



Jerusalem 7:06 Toronto 8:43

Commentary...

How We Live By Naomi Ragen

This is how we live: last week I went to a memorial service for Eitan Newman, the young soldier blown up in his tank last year as he patrolled the dangerous Philadelphia road that separates Gaza from Egypt and weapons smugglers and terrorists. Only a year ago, I paid a shiva call to his family. In the midst of her grief, his mother, Sara, asked me to tell this e-mail list to buy Israeli products, because the Israeli economy was hurting so badly. I was humbled by her request, and passed it on to you, and you responded with hundreds of heartfelt letters of condolence to Sara and her family.

The memorial was held at Himmelfarb, a religious boys' high school where my son went. It was packed with Eitan's family and friends, so many young men and women, many of them married and wheeling baby carriages. Those like myself, who had never met Eitan, spent the evening getting to know him, in what was a celebration of his short, beautiful life, a life filled with kindness and laughter and learning and giving. I looked at the videos of him and his friends --such a handsome, charming, clever boy. Beside me sat Esther Waxman, a friend of Sara's, whose own soldier son was kidnapped and murdered by Hamas terrorists. She had come to participate in an evening that could not have been easy for her. She had come to remember Eitan with love. Not a word of hatred or revenge or politics was heard that evening. And we left feeling like family.

A few days later, I rode out to Gush Katif and spent an afternoon speaking with Roz and Paul, friends who are farmers in Netzar Chazani. They have eight kids, seven boys, five of whom are army officers. I sat in the house they've built, saw the lettuce they grow in sand that brings in so many export dollars, and spoke with them about how their government is planning to throw them out of their house and land come August in exchange for...nothing. They are filled with faith that it won't happen. Filled with love and forgiveness for their fellow Jews, who they think are mistaken.

Last night I attended a wedding. The bride was the beautiful young daughter of friends. I didn't know much about the handsome groom. The wedding was held in an elegant hotel. It was special. The dancing was amazing. Then someone said to me: "I don't know how she does it."

"Who?" I asked, puzzled.

"The mother of the groom. You must know, her daughter and husband..last year, Cafe Hillel..."

I thought about it a minute, and then it dawned on me. The bride who had been killed in a suicide bombing the night before her wedding, along with her father, a well-known physician, who had run the emergency room at Shaare Zedek, saving the lives of so many terror victims. And now, a year later, another wedding. The bride's brother.

I looked around the room. Many of these people had no doubt gathered the year before to attend his sister's wedding, and had instead attended her funeral. And now they had gathered once again, to celebrate with joy, to make the bride and groom joyful, to dance and be happy.

I watched the groom's mother, girlish as a bride herself, as she danced with the bride doing everything she could to make her happy. I watched as the room swirled around them, everyone laughing, rejoicing. And then I watched the young groom suddenly break into the women's circle, taking his bride by the hands and dancing with her as the room exploded with cheering, and clapping and happiness.

Whenever I think I can't go on one more day, that the cisterns of grief are overflowing, ready to tip over and drown me, I never fail to be touched by the extraordinary spirit of the people of Israel, the most humane, giving, life-affirming people on the planet-- whatever sick propaganda you might have read to the contrary.

I know we are truly God's people. How else can you explain what I've just told you? Our enemies will never win. Because love is stronger than hate. Joy is stronger than sorrow. And those who love life are stronger than those who

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value death. Our enemies think they will win because they are willing to die. But I know we will win, because we are willing, despite everything we've been through, to go on living joyful, meaningful lives that are full of love. I don't know how it's possible, but everyday, every hour, someone else shows me how it's done.

God bless them. And God bless all of you who love the people of Israel. (NaomiRagen.com Jun 9)

Danger in Ignorance By Daniel Doron

Despite Israel's many faults and failures, American Jews are still deeply committed to its security and well-being. But they, and even their highly intelligent leadership, need to be better informed if they are to more effectively defend it.

The attack on Israel's legitimacy is widening because US Jews, like most other Americans, get much of their information about the Middle East conflict from an ideologically slanted media - The New York Times, CNN and National Public Radio, to name a few. And the pro-Israel community lacks enough knowledge to overcome the bias.

