



ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee
of Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

Security officials say this group is part of the new wave of homegrown Muslim terrorists appearing in the West. Like the British subway bombers, these second and third generation Muslims have never lived in an Islamic country, at least for any length of time, and have never attended an al Qaeda training camp, but are inspired by Osama bin Laden's hatred for the West. Their motive, they claim,

Events...

Thursday, June 22, 8:00pm

*Community-Wide Event United Against Terrorism, featuring Minister Stockwell Day, John Loftus and the screening of **Obsession**, at the Toronto Centre for the Arts, 5040 Yonge Street, Call 905-764-1818 for tickets.*

Monday June 26, 8:00pm

Paysi Golomb, Director of Kehillot Tehilla, will provide an outline of the process of buying a home in Israel, at BAYT.

Commentary...

Terror in Toronto By Stephen Brown

"Turns out they don't have to find us. They are us."

This statement by Toronto journalist Joe Warmington sums up perfectly the arrests last Friday of 17 suspected Islamist terrorists, mostly in the Toronto area, who were planning multiple attacks on targets in southern Ontario. Shockingly for Canadians, almost all the suspects, who range in age from 17 to 43 years, were either born in Canada or had arrived here at an early age and possess Canadian citizenship. Five are under the age of 18 and thus will be tried as young offenders under Canadian law; most of the others are in their early twenties.

According to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (Canada's CIA), the group intended to blow up government buildings, including the CSIS and RCMP headquarters in Toronto, in retaliation for Canada's support of America in the War on Terror. To do so, they had procured three tons of fertilizer of the type used to blow up the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995, which took only one ton to destroy. In raids across the Greater Toronto Area and in Kingston, CSIS seized a cell phone detonator and military paraphernalia that had been used at a training camp the accused had set up in an isolated Ontario area. At the police press conference after the arrests on Friday, even the door the suspects had been using for target practice at the camp was put on display, riddled with bullet holes. CSIS also said the investigation is ongoing.

Many of the arrested are of Middle Eastern or Somali background, while at least two are converts to Islam. Some have jobs and some don't, while others are high school or university students. The father of one of the accused works for Atomic Energy of Canada, while the father of another is a doctor. Two are related by marriage. They live in nice suburban houses or in city apartments, sometimes close to each other. Moreover, one Toronto newspaper reported that the AEC contract employee had once posted bail for an Islamist currently being held in an Ontario jail on a security certificate, awaiting a deportation order.

The group's members, according to security officials, had met through radical Islamist internet sites, now one of the chief means of recruiting jihadists in the West. But CSIS officials say it was their surveillance of these fundamentalist web sites in 2004 that first attracted the intelligence community's attention to the group. It was also CSIS who had arranged the sale of the fertilizer to the alleged terrorists in a sting operation, arresting them shortly thereafter. An earlier visit to Toronto by two Islamists from Georgia, now in American custody, may also be connected with the investigation. It was reported that one of the two had attended high school in Toronto.

for plotting to kill their neighbors and for attacking the countries that have opened their doors to them and their families is the West's supposed persecution of Muslims in such places as Iraq, Afghanistan and Chechnya and for their support of the United States in the War on Terror.

Despite al Qaeda having mentioned Canada twice as a potential terrorist target and a top al Qaeda official telling Canada last week to get its troops out of Afghanistan, Canadians were shocked by the arrests. Up until now, terrorists, some of them Canadian citizens, have mostly used Canada to raise money, find recruits and plan attacks in other countries. The most noteworthy example was Ahmed Ressay, an Algerian living in Montreal, who had intended to blow up the Los Angeles airport as part of the Millennium Plot. American officials arrested him at Washington State's Canadian-American border with a car-load of explosives en route to Los Angeles.

But the arrest in 2004 of a Canadian-born Muslim indicated that Canada had a homegrown terrorism problem. Mohammad Momin Khawaja, whose father is Pakistani, was arrested in Ottawa for his involvement in a terrorist bomb plot that was to unfold in London.

