

**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*

## Events...

**Motzei Shabbat, October 29, 8:30pm**

**Rabbi Mordechai Machlis**, Jerusalem educator and foamour Shabbat host, will speak on "Building Jerusalem with Bricks of Chesed" at the **Sephardic Kehilla Centre**.

**December 4-13**

**BAYT Brotherhood Mission to Israel**. Visits to Jerusalem, Hevron, Bet El, Golan, Galil, displaced former Gush Katif families. For info: Moische Posner 416-896-4451 [moische@rogers.blackberry.net](mailto:moische@rogers.blackberry.net) or Larry Zeifman 416-256-4000 ext. 239 [LWZ@Zeifman.ca](mailto:LWZ@Zeifman.ca)

## Commentary...

**Training Our Enemies** By Patrick Devenny

Last month, NBC News correspondent Lisa Myers tracked down one Jihad Jaara, a veteran Palestinian militant who currently resides in Ireland. Jaara's career as a terrorist has been a remarkably effective one. As a member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade - a violent militia tied to Yasser Arafat's Fatah party - Jaara supervised and planned dozens of assassinations and bombings against a wide-range of American and Israeli targets. One of the more reprehensible actions authorized by Jaara was the kidnapping of Avi Boaz, a 72-year-old American architect who was abducted by Al-Aqsa terrorists while he waited at a Palestinian police checkpoint. His bullet-riddled body was found a few hours later, dumped just outside of Bethlehem. Upon being questioned by Myers, Jaara swore that he had renounced such terrorism, a claim that was dismissed by former associates, who identified him as an important interlocutor between Hezbollah and various Palestinian terrorist groups.

What distinguishes Jaara from many of his fellow Palestinian terrorist leaders is that he plied his bloody trade while simultaneously serving as an officer in the Palestinian Preventive Security Service, a body assigned with combating militants.

His official status gave Jaara the ability to travel freely throughout the territories, enabling him to plan his attacks while enjoying the protection afforded to Palestinian officials by the Israelis. While his position gave him some advantages, Jaara was unhesitant when asked what single factor had most contributed to his transformation into a successful terrorist: small-arms training supervised by officers of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The fact that the CIA trained a man such as Jihad Jaara is hardly surprising. For almost ten years, the American government has been engaged in a series of hopelessly misguided endeavors designed to train and fund the Palestinian security services, an initiative which can be deemed, politely, as a dismal failure. Tens of millions of American taxpayer dollars have simply disappeared into the covert bank accounts of corrupt Palestinian officials, while CIA-trainers recklessly lent their considerable combat expertise to fanatics such as Jaara.

The misguided attempt began in 1996, when the CIA led an effort - engineered by then deputy director George Tenet - to train the Palestinian authorities in anti-terror tactics. The initiative was secretly authorized by President Clinton, who later signed a Presidential order sanctioning the expansion of the program to include chaperoned tours of the CIA and FBI headquarters buildings for Palestinian security chiefs. The covert training and funding operation continued over the next two years, existing wholly outside of the public's view.

In 1998, President Clinton - anxious to cement his legacy as Middle East peacemaker - pushed for an expanded and formalized security assistance effort which would be included as a provision in the Wye River agreement. While the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was initially reluctant to accept such an idea, Clinton managed to browbeat the Israeli delegation into

compliance, an י"ט  
acquiescence which ensured the continuation and growth of the formerly covert training program. In doing so, the President ignored the warnings of several veteran Israeli counter-terrorist officials, who repeatedly warned their American counterparts that several high-ranking Palestinian terrorists such as Al-Aqsa Brigades leader Nasser Awis were simultaneously serving as senior security officials in the Palestinian Authority, with responsibility for conducting counter-terrorist operations.

