



Jerusalem 3:57 Toronto 4:24

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*

Commentary...

Sari Nusseibah and Boston's JCRC

Naomi Ragen distributed this letter sent in response to the controversy surrounding Boston's JCRC hosting Sari Nusseibah.

I have been following this dialogue and decided to add my two cents worth of thoughts on this issue. While I have always been a staunch defender of Israel,

I had never really paid much attention to the growing lack of support for Israel among American Jews until the last few years. Then I became obsessed by it.

I didn't understand how little American Jews had done to help the European Jews during WWII, being more concerned with their own position and afraid to jeopardize it by speaking out. I was not alive then and it was never part of any Holocaust information that I was taught.

I do quite clearly remember when I was 15, reading about Leonard Bernstein hosting a fund-raising dinner for the Black Panthers even though they supported the PLO and were very anti-Jewish.

Which brings me, at last, to my point. Jews are always trying to be accepted and to dispel images of them such as the judensau, or as Columbia University Professor Joseph Massad recently described them (I can't quote him exactly) at a Harvard event, hook-nosed, dirty, cheating weasels. This is a lot of baggage to carry. To paraphrase Ruth Wisse, mainstream Jews would rather try to prove themselves likable, to show tolerance and understanding, rather than really take on their adversaries. Examples of this are too numerous to list.

On the other hand, groups like Christians4Israel and the International Christian Embassy of Jerusalem don't have this negative self-image underlying their mission. They are more willing to be outspoken supporters of Israel, condemn Palestinian terrorism, etc. I think it is time that Jewish organizations started aligning themselves with groups that support them!

Anybody that openly defends suicide bombers should not be given a forum to speak by Jews. There are more than enough venues for them as it is. We should be giving opportunities to speakers that openly, and unabashedly support Israel and show zero tolerance for terror. Speakers from Arabs for Israel and Christian groups that feel no shame about being pro-Israel might give Jews more backbone in standing up for themselves and the beleaguered Israelis.

Sincerely, Jill Hunter www.jillhunter.net (www.NaomiRagen.com)

The Wisdom of the Fathers By Caroline Glick

This week saw Arafat's heirs, PLO chairman Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei and PA Foreign Minister Nabil Shaath, on a junket to Syria and Lebanon where they labored to shore up their base of political support. In Syria, the Palestinian "moderates" met with dictator Bashar Assad and his underlings and agreed to coordinate their positions in future negotiations with Israel with him.

That base covered, they went to meetings with the senior terror chieftains who make their homes in Damascus: Ahmed Jibril, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command; Nayef Hawatmeh, head of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine; Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas; and Ramadan Shalah, head of the Islamic Jihad.

Reinforced from their meetings – where, according to Shaath, they discovered that between the "moderate" leaders and the arch terrorists, "There are no differences over the objectives" – the three went for visits in UN-run internment camps falsely referred to as Palestinian refugee camps in Syria and Lebanon. There they promised that they will never give up the demand for the unlimited immigration of these foreign-born Arabs to Israel in the framework of a peace treaty.

At the same time as they were running around in the terrorist capitals of the

Levant, the US announced that it would for the first time be providing the PA with \$23.5 million in direct budgetary aid to make it easier for the Palestinians to conduct elections in which these three moderates will be elected.

Unfortunately, no one of any consequence seems to think it at all necessary to call attention to the fact that in order for Abbas and his colleagues to shore up their legitimacy in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, they have

moved to build alliances with the most overtly extreme and violent forces in the region. Even as the US is now openly admitting Syria's major role in leading and financing the terror war being perpetrated in Iraq, no one has cast aspersions at Western supported Palestinian leaders who just declared their fealty to Assad and his terrorist vassals.