A large problem in Canada's fight against terrorism at home was the previous Liberal government, which was voted out of power earlier this year after 12 years of rule. The Liberals are Canada's party of multiculturalism. As a result, the Liberal government hesitated to crack down hard on terrorist groups, enforce deportation orders (such as the one against Ahmed Ressay) or tighten lax immigration and asylum laws for fear of alienating the urban ethnic vote that forms a large part of their constituency.

Former Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chretien once even had the temerity to say that there were no terrorist groups in Canada, causing CSIS to go to the Canadian public via the media to contradict him, saying there were at least 50 terrorist organizations operating on Canadian soil. A vindictive Chretien then cut CSIS' budget. So is it any wonder that Canada's only court-recognized expert on jihadism, Tom Quiggen, recently told a Canadian national newspaper that "...some of the world's most infamous terrorists have operated in Canada almost unhindered for years."

Meanwhile, Canadian Islamic groups have reacted differently to Friday's arrests. While one Muslim leader sensibly said that Muslims themselves must fight against this extremism in their community, another blamed the federal government for not giving Muslim groups enough money to study why young Muslims are turning to fundamentalist ideologies. Families and friends of those arrested, predictably, have said those charged are good people who have been wrongly accused despite the fact that two of them are already in jail serving a two-year sentence for smuggling weapons into Canada.

But Joe Warmington, who was present in the courtroom for the shackled suspects' bail hearing last Saturday, termed some of the alleged terrorists' behavior "bizarre", saying they were smiling and laughing, as they waved to family members, some of whom were clad in burkas.

"You could see that they were proud of themselves," said Warmington.

And with the police still searching for two suspicious men who were filming the Toronto subway system last week, their twisted sense of pride may not yet be misplaced. (FrontPageMagazine.com Jun 5)

The writer is a columnist for Frontpagemag.com.

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Israel's Image - Why the All-time Low? By Evelyn Gordon

Conventional wisdom holds that Israel's international standing is directly related to its willingness to move toward peace with the Palestinians. Yet in recent years, despite previously unimaginable concessions, its international standing, far from improving, has hit an all-time low.

Consider some of the past few years' developments:

It has become acceptable in academic and media circles to question whether Israel even has a right to exist. Yet 13 years ago, at the height of the "occupation" - before Israel had recognized the PLO, transferred land to the Palestinian Authority or evacuated a single settlement - such discourse was considered beyond the pale.

It has become increasingly common to speak of Israel as an "apartheid state." That, too, would have been unthinkable 13 years ago.

Decisions to boycott and/or divest from Israel - virtually unknown 13 years ago outside the Arab world - are now commonplace in the West. Several churches, for instance, have decided to divest from Israel; and in the last two weeks alone, both the largest British lecturers' association and a leading Canadian union voted to boycott Israel.

Most Europeans, according to polls, consider Israel the leading threat to world peace. That, too, is a new development.

SO WHY have years of Israeli concessions produced not acclaim, but unprecedented international opprobrium? The answer is twofold. One part relates to the general public, and the other to a small but influential group of opinion leaders. I will discuss the first now, and the second next week.

Among the general public, the growing view of Israel as a pariah would be impossible had Israeli (and international Jewish) leaders not abandoned one simple tenet that all of them maintained prior to the 1993 Oslo Accords: that Israel has a valid claim to the West Bank and Gaza.

This claim does not necessitate Israel's retention of these areas; countries throughout history have occasionally ceded land to secure peace agreements. But only if Israel has a valid claim to the territories can giving them up be a "painful concession" that merits reward by the international community. If Israel has no claim, it is merely a thief. And no one would admire, much less compensate, a thief for the "painful concession" of returning some, though not all, of his ill-gotten gains - or for offering to return some, but again not all, of the remainder in exchange for sufficient reward. On the contrary: The thief deserves opprobrium, boycotts and divestment.

Indeed, if Israel has no claim to this land, even its seemingly unassailable demand that the Palestinians end terror in exchange for Israel's withdrawal loses validity. Israel can reasonably refuse to cede land to which it has a valid claim without receiving peace in exchange. But if the land belongs to the Palestinians, then Palestinian violence, ostensibly aimed at retrieving their stolen property, becomes understandable - and so does their claim that Israel has no right to impose conditions on its return.

