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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

Quote of the Week...

"The disengagement plan will turn Gaza into the only shelter state in the world for the Al-Qaida organization," - Major General (res.) Yaakov Amidror in a speech at the Herzliya Conference last Thursday.

Commentary...

Israel's Risky Outlook By Frank J. Gaffney Jr.

The plight of Israelis today calls to mind the tongue-in-cheek prayer of Tevye, the hero of "Fiddler on the Roof" who, in light of his people's suffering, asks the Almighty if someone else could be the chosen people for a while.

For years, the people of Israel have voted for leaders who promised to protect them against Arab neighbors bent on destroying the Jewish state and to eschew wooly-headed "peace processes" that advance their enemies' goal. Yet, in turn Yitzhak Rabin, Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak made a succession of concessions -- most notably, legitimation of Yasser Arafat and his fellow terrorists as "partners for peace" that was at the core of the Oslo "process" -- that have emboldened those who believe Israel will ultimately be dismantled and increased international demands for still more Israeli concessions.

Such pressure takes many forms. Foes like Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Syria disregard their obligations under U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, which, all too few remember, requires "termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force."

As Shoshana Bryen of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs noted recently, the Arabs and Iranians instead cynically insist that Israel must first find -- and pay -- a price acceptable to the Palestinians. They do so knowing full well that none among the latter could make peace with the Jewish state, even if they wanted to, so long as the region's principal nations refuse to do so. These nations' totalitarian regimes offer the same excuse to justify staving off domestic and foreign calls to engage in long-overdue political and economic liberalization.

The Europeans are no less insistent the responsibility for peace rests first and foremost with Israel. To be sure, leaders like Britain's Tony Blair pay lip service to the need for an end to terrorism from the Palestinian quarter. Still, Europe seems determined to construe continued terrorism against Israel as an argument for demanding Israel swiftly resume negotiations with the Palestinians and concede the substantive points necessary to move them forward, rather than as legitimate grounds for refusing to re-enter the fraudulent "peace process."

Then there is the United Nations. The organization's domination by states hostile to Israel has made it a hotbed of agitation against the Jewish state from the get-go. While Zionism is no longer officially equated with racism by the United Nations, that sentiment remains much in evidence as Israel has been subjected to far more criticism and condemnatory resolutions than any other member state. Israel alone is ineligible for membership on the Security Council. And an organ of the "world body," the International Court of Justice, has even ruled the Jewish state may not legally take measures to defend itself with a security barrier separating Israel and parts of the disputed West Bank where Jews live from terrorists bent on murder and destruction of property.

To their credit, President Bush and his administration have, to date, generally refrained from adding U.S. pressure on Israel to that emanating from other quarters. That may change, however. Mr. Blair is determined to be repaid

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for his loyalty on Iraq in the currency of "progress" toward peace in the Mideast. Best-selling author and former CIA official Michael Scheuer is among those pushing the line that U.S. support for Israel is the reason al Qaeda and other Islamofascist terrorists want to attack us. And last Sunday, former National Security Advisers Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski jointly declared that the opportunity created by Arafat's death must be seized by the United

States "imposing" a peace deal on Israel and the Palestinians -- ignoring Winston Churchill's sound advice against weakening a strategic ally.

Washington may not have to take such a misbegotten step, however, if -- as has been the case to date -- the present Israeli government decides to make concessions on its own. For some time, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has seemed more concerned with his place in history than in fulfilling the robust campaign security promises that won him the premiership.

Today, Mr. Sharon is rooting his claim to power in an embrace of Shimon Peres' Labor Party, the principal apologist for the myriad failures of Oslo and other peace processes. He is unilaterally withdrawing from the Gaza Strip, a superficially appealing and politically popular cut-your-losses move that will, unfortunately, give rise to a new haven for terrorists there (witness Sunday's attack). It will also compound the signal sent by Ehud Barak's earlier, precipitous withdrawal from Lebanon, namely that Israel's piecemeal destruction is inevitable. And Mr. Sharon is releasing terrorists and promising to pull Israeli forces from Palestinian communities as gestures to its electorate.