Within months of the Wye agreement, the first Palestinian trainees arrived aboard U.S. government aircraft. Their training regimen was rigorous, far superior to the domestic "boot camps" offered by the Palestinian government or terrorist groups. The Palestinian units were ferried to various military installations, where they were given advanced small-arms training on firing ranges normally used by the U.S. Army and special forces units. Additionally, the recruits were taught how to effectively protect high-value targets and "motorcade operations," skills that could easily be transferred into protecting terrorist leaders from Israeli capture. Many of the former CIA trainees turned terrorists have since praised the CIA course, including Jaara, who made a point to extol the CIA's "shooting" course. Perhaps most disturbingly, however, was that the Palestinian officers were given "interrogation" training, which, in the hands of those who work in the espionage services of groups such as Fatah, could prove extremely valuable.

American officials reasoned that - emboldened by their new training - Palestinian authorities would immediately and aggressively crack down on terrorist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who were consistently breaking ceasefire agreements during the late 1990s. To the U.S. government's dismay, many of the Palestinian security officers quickly joined or began aiding the very terrorist groups which they had been trained to combat. Security personnel were also observed transferring arms and their American training to militia groups such as the Tanzim, which was led by convicted terrorist Marwan Barghuti.

Indicative of the Clinton administration's staggering ignorance over this issue was a class of 18 Palestinians brought to a top-secret location near CIA headquarters in 1998 for a course in "anti-terrorist techniques." American officials failed to realize, however, that most of the men hailed from cities where militant infiltration of the police forces was acute, such as Nablus. Not surprisingly, as detailed in the San Francisco Chronicle, several of the students went on to become some of the most dangerous terrorists in the Palestinian territories, including the infamous Khaled Abu Nijmeh, who used his CIA training to supervise multiple suicide bombings in 2001 and 2002 in Bethlehem. More than half of the original class of 18 went on to become fighters in the Al-Aqsa brigades.

Beginning in 1999, Israeli government officials began suggesting that the American training effort be scaled back, in order to better judge its overall effectiveness. In addition, Prime Minister Ehud Barak complained to the White House that Yasser Arafat was using his seemingly close relations with the CIA to bolster his negotiating position, which had become increasingly aggressive. Tel Aviv's requests fell on deaf ears in Washington, which stubbornly clung to the pipe dream that Arafat's police forces would - given enough American aid and training - eventually confront the various militant organizations. This expectation was abruptly dashed during the intifada of 2000, in which large numbers of Palestinian police joined militant groups in fighting the Israeli Defense Force. The sight of Palestinian police stripping off their uniforms and engaging in raging street battles with Israeli forces became commonplace. At the same time, the Palestinian authorities failed miserably to curtail the actions of terrorist organizations, who operated with total impunity inside the territories.

Apart from the blowback effect precipitated by the Clinton administration's foolishly training men such as Jihad Jaara and Khaled Abu Nijmeh, the futile quest to prop up a Palestinian security service has been an unqualified financial disaster. All told, the U.S. government has squandered almost one billion dollars in the effort to construct a viable Palestinian state, a large portion of which has gone into building a Palestinian security force. Despite this massive amount of funding, the Palestinian services have shown little signs of progress, as detailed in a July 2005 report compiled on behalf of the U.S. government by the consulting firm Strategic Assessments

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Initiative (SAI). The SAI report stated that, even with millions of American dollars and years of CIA training, the PA police were wholly ineffective, wracked with divided loyalties and inferior equipment. Many of its officers, charged the SAI analysts, were active or complicit in terrorist attacks or organized crime rings.

Recent events have provided ample evidence of the overall program's failure. The ongoing chaos in Gaza and the current inability of the Palestinian Authority to enforce its own disarmament provisions with regard to Hamas should serve to prove the utter futility of "reforming" the Palestinian security apparatus. The latest example came on Tuesday, when Palestinian police officers brazenly stormed the offices of the national legislature, complaining that they lacked the basic resources to confront the heavily-armed militant groups. Their lack of weaponry or funding suggests that the tens of millions of dollars in Western aid which was specifically earmarked for arming the police had been directed elsewhere, a violation of the agreed-upon protocols.

Regardless of these past failures, the Bush administration seems determined to follow a similar path, as training the Palestinian security services remains at the heart of President Bush's efforts to keep the Palestinians involved in the negotiation process. Earlier this year, while visiting London, Secretary of State Rice suggested, "There will need to be some international effort, and the United States is prepared to play a major role in that, to help in the training of the Palestinian security forces and in making sure that they are security forces that are part of the solution, not part of the problem."