The liberal media believes that Israel, an ally of what they consider an aggressive imperialist America, cannot do anything right. Its adversaries, the Arab Noble Savages, members of the Third World club of the oppressed can, on the other hand, seldom do wrong.

It is amazing, actually, that despite years of relentless disinformation which has blackened Israel's image, Jews still maintain even a residue of respect and affection for it. Moreover, there is a well-funded and sophisticated Arab propaganda campaign that has indoctrinated significant elements within the American elite, especially at universities and in the media where lies and distortions undercut Israel's moral legitimacy.

Since most Americans, including Jewish leaders, have only a general notion of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Arabs and their self-hating Jewish allies have successfully sold the narrative that "Arab lands" were stolen, making indiscriminate Arab terrorism the only way they could fight a Jewish "occupation" and "ethnic cleansing"; and that Arabs deserved support because they were like a David fighting the wicked Goliath - Israel.

But the landmass that was designated as a British Mandatory Palestine (including what later became Jordan) was allotted to a Jewish national home as part of a post-World War I

deal that disposed of Middle East territories that the Turks ruled for centuries. More than 99 percent of these lands were given to the Arabs, without their lifting a finger, really, to liberate them, with the understanding that Palestine, which occupied less than 1% of this landmass, was to be given to the Jews. The international community judged Jewish claims to this sliver of mostly desolate land overwhelming. Arab representatives to the post-World War I peace conference first accepted this generous deal. They objected only later after British imperialist agents incited them against it.

There were never any valid historical, legal or national claims to "Palestinian lands" and few valid claims to Palestinian private property rights either. Up until this time most of the disputed West Bank is arid and empty. Less than 7% of it is privately owned or settled. Israel barely touched privately owned land; settlements were built on 4% of empty government-owned land.

Moreover, the 93% of the land which is in dispute was last the possession of the British Mandatory government, which inherited the lands from the Turkish crown. So the land was never "Palestinian." After the demise of the Mandate in 1948 and the rejection of the UN partition plan by the Arabs, this land remained with no legal ownership. It became disputed territory, with the Jews holding prime claim to it, since it was last designated by the community of nations for a Jewish national Home.

"Occupation" is another lie. After the 1997 Oslo Accords more than 95% of the West Bank's Arab population came under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. True, Israel has been making forays into this territory in order to fight terrorism, but they do not constitute a permanent conquest.

Lastly, the Arabs of Palestine were always the spearhead of an obsessive Arab effort to destroy Israel. When you consider that Israel is fighting the whole Arab world, which enjoys the backing of many Muslim and Third

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World countries, and the complicity of many European nations, it should be clear who is the David and who the Goliath.

Not only Jewish-Americans, but also Israeli spokespersons seldom challenge or counteract false Arab charges. They mostly just let them go unrefuted, so that by default Israel has come to be regarded as guilty of stealing Palestinian lands and of an occupation involving ethnic cleansing.

The erosion in Israel's moral stature has weakened not only its international standing but its most valuable ally, the American Jewish community. Jews no longer feel the pride and self confidence that they felt after Israel's upset victory in the Six Day War, or after the remarkable rescue of Israeli hostages from Entebbe.

But the problem is far more serious than mere loss of pride or self confidence. We see how the indoctrination of European elites by Arab propaganda has resulted in calls for Israel's dismemberment or at minimum for an anti-Israel boycott. The indoctrination has also generated an ugly and dangerous wave of anti-Semitism.

The American people, thank God, are not likely to be bamboozled by their intellectuals, and thank God again, Israel is defended by good fundamentalist Christians. Still, one must not underestimate the potential danger that an erosion in Israel's moral position poses for Israel and for the American Jewish community.

This danger must be met by mounting a massive educational effort to arm US Jews, especially its leadership, with a better understanding of the nature and history of the Middle East conflict. (Jerusalem Post Jun 9)

Spin-Cycle Blues By Jonathan Tobin

Bush's romance with Abbas leaves GOP with some explaining to do

Jews are an especially paranoid lot. Often, it doesn't take much to set us off. In the latest case, it was the mere mention of a date that set alarm bells ringing: 1949.