All this adds up to a grim forecast for the people of Israel. Their foes are implacable and being emboldened. Their "friends" at best encourage strategically dubious peace initiatives like the ill-conceived "road map"; at worst, they are part of the problem. And their leaders, both of the recent past and the present, seem intent on repeating, and compounding, past errors. Lovers of freedom can only hope all this does not add up to Tevye's prayer being answered in the worst possible way. (Washington Times Dec 14)

The writer is president of the Center for Security Policy and a columnist for The Washington Times.

Will the Real Abu-Mazen Please Stand Up?
By Michael Widlanski

Does the Palestinian Arab press know something that the Israeli press does not

know?

Even as the Hebrew press headlined the remarks of Mahmoud Abbas (nickname Abu-Mazen) calling for an end to the "Intifada," the Arab press especially the Palestinian press ignored the "news" item.

When "Haaretz" wrote in its lead headline (Dec. 15, 2004) "Abu Mazen: The Use of Weapons in the Current Intifada has hurt us and has to stop," Radio "Sawt Filasteen" "Voice of Palestine"-- the official mouthpiece of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), kept completely quiet. When "Yediot" and "Maariv" extensively covered and featured the remarks of Abu-Mazen (which were made to "Al-Sharq al-Awsat," an Arab newspaper published in London), official Palestinian television and the daily newspapers ignored the event.

So what does this mean? Who got it right the Israeli Hebrew press or the Palestinian Arab press?

It seems that the Arab press was right, if only for professional journalistic reasons.

After all, PLO Chairman Abu Mazen has said exactly the same thing or almost exactly the same thing several times before. In March 2003, he said the same thing to the same Arab newspaper in London when he was Prime Minister-presumptive of the PNA. He said almost identical things to the Jordanian newspaper "Al-Ra'i" in September 2003, and I have personally heard him say similar things on several Arab television stations in Lebanon and the Gulf. Indeed, Dr. Abbas made very similar remarks at the Aqaba Summit on June 4, 2003, and then he quickly "explained" his remarks in a subsequent "special press conference" held for the Arab press.

One therefore has to ask what is the real importance of the remarks of Dr. Abbas (Abu-Mazen).

First, we must stress that the Arab press's disregard of the "moderate"

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remarks of the current PLO Chairman concerning the "current Intifada" are not part of a desire to ignore Abu-Mazen, the successor to Yasser Arafat. Quite the contrary! On the same morning (Dec. 15, 2004), Radio Voice of Palestine opened its broadcasts with extensive quotations from the new PLO Chairman who was touring Gulf countries. In fact, the radio as well as official PA television quoted Abu-Mazen's strong opposition to any kind of limitations of the Palestinian "right of return." The Palestinian media asserted that Abu-Mazen said and with him the entire PLO/PA leadership that they would not tolerate leaving any Palestinian refugees inside Arab countries.

It appears, then, that a careful examination of Abu-Mazen's remarks to the Arab newspaper in London as well as other recent remarks shows that Abu-Mazen does not oppose violence against Israelis from a moral or ideological perspective. Rather, he opposes some violence only from a "pragmatic" or "utilitarian" perspective. And then only for a short time.

Dr. Abbas believes that the Palestinian-Israeli War of Attrition has done more harm than good to the Palestinians. In other words, Abu-Mazen opposes using bullets and bombs against Israeli civilians inside "The Green Line." And he opposes this use of ammunition for reasons of "profit and loss."

In the current interview in "Al-Sharq al-Awsat" as in earlier interviews Abu-Mazen has been very consistent on several points.

1. The "Intifada" is a legitimate form of "resistance to occupation," and it should continue, but without bombs and bullets;
2. Abu Mazen supports attacking soldiers and settlers everywhere;
3. Dr. Abbas opposes for the time being attacks on Israeli civilians inside Israel because such attacks are "counterproductive to Palestinian interests."

On the same morning that the Israeli press praised Abu-Mazen for his "moderation," the senior anchorman of Voice of Palestine, Nizar al-Ghul called the attack on the Israeli border checkpoint in Gaza a "resistance operation." The radio anchorman also proudly claimed that the "resistance operation" was carried out by the FATAH (headed by Arafat and Abbas) and the HAMAS (the Islamic Resistance Movement) with whom Abbas has been negotiating.

Is this the real meaning of "Palestinian unity" so sought by Abu-Mazen?