At the same time, Israel has been awash this week with excitement and enthusiasm over Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak's newfound adoration for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Pharaoh Hosni's decision to release Azzam Azzam from his dungeon, like his announced intention to begin to abide by his obligation to the Camp David peace treaty by returning his ambassador to Israel sometime next year, have been taken as indications that Mubarak is now an ally of Israel. He can be trusted, we are told, to remilitarize the Sinai and control the border between Gaza and Egypt even though he is responsible for his country's refusal to date to do anything to stop the weapons smuggling into Gaza. He can be trusted to train Palestinian military forces even though the ones he trained in the last go-around went on to become senior terrorists in the now four-and-a-half-year-old Palestinian terror war.

No one in Israel this week saw fit to mention that the very day Azzam was finally allowed to come home after eight years of politically motivated persecution, it was announced that Iran had transferred Mustafa Hamza, leader of al-Gamaa al-Islamiya, to Egyptian custody. Hamza had been tried and sentenced to death in absentia by Egyptian courts three times since 1992 and is believed to have masterminded the attempted assassination of Mubarak in Ethiopia in 1995. Reports of the transfer noted that ever since Egypt hosted the Sharm e-Sheikh conference aimed at preventing Iraqi elections last month, Egyptian-Iranian relations have improved considerably to the point where they are considering reinstating full diplomatic ties.

Few in Israel, or in the US for that matter, are particularly interested in analyzing what is happening with the Palestinians or the Egyptians today. This is so because it is considered impolitic, not to mention extremist, to point out anything that might cast doubt on the viability of Sharon's plan to abandon Gaza and northern Samaria while expelling some 10,000 Israelis from their homes, farms and communities.

Next week we will have the fifth annual Herzliya Conference. The conference has become a centerpiece in Israel's national politics because the prime minister has used his address there for the past two years to mark dramatic shifts in his policies. Two years ago he shocked everyone by saying that he supports the establishment of a Palestinian state. Last year he outlined his plan to withdraw from Gaza and northern Samaria. Each time, it took several months for Sharon to ram his new strategic outlook down the throats of his party members. But with the assistance of the press, this year, he is going into the conference with his withdrawal plan firmly entrenched in the received wisdom of our times.

Sharon's adoption of the Labor Party's cut-and-run strategy has had catastrophic consequences for Israel's international standing. Because the plan is being advanced by Sharon, who has been demonized by the international Left as a war criminal, Israel's friends abroad have abandoned the strategic wisdom of never rewarding terror that they bravely advocated for decades and embraced the plan.

Pro-Israel writers and policymakers in the US like Charles Krauthammer, William Safire and Abraham Sofaer have publicly lauded Sharon for his "strategic wisdom" and have castigated as extremists those who insist that the planned withdrawal will be devastating to Israel's national security. Sharon's minions in the government like Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert have

This week's issue is sponsored
in prayer for a refuah shelema for
משה בועז בן יוכבד הענא

Yasher Koach and thank you to our supporters. Thank you also to Continental Press for their ongoing support.
Readers are requested to please mail contributions to: BAYT - re: Israel News, 613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario. L4J 5V3
Annual Rates: Friend - \$36, Supporter - \$50, Benefactor - \$180. Dedications are welcome at \$120/week.
Call (905) 886-3810 for further info. Israel News can be viewed on the internet at www.bayt.org

taken to threatening Israelis directly, arguing that if we oppose the withdrawal we will receive Yossi Beilin's delusional Geneva Initiative, which gives up the entire store to the PLO even as the US National Security Council's point man on Israel, Elliott Abrams, reportedly told leading American Jewish leftists that the White House views all Israeli communities located to the east of the security fence as slated for destruction.

In an opinion column in Thursday's Wall Street Journal, Sofaer, who as legal adviser to the State Department during the Reagan administration arguably did more than anyone to prevent international law from being used as a whip to prevent nations from fighting international terrorism, argued that Sharon's withdrawal plan is the only option. Sofaer allows that "the Palestinians are far from ready to negotiate." The advantage of Sharon's plan therefore, is that it gets Israel out of an "untenable" position in Gaza. Sofaer compares the withdrawal from Gaza to Israel's May 2000 withdrawal from Lebanon, arguing, "Today, the Lebanese-Israeli border is more secure than during occupation."

