

**ISRAEL NEWS**  
*A collection of the week's news from Israel*  
*A service of the Bet El Twinning Committee of*  
*Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

בס"ד  
in the hospital for exercising their democratic rights, our much vaunted democracy.  
To cure a disease, one has to remove the contaminants. Bones can regenerate and grow strong again. They must be nourished and cared for. Mr. Olmert and the Kadima party are contaminants. And the bones are very weak.  
(NaomiRagen.com Feb 2)

## Commentary...

**As If We Weren't Brothers** By Naomi Ragen

Osteoporosis is an insidious disease. Things look the same on the surface. You don't feel anything is happening, while all the while the bones that hold your body together are sapped of their strength, until huge gaps appear in the bone structure, and suddenly everything begins to crack.

It is a good metaphor for what is happening to Israeli society.

Yesterday Israel passed new red lines that I never thought that I would see in my lifetime. Jewish policemen, trained in anti-terror, were let loose upon Jewish demonstrators trying to save nine houses in an obscure hilltop. Using clubs, they rode on horseback into the crowds and starting bashing in heads. You heard it. They didn't aim for arms or legs. Heads. The demonstration quickly escalated, as demonstrators responded with unprecedented violence. Over a hundred people were hospitalized, including a policeman hurt seriously, a sixteen year old who was unconscious with head injuries, and two Knesset Members hospitalized. One of them was MK Effie Eitam.

I have met MK Effie Eitam a number of times. He is the father of eight. He lives in the Golan Heights. And he had a wonderful plan that would really have brought peace to Israel, in my humble opinion. He served as a general in the Israeli Army. He has served his country on battlefields for thirty years.

When Ehud Olmert decided, after the election of the Hamas, that wisest and most pressing agenda of the country was to confront teenagers still in shock from their battles to save Gush Katif this summer, to bulldoze more Jewish homes, he showed what we can expect his leadership to be like if God forbid, he somehow gets elected to head our country.

Instead fostering unity, and helping our bones to heal, Mr. Olmert has decided to speed up the rot. His aides even went so far as to call the demonstrators Jewish Hamas (what a great way to avoid dealing with the real Hamas). And so, the population pool of boys and girls who once were the pride of the Israeli army, who manned the most dangerous volunteer units, are now being turned into Jewish Hamas, so that a sleazy politician can prove to those who loved Sharon for destroying Gush Katif, that he also knows how to use a bulldozer, and unlike Sharon, he has no problem breaking open heads as if was heading another kind of Mideast state, the kind that don't have elections.

During the INTIFADA, while Ehud Olmert was Mayor of Jerusalem, there were numerous demonstrations in Jerusalem by Palestinians supporting terror. Many Palestinian MK's were at these demonstrations. Never, ever, to my knowledge, did one of them wind up in the hospital, even the ones who touted terror and went to meet with Assad in Syria.

Speaking from his hospital bed, Eitam said: "The police received an order to make a bloodletting among our children and public leaders. But I don't blame the police. They are simply Olmert's agents. [He's] proven that [he] is a confused, cowardly manipulator. [He's] shown his stupidity and his heartlessness."

Eitam, who stood in front of a group of young demonstrators, said he was there to engage the police in dialogue. "The policeman on horseback saw clearly who we were. But he struck me in the head anyone. And then I lost consciousness. I have spent 30 years fighting on Israeli battlefields. I never thought in my lifetime a Jewish policeman would be the one to put me into the hospital. As if we weren't brothers."

There are thousands of illegal dwellings in East Jerusalem. As Mayor of Jerusalem, Ehud Olmert did almost nothing about them. But we can see his attitude will be quite different when it comes to settler -bashing, which seems to be the new hit on the political horizon, destroying our country's social fabric, our army, our security, our vision, our nationhood, and with Knesset members

**Don't Demonize Good People** By Isi Leibler

It is a highly unedifying spectacle to witness Israelis demonizing Israelis. Unfortunately, in recent times this has extended beyond post-Zionists and other alienated Israelis to many rank-and-file citizens.