The Voice of Palestine radio anchorman's remarks on the "resistance operation" were the lead-in to the morning headlines. The day earlier, Voice of Palestine and PA Television called the tunnel bombers "mustash-hedeen" "heroic martyrs" in Arabic.

It appears possible that Dr. Abbas (who got his Ph.D from the Soviet "Patrice Lumumba University" on the subject of "Relations between Zionism and Nazism") is not only the formal successor to Yasser Arafat but a willing and eager student anxious to apply Arafat's methods of sending multiple messages to multiple (and sometimes gullible) audiences in different locations and in different languages.

Dr. Abbas, who wears a suit rather than the military uniform of Arafat, has a more refined and subtle style than his mentor, but it seems likely that their ideological content is similar, if not identical.

We will surprise ourselves a lot less if we study the words and methods of the new Palestinian leadership. Perhaps, we might even discover that when it comes to the "right of return" of Palestinian refugees living in Arab countries for 50 years that Abu-Mazen and Abu 'Ala (Ahmad Qreia) may actually have a tougher line than the Egyptian-born Arafat. (Ha'aretz Dec 19)

The writer, who teaches Political Communication at the Hebrew University's Rothberg School, has researched the Palestinian media for nearly a decade.

The Palestinian Schoolbooks: Planting seeds of the next war

By Itamar Marcus

One of the most meaningful gauges of the integrity of a peace process and its likelihood for success is the degree to which the "peace partners" educate towards peace. It is for this reason that the entire Palestinian Authority (PA) education apparatus, both formal and informal, has been such a tragic disappointment. Instead of seizing the opportunity to educate future generations to live with Israel in peace, the PA has done everything in its power to teach hatred to young minds.

Compounding the problem is that ever since the hatred in the Palestinian textbooks has been exposed and world pressure has been mounting to eliminate the hatred, various defenders of the PA curriculum have surfaced, trying to legitimize this problematic educational system. The truth is that the PA schoolbooks, both old and new, incite to hatred, violence and anti-Semitism, and it's tragic that their defenders are enabling the PA to avoid necessary peace education.

Anti-Semitism in presented openly in PA education. In the new 6th grade book Reading the Koran, children read about Allah's warning to the Jews that because of their evil Allah will kill them: "...Oh you who are Jews, if you think that you are favored of Allah... Then long for death if you are truthful... for the death from which you flee, that will surely overtake you..." In other sections they learn of Jews being expelled from their homes by Allah, and in another Jews are said to be like donkeys: "Those [Jews] who were charged with the Torah, but did not observe it, are like a donkey carrying books..." [1]

And while the Koran and Islam are certainly not under scrutiny here, it is tragic that although the Koran and Islam have positive traditions regarding Jews, the PA educators have chosen to incorporate only hateful religious

traditions. PA children are left with the impression that that the Koran sees the Jews as an enemy of God, and consequently their enemy as well.

In the new textbooks, Israel is de-legitimized as a state. Israel is portrayed as a foreign colonial occupier: "Colonialism: Palestine faced the British occupation after the First World War in 1917, and the Israeli occupation in 1948..." [2] Once Israel is an "occupation" it is a logical step to define all of Israel's cities, regions and natural resources as being part of "Palestine," including the Beersheba, the Negev, the Sea of Galilee.[3] Israel's land is called the "stolen homeland," Israel's creation the "catastrophe" and an encyclopedia is cited that was written for "...Palestinians, so that they would remember their stolen homeland and work for its salvation..."[4]

This teaching to not recognize Israel's existence is cemented through dozens of maps in the schoolbooks in which "Palestine" encompasses all of Israel. The argument that the map is not modern "Palestine" but "Mandatory Palestine" is an insult to our intelligence. Children reading these schoolbooks believe they are looking at maps that reflect the current situation, not maps and pictures of British territory more than half a century ago.

Completing the dangerous messages of the new books is the teaching that it is a religious obligation for Israel to be destroyed: "Islam encourages this [love of homeland] and established the defense of it as an obligatory commandment for every Muslim if even a centimeter of his land is stolen. I, a Palestinian Muslim, love my country Palestine..."[5]

The complete message Palestinian children are taught is that Jews, according to Allah, are like donkeys; Israel is a colonial occupier who stole their land; the cities, lakes and deserts of Israel are "occupied Palestine;" and the Palestinian children are learning that they have an obligation to liberate it "even if a centimeter is stolen."