At a joint press conference held at the White House May 26, President Bush uttered the following statement in the presence of Palestinian Authority head Mahmoud Abbas: "Any final-status agreement must be reached between the two parties, and changes to the 1949 Armistice lines must be mutually agreed to. ... This is the position of the United States today; it will be the position of the United States at the time of final-status negotiations."

For many who heard these words, the interpretation was clear: The United States opposes Israel's presence in the territories, and even in Jerusalem. This seemed to contradict the statement Bush made last year in an exchange of letters with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on April 14, 2004.

At that time, Bush wrote: "In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli populations centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final-status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949 It is realistic to expect that any final-status agreement will only be achieved on the basis of mutually agreed changes that reflect these realities."

At the time, the interpretation given these words by most observers, including this writer, was that Bush was signaling that if the Palestinians really wanted a state, then they must accept that some Jewish communities over the green line would never be relinquished.

Placed alongside each other, has Bush flip-flopped? Are those who think he's changed wrong?

The answer to both is a big, fat maybe.

In the world of diplomacy, nuance is everything because it is entirely possible to view both statements as entirely consistent.

After all, the president's 2004 statement also made it clear that the Palestinians had to sign off on any accord in which settlements would be brought within Israel's borders.

And even though the 2004 letter also specifically rejected the "right of return" for Palestinian refugees and their descendants to swamp, and ultimately destroy, Israel, it also promised them the same viable Palestinian state that was mentioned last month. The key to interpretation is, of course, context.

In April 2004, the Palestinians were still led by arch terrorist Yasser Arafat, a man who was persona non grata at the Bush White House. And given the fact that the Palestinian terror war of attrition known as the intifada was still raging, Washington was eager to send the Palestinians the message that the U.S.-Israel alliance was rock-solid.

The feeling is a little different today.

Arafat's now dead. And his replacement - longtime deputy Mahmoud Abbas - has been on a nonstop charm offensive in the Western world.

Even if he was elected in a race that was noticeable for its lack of competition, Abbas has been anointed by Bush as proof of the rise of democracy in the Arab world advocated by the administration in the context of the war in Iraq.

And even though Abbas has done nothing to disarm Palestinian terror groups, he's still getting credit here as a good guy who must be supported.

The dynamics of the recent visit of Sharon to Bush's Texas ranch and Abbas' White House jaunt were also remarkably different.

Sharon, who counts so heavily on American support to justify his own policy of withdrawal from Gaza, came away from the ranch with virtually nothing.

By contrast, Bush hailed Abbas. In a piece of unintentional humor, the

normally tongue-tied president even seemed to play the rhetoric coach when he intoned, "Good job, good job," after Abbas ended his White House statement. Those who see this as a forerunner of doom for Israel believe that the re-elected Bush is now free to do what he likes, without fear of offending Jewish voters.

Worse, they worry that the administration's democracy mantra has caused the president to lose sight of reality on the ground because burnishing Abbas' reputation as a peacemaking democrat bolsters Bush's general foreign-policy aims. As a result, the worry is that he will throw Israel and Ariel Sharon under the bus in order to prop up his newest Middle Eastern buddy.

As to the truth of the charges, we can dismiss the second-term motive. Bush was elected in 2000 with very few Jewish votes and not that many more four years later. As a result, he owed the pro-Israel community nothing when he arrived in the White House.

Nevertheless, he produced - to the amazement of many who thought him a clone of his father - a very strong pro-Israel record. Even Democrats would have to concede that the green light he gave Ariel Sharon to go on the offensive against Arafat's terrorists enabled Israel to defeat the intifada. And his shunning of Arafat and embrace of Israel's position on the future of the territories and refugees were landmark moments for the U.S.-Israel alliance.

That he did this as a result of his own convictions, rather than as a payback to the Jews, deserves to be acknowledged by even the most rabid Bush-basher. But at the same time, Bush's biggest backers need to acknowledge that his current embrace of Abbas is more reminiscent of Bill Clinton's delusional pursuit of a Nobel Peace Prize than the cowboy who road roughshod over Arafat and his cheering section at the United Nations.