In the last elections Shinui garnered many votes by exploiting those aspects of haredi life that generated fear and dislike - refusal to serve in the army, failure to contribute productively to the economy, and, in some cases, even ambivalence toward the state itself. The party fanned such prejudices for political purposes, sinking political discourse to the lowest common denominator. It is especially sad to witness such bigotry among Jews, whose bitter experiences in the Diaspora so often related to ruling groups cynically exploiting them as scapegoats for the failures of society, or as a means to divert the attention of the people from their problems. It has, of course, also been standard fare for anti-Semites to highlight the real or fabricated deficiencies of individual Jews in order to defame the entire Jewish people.

Shinui has imploded, but its former vilification of haredim has now been redirected by other hate-peddlers to religious Zionists and settlers, the new group currently being demonized with a vengeance and exploited as scapegoats for Israel's security problems.

The hatred generated against settlers is likely to have more far-reaching negative consequences than the campaign against the haredim. The latter are

a relatively isolated group, whereas religious Zionists are an integral element of society occupying important roles in every field of Israeli life and endeavor. The settlers, who had been encouraged by successive governments of all shades of opinion to settle the land in Judea and Samaria, represent a highly constructive element in the nation. They also served on the front lines and bore the brunt of Palestinian terrorism, suffering more casualties than any other sector of the community.

In fact, religious settlers assumed the role of a new Zionist vanguard filling the void left after the secular kibbutz elites of the earlier days of statehood gradually disappeared. They emerged as

the antithesis of the Tel Aviv consumerism and post-Zionist trends that diluted the Zionist ethos that had dominated the state in its formative years. In contrast to the post-Zionist and yuppie circles, evasion of the draft or emigration is simply inconceivable in these quarters. In fact their patriotism and love of the land, combined with the inclination of their youth to serve in army combat units, transformed many of them into role models for civic behavior.

Not surprisingly, the displacement from Gaza devastated and embittered most religious Zionists and has made the entire settler movement concerned about the future. Israelis who had transformed deserts into thriving agricultural communities and witnessed their loved ones and neighbors being killed by terrorists were treated like pariahs by a government which failed to perform its elementary obligations. To this day the vast majority of those who were so painfully displaced from their homes in Gaza have not been resettled; most lack a livelihood; many of their children still not attending permanent schools, are traumatized and require psychological counseling. Even many Israelis who supported the withdrawal are outraged at such callous behavior by their government, which has not even displayed remorse at its abysmal failure to act decently toward these citizens.

The manner in which the settlers are being portrayed in election rhetoric is equally disconcerting. Following the cue of a number of politicians, the media is having a field day, irresponsibly presenting extremist elements as though they reflect the norm, creating an atmosphere of hysteria and hatred against the entire Israeli settler community.

This week's issue is dedicated  
in honour of the Bar Mitzvahs of:  
**Russel Tobias Handelman**  
by his grandparents Lionel and Ruth Fisch  
**and Jonathan Tebbi**  
by his parents Jake and Rosanne Tebbi.  
Mazel Tov!

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Needless to say, such demonization in no way excuses the violence of a small number of hooligans. Scenes of young Israeli hoodlums wearing masks and violently confronting law enforcement officials can only be described as obscene. No responsible person would deny the need to ensure that people who behave in a violent manner and refuse to abide by the laws of the land be dealt with severely. There is also no doubt that settler movement spokesmen who assumed a passive role in such circumstances have contributed to undermining the standing of the entire settler community. They must be far more vocal and explicit in condemning and dissociating themselves from such illegal behavior.

In the current climate, however, it is not surprising that when every violent incident is highlighted as though it typified settler behavior, the public perception of settlers as a group has deteriorated substantially and assumed a highly negative profile. Regrettably, it is not realized that the vast majority of settlers have always been, and remain, law-abiding model citizens. In fact their lifestyle is remarkably reminiscent of the pre-state secular Zionist pioneers who also chose to settle with their families in barren areas frequently surrounded by hostile Arabs.

It is, therefore, surely the obligation of politicians and the media to ensure that a small minority of degenerates in a community are not portrayed as the norm. Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert must also caution the police that encouragement by the government to take resolute action to enforce the rule of law must not be regarded as *carte blanche* to employ violence indiscriminately. Police must take particular care to avoid harming innocent bystanders or those involved in peaceful and lawful demonstrations.