The result of this delegitimization is a belief, frequently expressed by Palestinian children, that justice can be achieved only through Israel's destruction. Speaking on PA TV, a 14-year-old boy explained: "The Israelis [came] from Holland, America, Iran. They [the Jews] came to take Palestine, that is Tel-Aviv, Jaffa, Haifa, Acre, Ramle. All these cities belong to Palestine. We must expel all Israelis from Palestine. Because Israel - there is nothing called Israel in the world." [PA TV Dec. 25, 2003]

Having never seen Israel on a map in school or on television, this intelligent 14-year-old has concluded, "There is nothing called Israel in the world."

Finally it should be stressed that all the new Palestinian schoolbooks cited here were written during the most optimistic periods of the peace process, before the violence began in September 2000. They are not a response to the war but an expression of dangerous ideology that has to be replaced if there will ever be peace. The ongoing attempts to defend these PA schoolbooks are tragic, as the PA is using these arguments to justify its education, and to refuse to improve their books. The PA is planting the seeds of the next war in its youth. The defenders of PA hate education are protecting and nurturing those seeds of war.

[1] [Reading the Koran, grade 6. p.20, 23, 78]

[2] [National Education, sixth grade, p. 16]

[3] [Our Beautiful Language, grade 6, Part A, p. 64, National Education, sixth grade, pp. 9-10]

[4] [Our Beautiful Language, sixth grade, Part A, p. 112]

[5] [Islamic Education, sixth grade, Part A, p. 68]

The writer is Director of Palestinian Media Watch and was Israeli representative to the Tri - Lateral Anti Incitement Committee established under the Wye accords. (International Herald Tribune Dec 22)

Wanted: Israeli Neocons By Caroline Glick

Speaking at the Interdisciplinary Center's Herzliya Conference on Monday, IDF Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Moshe Ya'alon said that Israel's "interest is to separate the general Palestinian population from those involved in terrorism." This, of course, stands at the core of all anti-guerrilla and counterterror operational thinking.

Ya'alon noted the economic devastation that the Palestinian terror war has wrought on the general Palestinian population. Repeated suicide attacks at the Erez Industrial Park, where 4,000 Gazans worked each day to support some 35,000 people, forced Israel to close the park. This week's attack against an IDF outpost on the border between Gaza and Egypt forced the army to close the border-crossing terminal, preventing Gazans from conducting business in Egypt. Suicide bombers disguised as ordinary workers have forced Israel to stringently limit the number of Palestinians working in Israel and to erect roadblocks throughout Judea and Samaria.

Israel has, over the past four years, and indeed since the first Palestinian suicide bomber introduced himself to Israeli civilians back in 1994, tried to develop methods of screening cargo and workers that would make Palestinian economic activity possible while preventing the infiltration of human bombs. Additionally, as Ya'alon noted, Israel has worked to ensure that the health and education systems in Judea, Samaria and Gaza have continued to operate. This, in spite of the fact that terrorists have hidden in maternity and cancer wards from Bethlehem to Jenin and that the Palestinian school system teaches children that their life goal should be to become a

suicide bomber.

Yet, in spite of all of Israel's attempts to separate the broader Palestinian population from the terrorists, Ya'alon admitted that support for the terrorists had not waned, nor had enthusiasm for terrorism in general. In his words, IDF counterterror operations over the past two years "have decreased the ability, not the motivation" of Palestinians to carry out attacks against Israelis.

And so it can be said that the IDF, and Israel as a whole, have failed in the mission of separating the general Palestinian population from those involved in terrorism.

How can this be the case? After all, Israel's leaders have never declared war on the Palestinians. To the contrary, every time it seemed there was a break in the clouds, Israel moved quickly to embrace any opportunity to begin discussions with Palestinian officials - whether at the political level or among the various official Palestinian militia commanders.

An answer to this seeming paradox was provided by The Jerusalem Post's Khaled Abu Toameh in a dispatch from Gaza earlier in the week. Toameh reported the case of Dr. Hassan Nurani, a psychologist from Gaza City who wished to run for the PA's presidency. Nurani composed a platform calling for the building of a "civilized and moral society." He was able to collect the requisite 5,000 signatures to submit his candidacy but couldn't afford the \$3000 needed to register for the election. Desperate to run, Nurani tried selling off his small parcel of land and his home furnishings. But he still wasn't able to raise the sum, which is the rough equivalent of an annual salary in Gaza.