Abbas may be the best of all possible Palestinian alternatives, but there needs to be more emphasis on accountability from Washington if peace is to have a chance. By embracing Abbas, Bush seems to be accepting the European model that the Palestinians are the exception to the prime directive of the war on terror: You are with us or you are against us. Abbas, who wants to appear the democrat in Washington but play nice with the terrorists in Gaza, doesn't fit into that formulation as a U.S. ally.

Bush's record has earned him some slack with friends of Israel, but not this much.

Yet the real test for Abbas - and Bush - is yet to come.

Some time after Israel finishes its unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, many intelligence analysts insist that the intifada will break out anew as Abbas pushes for more Israeli concessions on the West Bank and in Jerusalem.

If Bush holds Abbas accountable for a spike in terror, then fears about American appeasement were misplaced. But if Bush reacts by making more excuses for the Palestinians and tries to restrain Israeli measures of self-defense, we will understand that the president has truly reversed course.

Until then, all we can do is watch, wait and warn of the dangers that lie ahead. (Jewish World Review June 15)

The writer is executive editor of the Philadelphia Jewish Exponent.

Et Tu, Oprah? By Naomi Ragen

I am a 55-year-old white, middle-class American woman; wife, mother, grandmother. I am one of the loyal fans who have made Oprah Winfrey the queen of American television, and a successful magazine magnate. I am special in only one respect: I have lived in Jerusalem for the past 35 years, and only narrowly escaped the Pessah massacre together with my family in 2002.

During the killing spree that was known as the Intifada, we Israelis found nothing more infuriating than the insidious line taken in interview after predictable interview by BBC and CNN that terrorists were motivated by hopelessness or poverty, brought about by the victims.

With 9/11, sympathy for terrorists waned, as well as belief in the theory that terrorist victims had it coming.

David France's recent article on Yusra Abdu, a Nablus teenager who confessed to volunteering to enact a suicide bombing inside Israel, was shocking on several counts. First, its subject matter: the "love" story between the head of the Marxist terrorist group, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) who rejected Oslo and all peace initiatives and a 17-year-old girl who sought him out and attempted to win his heart by batting her "velvety eyes" at him and declaring her willingness to be a suicide bomber.

The second count is the venue: How did this inaccurate and obviously politically biased piece of bad journalism find its way into O magazine among the diet tips and \$195 Prada sunglasses? Among the tips for living a better, kinder, more involved life?

As a fan of Oprah's and a subscriber to her magazine, I couldn't believe my eyes. Part of a commendable Women and Girls at Risk series exposing dangers to women in other countries, the Yusra Abdu piece would have fit right in except for one huge problem: the writer, who falls all over himself trying not to figure out who and what has put Abdu and other Palestinian women at risk.

France attempts to go the route of hopelessness and poverty. But he is stymied.

Her parents describe Yusra as a "wonderfully frivolous" teenager. And he

has no choice but to admit that her closets are overflowing with clothes, and her walls full of posters of pop stars. A "happy girl with an optimistic smile." All this, of course, happened under Israeli occupation. But readers would never know it. From the context of France's piece, the trouble began with the withdrawal of Israeli troops after Oslo, who were replaced by Arafat's security police. According to Israeli security, Nablus has provided more homicide bombers than any other Palestinian city.

Terrorist groups ran rampant, so that a well-known killer like 24-year-old Hani Akad, bomb expert and Nablus head of the DFLP – which once blew up Arab students in the Old City and set off a bomb next door to a nursery school in Talpiot – was left to ply his trade unhindered.

According to France's own report, Yusra went to him offering herself as a suicide bomber. France tells us it was her way of flirting. And then France says something else which is really revealing. "They didn't date. Hani couldn't date."

WHAT HE doesn't tell American women is why, which perhaps more than anything else is the crux of this story: Because a date would have compromised Yusra honor and she might have found herself getting her throat slit by her brother or father. Is it any wonder that, as France himself writes, she confessed to Israeli security police that the real reason she wanted to blow herself up was "boredom?"

Glaringly, France ignores completely the constant and unrelenting incitement to terror by the religious, cultural and educational systems in place in the Palestinian Authority. Like a spanking new sixth-grade text book called Reading the Koran which selectively quotes from the Koran such gems as: "oh you who are Jews if you think you are favored by Allah then pray for death"

France goes another route, seeking to explain the desire for terror by describing the brutality of the Israeli army. Paraphrasing a report by Amnesty International, he makes the outrageous charge that "both sides target minors."