Unfortunately, since Olmert encouraged the police to act with greater firmness there have been documented cases of innocent people undergoing police brutality. Thankfully this does not apply to the IDF, whose record in this problematic area has, by and large, been exemplary. Olmert stands at a crossroads. He must clearly demonstrate that he has the welfare of all Israelis at heart and ensure that the forthcoming election debates are not transformed into diatribes against the very people with whom, until only recently, he shared a common political outlook. He has the choice of turning a blind eye while vulgar populism is channeled to gain votes by demonizing all settlers. Or he can act as a statesman and demonstrate his determination to heal and unify rather than intensify schisms.

The demonization of any societal sector must be nipped in the bud. Woe to Israel if settlers and religious Zionists, who include the most devoted citizens in the land, are transformed into a political football and vilified as enemies of the state. It would have a devastating impact on our society, one for which we would pay a bitter price for generations to come. (Jerusalem Post Jan 31)  
*The writer chairs the Diaspora-Israel relations committee of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, and is a veteran Jewish international leader.*

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### **The Hamas Victory Is Good News** By Jeff Jacoby

Western reactions to the outcome of the Palestinian election last week mostly came in two varieties: highly negative and decidedly undecided.

In the first category was Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who moaned that the Hamas defeat of Fatah was a "very, very, very bad result." In New York, the Anti-Defamation League pronounced the results "a tremendous setback for the region and for American interests."

But many others insisted that the significance of the election couldn't be known until Hamas decides whether or not to abandon its foremost objective: the liquidation of Israel and its replacement with an Islamist dictatorship. In the words of FBI Director Robert Mueller, "Hamas has a choice to make." It was a line echoed everywhere, from the British Foreign Office ("It is up to Hamas to choose. We will have to wait and see") to the New York Times editorial page ("Hamas has a choice between governing and terror").

Well, put me in a third camp: I think the sweeping Hamas victory is by far the best result that could have been hoped for.

I say that not because Hamas is anything other than a blood-drenched terrorist group responsible for killing or maiming thousands of innocent victims, but because its lopsided win is an unambiguous reality check into the nature of Palestinian society. And if there is one thing that the West badly needs, it is more realism and less delusion about the Palestinians.

Some of that delusion was on display at the White House on Thursday, when President Bush painted the Palestinian election as a "healthy" and "interesting" exercise in civic reform:

"Obviously, people were not happy with the status quo," Bush explained. "The people are demanding honest government. The people want services. They want to be able to raise their children in an environment in which they can get a decent education and they can find healthcare. And so the elections should open the eyes of the old guard there in the Palestinian territories. . . . There's something healthy about a system that does that. And so the elections yesterday were very interesting."

Please, Mr. President. If a slate of neo-Nazi skinheads swept to power in a European election, would you say that the voters were seeking "honest government" and "services"? Palestinians are not stupid, and it insults their intelligence to pretend that when they vote to empower a genocidal

organization with a platform straight out of "Mein Kampf," what they're \*really\* after is better healthcare. Islamist extremism isn't needed to fix Palestinian hospitals any more than Fascism was needed to make Italian trains run on time in the 1920s. If Palestinians turned out en masse to elect a party that unapologetically stands for hatred and mass murder, it's a safe bet that the hatred and mass murder had something to do with the turnout.

By the same token, Hamas's new duties are not going to turn it into a moderate group of diligent civil servants. When violent Islamists win political power, their brutality and zealotry do not diminish. (See Khomeini, Ayatollah and Taliban, Afghan). The notion that Hamas now has "a choice to make" is just another example of the delusional thinking that is so pervasive when it comes to the Palestinian Authority.

In his remarks on Thursday, Bush went on to say that he didn't "see how you can be a partner in peace if you advocate the destruction of a country as part of your platform" or "if your party has got an armed wing." Therefore, he said, Hamas is "a party with which we will not deal." If that means that the Bush administration will shun the new Hamas government as it once shunned Yasser Arafat, well and good. But why was Mahmoud Abbas treated any differently? Like Hamas, Fatah -- the PLO faction Abbas and Arafat co-founded 45 years ago -- advocates Israel's destruction in its basic charter. Like Hamas, Fatah has an "armed wing" -- the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades -- that is guilty of horrific terror attacks. Fatah's emblem shows crossed rifles against a map of "Palestine" that depicts all of Israel; on the Hamas emblem, the map is the same, but the crossed weapons are swords. The only important difference between the ousted Fatah party and the incoming Hamas leadership is that for PR purposes the former sometimes pretend to accept Israel's right to exist, while the latter is openly and nakedly committed to Israel's elimination.