It is possible that Dr. Nurani supports terrorism. It is possible that he is not willing to live in a Palestinian society which exists alongside a strong and vibrant Jewish state. It is possible that he insists that Israel allow millions of foreign-born Arabs to immigrate freely into Israel as a condition for peace. But we'll never know, and neither will the Palestinians, because he is too poor to tell us.

And then we have the frontrunner for the Palestinian presidency, new PLO head Mahmoud Abbas. He's the only show in town. It doesn't seem to bother anyone that Yasser Arafat's deputy of 40 years has refused to call for an end to the Palestinian terror war, saying just Wednesday in Saudi Arabia that he didn't mean to offend anyone when he said the day before that violence against Israel is counterproductive.

"All I meant," Abbas explained, "is that we are in a phase that does not necessitate arms because we want to negotiate." And in the meantime, he decried Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom's call earlier in the day for the international community to build permanent housing for the millions of Arabs, whose ancestors may have once lived in Israel, who have been interned in UN refugee camps in the Arab world for the past 55 years. "Any proposal regarding the resettlement of the refugees is completely rejected," Abbas, the soon-to-be-democratically elected Palestinian leader, said.

Shalom's call for the rehabilitation of the residents of the UN refugee camps was given in the course of his address to the Herzliya Conference. Aside from daring to raise the possibility of letting these poor people finally be free of the burden of living their lives as political symbols, his speech was actually wholly supportive of the combative, rejectionist Abbas.

Shalom devoted much of his address to calling for the convention of a second Aqaba summit with US President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Abbas right after the January 9 elections. In his words: "The lead actors from the first Aqaba summit, which took place in June 2003 - Sharon, Bush and Abu Mazen [Abbas] - are the same actors today, but stronger."

So, in the run-up to the Palestinian election, which is supposed to be the first step toward the liberalization and democratization of Palestinian society, the presumptive winner - who stands opposed to any action against terror operatives or compromise on the so-called refugees that would enable peace to be achieved - is embraced as a positive development, a window of opportunity and a foregone conclusion. So much for giving the Palestinians a reason to separate themselves off from the terrorists.

In an interview with the Post's Ruthie Blum appearing today, Palestinian apologist extraordinaire Hanan Ashrawi assailed Bush for adopting "the neocon agenda" in calling for the transformation of Palestinian society from a terror-supporting and -engendering society into a peaceful democratic one before the establishment of a Palestinian state. In her words, "You don't use democracy for justifying the existence of states. You would then have to remove many states. Self-determination for Palestinians is a right that has to be implemented as a way of bringing peace and stability to the region. Therefore, you don't make a state dependent on its system of government."

And Ashrawi isn't alone. In his speech at the conference on Tuesday, Labor party leader and soon-to-be acting prime minister Shimon Peres assailed the notion that democratic reform is a necessary condition for peaceful relations.

Indeed, ironically the very thought that Palestinian society must be democratized meets its staunchest opposition from Israelis; specifically from the Israeli elites. In his column in Yediot Ahronot last Friday, Nahum Barnea, Israel's journalistic supremo and proud socialist, wrote scathingly of Bush's attachment to the notions of democracy and morality. Speaking of Bush's reading of Minister-without-Portfolio Natan Sharansky's book, *The Case for Democracy*, which argues that peaceful relations are contingent on individual freedom and democracy, Barnea sneered, "The book publisher can now

advertise it as 'the only book the president has read in the last 10 years.'" He then went on to witheringly criticize Sharansky's book, describing it as "clear, easily digestible, unburdened by doubt, moralistic, very positive and totally simplistic."

Israel's elitists, like Barnea and Peres, and their sheep-like followers like Shalom, no doubt took comfort in the obnoxious responses evinced toward the Bush administration's policy doctrine of bringing democracy to the Arab world during last Saturday's international summit on the topic in Rabat, Morocco. There, US Secretary of State Colin Powell was barraged by angry statements from the Egyptian, Saudi and Libyan foreign ministers, who claimed that the US can't talk about democracy until "the peace process" goes forward and US occupation of Iraq comes to an end.