Amnesty, which has had a true credibility gap in the past few years concerning its coverage of human rights abuses by Palestinians, makes the following statement in its 2004 report, which is not judged worthy of inclusion by France: "Palestinian terror groups have repeatedly shown total disregard for the most fundamental of human rights notably the right to life, by deliberately targeting Israeli civilians and by using children who are susceptible to recruitment."

Trying to turn the story of Yusra and Hani into a love story, France encounters numerous obstacles. He can think of no explanation, for example, why after accepting Hani's proposal, Yusra approaches Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades and offers once again to blow herself up. Not very complimentary to her "freedom fighter" with the M-16 and the "fiery glance and dimpled cheeks."

Also, in his attempt to paint Hani the terrorist in heroic colors by revealing how he tried to talk his fiancée out of "taking revenge on Israelis," France omits one very pertinent fact: Hours after Hani was killed, two female Palestinian students, Aadala Goavra, 21, and Lina Goavra, 22, gave themselves up to Israeli security forces. The pair had been recruited and equipped by Hani, a specialist in explosion devices passed on to operatives, to blow themselves up in Tel Aviv.

What a guy! What a story!

And what, in heaven's name, is Oprah Winfrey thinking?

Champion of the underdog, patron saint of the downtrodden and depressed and overweight, why has she allowed her reputation and her magazine's to be sullied by this sordid attempt at terrorist white-washing? Millions of American women who get their information about vital subjects like terrorism that affect us all, are now all women at risk. (Jerusalem Post Jun 9)

Disengagement Is No Solution By Shmuel Katz

When Menachem Begin, newly-elected prime minister of Israel, met president Jimmy Carter at the White House in 1977, he was almost immediately pressed by Carter to stop the settlement of Jews in Judea and Samaria. Begin replied that just as the president could not prevent American citizens from living where they pleased in the US, so he as prime minister of Israel had no right to prevent Jews from living where they pleased in the Land of Israel.

Begin's reply was in complete conformity with the Mandate for Palestine – the Jewish people's international charter for its state in Palestine. It was conferred on Britain in 1922 for the specific purpose of promoting and facilitating the "reconstitution" of the Jewish National Home in Palestine. Notably it laid on the British government the duty of promoting the "close settlement" of Jews on the land, as well as giving them state lands on which to settle.

Britain's giving up of the Mandate in 1947 did not affect the rights of the Jewish people. They remained valid under the United Nations organization established after World War II – and in spite of all that has happened since, they remain valid to this day.

Palestine, however, was only a very small part of the territories of the defeated Turkish Empire shared out by the League of Nations after World War I; and it was the Arabs who were the great beneficiaries of the Turks' defeat. Mandates to oversee and promote Arab progress to independence were given to France as well as to Britain. France governed Syria and Lebanon; Britain, in addition to Palestine, was entrusted with a Mandate for the huge territory of Mesopotamia (Iraq). All these were to become Arab states.

Moreover, as a precursor to Britain's later betrayal of her trust to the Jewish people, the British government slipped in a clause excluding the whole of

Eastern Palestine (beyond the Jordan River) from the Jewish state-to-be. Jewish protests were to no avail.

Thus, in time, was formed Transjordan – a virtually empty territory taking up almost 80 percent of Palestine's total area. It became a brand new Arab state, its inhabitants coming from western Palestine and some from Hedjaz (now Saudi Arabia). This eastern part of the Land of Israel was eventually named the Kingdom of Jordan.

Thus the great Arab nation came into sovereign possession of the whole of the huge territory between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean, except for the sliver of land that remained for the Jewish State of Israel.

THEN, IN 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations, successor to the League of Nations, proposed the partition of Palestine, which would add still more territory (now in Western Palestine) to Transjordan. The Jews, decimated by the Holocaust, and hungry to see their own state at last, perform accepted this further truncation of their territory.