Yet that is exactly why the Hamas landslide is good news. It increases clarity and dispels illusion. It makes it harder to wish away the unpleasant fact that after a dozen years of PLO misrule, Palestinian society is deeply dysfunctional, steeped in hatred and violence. All but the willfully blind can now see that the Palestinian Authority is no "partner in peace." Until it is decisively defeated and thoroughly detoxified, the Palestinian people will never enjoy the blessings of liberty and decent governance. Ironically, the ascendancy of Hamas may have brought that eventual outcome a little closer.  
*The writer is a columnist for The Boston Globe. (Boston Globe Jan 29)*

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### **Wooing Hamas** By Steven Plaut

Ever since Hamas's victory in the Palestinian "elections," the media inside and outside Israel have continued to miss the most crucial realities of the Mideast crisis. One of the main themes of the media has been that Hamas' victory is due to the failure of the PLO to deliver public services -- and that Hamas will do a better job delivering such services. A BBC radio commentator, for instance, attributed the Hamas victory to the fact that the terror group is better at fixing potholes and sewers than the PLO.

There are also declarations that Hamas is a group with which Israel and the world can do business. We are told that these terrorists are essentially pragmatists, interested in jobs and budgets. Thus, Hamas may use lurid rhetoric and slogans, but it is most keenly interested in the perks of office. Media commentators who articulate these themes are convinced that, once in office, Hamas will devote all of its energies to ecology, Affirmative Action, and infrastructure repair.

The Israeli Left also argues that Hamas took power because Israel waged its War on Terror. Had Israel just turned the other cheek after each bus or café bombing, the PLO could have stayed in office and struck peace deals with Israel based on new unilateral Israeli appeasements and concessions.

Finally, many in the Israeli far-Left believe Hamas is in power because it is a more "genuine" and "authentic" representative of Palestinian opinion. Israeli leftists increasingly cheer for Hamas, because they openly endorse Hamas's agenda itself, which just happens to be based on annihilating Israel.

Let's clear up a few things:

First, the idea that Hamas will abandon terror because it will be too busy building roads and hospitals is simply absurd. The raison d'être of Hamas is to foment terror, to attack Israel, to draw Muslim armies into the war with Israel, and building an army to attack Israel and kill its Jewish population. This is not a ulterior motive, but a fundamental part of its charter.

The Hamas Nazi state will immediately begin importing deadly weaponry -- not the nickel and dime Kassam rockets being glued together in Gaza basements, but state-of-the-art, 21st-century weapons financed by the Saudis or Iranians: shoulder missiles, tanks, and quite possibly Weapons of Mass Destruction. And there is the added danger that Hezbollah will back Hamas by opening up a second front against Israel from Lebanon.

Hamas took power and evicted the PLO for one reason -- and it has nothing to do with potholes: the Palestinian population has been thoroughly Nazified, and Hamas embodies the Palestinian goals of genocide and terror better than the PLO. That is the reason Hamas won. The PLO had been "compromised" in the eyes of most Palestinians by engaging in make-believe cooperation with Israel, by giving lip service to "peace" with the Israelis. The

average Palestinian wants none of that.

The Israeli daily Haaretz, represented best by its anti-Israel leftist fanatic Gideon Levy, celebrates the victory of Hamas as a great moral victory, not because it will force Israelis to acknowledge the folly of the last 14 years of appeasement, but because Haaretz columnists simply endorse the goals of Hamas.

Here is Levy's wisdom:

The good news from the occupied territories is that Hamas won the elections...one can find quite a few points of light in the Hamas victory. First, these are very authentic results, achieved through elections that were respectably democratic, even though they took place under the least democratic circumstances imaginable, the occupation. As usual, we were threatened by our experts with "anarchy," and, as usual, the Palestinians did not meet those expectations. There was no shooting and no rioting; the Palestinian nation had its say with admirable order. It said 'no' to a movement that did not bring it any achievements in the just struggle against the occupation, and it said "yes" to those who appeared to the voters to be braver and with clean hands...