Even German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, the champion of the Israeli Left, said that progress toward peace between Israel and the Palestinians "will lend all reform and modernization efforts in the Arab world unprecedented momentum."

It isn't surprising that the same people who demonize their political opposition in Israel as warmongering extremists and potential political assassins would have such a low opinion of the possibility that Arabs might, if given the opportunity, choose to live freely and at peace with Israel and the rest of their neighbors.

And yet, as The Washington Post's editorialist noted on Wednesday, even as the Arab potates at the Rabat summit were berating the Americans for daring to discuss democracy with them, Arab human rights activists who also participated in the conference insisted that the Americans continue to pressure their governments and that "Palestinian and Iraqi issues should not be used as excuses for not launching reforms."

And what did these people want? They demanded that their governments "allow free ownership of media institutions and sources; allow freedom of expression and especially freedom of assembly and meetings; ensure women's rights and remove all forms of inequality and discrimination against women in the Arab world; and immediately release reformers, human rights activists and political prisoners."

The American neoconservatives, who have been the most visible proponents of democracy in the Arab world and who Barnea, echoing Ashrawi, alleges "control the foreign policy of the Bush administration," have often been accused of working for Israel. Yet, as our elites' revulsion with democracy and our government's silence on the issue shows, American democracy advocates have almost no one to talk to in Israel. Indeed, Israel's passivity in the face of Palestinian corruption, authoritarianism and hate indicates that what Israel needs most desperately is for a movement of Israeli neoconservatives to arise and "take control" of Israel's foreign policy. (Jerusalem Post Dec. 16)

Palestinians Don't Deserve Additional Aid By Daniel Pipes

Yasser Arafat died last month. This month, his death is prompting plans for a foreign aid bounty of \$500 million to \$1 billion a year for the Palestinian Arabs.

That's the scoop Steven Weisman published in the New York Times on December 17. He revealed that Western, Arab, and other governments plan to add a 50% to 100% bonus to the \$1 billion a year they already direct to 3.5 million Palestinian Arabs in the territories, contingent upon a crackdown on terrorist groups and the holding of credible elections in January 2005.

(Asked about Mr. Weisman's report, White House spokesman Scott McClellan neither confirmed nor denied it. But President Bush did subsequently make some hugely ambitious statements about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: "I am convinced that, during this term, I will manage to bring peace" and "Next year is very important, as it will bring peace.")

Aid-wise, residents of the West Bank and Gaza have hardly been neglected until now. They receive about \$300 per person, making them, per capita, the world's greatest beneficiaries of foreign aid. Strangely, their efforts to destroy Israel have not inspired efforts to crush this hideous ambition but rather to subsidize it. Money being fungible, foreign aid effectively funds the Palestinian Arabs, bellicose propaganda machine, their arsenal, their army, and their suicide bombers.

This, however, does not faze international-aid types. Nigel Roberts, the World Bank's director for the West Bank and Gaza, blows off past failures. Addressing himself to donors, he says, "Maybe your \$1 billion a year hasn't produced much, but we think there's a case for doing even more in the next three or four years."

Mr. Roberts is saying, in effect: Yes, your money enabled Arafat's corruption, jihad ideology, and suicide factories, but those are yesterday's problems; now, let's hope the new leadership uses donations for better purposes. Please lavish more funds on it to enhance its prestige and power, then hope for the best.

This la-la-land thinking ignores two wee problems. One concerns the Palestinian Arabs' widespread intent to destroy Israel, as portrayed by the outpouring of grief for archterrorist Arafat at his funeral, the consistent results of opinion research, and the steady supply of would-be jihadists. The Palestinian Arabs' discovery of inner moderation has yet to commence, to put

it mildly.

The other problem is blaming the past decade's violence and tyranny exclusively on Arafat, and erroneously assuming that, now freed of him, the Palestinian Arabs are eager to reform. Mahmoud Abbas, the new leader, has indeed called for ending terrorism against Israel, but he did so for transparently tactical reasons (it is the wrong thing to do now), not for strategic reasons (it is permanently to be given up), much less for moral ones (it is inherently evil).