But the League of Arab States (not the "Palestinians" – no such entity or claimant existed in 1947) rejected the offer, and instead, emboldened by the manifest military weakness of the minuscule Jewish state, launched a three-front attack on it the day it was born in 1948 with the declared intention, and exuberant hope, of wiping it out.

Why? Why? What quarrel with Israel did Egypt have, or Iraq, or Syria, or Saudi Arabia, or indeed Transjordan itself? They had no quarrel with Israel – except its very existence.

Whence comes the Arabs' unchanging, inflexible attitude to the Jewish people? One part of the answer is that they have persuaded themselves that the complete territory between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean is Arab property.

The Arabs, though failing to destroy Israel in the war of 1948, managed to capture and occupy (and annexed) a slice of western Palestine – the "West Bank."

Still, they did not waver in their determination to destroy Israel. In 1967 they went to war again in order to take over the remainder of the land. Unabashedly, with their armies poised on Israel's borders, their leader, Egyptian president Gamal Nasser, boasted that they were about to annihilate Israel.

That second war the Arabs lost completely. By any civilized criterion – let alone international precedent – they certainly thereby forfeited the territory they had raped in the first place in 1948. Unbelievably, the Israeli government, longing for peace, offered to hand back the territory Israel had regained. The Arab states, at a conference in Khartoum, bluntly refused. They were not interested in just any piece of territory. They wanted it all.

Any objective observer would say: "Here was a golden opportunity to give the Palestinians a state." But that had been possible also before 1967. Indeed, why not in 1947 or 1948? And throughout the 19 years in between? This never occurred to the Arab states, including Jordan, nor did the Arabs living in western Palestine ever demand it from Jordan. True, a terrorist organization was formed in 1964 when Jordan still held the territory but the terrorists – the PLO – did not attack Jordan; they attacked Israel.

However, the Arabs changed their strategy after the 1967 defeat. They recalled the advice of the Tunisian president Habib Bourguiba who warned them in the 1950s that they would never destroy Israel in one blow and must aim at accomplishing it in phases.

Thus Arab diplomacy switched from dissolution of the Jewish state to the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank, but with Jerusalem as its capital.

That is the reality that successive leaders of Israel, Right and Left, have failed or refused to confront. Nor have they seriously considered a comprehensive strategy with which to combat its manifold manifestations, nor even a serious public education campaign to parallel the world-wide Arab propaganda.

NOW, PRIME Minister Ariel Sharon has catapulted Israel straight into the Arab plan of "phases" – by which Yasser Arafat meant one Arab gain or victory as a jumping off ground for the next phase, until Israel is eliminated and "a million Jews flee to America."

Here we have a sudden unexpected procession of circumstances. First, the acceptance of the Munich-styled road map diktat – which at least, as a first step, provided for Arab disarmament. Then, without any sign of disarmament (on the contrary, with every indication that no Arab leader was going to do anything about disarmament), Israel announces the surrender of territory.

To the Arabs the surrender of territory in Samaria is probably more important symbolically than in Gaza; and perhaps most meaningful to them is the "evacuation" of Jews from the land they live on, by force if necessary Inshallah.

Now, more and more Israelis who were at first beguiled by a presumably far-sighted leader, who seemed to be saying that this is the road to peace, have begun to see the Sharon plan as simple defeatism. Even from the editors of Haaretz, who have been asserting persistently that Sharon's plan was supported by a majority of the people, have come signals that they are afraid that a referendum now would show the contrary.

Can disengagement be stopped? It can be stopped if Sharon's majority in the Likud Party come to their senses, withdraw their support for his plan, and pass through the Knesset a decision for a referendum. Such a vote might well also ensure their own chances of being elected to the next Knesset.

Israel's enemies would not like it, but with Europe going through a rash of referenda, criticism there would largely be stilled. Nor could the United States reasonably object to such a democratic decision.

In any case, it is time that Israel stopped trying to appease its enemies. Moreover, a halt in the disengagement process would have a healing effect on internal Israeli relations. It would also create a margin of time for a rethinking of the whole Arab Israeli dispute, not only in Israel but also in the United States and, indeed, in the world at large. (Jerusalem Post Jun 15)
The writer, who co-founded the Herut Party with Menachem Begin and was a member of the first Knesset, is a biographer and essayist.

