



OPINION and ANALYSIS

Vol 6, Number 4: 14 June 2010

**A selection of some of the more challenging and thought-provoking
local and international writings on the Middle East**

<http://www.sazionfed.co.za>

SAZF DATES TO DIARISE

30 June 2010	FOOTBALL FOR HOPE: <i>Peres Centre for Peace "Peace Team"</i>
July 2010	THE STORY OF ISRAEL: <i>Photographic Exhibition, Beyachad, Elray Street</i>
27/31 July 2010	OUR SOLDIERS SPEAK: <i>Benjamin Anthony (Sgt. Res.)</i>
22 August 2010	ISRAEL QUIZ: <i>Finals</i>
2/3 October 2010	YOUNG ADULT ADVOCACY WEEKEND: <i>Michelle Rojas, StandWithUs</i>
21 October 2010	CAROLINE GLICK: <i>Deputy Editor of the Jerusalem Post</i>
26/27 March 2011	47 th SAZF CONFERENCE: <i>International guest speakers</i>

1. David Harris To the Free Gaza Movement

You don't give a hoot about the well-being of millions of Iranians, whose human rights are being massively violated. You wouldn't take a single day off from your relentless anti-Israel campaign to assist the Iranian people.

2. A. Barton Hinkle Israel committed the one unforgivable offense

What's the real problem with Israel's assault on the Gaza flotilla? It's not the loss of life. Almost nobody cares about that. It's not the suffering of Palestinians. When Palestinians suffer, the world shrugs.

3. Leon de Winter Antisemitism is socially acceptable again

The Gaza flotilla was a perfect piece of Islamist theatre, revealing an old European hatred

4. Arnold Ahlert Who gets the benefit of the doubt?

Most Americans understand we are at war with Islamic fascists determined to establish a worldwide, totalitarian, religious empire. Yet even most conservatives insist that such people are only a miniscule segment of the Muslim community.

5. Caroline Glick The first rule of strategy

The main reason that the past year has been such a good one for Iran and its allies is because they have managed to keep Israel so busy fending off attacks that Jerusalem has had no time to weaken them in any way.

To the Free Gaza Movement

David Harris, AJC Executive Director and Co-Chair of UN Watch, UN Watch 6 June 2010

According to your website, you describe yourselves as a "human rights movement."

You proclaim: "We respect the human rights of everyone, regardless of race, tribe, religion, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship or language."

And yet nowhere is there evidence of your respect for the human rights of Israelis, who've been the targets of massive human rights violations by Hamas and other terror groups operating freely in Gaza.

Are human rights indivisible, or only permitted for the groups you preselect?

Actually, you answer that question at a deeper level when you assert that: "We recognize the right of all Palestinian refugees and exiles and their heirs to return to their homes in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.... This is an individual and not a collective right, and cannot be negotiated except by the individual."

In other words, not only do Israelis, who want nothing more than to live free of missile and mortar attacks from Gaza, have no such right, but the country in which they live has no right to exist. That's precisely what your formula means.

So much for being a "human rights movement" and respecting "the human rights of everyone."

Clearly, if it's not about pointing the finger at Israel – or, should I say, giving Israel the finger – then you're simply not interested. When Egypt occupied Gaza until 1967 and imposed draconian military rule, where were you to protest and organize flotillas and "humanitarian convoys"?

When in 2005 Israel left Gaza to determine its own destiny – for the first time in its history, I might add – where were you to encourage investment and job creation?

When Hamas violently ousted the Palestinian Authority from Gaza in 2007, where were you to express support for the PA?

When Hamas opted to follow a dead-end strategy to turn Gaza into a pariah state and terrorist redoubt, where were you to press for a truly "free Gaza"?

When Christians were attacked in Gaza by jihadists, where were you to demonstrate solidarity with the victims?

When Egypt sealed its border with Gaza and, later, announced the construction of a steel wall along the frontier, where were you?

And when officials today live lavishly in Gaza and humanitarian supplies are siphoned off to privileged groups and gangs, where are you?

No, it's only about Israel. Nothing else matters. Your agenda is obvious. Your motives are transparent. And surrounding yourselves with a few convenient Jews doesn't make you any more credible.

But if you still want to persuade the world that you're a "human rights movement," here's an idea.