Mr. Abbas is not a moderate but a pragmatist. Unlike Arafat, consumed by his biography and his demons, Mr. Abbas offers a more reasonable figure, one who can more rationally pursue Arafat's goal of destroying Israel. In this spirit, he has quickly apologized to the Kuwaitis and made up with the Syrians; compared to this, reaching out to the Americans is easy.

But, no less than his mentor Arafat, Mr. Abbas remains intent on eliminating Israel. This is evident, for example, from his recent comments insisting that millions of Palestinian Arab "refugees" be permitted to enter Israel so as to overwhelm it demographically; or from his keeping the virulent content of the Palestinian Authority's press in place.

To give additional money to the Palestinian Arabs now, ahead of their undergoing a change of heart and accepting the permanent existence of the Jewish state of Israel, is a terrible mistake, one that numbingly replicates the errors of the 1990's, Oslo diplomacy. Prematurely rewarding the Palestinian Arabs will again delay the timetable of conciliation.

As I have argued for years, money, arms, diplomacy, and recognition for the Palestinian Arabs should follow on their having accepted Israel. One sign that this will have happened: When Jews living in Hebron (on the West Bank) need no more security than Arabs living in Nazareth (within Israel).

Until that day of harmony - which I predict is about thirty years off - the outside world should focus not on showering money or other benefits on the Palestinian Arabs, but on pushing them relentlessly to accept Israel's existence. (New York Sun Dec 21)

The Dishonest Reporting 'Awards' 2004

2004. It was the end of the Arafat era, the end of Sheik Yassin's terror reign. The year Israel's security fence saved innumerable lives? yet was condemned at The Hague. Deadly Kassam rockets from the south, Ketushas from the north, and suicide bombings in Ashdod, Beersheva, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The year of Iraq conspiracy theories, and vicious anti-Israel material disguised as art, science, and urbane opinion.

On one hand, the media are looking better. This year, the western press became more careful in its reporting of the Mideast conflict, with news stories only rarely exhibiting the overt anti-Israel bias prevalent in previous years.

On the other hand, the bias that persists has become more subtle, implicit, and downright libelous. For example, the media have allowed the following terminology to gain broad legitimacy: The security fence as an 'Apartheid wall', Israel practicing 'ethnic cleansing' of Palestinians, and a sinister 'Likud cabal' infesting Washington? such terms have gained currency on the pages of major newspapers, despite having no basis in reality.

Thanks for sending in your nominations. Now, without further ado, we present this year's Dishonest Reporting 'Award' winners:

The 'Camera Sees All' Award

Winner: While photojournalists were recording a seemingly candid expression of Palestinian suffering alongside the security fence, AP's Eric Marti shot the scene from another angle, including the pack of photographers in his frame:

This image speaks volumes about media coverage of Palestinian life. The photographers are not merely 'capturing the scene,' but rather creating it? either actively (by asking the woman to pose) or passively (allowing themselves to be manipulated by her posing for their cameras).

The 'Award' winners in this category are the five unidentified photographers who sent to their newsrooms the version depicted.

Sympathy for Terrorists Award

Winner: Barbara Plett, BBC. When Yassir Arafat's health failed in November, BBC's West Bank reporter Plett openly wept for the Godfather of Modern Terror. Plett's weeping revealed an unprofessional (and, some would say, bizarre) identification with one side of the conflict that she is employed to cover in an objective fashion.

Runners-up:

- The Guardian for hailing Arafat's 'undisputed courage as a guerrilla leader,' exceeded only 'by his extraordinary courage' as a peace negotiator.

- Syndicated columnist Gwynne Dyer, for proclaiming that what Arafat 'did right' in his life were 'successful acts of terror' that drew attention to the Palestinian cause.

- And Jonathan Cook, writing in the International Herald Tribune for expressing his understanding and appreciation of Palestinian terrorism as the 'surest way to get their struggle noticed.' (The IHT was also caught altering New York Times articles to make Israel look worse, and Palestinian terrorists look better.)

Slip-of-the-Tongue Award

Winner: David A. Schlesinger, Reuters. In a remarkable moment of candor, Schlesinger, Reuters' global managing editor, admitted that one reason his

agency refuses to use the term 'terrorist' has nothing to do with editorial pursuit of objectivity, but is rather 'to protect our reporters.' Schlesinger described the 'serious consequences' if certain 'people in the Mideast' were to believe Reuters called those who detonate civilian buses and open fire on pregnant women 'terrorists.'