This is the sort of sophistry that friends of Israel like Sofaer would almost certainly never have entertained before Sharon adopted the plan. The fact of the matter is that today, Hizbullah forces in south Lebanon constitute a strategic threat to Israel. Just this week the army reported that Hizbullah is developing unconventional weapons. Last week the IDF deployed a battery of Patriot missiles to Haifa to prevent Hizbullah drones, which can be armed with chemical and biological weapons, from infiltrating Israel – again. Hizbullah's transformation from a tactical challenge to a strategic threat has advanced unfettered over the past four years because the IDF left Lebanon and stopped fighting Hizbullah. The fact that since the withdrawal of IDF forces from Lebanon no soldiers have been killed in Lebanon is a tautology, not proof that the move was wise. Aside from that, the IDF also reported this week that the majority of Palestinian terror cells in Judea and Samaria that executed successful terror attacks in 2004 have been affiliated with Hizbullah. And so we disengaged from them in Lebanon only to fight them in Israel.

This week St.-Sgt. Nadav Kudinsky was killed in Gaza as he led forces in uncovering a tunnel for transferring terrorists into Israel. How exactly will Israel be able to prevent such tunnels from becoming operational once IDF forces have left the area? Will Egyptian or British forces fight Palestinian terrorists for us? Sofaer writes that "Israel's security would be threatened if Gaza is taken over by terrorists." Well, who else does he think will take it over when, in order to shore up domestic support, the likes of Abbas and Qurei and Shaath feel it necessary to bed down with the likes of Ahmed Jibril and Assad? What do Sofaer or any of Israel's other staunch supporters think Egypt, with fresh diplomatic ties with Teheran and new legitimacy in Israel because of Azzam's release, will do against these people when Mubarak's chief government-sponsored cleric Sheikh Tantawi this week extolled the legitimacy of the Sunni terrorists fighting Iraqi and coalition forces in Iraq?

The fact of the matter is that by fighting Palestinian terrorists on the ground in Gaza and along the Egyptian border and by controlling the air, land and sea entry points to Gaza, Israel is not in an untenable position. It is in a difficult position. But there can be no doubt that the threat won't go away if we turn our backs to it and call it untenable. As in Lebanon, it will grow all the more dangerous.

It is hard to dispute the strategic wisdom of a man with Sharon's military credentials. But can we not at least entertain the notion that Sharon at 76, embroiled in criminal investigations, may be past his prime? This is not the time for debating Sharon's place of honor in Israel's history, which he more than earned long ago. But we owe it to ourselves to coldly analyze the strategic options with which we are faced, rather than simply saying that, since Sharon has said his piece, all that is left for us to do is quietly follow along. (Jerusalem Post Dec 10)

Win the Tunnel War By Uri Dan

Let's call the current conflict with the Palestinians the "war of the tunnels." How else to describe it in the wake of the deaths of five IDF soldiers Sunday at an outpost in Rafah?

Now the question is: Will the IDF, together with the judicial system, come to terms with what it will take to win this war?

To date, there is little room for encouragement.

It's true that the Palestinian offensive, now in its fifth year, is a war of suicide bombers. Yet the enemy's ability to obtain weapons and explosives is due largely to the existence of the tunnels.

To complicate matters, there is a developing danger that the Palestinians will use their tunneling capabilities honed in Gaza to circumvent the security fence, not just around Gaza but in the center and north of the country, as well as Jerusalem.

This mounting threat obligates the defense establishment to learn from its mistakes.

Clearly, the original sin lay with the Oslo Accords, in which Yossi Beilin, Shimon Peres, and Yitzhak Rabin invited Yasser Arafat to set up shop in the Gaza Strip in the summer of 1994.

Arafat immediately used the opportunity to build up the Palestinian arsenal by smuggling arms into Gaza from Sinai. Some of these arms later made it to the West Bank.