The Gathering Storm Jerusalem Post Editorial

As attention is increasingly focused on the drama of disengagement, the unraveling of the Palestinian Authority is quietly proceeding apace. A quick survey of events of the last week or two is at once shocking and depressing:

Security chief Muhammad Dahlan is openly warning of a "third intifada."
PA Foreign Minister Nasser Al-Kidwa, in defiance of the road map and Mahmoud Abbas's promises to confiscate weaponry, has declared the right of all Palestinian groups to maintain their arms "until the end of the occupation."

Hamas is expressing its willingness to join a "unity government" with Fatah after upcoming elections, delayed by Abbas because of Hamas's electoral strength.

The leader of Islamic Jihad has declared "the calm is over," and joint statements by the terrorist groups say they will soon resume their attacks.

The PA has responded by imploring the assorted militias to maintain calm so as not to interfere with disengagement, begging the question of what will happen after the Israeli withdrawal.

Former GSS chief Avi Dichter, considered the optimist compared to former OC-General Staff Moshe Ya'alon, says the PA has not been lifting a finger against terrorism and opposes the handover of further cities to Palestinian security control.

In attempt to curb anarchy, the PA will not collect weapons, but has resumed executions of alleged "collaborators" and murderers, after cursory military tribunals with no right of appeal. Meanwhile, Fatah has just admitted that some previous victims of "collaborator" executions were innocent.

Two suicide bombings have recently been foiled by Israeli security forces, and warnings and attempted attacks are on the rise.

Smuggling of weaponry from Egypt to both the West Bank and Gaza is rampant, with every indication being that the terrorist groups are using a period they have defined as less than a cease-fire as an opportunity to rearm and regroup for the next round.

The temptation to see all these events through the prism of disengagement should be resisted. Some see this gathering storm as an argument to cancel or postpone that operation, others for proceeding as planned with greater determination. But there is a separate, more important, question from whether disengagement will make it easier or harder to deal with an unraveling Palestinian "partner."

There is the obligation of both Israel and the international community to reexamine the decision to place all its eggs in the basket of Mahmoud Abbas and its notion of what it means to support Palestinian moderation and reform.

The hard fact is that Abbas is not only failing, but also that most trends are in the wrong direction: toward more rearmament, toward denial of previously accepted obligations, toward increasing power of terrorist groups, and away from creating conditions for true democratization through the rule of law.

While some argue that Israel could be helping by removing more checkpoints and releasing more prisoners, what Dichter says of such "experiments" is sobering: "It's impossible to jump from the Shalom Tower without a parachute every time and say: 'Wow, we crashed.'"

Perhaps it is time to consider the possibility that Abbas's rule has suffered not from too little help but from too much. How surprising is it that Abbas moves further and further away from the key task demanded of him by the international community – confiscating weapons and dismantling the infrastructure of terrorism – when international assistance to him only increases as the situation deteriorates?

The claim that Hamas would be worse cannot be allowed to absolve Abbas's PA of its minimal requirements and obligations. In fact, as in the time of Yasser Arafat, the worst situation is not Hamas control, but a PA that serves as a fig leaf for what is increasingly an anarchic terror state.

Whether the goal is saving disengagement or preparing for the day after, the time to force the PA to confront terror is now. (Jerusalem Post Jun 14)

Sharon's Gift to Terrorists By Myles Kantor

Yasser Arafat possessed has passed away, but he is probably rejoicing at recent developments inside Israel.

On June 2, Israel released 398 Arab prisoners as what Ariel Sharon called "part of Israel's efforts to assist Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas] and the moderate forces in the Palestinian Authority." [1] This makes 900 prisoners released in 2005, preceded by more than a thousand released since Sharon's election as prime minister in February 2001. [2]

Out of Sharon's 21-member cabinet, only three members voted against the latest releases: Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, Health Minister Dan

Naveh, and Agriculture Minister Yisrael Katz. Of those released, 170 committed shootings and bombings. [3]

In addition, Ha'aretz recently reported that Sharon "has instructed Justice Minister Tzipi Livni to prepare for the release of veteran Palestinian prisoners who have 'blood on their hands.'" [4]

For an idea of what this means for Israeli security, consider Waseem Akab Khalil Mantzur and Atzam Mantzur.