Second, both Israelis and Palestinians can learn important lessons from the results of the election. The Israelis have to finally learn that applying force will not get the desired results...To that end, both sides, Israel and Hamas, must free themselves of the slogans of the past. Those who pose preconditions, like disarming Hamas, will miss the chance. It is impossible to expect that Hamas will disarm, just as it is impossible to expect that Israel would disarm. In Palestinian eyes, Hamas' weapons are meant to fight the occupation, and, as is well-known, the occupation is not over. Practically, and indeed morally, the armed are armed if they are equipped with F-16s or Qassam launchers. If Israel were to commit to an end to killing Hamas operatives, there is reason to assume that Hamas would agree, at least for a while, to lay down its arms...If Israel were to be friendly toward Hamas, it could benefit.

Anti-Zionist writer Uri Avnery and other ultra-leftists are already calling for "negotiations" with Hamas. It would not be surprising if some far-leftist Israeli professors and writers are already seeking audiences with Hamas leaders for "negotiations," reminiscent of the illegal talks the Left conducted with the PLO in the late 1980s, also in Oslo. (If so, it will be interesting to see if Hamas obeys any of them.)

One of the immediate issues that have come up on the Israeli domestic agenda is whether to turn 200 million shekels in funds over to the new Hamas government. Under Oslo, Israel is required to give the Palestinian Authority some receipts from Value Added Taxes and similar sources of revenue. Haaretz and the Left are demanding that Olmert hand the arrears over to Hamas immediately. Olmert is also seriously considering letting Hamas terror leaders inside Syria and Jordan move to the West Bank or Gaza. The Likud Party under Benjamin Netanyahu is using this as an election issue against acting Prime Minister Olmert and his Kadima Party—although Likud, before the Kadima split, turned billions of dollars over to Palestinian terrorists.

Another immediate Israeli domestic issue is whether the Olmert government will go ahead with its plans to conduct a new expulsion of Jews this week, this time from homes in the commercial downtown street of Hebron and from an "illegal" West Bank settlement named Atzmona. Given the Hamas, making all further deals with "Palestine" impossible, will Olmert go ahead with the expulsions as new appeasements of a Palestinian Authority, now controlled by the open allies of bin Laden? Meanwhile, Amir Peretz, the new head of the Israeli Labor Party, has announced he will not be changing his party's agenda one iota: raising the minimum wage to increase Israeli unemployment and cutting defense spending to use for social welfare services are still at the top of Labor's agenda.

For years, Israeli politicians have placed Israel's right to exist up for negotiation. Since the 1980s, Israel's leaders gave up insisting Israel has the right to its land and that the Palestinians are not and never were a "people." (They were simply the local groups of Arabs who already controlled territory nearly twice the size of the United States.) Instead, the Israeli political elite adopted the rhetoric of those seeking Israel's annihilation, speaking about "Two States for Two People," and "legitimate representatives of the Palestinian nation." Israeli leftists hectored the country, telling Israelis that there was no peace with the Arab world, because Israelis did not desire it enough. Some went so far as to adopt the Arab world's terminology for Israel: "naqba" ("the catastrophe").

Now that Israel and the West have collaborated to empower Hamas and turn the reigns of power in the suburbs of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem over to a terror organization, Israel's closest neighbor has joined in the debate about whether Israel has a right to exist, in the negative.

The expectation by Israel's leaders that the world will shun Hamas and refuse to fund it or talk with it is but the last in a series of delusions. By the spring, Israel will be under international pressure to make much larger gestures of goodwill to Hamas. (FrontPageMagazine.com Jan 30)

*The writer is a professor at the Graduate School of Business Administration at the University of Haifa and is a columnist for the Jewish Press.*

**The Rise of Hamas and the Fall of Palestine.** By Yossi Klein Halevi

Here then is the real asymmetry of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Precisely at the moment when a majority of the Israeli people has accepted not just the political necessity but moral legitimacy of a Palestinian state, the overwhelming majority of the Palestinian people empowers its most hateful and triumphalist ideology.