Successive Israeli governments took no tangible actions to stop the smuggling – they didn't want to jeopardize "the peace." Ehud Barak, for instance, promised to achieve an agreement with Arafat at Camp David 2000 that would bring an end to the conflict.

He didn't.

In the current war against Israel, the tunnels are the oxygen of Palestinian terror.

HAD THE IDF used the methods employed by the Russian Army in Chechnya or the US Army in Fallujah, Israel could have gained control of a 2-3 km. wide strip along the Philadelphia route. We could have put an end to the tunnel networks. This is an area dense with Palestinian housing, which perfectly camouflages the tunneling excavations.

But Israel's hands are tied.

Partly this is due to the stance taken by Attorney-General Meni Mazuz, who has urged Israel to openly apply the Geneva Convention to the territories and hinted that the demolition of Palestinian homes might contravene the Convention.

The involvement of the judicial system complicates an already dicey military conundrum. How realistic is it for the army to give advance notice to occupants before a house may legally be demolished?

The army is mindful that the High Court must be kept happy. But the court craves the admiration of outside jurists, particularly the international court at The Hague.

Despite having its hands partly tied, the IDF has, over the past four years, detected and destroyed hundreds of tunnels. In doing so, some of its best officers and soldiers – both Jews and Beduin – have fallen.

But beyond judicial hamstrings, the IDF and defense establishment have themselves been tardy in developing and applying technology that could help detect tunnels.

Part of this failure, too, can be attributed to the constraints imposed by the judicial system, which has no understanding of the battlefield conditions under which the IDF operates.

However, this may also be a case of incompetence – even negligence – on the part of some senior officials in the defense establishment. And the security apparatus needs to take stock of what it has been doing wrong.

I'm reminded of the time the legendary Moshe Dayan traveled to Vietnam in the 1960s to cover the war as a special correspondent. When I met him in Paris, after his return from Vietnam, Dayan told me that he had been asked by secretary of defense Robert McNamara what advice could he give the US.

"I gave him my views," Dayan told me, "and then added that each nation has the enemy it deserves. You have the sophisticated Viet-Cong and we, fortunately, have only the Arabs."

All these years later, it is clear that the Palestinians have learned the tactic of tunnel warfare that the Viet-Cong had earlier perfected.

This necessitates that the Jewish state's defense establishment respond in its usual sophisticated and creative way, not in the lethargic manner with which it has lately approached the tunnel problem.

Dayan was right, and we can defeat the Arabs even in the war of the tunnels. Let's do it. (Jerusalem Post Dec 16)

Saturday's Slippery Slope By Wendy Blumfield

As the controversy resurfaces about Shabbat shopping, opinions are divided. Do Israelis have the right to spend their one day of leisure as they wish?

It is not simply a divide between Orthodox and secular. While the Orthodox do not want their neighborhoods disturbed by commercial traffic on Shabbat – as will happen if the status quo changes in Haifa and the Grand Canyon mall stays open seven days a week – not all secular people want to see Shabbat degenerate into yet another ordinary day.

Go back in time about 20 years to Britain or the United States, when shops were closed by law on Sunday. Practicing Christians do not have the kind of prohibitions observant Jews have in their observance of Shabbat, but there are guidelines on the spirit of their day of rest.

It was normal practice to go to church in the morning, drop into the pub for a drink before lunch, and drive out to the country or to the seaside with the family in the afternoon.

Waking up on a Sunday morning, there was no mistake as to what day of the week it was. Even without the melodious church bells, there was a tranquility about the day.

The only shop open in the High Street was the newsagent; the early riser in the family would collect the Sunday papers and return home so everybody could laze around reading; later they might stroll out for brunch.

In summer, the parks and riversides were thronged with families enjoying their leisure; and in bad weather one could take refuge in the museums and

cinemas which were allowed to open on Sunday.

Since there is a two-day weekend for most workers, Saturday was the day for chores, shopping and laundry.