Released in 2003 after imprisonment for shooting attacks, in February the Israeli military arrested Waseem Akab Khalil Mantzur for involvement in attacks including an attempted massacre of Jews in Bracha near Nablus. Released in January 2004, on February 16 the military killed Atzam Mantzur and fellow terrorist Mahyub Yusef Kiny while planting a bomb in Bracha. [5]

Another terrorist the Sharon administration previously released was Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades commander Suleiman Abu-Mutlak, who participated in the November 2000 bombing of a school bus that murdered two Israelis and maimed several children. The parents of three of the children remarked, "Our children don't have legs, and they release him?" [6]

Islamic Jihad member Hassan Abu Armana was among the 500 prisoners released in February as a "confidence-building" measure for Mahmoud Abbas. He remarked, "There will be no peace, no security, no stability without the release of all prisoners." [7] Hamas leader Hassan Yousef likewise declared to a crowd, "There will be no peace as long as there is a single prisoner in Israeli jails." [8]

Senior Abbas aide Tayyeb Abdel-Rahim said of the latest releases, "this is not enough. All prisoners should be released." [9]

Those are real confidence-building sentiments.

Today's terrorists commit mass murder to protest Israeli soldiers in Gaza City, Nablus, etc. Tomorrow it will be to protest the imprisonment of their "heroes"; or Israel's refusal to commit suicide through "the right of return"; or Israel's "occupation" of Jerusalem.

The least a government should do is not increase the ranks of its citizens' enemies. It is a perplexing horror that the general associated with protecting Israel for generations has become the preeminent liberator of Israel's enemies.

The planned evacuation of the Gaza Strip [10] has obscured Sharon's serial empowerment of terrorists and endangerment of Israeli lives. As the citizens whose settlement Sharon encouraged [11] face dispossession, Islamic Jihad and other terrorist groups have received an infusion of strength.

Israel's Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty states, "All persons are entitled to protection of their life, body, and dignity." [12] The Sharon government has abandoned its primary duty of protection, and Israelis who value the safety and themselves and their loved ones must view this as reckless leadership.

ENDNOTES:

[1] Tovah Lazaroff, "Abbas: Suicide bomb era may be over," The Jerusalem Post, May 30, 2005;

[2] See <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L02399576.htm>.

[3] Israel National News, May 31, 2005,

[4] Aluf Benn and Arnon Regular, "PM orders release of prisoners who killed Israelis," Ha'aretz, May 31, 2005.

[5] Israel National News, February 24, 2005

[6] Quoted in Michael Freund, "Remember Entebbe?" The Jerusalem Post, July 9, 2003

[7] "Bush insists Middle East peace is 'immediate goal,'" The Daily Star, February 22, 2005

[8] "Palestinians welcome freed prisoners," Associated Press, February 22, 2005, <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2005/2/21/215244.shtml>.

[9] "Israel releases 400 prisoners but Palestinians say gesture insufficient," The Daily Star, June 3, 2005

[10] Sharon said as late as 2002, "Netzarim [a Jewish town in Gaza] is the same as Negba and Tel Aviv. Evacuating Netzarim will only encourage terror and increase the pressure on us." Quoted in Michael Ratzon, "Likud's moment of truth II," The Jerusalem Post, October 20, 2004.

[11] Sharon recounts in his autobiography after leading an anti-terrorism operation in Gaza in 1971 and 1972: "When a special cabinet committee visited me for a briefing on the anti-terrorist effort, I described the various military measures we were taking. I also recommended the establishment of several Jewish settlements, Jewish 'fingers,' as I called them, to divide the Gaza district. I wanted one between Gaza and Deir el Balah, one between Deir el Balah and Khan Yunis, one between Khan Yunis and Rafah, and another west of Rafah—all of them built, like the Judean and Samarian settlements, on state-owned land. Standing with the cabinet members on a high hill of dunes, I pointed out exactly what I thought we needed. If in the future we wanted in any way to control this area, I told them, we would need to establish a Jewish presence now." Ariel Sharon with David Chanoff, *Warrior: An Autobiography* (New York: 1989), p. 258.

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