Runner-up: Washington Post ombudsman Michael Getler, for rationalizing the Post's ongoing refusal to use the 'T-word' in reporting on Palestinian terror. The term 'terrorism' is 'not helpful,' Getler explained, since using it would 'adopt the language of one side.' Moreover, said Getler, 'Palestinians view many Israeli actions... as terrorism.'

Israel Conspiracy Award

Winner: Neil MacDonald, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In May, while delivering CBC television's lead story on the political fallout from the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses, Macdonald shifted attention away from Iraq and toward Israel, proposing to viewers that the occupation of Iraq and George Bush's unprecedented alliance with the right wing government of Israel has placed Americans overseas in danger. Macdonald then brought on camera a retired US diplomat who made the outlandish claim that the Israeli Mossad was behind the Abu Ghraib tortures.

Then in December, Macdonald did it again. Reporting on the deadly al-Qaeda attack on a US consulate in Saudi Arabia, Macdonald gratuitously dragged Israel into the story, going out of his way to find someone willing to blame America's relationship with Israel for the attack. Macdonald put one Allen Keiswetter on the air, who said "I think the principal reason is our policies on the Arab-Israeli issues. This is extremely important. We're now regarded as being very much in the pockets of Sharon. And the second reason of course is Iraq."

CBC Ombudsman David Bazay, in response to allegations of anti-Israeli bias in the May incident, declared that while Macdonald was not guilty of bias, 'editors and producers must not only avoid bias; they must avoid the appearance of bias. And, I agree, the May 4 report did expose [CBC] to the appearance of bias.'

With Macdonald, CBC is finding it increasingly difficult to discount the allegations of bias.

Alternative Media Award

In 2004, anti-Israel invective made its way off the newspaper page and became propagated via 'alternative' media:

Winner: Dror Feiler. A Stockholm art show (accompanying an international conference on preventing genocide) included a large exhibit by Feiler glorifying the Palestinian terrorist who murdered 21 Israelis at Haifa's Maxim restaurant. Dubbed 'Snow White and the Madness of Truth,' the exhibit showed a tiny sailboat floating on a pool of red water, and the accompanying text cast the mass murderer as a 'Snow White' victim.

In a spontaneous act of protest, Israeli ambassador to Sweden Zvi Mazel threw a light fixture into the red pool, then said: 'I could not remain indifferent to such an obscene misrepresentation of reality. This was not a piece of art. This was a monstrosity.'

Runners up:

- The City of Melbourne, Australia, for sponsoring a professionally-designed window display (at left) of the flag of Israel, covered with red text spelling out 'statistics' on alleged horrors committed by Israel since 1948. Besides unfairly singling out democratic Israel for a publicly-funded harangue halfway around the world, the text also contained a number of libelous fabrications? e.g. claiming that '200,000 Palestinians have been killed and 200,000 settlements have been built.'

And in December, Hamas supporters placed on a busy Melbourne street four large lightboxes paying homage to fallen terrorist leaders.

- The town of Oleiros, Spain, whose public information signs flashed the message 'Let's stop the animal!!! Sharon the assassin, stop the neo-Nazis.'

- A Houston art studio for hosting a Palestinian art exhibit containing a painting (at right) of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon collecting and boiling a young Palestinian's blood. The Westchester NY County Center hosted a fundraiser to bring this exhibit to the New York metropolitan region.

- The British Medical Journal, for an article entitled 'Palestine: The assault on health and other war crimes,' by Dr. Derrick Summerfield. Summerfield falsely branded Israel as guilty of 'war crimes,' deliberate child-killing, illegal colonization and apartheid, and made no mention of how Palestinian terror and political corruption have contributed to the unfortunate state of the Palestinian health system.

Summerfield's article is a prime example of how such terms and outlandish accusations have become legitimized in public discourse. The very editors and publications that remain reluctant to use the term 'terrorist' to describe Palestinian atrocities are increasingly willing to float accusations against Israel for committing 'crimes against humanity.'

So while 2004 saw real progress in certain areas, Israel remains the target of biased and distorted reporting the world over. In 2005, HonestReporting subscribers will need to remain diligent to this crucial facet of the Mideast conflict. (HonestReporting.com Dec 16)