However, over the past 20 years the shopping mall has become the leisure center. As laws relented and malls opened for limited hours on Sunday, the High Street shops followed.

Gone is the tranquility. Anyone now landing in the middle of London or in any provincial town on a Sunday morning would not know which day of the week it was.

Some people may say, so what? If families enjoy shopping, let them.

But the truth is that for every shop that opens on the Christian Sabbath, a family is distanced because one parent is working.

To those listening to earnest discussions on the BBC about the rights of workers who refuse to work on Sundays because they prefer to preserve their family values it is obvious that discrimination in the work-place exists against hiring or retaining Sabbath observers who refuse to take the Sunday shift.

UNTIL NOT long ago, here in Israel there was a tangible difference in atmosphere that began Friday afternoon as streets quietened, shops closed, and the last trains and buses brought soldiers home.

Even today Friday evening has a different atmosphere as synagogue-goers return home to dinner, the children scrubbed clean and dressed in white shirts.

Yes, pubs, restaurants and cinemas are open on Friday night, but most residential neighborhoods are quiet and families can choose whether to enjoy the evening at home with their families, or go out with friends knowing they do not have to get up early on Shabbat morning.

At the same time, Shabbat itself is fast becoming a peak day for shopping.

Out-of-town shopping outlets are open, unfair competition indeed against urban shop-owners.

Before we go down the slippery slope of opening local shops, there needs to be some serious thinking about the ramifications.

The increase in urban traffic will disturb not only the Orthodox, but also traditional Jews who respect Shabbat as a day of rest.

Small businesses already suffering from high municipal taxes and parking restrictions in city centers will be forced to open on Shabbat, causing staffing problems and discriminating against Shabbat-observant personnel.

This will engender discrimination against Sabbath-observant shop-owners, who will keep their business closed on what will become the busiest shopping day of the week.

How can the conflict be resolved between those who would like to enjoy a tranquil Shabbat and those who want to do all their shopping on their one free day?

If a five-day week was legally established, workers would know that whether or not they work a half-day on Friday they would have an extra day a week to do all those chores. This would stagger the crowds in the markets and the malls and prevent traffic jams at peak times.

And it would leave Shabbat as a day of leisure to be used as each family chooses.

Whether it be spending it in prayer and learning, taking the children on a picnic, exploring the countryside, walking closer to home or just sprawling around the house reading or watching TV, there would be freedom of choice based on respect and consideration for others.

Only in Judaism do we light a candle and celebrate havdala – the end of the Sabbath and the start of the new week.

What will be the significance of havdala when there is no difference between our day of rest and the hectic, crowded, noisy workaday world?

The writer is a Haifa-based journalist. (Jerusalem Post Dec 15)

A Message to Europe By Arnold Roth

This is the transcript of a recent speech delivered to a visiting delegation of European parliamentarians in Jerusalem.

The world is divided into two camps. On one side are those people who see terrorism as a warning of danger ahead. Unless something is done, they say, a catastrophe may happen. On the other side are those people whose lives have been turned upside down, never to be the same again, because terrorism has struck them, has fallen on top of them, has brought catastrophe right into their lives.

I want to spend a few minutes looking at the differences between these two camps, and to suggest some reasons why each camp seems to find it so hard to understand the other.

By what right do I speak? I am a professional person, a man in his fifties, educated, informed, with respectable qualifications. Still, I hold no academic position and no public office. I harbour absolutely no political ambitions and I take no part in public debate. Of the different ways there are to define me, the one I prefer - the one which best represents who I am and what I do - is that I am a husband and a father.

I brought my family to Israel in 1988 not because Australia was a miserable place and not because my wife and I were unable to earn a living. The opposite

is true. We came to Israel despite the comfort and pleasure of life in Melbourne. There, we earned a good living, lived in a lovely home, had friends, felt safe and were safe. We moved to Israel to raise our children here because this is the historic home of the Jewish people, the right place for Jews to be. Our parents and grandparents and great-great-grandparents dreamed of doing this but were not able. We were able, and therefore we did it.