THIS, HOWEVER, is precisely the picture that Israeli (and international Jewish) leaders have painted for the past 13 years. No Israeli leader talks any longer about Israel's right to the territories; instead, they talk about the Palestinians' "right" to statehood and the need to end "the occupation." But if the Palestinians have a "right" to a state on this land, it must belong to them; similarly, if Israel is "occupying" the Palestinians, the land must be theirs. That is what "right" and "occupation" mean.

Then, as if this were not bad enough, the unilateral withdrawal craze compounded the problem.

Until three years ago, Israel deemed uprooting settlements a national and personal tragedy - a painful (and expensive) move that merited sympathy and compensation. And the human portion of this tragedy - tens of thousands of people thrown out of their homes - would arguably be undiminished even if the territories were stolen Palestinian land. But now, two successive Israeli leaders have declared that far from being a tragedy, uprooting settlements is an Israeli interest, because they constitute a demographic and security burden. And if dismantling settlements serves Israel's interests, how can this possibly constitute a "painful concession" that merits either sympathy or compensation?

THUS IF Israel is to have any hope of reversing the rising tide of worldwide antipathy, it must start by reiterating the basic truths that have disappeared from its discourse over the last 13 years: that Israel has a valid claim to this land, and that ceding this claim is not an Israeli "interest," but a wrenching move conceivable only in exchange for suitable recompense.

The case, briefly, is as follows:

First, this is the historic Jewish homeland: Jerusalem and Hebron, not Tel Aviv and Haifa, were the heart of the biblical Jewish kingdom. This is vital,

because the fact that this was our historic homeland is what justifies establishing a modern Jewish state here at all. Otherwise, we are indeed mere foreign interlopers.

Second, this land was unequivocally allotted to the future Jewish state by the 1922 League of Nations Mandate, which was never legally superseded. The 1947 UN partition plan was no more than a non-binding "recommendation" (the plan's own language) - as are all General Assembly (as opposed to Security Council) resolutions. Thus once the Arabs rejected the plan, it had no more validity than any other unsigned deal. (Were this not true, incidentally, much of pre-1967 Israel would also constitute "occupied Arab land.")

Third, no sovereign state ever replaced the Mandate on this territory. Jordan and Egypt conquered the West Bank and Gaza, respectively, in 1948, but neither conquest ever received international recognition. Legally, the territories remained stateless lands whose ownership was disputed. The only change that has occurred since is that the Palestinians have replaced Egypt and Jordan as the Arab claimants.

And finally, Israel acquired these lands not in a war of conquest, but in a defensive war.

At this late date, reversing the international perception of Israel as a thief rather than a legitimate claimant will be a Herculean task. But unless Israel makes the effort, it will increasingly be treated as a criminal rather than a seeker of peace. (Jerusalem Post Jun 8)

Stan Laurel's Smile By Sarah Honig

Finally, after so much philosophizing, pondering, studying and speculating, the mystery is solved. At last I see the light from DC and realize what 4,000 years of Jewish suffering were for, more particularly why Zionism arose, why Israelis struggled for self-determination and why we keep sacrificing. Our *raison d'être* is to not let America down and to make the patron from Washington proud of his pesky protege from Jerusalem.

Ehud Olmert - representing a venerable ancient nation - stated as much in his speech before the Joint Houses of Congress. "Abraham Lincoln once said," he dramatically intoned (it's always useful to resort to august models), "I am a success today because I had a friend who believed in me, and I didn't have the heart to let him down." Israel is grateful that America believes in us," exclaimed the head of the nascent Jewish state's sovereign government. "Let me assure you that we will NOT let you down!"

What a heavy weight off America's heart! Washington's peace of mind was doubtlessly restored now that troublemaking Israel undertook to do its bidding. Evidently Jewish independence was achieved at so great, still-exacted and ever-escalating a cost in order to subordinate Israel's existential interests to America's transitory realpolitik.

It matters little whether this was Olmert's explicit message or whether he carelessly belittled his country by implication in his headlong alacrity to ingratiate himself. The impression he sycophantically imparted is that insignificant Israel's destiny is to please its superpower sponsor, refrain from disappointing it with uncalled for noncompliance, and obediently take its cue from its supposed benefactor. We can be depended upon to toe the line.