Echoing the Secretary of State's words was President Bush, who - while meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in May - pledged to "reform" the PA's security services through a \$50 million dollar aid package, assigning an American general to oversee the process. Just two weeks ago, American officials in Ramallah proudly announced the transfer of three million dollars to the Palestinian security services, for the "enhancement of their capabilities." Additional measures have been approved by the President, chief among them a CIA-run effort which would give the Palestinians a supplementary \$300 million dollars for security operations.

These recent overtures are the latest example of our government's puzzling willingness to pour additional millions into anonymous Palestinian coffers, all in the name of highlighting our "even-handedness" with regard to the peace process. As we have already witnessed, however, any American initiative to reform the Palestinian security services is doomed to fail so long as no credible Palestinian government or judicial systems exists in the territories. Yet - desperate to accrue some sort of good will from our erstwhile Arab and European allies - the Bush administration sees fit to throw such considerations by the wayside, disregarding our security - not to mention Israel's - in favor of overseas image management. (FrontPageMagazine.com Oct 18)

*The writer is the Henry M. Jackson National Security Fellow at the Center for Security Policy in Washington D.C.*

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## **The Right Strategy** By Caroline B. Glick

Today may well be the beginning of the end of Syria as we know it. The UN's German investigator Detlev Mehlis is set to submit the findings of his investigation of the murder of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri to the UN Security Council today. The German magazine Stern reported this week that Mehlis will finger several high-ranking Syrian officials as having been involved in the murder. For their part, the Americans and the French are reportedly preparing draft sanctions resolutions against Syria that could be passed in the Security Council as early as next Tuesday.

What happens in Syria is of acute interest to Israel. Our neighbor to the north has been in a formal state of war against Israel for the past 58 years. Since 1982, Syria has been the chief architect and enabler of the Hizbullah terror war against Israel from Lebanon - a war which Israel lost in May 2000. Syria has also been one of the chief state sponsors of the Palestinian terror war against Israel (which Israel is losing).

Given our legitimate stake in the future of Syria, it would seem natural for Israel's political and military leaders to be making clear, forward-looking pronouncements of Israel's national interests as they regard the events now unfolding. Yet disturbingly, statements by Israel's leadership have been both shallow and strategically misconstrued.

Israel's basic line is that the government is against regime change but supports a change in the policy of the Assad regime that will end Syria's sponsorship of Lebanese and Palestinian terrorism against Israel.

There are two strategic fallacies inherent in this statement. The first fallacy is that stability in Syria serves Israel's interest. We are told that the strongest force in Syria after the current regime is the Muslim Brotherhood. Were the Muslim Brotherhood to take over Syria, we are told, the situation for Israel would be far worse than it is today.

But why would this necessarily be the case? Under the "stable" Assad regime, Syria supports the terror wars being waged against Israel. Under a "chaotic" regime of the Muslim Brotherhood, Syria would support the terror wars being conducted against Israel.

So why should we care? Then too, whereas the Ba'athists, who provide safe haven for terrorist groups from al Qaida to Ahmed Jibril wear Western business suits and therefore enjoy a reputation as rational actors that the West can do business with, the Muslim Brothers, who wear gowns and turbans enjoy a reputation as radicals whom the West cannot do business with.

As a result, current international pressure on Israel to restrain its actions to defend itself against Ba'athist Syrian aggression would likely be diminished were the Ba'athists to be replaced by the Islamists. So again, it is unclear why Israel has any interest in regime preservation in Syria.

The second fallacy at the heart of Israel's perception of the maelstrom now seizing Damascus is that it is possible to tinker with the status quo in the Arab world while preserving its basic contours. There may have been something to this view before the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US. But four years later, it is both false and dangerous. Until America was attacked, it was US policy to maintain the status-quo in the Arab world. But in the wake of those attacks, US policy was stood on its head.