Everything in our lives changed forever when Malki, our middle child, a delightful fifteen year old girl with a constant smile on her beautiful face, was killed on 9th August 2001. Malki died like more than one thousand other Israelis in the last four years - innocent and unprepared. She was not caught in the crossfire of some battle. She was not a bystander. She was murdered with fourteen other Israelis in a restaurant in the middle of the day, in the middle of this city. The women and children in that pizza restaurant on a hot school-holiday afternoon were the actual target. The terrorists who planned the massacre took their orders from a pediatrician and from a minister of religion in a wheelchair. They picked their target with exquisite care. The bomber was the son of a land-owning wealthy family. The other gang members were mainly university-educated and well-traveled. To call them 'desperate', as many journalists have done, is to completely twist the meaning of the word 'desperate'.

On the day that the joy of life was turned into ashes for my family and me, men and women in villages close to where we are now sitting danced in the streets and distributed candies to their children. We have the pictures.

I said a few moments ago that I take no part in public debate, but this is not true any longer. My daughter's murder and the confusion and ignorance which we have seen around us compelled my wife and me to find our voice, and to speak and to write at every opportunity. We used to be the most private of people. Now we feel an urgent need to speak out. We try to shape abstract ideas for people so they can understand them. We try to give expression to the agony and the misery of the desperate families around us - the Israeli families, desperate... for peace.

If, like me, you are ready to sit down and listen to Israeli families who have experienced murder at the hands of the barbarians, I can tell you what you will hear. Like almost every Israeli I have ever met, terror victim families want to see the Palestinian Arabs live productive lives, travel in safety, obtain a good education for their children, make money, receive good medical care. The miserable reality of their daily lives is far from what we wish them - and this brings absolutely no happiness or comfort to our side. The opposite is true. The struggle between them and us which is asymmetrical in so many respects is asymmetrical on this point too. If only they would feel protective of their achievements, if only they felt they have something to lose, if only they could experience the pride of a Palestinian Arab winner of a Nobel Prize for physics or literature...

Forty years of a corrupt and incompetent regime has assured that there is almost nothing of worth which they can lose.

Instead, we Israelis today are obliged to cope with the actual day-to-day legacy of the Arafat regime and its kleptocratic leaders: the dozens of crooked men who have grown wealthy on the back of their people's misery; the teachers of religion who have hijacked a noble faith and turned it into a tragic parody; the teenage boys and girls, raised on a diet of racist hatred and on the glorification of violence and self-destruction.

In 1977 the great political analyst Walter Laqueur wrote this: "The disputes about a detailed, comprehensive definition of terrorism will continue for a long time, they will not result in a consensus and they will make no notable contribution towards the understanding of terrorism."

He was absolutely right. The United Nations via its many agencies has still not found the way to agree on a definition of terror. But terrorism, like pornography with which it shares some characteristics, is hard to define but not so hard to recognize when you meet it.

The hatred and the barbarism of the terrorists are not a component of the political struggle between Israelis and Arabs. They are outside politics, beyond it and largely unconnected to it. Terrorism is absolute evil. Unless it is stopped by necessary and sufficient force, it will neither evaporate nor crumble. It will grow, and change form, and expand and spread. It cannot be appeased, and it must not be understood. We suffer from a grotesque surplus of understanding, whose price is human lives. A force which can take deliberate aim at an infant's head and shoot, a force which can plant a bomb in a pizza restaurant, or in a railway station, on a passenger jet or in a kindergarten, is a force from Hell.

I was raised by parents who knew about Hell. My father, who died before Malki was born, grew up in the Auschwitz death camp. My mother lives in quiet retirement in Australia today, but she was there too. A month after her fifteenth birthday, my mother's little Polish town was over-run by Nazi forces and her father, my grandfather, was arrested for the usual crime of being Jewish. Before he could be taken away, my mother threw herself at the feet of a German soldier and screamed for mercy. Somehow this worked, her father was released and the family remained together for several more months. My grandparents, like the grandparents of all of the friends I grew

up with, were eventually murdered. My parents, like all of the Jewish refugees who came to Australia after the second world war, came with nothing - no parents, no property, no education. But they brought with them a powerful sense of history - of their own history, and of the history of the Jewish people. They established schools, synagogues, social welfare agencies, sports clubs. They created a new life. They found within themselves resources of love and mutual concern and support.

