences - for instance, by making it harder to deal with the Yitzhar incident.

The hooligans would always have claimed that legal action against them was motivated by political bias. But now it will be more difficult for the majority of settlers who oppose their behavior to dismiss this claim out of hand.

And as Mazuz himself correctly observed a few weeks ago, a sense of being under attack - such as is created by a perception of political bias - will cause any group to close ranks around aberrant members whom it would otherwise isolate, thereby making it harder to eradicate the minority's unacceptable behavior.

It is therefore essential that both Mazuz and Ya'alon move quickly to dispel the impression of bias. Ya'alon, who reportedly opposes his General Staff's hysterical approach, must reassert control.

And Mazuz should either close the criminal investigations against Weiss and Livnat, or demonstrate evenhandedness by opening parallel probes against the leaders of Courage to Refuse.

Such belated action is obviously problematic, but it could be legally justified: With refusal having moved from a marginal phenomenon to one that seems to be gaining momentum, there is now a public interest in cracking down on all its manifestations that did not exist before.

In the debate over whether refusal advocates should be dealt with by the law courts or the court of public opinion, there are valid arguments on both sides.

But there can be no valid argument for any state institution to make this decision on the basis of the activist's political beliefs. (Jerusalem Post Jan 11)

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