A two-fold spin has already begun. The first spin concerns Hamas. The same commentators who once assured us that power and responsibility would transform Yasir Arafat from terrorist to statesman now assure us that Hamas leaders similarly will be transformed by the process of governance. Fatah was supposed to control Hamas; now, presumably, Hamas will control itself.

And so get ready for the era of the wink and the hint. Experts will examine Hamas statements for signs of the slightest shift; they will ignore what Hamas tells its own people and celebrate every seemingly reasonable utterance to Western journalists. And Hamas leaders will readily oblige: They will speak of "peace," just as Arafat spoke of the peace of the brave. And the peace they will mean, as the bitter Israeli joke once went, is the peace of the grave.

The essence of Hamas is a commitment to destroy the religious affront of Jewish sovereignty. For Hamas to "moderate" would mean turning into an apostate of its own most sacred truth. If the process of moderation didn't happen to the less devout Fatah, which continues to reject Israel's legitimacy and now opposes terror only on temporary tactical grounds, it surely won't happen to Hamas.

The second spin concerns the Palestinian people. Palestinians, we're being told, didn't really intend to vote for the bad Hamas that blows up buses and promotes Holocaust denial and enshrines the Protocols of the Elders of Zion in its charter. They were simply fed up with Fatah corruption and voted for the good Hamas that provides social benefits and a sense of discipline and purpose. True, Palestinians were understandably outraged at Fatah, which was the recipient of billions of dollars of foreign aid and managed in the last decade not to rehabilitate a single refugee camp. Yet to excuse the landslide vote for Hamas is to continue to patronize the Palestinian people, as most of the international community did through five years of suicide bombings. Palestinians voted for a movement for whom means and ends are identical: The suicide bombings are mini-preenactments of Hamas's genocidal impulse. Not to hold the Palestinians responsible for their fate, when they vote democratically, is to deny them the right to define themselves.

In truth, Hamas's victory doesn't mark the end of the peace process. That's because the peace process ended five years ago, when Arafat responded to Ehud Barak's peace overtures with the terror war. A recent poll asked Israelis the following question: If Israel withdraws to the 1967 borders, uproots the settlements, redivides Jerusalem, and signs a peace treaty with a Palestinian state, would the conflict end or would terror continue? Some 70 percent responded that the conflict would continue. And that was before the rise of Hamas. What the Hamas victory has ended, then, is the pretense of a peace process.

The rise of Hamas also marks the end of the era of the guilty Israeli conscience, which began during the first intifada in the late 1980s. Perhaps the most effective ally of the Palestinians in their quest for statehood was the realization among many Israelis that the Palestinians had rights and had been wronged. Over the last five years of terror, though, the Israeli guilty conscience has been steadily eroded. Now, none but the most deluded Israelis will continue to maintain that the conflict is about the occupation and the settlements rather than Israel's existence. As Dan Meridor, one of the Israeli negotiators at Camp David, put it, the peace process failed not because of a Palestinian state but because of a Jewish state.

What, then, is Israel going to do? There is a virtual national consensus to treat a Hamas government as no more legitimate than the Holocaust-denying, extermination-minded regime in Tehran. That consensus will hold.

Less certain is the fate of the unilateralist policy begun by Ariel Sharon in Gaza. The logic of unilateralism—that in the absence of a credible Palestinian partner, Israel must define its own borders—has never been more compelling. Yet, ironically, the consequences of unilateralism have never been more terrifying. Until the Hamas victory, those of us who supported further unilateral withdrawal hardly expected Fatah to control terror and rocket attacks from the evacuated territories, but could at least trust that Fatah would try to prevent Iranian penetration, if only to ensure its continued rule. Now, though, any territory Israel evacuates will almost certainly become a frontline base for Iran. The operative result of the Hamas victory, then, is that Tehran has just moved several thousand kilometers closer to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. In fact, Israel is now surrounded by Iranian proxies—Hezbollah to the north and Hamas to the south and east.

As untenable as Israel's options have now become, the more enduring tragedy belongs to the Palestinian people. Palestinians have chosen rejectionism after being handed the entirety of Gaza as an experiment in Palestinian sovereignty. Electing Hamas, then, may well be the historical equivalent of the Palestinian rejection of U.N. partition in 1947.