As President George W. Bush has repeatedly stated, and as the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq have borne out, the US now sees social dynamism and flux rather than stability as the means to achieve its strategic aims in the Arab and Muslim world. It is not simply that the regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq were overthrown and that Syria may well be the next in line. From Cairo to Riyadh to Amman to Rabat, no Arab regime today remains firmly in control of its destiny. In this historic and geo-political context, for Israel to state a preference based on a no longer relevant status quo is to miss the central regional reality of our times.

Israel's stubborn indifference to the enormous impact that Iraq's transformation into a dynamic, multiethnic quasi-constitutional proto-democracy is having on the Arab world writ large is merely the most blatant manifestation of our intent on preserving our strategic blindness. What we are missing is an appreciation of the fact that while it remains true that the overwhelming majority of our neighbors hate us and wish to see our country annihilated, it is equally and more significantly true that while we sleep, the Arab world is undergoing its most significant change since our neighbors' post-colonialist dictatorships were founded in the 1940s and 1950s.

In the context of the emerging realities in our region, what should Israel rightly base its strategic logic on? We are not America. We do not have the ability to influence how our neighbors' political and social forces will align themselves. But we do have control over defining our expectations of our neighbors and of incorporating those expectations into our political consciousness, our military operations and our diplomatic policies in a manner that will cause these expectations to form the strategic foundations and the tactical guideposts for Israel's actions.

Israel's expectations must be based on the principle that the conduct of good neighborly relations with the Jewish state is not a matter of choice but an international legal duty. When Arab states reject Israel's right to exist and support violent attacks against it, they are transgressing the law of nations.

As such, Arab regimes should not expect a prize from Israel for desisting from their criminal behavior.

There are two principle sources of Israel's strategic befuddlement. First, the strategic line that Israel has adopted since the 1993 inauguration of the Oslo process with the PLO is unilaterally dictated by the Left.

The Israeli Left bases its world view on two incorrect assumptions. First it assumes that at base, the Arab world is unchanging. Second, it assumes that given the stasis of the Arab world, Israel must change and it must do so by internalizing, accepting and justifying the Arab world's refusal to accept Israel's right to exist.

The latter assumption then informs Israel's attempts to appease these "static" Arab regimes by transferring territory to the same rejectionist yet inherently "stable" regimes in exchange for their empty declarations to cease their support for wars - conventional and unconventional - against Israel.

The fact that Israeli security and political sources are now expressing concern that a tamed Assad or an outwardly pro-Western replacement regime may foment immediate US pressure on Israel to give Syria the Golan Heights in exchange for "peace" is a result of our strategic confusion due to our internalization of the Left's strategic fantasies.

Were we to understand that the Syrians, not we, are the ones who must change their behavior, we would not be particularly worried. It is Israel's legitimate right to demand and expect Syria to change before we even begin to consider any arrangements relating to an alteration of the current status of the Golan Heights.

The second reason why Israel's strategic conversation has been brought to the point where our leaders cannot explain to themselves, to the public or to the international community what our national interests are is because the Israeli Right, which enjoys the support of the majority of Israelis, is incapable of independent thought.

For the past twelve years, the Israeli Right has reduced its strategic thinking to reacting to and opposing leftist initiatives. In so doing, it has enabled a continuous erosion of its ability to construct policies, an erosion

that has enabled a right-wing prime minister to mainstream the radical Left's post-Zionism.

Today the Israeli Right has an opportunity to change this disturbing state of affairs. The separation fence in Judea and Samaria - whose creation is a consequence not of Israel's security imperatives but of the government's adoption of the defeatist ideology of the Left which claims that Israel ought not defeat terrorism - is about to be built around Jerusalem's southern flank in Gush Etzion along a route that will endanger the long-term survival of the settlement bloc and expose its residents to unremitting terrorist attacks from the territories outside of the fence.

Opposing this dire and strategically unjustifiable future is the fact that Ariel Sharon has repeatedly declared that he secured American support for Israel's permanent control of settlement blocs in Judea and Samaria which he himself has stated include Gush Etzion.

In light of all this, the Israeli Right now has an opportunity to unify its forces not by objecting to the route of the fence but by rejecting the fence - which only advances the defeatist world view of the appeasement-guided Left - completely. In rejecting the fence, the Right should set forth the demand to extend Israeli law and jurisdiction to Gush Etzion.