THAT'S WHY Olmert's first order of business was to answer Bush's summons and solicit American approval for the new "realignment" brainstorm, a.k.a "convergence," previously hawked as "disengagement." The immature ward can make no move without his guardian's obligatory blessing. The very compulsory dash to DC, hot on the heels of taking office, smacks of subservience, of reporting dutifully for duty to receive orders from the commander-in-chief. So much for the Sabra New Jew, freed from the shackles of Diaspora cringing, emancipated from helplessness and the cowering mind-set known in our midst as *galutiyut* - obsequious self-deprecation and currying of favor with whoever could constitute danger and/or offer protection.

Israel's Diaspora-born founding fathers ironically knew how to stand up to the world's highest and mightiest. They could - and often did - send foreign potentates and their emissaries packing. But not so the progeny they reared, ostensibly unconstrained by degrading complexes. Pragmatic Sabras endlessly calculate the odds and are serially overwhelmed by them.

Pressurable and pliable Rabin, Barak, Sharon and Olmert - all products of our local insular upbringing - don't remotely measure up to the stick-to-itiveness of Ben-Gurion, Golda, Begin or Shamir. Sabras may swagger but they're fretful. They posture as tough unsentimental moral relativists, but they

lack resolve, conviction and - pardon the untrendy term - pride.

That's why Olmert flashed an inane Stan Laurel "hanger-in-my-mouth" smile when appearing with Bush, looking like a smitten overawed schoolboy in the presence of notable nabobs.

So conscious was Olmert of his new elevated status, and so intent on sucking up, that the satisfied grin didn't even fade when Bush, referring to the Iranian nuclear threat, assured Israelis that "in the event of any attack on Israel, the United States will come to Israel's aid."

But if we're talking about atomic weapons, what good will anything but preventative pre-attack action do? After we're nuked it'll be of little comfort even if Bush sends over experts to gauge radioactivity or super-spatulas to scrape up our remains.

This little lapse in logic, however, didn't deter Olmert's self-congratulatory aides - headed by the never-elected power-behind-the-throne, Dov Weisglass - from calming our anxieties and telling us we can from here on sleep soundly at night because Bush promised us protection.

That assurance is one of the pillars of Olmert's claimed success in Washington. The other was that the boss didn't rap him publicly on the knuckles for his insubordinate unilateral initiative. Indeed, Bush even called it "bold." Cause for joy.

BUT THE greatest coup of all was the fact that Olmert was graced with friendly photo-ops and flattery (which is cordially extended to any guest, but which Olmert took literally and very personally). His spin-master assistants/advisers/publicists all gushed with glee when counting just how many standing ovations American legislators accorded Olmert. Their meticulous tallying reveals that Olmert came away with 13 - a momentous triumph over the mere nine managed some years back by his nemesis Netanyahu.

Toting up applause (to say nothing of quantifying decibels) isn't petty. It's of profound image-bolstering value among provincial voters who aspire to vassal-statehood. Presumably this denotes something of depth regarding real issues. Hence the sympathetic coverage for Aliza Olmert's "conquest of America" and the effusive unstinting praise, heaped upon her in such stark contrast to the character-assassination practiced with equal relish against Sara Netanyahu.

Most Israelis hanker after the kitsch, the hype and the pose. Real substance is too darn depressing. The bottom line is that Olmert's visit ended well.

Bush didn't berate him for "another fine mess," while broadly beaming Olmert seemed to fawningly hang onto his mentor's every word, almost like Stan Laurel asking "Whatever are we gonna do now, Ollie?" It would serve all of us - those who voted for Olmert and those who didn't - to bear in mind that in the Laurel & Hardy reality, avoidable blunders inevitably lead to even more blunders, and debasement is endured so it can be repeated again. (Jerusalem Post June 1)

Before Our 'Luck' Runs out Jerusalem Post Editorial

Yesterday morning, a Kassam rocket fired from Gaza plunged into a home in Sderot, landing on the bed of a boy who had just left for school. Two other rockets hit the center of Sderot near a school, wounding one woman. Three other rockets landed in or near the town.