Palestinians have delivered their next generation to Moloch, to a movement whose religious pageants include parading children dressed as suicide bombers. The celebration of mass murderers as religious martyrs and

educational role models, promoted by both Fatah and Hamas, has now reached its inevitable conclusion in the national suicide of the Palestinian people.

*The writer is a foreign correspondent for The New Republic and a senior fellow of the Shalem Center. (The New Republic Jan 26)*

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## **Hamas Landslide Reveals More about Left than about 'Palestinians'**

By Dennis Prager

It is a sad day for humanity when a people choose to elect terrorists as their leaders. But for those of us who believe that clarity is the prerequisite to moral progress, the landslide victory of the terrorist organization Hamas in Palestine has a silver lining.

First and foremost, it proves what people who perceive reality have been saying for decades: The great majority of Palestinians - like the majority of Arabs elsewhere and like vast numbers of non-Arab Muslims - want Israel destroyed. Even granting legitimacy to the argument that the complete moral, financial and political corruption of Fatah was partly responsible for the Hamas victory, those who voted for Hamas did not find that organization's terror, religious celebration of murder or charter calling for Israel's destruction an impediment to their vote.

It is true that in 1933, some Germans who voted for the Nazis did so out of anger at the Versailles Treaty and because of the economic chaos that engulfed their country. Indeed, it is widely agreed among historians that Hitler played down anti-Semitism in the Nazis' electoral campaigning. But every German voter was aware of the ferocity of the Nazis' Jew-hatred. And, whatever the case in 1933 Germany, in 2006 Palestine, Hamas has never played down its anti-Semitism or its support for continuing terrorism.

So the Palestinian vote reveals the falsity of the worldwide Left's view of the Palestinians as committed to peace. It likewise reveals the falsity of the Left's belief that Palestinian terror is supported by a small minority of the Palestinian population.

That is one reason why the Bush doctrine - we need to spread democracy everywhere possible, including, or even especially, in the Arab world - is so valid. You cannot deal with any problem in life - from the most personal to the most macro - by engaging in wishful thinking and denying reality.

Thanks to this election, the mask has been removed. When given the opportunity to express themselves, most Arabs and many Muslims elsewhere support terror and seek the annihilation of Israel. That is why the Hamas victory is such a defeat for the world's Left - university professors, news media, socialist parties, the European Union, the United Nations, "peace" activists, editorial writers, and all other apologists for the Palestinians.

A personal anecdote will help illustrate this. Two years ago, thanks to the Hoover Institution at Stanford, I spent a week lecturing at the university. Coincidentally, Israel's Independence Day fell during that same week, and pro-Israel students asked me to speak at their rally honoring Israel.

In my remarks, I mentioned that the primary reason for the Arab-Israeli conflict was that the majority of Palestinians wanted Israel destroyed.

A woman who introduced herself as "a peace activist" walked over to me afterward and said I was wrong, that, in fact, the majority of Palestinians wanted peace with Israel. I asked her to go over to the Arab students who were attending a counter protest against Israel and ask them if they accepted the right of a Jewish state of Israel to exist. I bet her \$5 they would say "no." She took the bet.

Fifteen minutes later, she came back to me.

"Well, who won the bet?" I asked.

"I don't know," she responded.

"What do you mean you 'don't know'? What did they say?"

"They all asked me, 'What do you mean?'"

Though not one Arab student answered "yes," she still didn't get it. This peace activist, like other "peace activists" and just about everyone on the Left, lives in a state of wishful thinking. As director Steven Spielberg, commenting on the Arab-Israeli dispute, recently told Time magazine, "The only thing that's going to solve this is rational minds, a lot of sitting down and talking until you're blue in the gills."

On just about every issue, the Left lives in a childlike fantasy realm. Their views are expressions of what they wish for, not what actually is. Here is a small sample:

- Support for terror represents a tiny sliver of the Muslim world.
- All cultures are essentially morally equivalent.
- The United Nations is a wonderful institution and the best hope of mankind.
- Men and women are basically the same.
- It makes no difference whether children are raised by a loving man and woman or by two loving parents of the same sex.
- Violent criminals in our society are pushed into crime by socioeconomic circumstances, not because of their own flawed characters and values.
- War is not the answer.