This move is based on a number of strategic assertions. First, the demographic situation in Judea and Samaria is different from that in Gaza. The Israeli population in the areas is growing faster than the Palestinian population.

Were Israel to annex today all of Judea and Samaria, Jews would make up two thirds of the population of the state. Aside from this, there is absolutely no reason for Israel to accept the racist Palestinian demand that any land it receives must be Jew-free. That demand is but a manifestation of the continued Palestinian rejection of Israel's right to exist.

Third, this move asserts that there is no reason for Israel to pay any price whatsoever for a Palestinian cessation of their terror war against Israel. Until the Palestinians themselves undergo a societal change that brings them to the point where they forswear violence, Israel must do what it can to strengthen itself and advance its national interests.

Finally, in the absence of a credible opportunity for peaceful relations with the Palestinians, Israel has the right to take such actions as necessary to secure its citizens and national interests unilaterally, regardless of how such acts may impact internal Palestinian politics. And Israel's national interests involve strengthening Jerusalem's southern flank in Gush Etzion.

Nationally, a campaign to apply Israeli law to Gush Etzion could have an electrifying effect on Israel's public debate. It would be the first opportunity since 1993 for the Israeli public to be exposed to a plan that is based on Israel's national interests rather than those of the delusional Left and of the unstable Arab autocracies that insist we have no right to our state. Aside from that, a campaign to apply Israeli law on Gush Etzion would be the first time since Oslo that the Right would unify in support of its own program rather than in opposition to the Left's programs.

Israel's strategic ignorance that has manifested itself so clearly in relation to developments in Syria is the result of a national intellectual failure that has grown larger and more dangerous with each passing year. A concerted campaign to apply Israeli law to Gush Etzion and to reject the strategically misconceived separation fence will be a first and necessary step outside the strategic trap in which we are currently ensnared. (Jerusalem Post Oct 21)

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### **An Open Letter to American (Orthodox) Jewry** By Orit

First, I'd like to thank you, America, for being a wonderful host to me after the terrible Disengagement. It was nice to spend time with my family in sunny Los Angeles, relax with manicures and pedicures, and zone out to the latest TV shows. I was able to gather new strength, gain new perspectives, and clarify my mission to go back to Israel and change a country.

However, it was less fun to go to shul on the High Holidays at my folks' Modern Orthodox synagogue. Services were terribly boring. But what really annoyed me was that no one talked about Gush Katif. The sermons that I heard (or didn't fall asleep to) mentioned Katrina a lot, but rabbis were eerily silent on the topic of the Disengagement. I find this a little disturbing, because all throughout the holidays we pray for the joy and peace of Israel; yet, while thousands of Israelis are in a state of suffering, uncertainty and confusion, no one seems to care, even though the liturgy expresses otherwise.

It was also interesting that on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, when we're supposed to reflect rigorously on the state of our soul, no one really talked about the fate-altering Disengagement. This certainly should have been a hot topic on the Day of Atonement, but again, it was easily evaded, if it was even on anyone's minds. And still, we prayed - all day - for righteousness, honesty and peace of mind - personal and national.

But, in America at least, Judaism is not about the Jewish people anymore. Judaism is about having a nice life and wearing nice outfits to shul, where you can network with equally smart, successful and well-dressed people. It's about saying morning and evening prayers because it feels holy and idealistic, and, hey, everyone wants to feel good about themselves.

For many American Jews, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur seemed all about how to continue living a nice, suburban life. The Torah might as well be a Tony Robbins self-help book, because it outlines great techniques for living, sprinkled with a few historic traditions and ethical codes.

I realized, during my nice stay with you, that you say you care, but deep down, I don't think you really do. You say you love Israel and that you are Zionists, but I don't think you really are. You see, Judaism is not about nationalism to you. Judaism is not about a people living free, independent and strong in their homeland; it's about having a nice house, a good parnasa, and a way of life that's safe and comfortable.