Since the withdrawal from Gaza last summer, whether as a result of extreme luck or divine providence, none of these attacks has directly killed Israelis. Everyone knows, however, that if one of the rockets happens to hit a home, school or car and to kill some of our citizens, Israel will have to respond in a way that it is not doing now.

This situation raises a burning question: Is it moral or wise to wait until civilians are killed before taking further action to stop these terrorist attacks?

In his June 1 interview with this newspaper, Lt.-Gen. Dan Halutz argued that the IDF is already doing a lot. Israel has killed 103 terrorists in the Gaza Strip since disengagement, he said. It has attacked the terrorists with elite units, artillery and from the air. "It is not safe to be a terrorist in Gaza... We will continue to hunt down those who manufacture and shoot [rockets]... against Israel," he said.

Kadima minister and former Shin Bet chief Avi Dichter thinks Israel can do more. We should "turn Beit Hanoun into a ghost town," he said this week.

Halutz, not to mention Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Defense Minister Amir Peretz, disagree. They are concerned about the risk of substantial Palestinian civilian casualties as a consequence of bombarding the Gaza civilian areas used to launch rocket attacks, and about the risk to soldiers' lives

in taking over parts of the Gaza Strip or launching a massive operation inside Gaza along the lines of Defensive Shield in 2002. And they are concerned, too, that any such action might fail to resolve the problem.

There is, however, another alternative. It is to do what most nations would do when attacked by another country: hold that country accountable, both directly and through international action.

Though it is difficult to imagine such a scenario, if terrorists based in Mexico or Canada started shelling the United States, the US would not just fire back at the terrorists, it would take action directly against the offending government, including seeking UN Security Council condemnation and sanctions against the aggressor.

While there is no state of Palestine, the Palestinian Authority likes to pretend there is one, and the UN goes along, treating "Palestine" as the equivalent of a member state for most purposes. The PA has a president, a prime minister, a cabinet, ministers and generals - all of whom are treated as such by their counterparts, including by Israel.

And while until last summer the PA could argue otherwise, the Gaza Strip is not "occupied" by Israel in any way, except for control over access by sea and air, but not over land via its border with Egypt. Indeed, Israel even destroyed the three northern Gaza settlements that could have been kept without harming Palestinian contiguity in any way - all so that it could hold the PA responsible at least for the territory it unambiguously controls.

Our foreign minister recently held a cordial meeting with President Mahmoud Abbas - whom the international community hopes Israel will "strengthen." Perhaps a central focus of the talks was the insistence that the PA put a stop to the constant shelling of Israeli communities. If that was the focus, there has been no result.

Whether this or that part of the PA is incapable or unwilling to stop attacks from the territory it controls should not be relevant to Israel or the international community: the PA as a whole must be held responsible. Ehud Olmert, set soon to meet with Abbas himself, will surely want to convey that message.

Under Ehud Barak, Israel destroyed generating stations outside Beirut in response to Hizbullah attacks. Ariel Sharon laid siege to Yasser Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah. Similarly, now, additional methods must be examined to make the PA accountable and to counter the Kassam attacks - methods that, unlike the Palestinian rocket fire, minimize the risk to civilian lives.

In parallel, Israel should seek UN Security Council condemnation of all the attacks on our territory, whether from Iran's and Syria's puppet in Lebanon or from Palestinian areas, and affirmation of our own right to self-defense. The chances of success in that forum are slim. But Israel should not let the international community off the hook - and display a lack of minimal self-respect - by not even bothering to ask. (Jerusalem Post Jun 6)

Muslim Zionism By Daniel Pipes

Might Muslim Zionism be stronger than Jewish Zionism?

Although the question may sound preposterous, it is not.

Jewish Zionism evolved out of a steadfast three-millennium-old love of Jerusalem that flourished despite a dispersion that settled Jews far from their holy city. This love of Zion inspired the most extraordinary nationalist movement of the 20[th] century, one that motivated a far-flung population to relocate to their ancient homeland, revive a dead language, and establish a new polity - and to do so against intense opposition.

Muslim Zionism, by contrast, has a conditional and erratic history, one based on an instrumental view of the city. Each time Jerusalem has emerged as a focal point of Muslim religious and political interest since the seventh century, it has been in response to specific utilitarian needs. When Jerusalem served Muslim theological or political purposes, the city grew in Muslim esteem and emotions. When those needs lapsed, Muslim interest promptly waned. This cyclical pattern has repeated itself six times over 14 centuries.