Although the shape of their lives was marked by their experience as Holocaust survivors, hatred was unknown in the life they made for me and for my generation. They simply had no time for hating - they were busy building a future for themselves, their children and their community. This success, I believe, was their revenge over the Nazis.

I mentioned the experience of my mother when she was fifteen. In 1967, I was fifteen. I remember watching my parents and their friends as they grew deeply apprehensive about Gamal Abdel Nasser and his open threat to throw all the Jews of Israel into the sea and destroy the young Jewish state. For the first time in my life, I could see that there were people ready to annihilate the Jews. And I could see there were others like U Thant, the then-secretary general of the United Nations, who might have blocked Nasser's aggression but chose not to. Arafat was already in the picture, by the way - he had become the head of the PLO in 1964 when the number of Israeli occupied settlements and Israeli army checkpoints was, of course, zero. All of this made a deep impression on me. Then war erupted, a Six Day War as it turned out, and Israel was saved. For me, the distance between Jerusalem and Melbourne grew very small from that moment onwards.

Most of us in this room are parents. We know that fifteen is a young age. At fifteen we have some of our basic ideas, and the general shape of our personality is in place. But we still have a lot of growing up to do. Malki, my daughter, will never reach her sixteenth birthday. We honour her memory by a fund called the Malki Foundation. Like Malki herself, the foundation gives support to families who are caring at home for a severely disabled child. Our foundation has already managed to support hundreds of such families - Druze, Christian, Moslem, Jewish. Like my daughter, this work has no political character. Its goal is to add some light, some happiness to the lives of ordinary people facing an extraordinary challenge.

I had the great privilege of speaking to the first MedBridge group in Jerusalem a year ago. I introduced myself to the 170 distinguished politicians and parliamentarians as someone who is not at all involved in the political process - in fact, as someone who tries to keep himself and his family as far away as possible from politics and from politicians. Please excuse my bluntness. I am not among those who seek truth from politicians, because I prefer to get my disappointments elsewhere.

I spoke then about how life can look very different depending on whether you are sitting on your sofa watching the television news, or standing on the other side - living the news. The three years that have passed since my daughter died at the hands of terrorists have taught me how different those two experiences are - how little information is given by the news media about the victims of terrorism. The frustration, the loneliness, the pain.

In the year since the first MedBridge group came to Jerusalem, I have met dozens of journalists and my understanding of how they do their work has gotten a little deeper and wider. The questions I had then, I still have. I have some additional questions. I'm puzzled by how a reporter from a serious newspaper or a journalist from an important television station can arrive at Ben Gurion Airport and know almost nothing about the history of the Israeli and Arab sides in this terribly long conflict. I have been asked questions where it's clear to me the person holding the microphone has almost no ability to understand the context of the events being reported. Context is an important thing. Without it, almost nothing makes sense.

There are many other things about the work of journalists, film editors and other media professionals which completely baffle me. In fact, it was not clear to me how large are the questions that informed people have about the media until I found myself part of the news.

Earlier this year, three friends and I went to a conference in Europe. This was the first ever conference of victims of terror. Hundreds of people were in the hall when we arrived - representing the host country, other European countries, the United States, Latin America, North Africa. Some weeks earlier, the organizers notified us that citizens of Israel would be free to take part in this conference provided that we paid the admission fee and sat quietly in the audience. But as Israelis, we would not be permitted to speak from the platform, and no steps would be taken to give official recognition to an Israeli contingent in the conference. In simple words, the message was "please don't come". So of course we came.