That's why many of you (and there are exceptions), didn't really like talking about the Disengagement. That's why some of you were even happy that it occurred, and that America was appeased, because God forbid, your generous host - your real nation -- would be mad at you otherwise. As soon as you have to take a stand or interrupt your lifestyle, you retreat to your prayer books and everyday say words like: "Blessed are You, HaShem, Who redeems Israel, Who gathers the dispersed of Israel, Who loves righteousness and judgment, Who breaks His enemies and humbles wanton sinners, Who builds Jerusalem, Who sprouts the rays of redemption, Who restores His Presence to Zion."

These are supposed to be your values, but are they? Do you mean these prayers? Do you want these blessings? No, you do not. Because if you did, you'd be taking a lot more risks for Israel than you are now. You'd seriously consider - and what a thought! - fulfilling the mitzvah of living in the country. You'd save some money, pick-up your family, and take part in realizing your prayers - the ingathering of the exiles, the building of Jerusalem, the restoration of Zion - no matter how difficult it will be.

Or maybe the flaws are in the prayers and the Diaspora Jews who penned them long ago, because it's easy to absolve all responsibility to HaShem and just say, "HaShem restores Zion, HaShem breaks His enemies, I don't have to do a thing!" But HaShem once said, through his prophet Isaiah, "Of what are your great many sacrifices to me? I am full of the burnt-offerings and the fat of fed beasts." Prayers are considered the modern-day substitute for animal sacrifices, and HaShem's sick of them. He doesn't want your new moon and Shabbat invocations - HaShem calls them "iniquity." He says that you can pray all you want, but he won't answer them.

HaShem wants us to do what's right and to seek justice - thus says Isaiah. But Torah is not about doing what's right anymore, is it? It's about making enough money to send kids to Jewish day schools, so that one day, they could also have a big house and two cars in the same neighborhood and send their kids to the same school and shul, and so on and so forth, forever.

And when Israel is at war with her neighbors, and her people are dying, they'll continue to send their kids to Jewish day schools, and say the same prayers in the same shul, and maybe they'll send some money to Israel, but they'll be glad they are in their beloved America. When Judaism is too difficult, why put yourself on the line? Why risk your life or your lifestyle? Why shed blood? After all, it's only a religion.

And I wouldn't want you to risk your life for a religion. But it's not a religion we're talking about. It's about a nation - the Jewish nation and its people - me, you, your spouse, your kids, your parents. It's about fighting for what is right and pursuing justice. But that doesn't seem to be too important these days.

So, farewell America. I had a good time. You're a good friend, you can be there for me in difficult times, but I have to catch a plane and start finding myself some justice. (IsraelNationalNews Oct 26)

*The writer, a resident of Tel Aviv, was a special correspondent for Israel Insider in Gush Katif during the disengagement.*

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### **Dead Jews Aren't News** By Tom Gross

Rachel Thaler, aged 16, was blown up at a pizzeria in an Israeli shopping mall. She died after an 11-day struggle for life following a suicide bomb attack on a crowd of teenagers on 16 February 2002.

Even though Thaler was a British citizen, born in London, where her grandparents still live, her death has never been mentioned in a British newspaper.

Rachel Corrie, on the other hand, an American radical who died in 2003 while acting as a human shield during an Israeli anti-terror operation in Gaza, has been widely featured in the British press. According to the Guardian website, she has been written about or referred to on 57 separate occasions in the Guardian alone, including three articles the Saturday before last.

The cult of Rachel Corrie doesn't stop there. Last week the play, My Name is Rachel Corrie, reopened at the larger downstairs auditorium at the Royal Court Theatre (a venue which the New York Times recently described as 'the most important theatre in Europe'). It previously played to sold-out audiences at the upstairs theatre when it opened in April. (It is very rare to revive a play so quickly.)

On 1 November the 'Cantata concert for Rachel Corrie' — co-sponsored by the Arts Council — has its world premiere at the Hackney Empire.

But Rachel Thaler, unlike Rachel Corrie, was Jewish. And unlike Corrie, Jewish victims of Middle East violence have not become a cause célèbre in Britain. This lack of response is all the more disturbing at a time when an increasing number of British Jews feel that there has been a sharp rise in anti-Semitism.