In the first such instance, an account in the Koran tells how God instructed Muhammad in 622 to pray toward Jerusalem and 17 months later redirected him to pray toward Mecca. The Arabic literary sources agree that the Jerusalem interlude constituted a failed effort to win over Jews to the new Islamic religion.

The same utilitarian pattern holds in modern times. Ottoman neglect of Jerusalem in the 19[th] century prompted the French novelist Gustav Flaubert to describe it as "Ruins everywhere, and everywhere the odor of graves. ...

The Holy City of three religions is rotting away from boredom, desertion, and neglect." Palestinian Arabs rediscovered Jerusalem only after the British conquered it in 1917, when they used it to rouse Muslim sentiments against imperial control. After Jordanian forces seized the city in 1948, however, interest again plummeted.

It revived only in 1967, when the whole city came under Israeli control. Muslim passion for Jerusalem has soared over the past four decades, to the point that Muslim Zionism closely imitates Jewish Zionism. Note two similarities:

Emotional significance: Ehud Olmert, today the prime minister of Israel, said in 1997 that Jerusalem represents "the purest expression of all that Jews prayed for, dreamed of, cried for, and died for in the 2,000 years since the destruction of the Second Temple." The Palestinian Authority's Yasser Arafat echoed his words in 2000, declaring that Jerusalem "is in the innermost of our feeling, the feeling of our people and the feeling of all Arabs, Muslims, and Christians."

* Eternal capital: Israel's President Ezer Weizman reminded Pope John Paul II en route to his visit to Jerusalem in March 2000 that the city remains Israel's "eternal" capital. A day later, Arafat welcomed the pontiff to "Palestine and its eternal capital, Jerusalem." Jewish and Muslim religious leaders meeting with the pope likewise spoke of Jerusalem as their eternal capital.

Generalizing, the analyst Khalid Durán observed in 1999 that "there is an attempt to Islamize Zionism ... in the sense that the importance of Jerusalem to Jews and their attachment to it is now usurped by Palestinian Muslims." (Interestingly, this follows a larger pattern of Palestinian Arab nationalism imitating Jewish nationalism.)

This effort is working, to the point that, as secular Israelis increasingly find themselves unmoved by Jerusalem, Muslim Zionism is emotionally and politically more fervid than its Jewish original. Note the example of rival Jerusalem Days.

Israel's Jerusalem Day commemorates the city's unification under its control in 1967. But, as Israel Harel writes in Ha'aretz, this tribute has declined from a national holiday to just "the holiday of the religious communities." By contrast, the Muslim version of Jerusalem Day – instituted 11 years later, by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 – attracts crowds of as many as 300,000 people in distant Tehran, serves as a platform for rousing harangues, and is gaining support steadily around the Muslim world.

A 2001 poll found that 60% of Israelis are willing to divide Jerusalem; just last month, the Olmert government announced its plans to divide the city, to little outcry.

Therefore, I conclude that the Muslim use of Zion represents a more powerful force today than the Jewish love of Zion. (New York Sun Jun 6) *This text is excerpted from the Distinguished Rennert Lecture that Daniel Pipes delivered last week in Jerusalem for Bar-Ilan University.*

An Open Letter From an "Illegal Outpost" By Drori Bar-Levav Honorable President of the State, Mr. Moshe Katzav,

I wanted to tell you about us, Ma'aleh Rechavam, a small community on the edge of the Judean desert, at the foot of the Herodian, about a kilometer east of Nokdim. Around us there are herds of deer, amazing flora and among the prettiest of sunrises.

We are about 20 folks, religious and secular, who came to make the desert bloom and to establish a new town in the Land of Israel. We have been categorized as an "illegal outpost". Oh, yes; in case you didn't know, Jews are not allowed to settle in Judea.

The community is based on Hebrew labor, a Jewish atmosphere, a large living space for each resident and no perimeter fence. Officially, this place is a neighborhood of Nokdim, and it was established with the knowledge of all the appropriate authorities: the regional council, the IDF, the Ministry of Housing, the Settlement Administration, and with the knowledge and blessing of the prime minister at the time - Mr. Ariel Sharon. The neighborhood was established on 13 Tishrei 5762 - September 2001 - and takes its name from Rechavam Ze'evi, H.y.d., who was murdered close to that date.