A few minutes before the start of the conference, one of the officials in the government of that country, a friend of Israel, approached me and asked if I would be willing to speak in the opening panel. Though I was unprepared, I said "of course" and that's when I learned that there were sitting in that hall, at that exact moment, in the conference of victims of terror, three special guests - the ambassadors of Syria, Iran and Palestine. But the organizers did not want an official Israeli presence. The story is long, but I will make it short. From the

panel, I spoke about the personal experience of victims of terror and it was immediately clear that many of the widows and orphans in that audience knew exactly what I was describing. Hundreds of people spoke with my three Israeli friends and me, all of us wearing small Israeli flag badges on our clothing. At the end of the conference, we met by chance with some officials of the foreign ministry of the host country, and in our polite Israeli fashion, we explained how really upsetting it was for us to know that they intended for us to be persona non grata in the conference and despite this, we found tremendous solidarity from among the participants.

The response was - please come to our foreign ministry tomorrow and we will have a conversation. So we did, and in this way we met some of the top officials of the foreign ministry including the deputy minister. This senior group explained to us that while there is authentic terrorism in Europe, in the United States, in Latin America, in Israel we must recognize that ours is actually a political conflict, and the solution must be a political solution. One of my Israeli friends objected to this, and expressed some strong personal words, not so politically correct, about the broad threat to Europe of radical Islam. My impression is that his comments were brushed aside or not heard. Three weeks later, most of the people with whom we met in that foreign ministry were out of a job. Madrid, the capital of Spain and the host of our conference, discovered in the hardest possible way that terrorism can take many forms. I was invited back to a second Spanish conference which took place in June. This time, I was asked to speak as an Israeli. Many things had changed for the Spanish since March 11th.

Your mission, as MedBridge participants, as political leaders concerned to create a better world for the people of the Middle East, is a complicated one - and I wish you the greatest possible success. The mission of my wife and me, and hundreds of other Israeli families, as people who want to go on living after our child or husband or wife or parent or brother or sister was murdered by terrorists, is also complicated. We want to look to the future, but we can only do this by understanding the present and learning from the past.

There is, as I am sure you already know, a well-developed sense of history among us Israelis. We turn to history when we want to understand who we are, where we belong, what we can expect from others. I mention this, in closing, because I want to share with you the extreme pain I - we - feel when we read about certain recent developments in European society.

Last week, a German survey of German-born Germans found that more than half think there is no difference between Israel's current treatment of the Palestinian Arabs and what the Nazis did to the Jews. 68 percent of Germans believe that Israel is waging a "war of extermination" against the Palestinians. I could give you my theory of how the media in Germany, in Europe and almost everywhere else contributes to ignorance of Israeli reality. I could tell you how journalists create, and at the same time are the result of, an almost total ignorance of what the Holocaust was. But if I did that, I would also have to point out to you that Germany happens to be one of the countries in Europe where they do make serious efforts to understand the Holocaust and the truth of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And yet they do not share our sense that Israel has been fighting one long defensive war of survival against an enemy that wants to ethnically cleanse Jews from their historic homeland for a century.

Also last week, the BBC published a survey showing that barely a third of young people in Britain have even heard the name Auschwitz and don't know what it is, where it is or what happened there.

I spoke of my experiences in Spain a few moments ago. A Spanish-born philosopher, George Santayana who died in the year I was born, wrote this: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." I believe this statement carries with it a great deal of wisdom. My daughter does not belong to the past - at least, she doesn't when we sit together around the Sabbath table and enjoy one another's company in our family. We feel her presence. We feel her absence. We are determined to do whatever we can so that her memory will endure, that she will never become just another statistic.

As a family, as a society, we are in a perpetual struggle to remember the past, to hold a vision of a better future, and to do everything we can so that the fifteen year old children together with their goodness and their dreams - children on both sides of the sad conflict here in this land - can grow to productive adulthood, free of the curse of hatred and of terror.

May your work be blessed. (NaomiRagen.com Dec 14)