Thaler is by no means the only Jewish Rachel whose violent death has been entirely ignored by the British media. Other victims of the Intifada include Rachel Levy (aged 17, blown up in a grocery store), Rachel Levi (19, shot while waiting for the bus), Rachel Gavish (killed with her husband, son and father while at home celebrating a Passover meal), Rachel Charhi (blown up while sitting in a Tel Aviv café, leaving three young children), Rachel Shabo (murdered with her three sons aged 5, 13 and 16 while at home) and Rachel Kol, 53, who worked at a Jerusalem hospital and was killed with her husband in a Palestinian terrorist attack in July a few days after the London bombs.

Corrie's death was undoubtedly tragic but, unlike the death of these other Rachels, it was almost certainly an accident. She was killed when she was hit by an Israeli army bulldozer she was trying to stop from demolishing a structure suspected of concealing tunnels used for smuggling weapons.

Unfortunately for those who have sought to portray Corrie as a peaceful protester, photos of her burning a mock American flag and stirring up crowds in Gaza at a pro-Hamas rally were published by the Associated Press and on Yahoo News on 15 February 2003, a month before she died. (Those photos were not used in the British press.)

While Thaler's parents, after donating their murdered daughter's organs for transplant surgery, grieved quietly, Corrie's parents embarked on a major publicity campaign with strong political overtones. They travelled to Ramallah to accept a plaque from Yasser Arafat on behalf of their daughter. They circulated her emails and diary entries to a world media eager to publicise them. They have written op-ed pieces, including a recent one in the Guardian.

The International Solidarity Movement (ISM), the group with which Corrie was affiliated, is routinely described as a 'peace group' in the media. Few make any mention of the ISM's meeting with the British suicide bombers Omar Khan Sharif and Asif Muhammad Hanif who, a few days later, blew up Mike's Place, a Tel Aviv pub, killing three and injuring dozens, including British citizens. Or of the ISM's sheltering in its office of Shadi Sukiya, a leading member of Islamic Jihad. Or of the fact that in its mission statement the ISM said 'armed struggle' is a Palestinian 'right'.

According to the 'media co-ordinator' of the ISM, Flo Rosovski, "Israel" is an illegal entity that should not exist — which at any rate clarifies the ISM's idea of peace.

Indeed, partly because of the efforts of Corrie's fellow activists in the ISM, the Israeli army was unable to stop the flow of weapons through the tunnels near where she was demonstrating. Those weapons were later used to kill Israeli children in the town of Sderot in southern Israel, and elsewhere.

However, in many hundreds of articles on Corrie published in the last two years, most papers have been careful to omit such details. So have actor Alan Rickman and Guardian journalist Katharine Viner, co-creators of My Name is Rachel Corrie, leaving almost all the critics who reviewed the play completely ignorant about the background to the events with which it deals.

So in April, when reviewers first wrote about the play, they tended to take it completely at face value. 'Corrie was murdered after joining a non-violent Palestinian resistance organisation,' wrote Emma Gosnell in the Sunday Telegraph. The Evening Standard, for example, described it as a 'true-life tragedy' in which Corrie's 'unselfish goodness shines through'.

Only one critic (Clive Davis in the Times) saw the play for the propaganda it is. At one point Corrie declares, 'The vast majority of Palestinians right now, as far as I can tell, are engaging in Gandhian non-violent resistance.' As Davis notes, 'Even the late Yasser Arafat might have blushed at that one.'

But ultimately the play, and many of the articles about Corrie that have appeared, are not really about the young American activist who died in such tragic circumstances. They are about promoting a hate-filled and glaringly one-sided view of Israel. (The Spectator (UK) Oct 22)

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### Israel Can Bank on Our Support By Greg Sheridan

WHEN people say they want a more independent Australian foreign policy, they generally mean they want a policy that agrees more with them.

Australia has always been a strong friend of Israel. But for most of the past few decades it has taken an understandable, if less than inspiring, refuge in abstaining from most of the plethora of routinely one-sided anti-Israel resolutions and actions at the UN.