The list of leftist positions based on a rejection of reality is as long as a list of leftist positions. That's why it is often said that "a conservative is a liberal who has been mugged." But that, too, is wishful thinking. After some initial cognitive dissonance, the Hamas victory will have little or no impact on most

leftists. The day after the Hamas landslide, the Los Angeles Times editorialized, "Most Palestinians, like most Israelis, want peace." Sure they do. Just not with Israel. (Jewish World Review Jan 31)

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## **The Wages of Unilateralism** By Moshe Arens

In August 2005, 10,000 Israelis were forcibly removed from their homes in Gush Katif and northern Samaria, while Kassam rocket launching sites were allowed to move into areas formally occupied by the settlements of Elei Sinai, Nissanit, and Dugit, thus moving them into range of Ashkelon, one of Israel's larger cities.

Less than half a year later, Hamas won the Palestinian elections decisively, achieving control over the Palestinian population in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. While many had given their unreserved approval to Sharon's unilateral withdrawal project, and others felt that the jury was still out regarding the wisdom of this move, history handed in its verdict last week - it was no more than a piece of foolishness. The Hamas victory, a blow to the chances for peace in the area, and an increased threat to Israel's security interests, is the direct result of that ill-conceived and misbegotten project.

There is no doubt that much of the Palestinian population was fed up with the corruption of the Arafat clique that ran the Palestinian Authority since the Oslo Accords, and that it possibly considered Hamas, the authors of much of the suicide bombings that have killed Israeli men, women and children in recent years, clean and incorruptible. This may have contributed to the Hamas victory. But all Palestinian polls had shown that the vast majority saw in the Israeli unilateral withdrawal a great Palestinian victory, which was the direct result of the campaign of terror waged in the past years by Palestinian terrorist groups, a campaign in which Hamas took a leading role. Thus Hamas received what most saw as well-deserved credit for this Palestinian victory at the recent polls.

How did so many Israelis, a nation of intelligent and politically alert citizens, fall for this plan? What was the conception that infiltrated itself into the minds of so many Israelis pushing aside caution and good sense? The Greeks had a word for it - hubris. What is unilateralism if not hubris - arrogance and disregard of others. The proponents of disengagement, the men and women who have found a place under the umbrella of the Kadima party, proudly announce that we are going to take our destiny into our own hands, that we are not going to wait for partners for peace, that we are going to unilaterally determine Israel's borders, and that the Palestinians can stew in their juices behind the fences we are rushing to complete. Now that is the kind of talk many Israelis like to hear.

But on second thought, the emptiness of this kind of talk becomes clear. No man is an island, and no nation is an island. We live in a world of interdependence, and this is most certainly true of Israel and the Palestinians. What we do affects them, and what they do affects us. Unilateralism is simply not a viable concept in this day and age, and permanent borders that would put an end to a conflict cannot be established unilaterally. Tunnels are dug under fences, and Kassam rockets and mortar shells fly over them. Every area from which Israel withdraws unilaterally becomes a breeding ground for terrorism against Israel; just look at what happened in the Gaza Strip since Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gush Katif and the Philadelphi corridor.

To have disregarded the Palestinian perception of an Israeli unilateral withdrawal and the subsequent effect on Palestinian behavior was unpardonable. But all reasoned arguments against the unilateral withdrawal plan could not overcome the arrogance and blind stubbornness of its proponents. And so the plan moved ahead, people were torn out of their homes, agricultural land was laid waste, synagogues were left to be destroyed by celebrating vandals, and Kassam rocket launchers were moved north.

And now, with the Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections, the whole house of cards that explained and justified this foolish move has collapsed, leaving behind 10,000 homeless Israeli citizens and a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority on the other side of the unilateral border the government tried to establish. Palestinian terrorism has been rewarded and encouraged, and Israel will have to suffer the consequences.

The unilateral withdrawal experiment has failed, but those who carried out this experiment want a chance to continue experimenting with Israel's future. Kadima is presenting itself to Israel's voters in the coming election with a collection of candidates gathered from other parties, with no platform, no institutions, and with a call for the establishment of a presidential executive system in Israel (like in Putin's Russia), so that if elected, they will be guaranteed a full four years to continue with their experiments. The voters will have to decide. (Ha'aretz Jan 31)