The community contributes to the region's security, including in the views of military sources, who expressed to us privately that our presence in the area saves them the deployment of troops. For if we weren't here, the Bani Ta'amara tribe - not known for its love of Zion - would be. ...Prior to our presence in the region, it was a lawless area, which led, among other things, to the murder of two children from Tekoa, who had their skulls crushed. All the residents of

Ma'aleh Rechavam serve as reservists in combat units.

We have invested our souls into this place. I personally have a grove of 150 olive trees that I planted myself, a vineyard with muscat grapes, an almond grove, a grove with 60 fruit trees (35 varieties!) - and there are other residents like me.

It all was established, as I mentioned, while in constant contact with the authorities; and we even resisted expanding beyond the "blue line" (which defines state-owned land). All of a sudden, one fine day, I open the newspaper and discover that I am in an "illegal outpost".

Of late, there is again talk of "dismantling the illegal outposts" (a politically correct term for destruction, demolishing and uprooting), so allow me to expose something for you. This has nothing to do with legality! There was a promise made by Dov Weisglass to Condoleezza Rice to evacuate anything established after March 21, 2001. That is to say, there could be a completely illegal community established on private land or in a nature preserve, which disregards the law, and no one will discuss it if it was established on March 20, 2001. On the other hand, a place established in coordination with all of the appropriate authorities one day later will find itself in the list of "illegal outposts".

In general, there is no legal way to establish a community in Judea or Samaria; Jews are even forbidden to settle in the Jordan Valley, which is supposedly within the consensus. If you want to settle there, you can not do so legally; and those who have done so in recent years have been listed as living in an "illegal outpost" just like ours. Furthermore, the State of Israel has forbidden the settlement branch of the World Zionist Organization, the Jordan Valley regional council, and any other official body from assisting those settlement outposts. Those who do so, thereby essentially fulfilling their mission statement, are in violation of the law.

The fact that in Judea and Samaria, in area C, there are thousands of new construction starts by Arabs, and that no one intends to enforce the law against them, does not indicate that the issue at hand is "law enforcement".

...As of now, we are in a situation wherein we set down roots with the permission of the prime minister, in our ID cards our place of residence is Maaleh Rechavam, the part of the state in the establishment of the community is clear (700,000 shekels from the Ministry of Housing according to the Talia Sasoon Report), yet there is the intention to expel us without compensation, without passing legislation, and without protecting the most basic rights preserved even in the case of enemies of Israel.

What is the purpose of uprooting people from their homes when the status of the area has not even been decided? I don't know if it is evilness or stupidity or both of them together.

As mentioned, the neighborhood sits on state land within the "blue line" of the town of Nokdim, and the neighborhood's territory is included in the general development plans of Nokdim. All that's missing is the signature of the defense minister.

Aside from all of the legal and bureaucratic phraseology, which lowers everything by several notches, whoever comes to visit us feels "the old, beautiful and forgotten Land of Israel, which holds out its hand to give and not to take." And I am sure that if you come to visit us, you will feel the same thing: that there is still hope, and that there are places in which settlement, agriculture, Hebrew labor, partnership and Land of Israel folksongs are not curse words, nor are they empty of meaning.

The new defense minister, Mr. Amir Peretz, has been speaking recently in every possible forum about the destruction of the outposts, and about how our existence shames the State of Israel. We shame the State of Israel? We who are among the last of the people who still work the land and are continuing the vision of our forefathers (and of the founders of the Labor party), in spite of all the dangers? We who continue to report for reserve duty in combat units even though we belong to a sector that the state treats like second-class citizens?

What can be said? One feels like shouting, "Open your eyes! Take a look at what is happening here! You have inverted everything!"

Perhaps it is still possible to halt the impulsive destruction of national myths and the surrender of values. (IsraelNationalNews.com Jun 5) *The foregoing was abbreviated and translated from a lengthier Hebrew-language letter sent to President Moshe Katzav.*