But about two years ago the Howard Government decided to change all that. As much as anything, it was watching the international community respond to the wave of suicide bomb attacks on Israel, which elicited muted international condemnation. But when Israel tried to protect itself by building a fence to keep the terrorists out, the fury of the bien pensants, especially at the UN, was boundless.

The UN has a deep structural bias against Israel. To take one of many examples, there has been at the UN Commission on Human Rights a separate

agenda item devoted to Israel at every meeting. No other nation gets a whole agenda item, not China, not North Korea, not Iran. It has been impossible even to get up a single resolution about Zimbabwe's recent murderous practices.

For 40 years more than one-quarter of the resolutions passed at the commission have been aimed at Israel. Anyone who believes Israel is responsible for one-quarter of the world's human rights violations needs to get their medication changed.

Similarly, the UN has established a vast bureaucracy dedicated to blackening Israel's name. There is within the UN secretariat a whole division called the Division for Palestinian Rights, while the General Assembly has the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People.

Of course the human rights of Palestinians should be respected and the UN should play a role in this. But no other nation is singled out for the relentless attacks at the UN that Israel has to cop.

All this anti-Israel activity does nothing to improve the Palestinians' lot. It makes the UN worthless in the Middle East because Israel is utterly hostile and distrustful of it, while the Palestinian cause is endlessly inflamed in soaring and worthless rhetoric, taken over by the international bureaucrat class far from the realities on the ground.

And it is in any event simply a grotesque distortion of what the UN is supposed to be about. Most nations that Australians would regard as like-minded, such as the west Europeans, the Canadians and some others, traditionally find this all too hard to deal with and seek a coward's solace in abstaining from most anti-Israel resolutions and activities. Until about two years ago, that was Australia's way as well. But then came the wave of terror attacks on Israel, Israel's fence and the absurd overreaction to it. Alexander Downer and John Howard decided enough was enough.

So Australia voted against referring the fence to the International Court of Justice. The ICJ inevitably ruled against Israel and in July last year the UN General Assembly passed the normal anti-Israel resolution. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advised the Government to abstain. The Government overruled the bureaucracy and decided to vote against the resolution. We were one of only six nations to do so, the US, Israel, the Marshall Islands, Palau and Micronesia being the others.

The Howard Government's position here was not reflexively pro-Israel. The Government criticised parts of the route taken by the Israelis in building their fence. But it wasn't going to go along with the usual Israel bashing. In truth it was a proud moment in Australian foreign policy and certainly one of the deepest independence.

Australia's ambassador to the UN, John Dauth, said at the time: "We remain of the view that the resolution unfairly isolated a single issue in a complex conflict; that it served no purpose, given the nature and content of resolutions already passed by this assembly; that it would politicise the court; and that it would distract the parties - as is happening - from the urgent need to resume negotiations."

Most of the Australian media commentary was mindlessly hostile to the Government and accused it of being Washington's poodle. In fact the US position on this had little to do with Canberra's decision. Australia could easily have hidden in the shadows of abstention, as did even the US's No. 1 ally, Britain.

This vote was not a one-off. It has become the pattern of our voting on Israel-related issues. Canberra has attempted to use its influence with Pacific Island nations, and even in Southeast Asia, to try to produce a change. And, get this, it is working. Canada has joined Australia on some critical resolutions and the attitude towards Israel at the UN has begun to change noticeably.

Traditionally, Israel was unique in not even being allowed to join a UN regional grouping; now it is, like Australia, a member of the Western Europe and Others Group.

As The New York Times recently reported, Israel has proposed a UN resolution, its Prime Minister has been received at the UN and it is to stand for a term on the Security Council, all unprecedented moves.

There is still vast and objectionable anti-Israel bias in the UN system, but this is progress and it was much less likely to have come about without Australia's actions.

These moves, though they annoyed the Arab League, have certainly cost us nothing in Arab trade or diplomatic relations. (Syria and Libya have recently opened embassies.)

But they are a sign of taking a position of political principle on an international issue and having an effect. They couldn't be more independent, but of course independence, real independence, is the last thing the serried ranks of the unanimous commentariat want. (The Australian Oct 22)

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