June 12th is the first anniversary of the rigged Iranian elections. Here's what one human rights group had to say on Iran: "Iran's latest presidential election on June 12, 2009, took place against a backdrop of discrimination, worsening repression of dissent and violent unrest. Amnesty International continues to document serious human rights violations, including detention of human rights defenders and other prisoners of conscience, unfair trials, torture and mistreatment in detention, deaths in custody and the application of the death penalty. Iran has one of the highest number of recorded executions of any country in the world.... Furthermore, Iran executes more people than any other country in the world except for China. Iran is also the only country in the world that continues to execute juvenile offenders."

Moreover, the group reported: "Iran is now witnessing sweeping restrictions on the use of communications technology, including telecommunications, satellite broadcasts and internet access, a ban on peaceful demonstrations, armed attacks on students in university premises, as well as the arbitrary arrest of political activists, students, journalists, and human rights defenders, many – if not all – of whom are prisoners of conscience."

There will be a global day of action on June 12th demanding an end to human rights abuses in Iran. You're missing from the sponsoring groups. How could that be? After all, you define yourselves as a "human rights movement."

Surely, the fact that human rights defenders in Iran – your presumed compatriots – are in jail should mobilize you, not to mention state-sanctioned murder of minors.

Oops, I forgot. Israel isn't involved. That disqualifies Iran from consideration.

In fact, if you truly were a human rights movement, and based on your well-honed methods, you'd be organizing another flotilla as we speak. You'd recruit your "activists" to be on board. You'd proclaim your solidarity with the dissidents, the prisoners of conscience, and those on death row. And, come what may, you'd head for the Iranian coast. Luckily for you, you'd discover that Iran has 1100 miles of shoreline along the Persian (or is it Arabian?) Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

Actually, you've got another option as well – logistically easier and cheaper to boot.

Lo and behold, Turkey shares a 310-mile land border with Iran. Given your cozy ties with the Turkish government and Turkish "humanitarian" groups ... why not plan to cross the frontier in convoys loaded with supplies for Iran's human rights activists? And don't forget to bring the signs to unfurl in front of the media you'll invite: "Free Iran," "End human rights oppression in Iran," "Women deserve equality," "Gays have rights," "Stop capital punishment," "We remember Neda," "Ballots, not bullets," "No more torture," "Persecution of Baha'i must end."

But you don't give a hoot about the well-being of millions of Iranians, whose human rights are being massively violated. You wouldn't take a single day off from your relentless anti-Israel campaign to assist the Iranian people.

Why is it that a self-proclaimed "human rights movement" doesn't care about the fate of Iranians desperately in need of outside support? Why would you never think about taking your show on the road to Iran, whatever risks might await you? Why is that you and your Turkish friends wouldn't spend a moment on the subject? Alas, the reason is obvious. Israel isn't involved. You can't pin the blame on Jerusalem. Those waiting for you on the border don't wear an Israeli uniform (and don't abide by the same strict code of military conduct, either).

So what does that make you? Nothing more than a Hamas booster club seeking Israel's disappearance, while posing as a "human rights movement."

Israel committed the one unforgivable offense

A. Barton Hinkle, Richmond Times-Dispatch. 4 June 2010

What's the real problem with Israel's assault on the Gaza flotilla? It's not the loss of life. Almost nobody cares about that. It's not the suffering of Palestinians. When Palestinians suffer, the world shrugs.

Remember the worldwide condemnations, the protests across Europe and Asia, the stern rebukes from the world's high councils in January of last year -- when Hamas militants executed 54 members of the Fatah party and tortured 175 more for (allegedly) collaborating with Israel? You don't? That's because the killing and torture went on with almost no notice or comment.

How about the world's outrage in November 2007, when Hamas gunmen killed seven civilians and wounded 80 more during a rally memorializing Yasser Arafat in Gaza? If you don't remember the outrage, the marches in the street, the scathing U.N. resolutions, it's because there weren't any.

Nor did the world weep when the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) suspended operations in Gaza after two staff members were caught in a Hamas-Fatah crossfire and killed. When Palestinian factional violence impedes humanitarian aid, well, tsk-tsk.

Last February, Amnesty International reported that numerous prisoners injured by an Israeli bombing of a prison were "shot dead in the hospitals where they were receiving treatment." But they weren't shot by Israelis, so nobody objected.

According to a report by Reuters, "An estimated 616 Palestinians have been killed in factional fighting since Hamas defeated Fatah" in January 2006.

World reaction? Shrug.

Two wrongs don't make a right, and none of the above is meant to excuse Israel's clumsy, ill-orchestrated boarding of the Mavi Marmara. Nor is it meant to offer an unequivocal defense of the blockade, a legitimate point of contention. (Are cilantro, sage, chocolate, and notebooks really tools of terrorism? Really?)

The point is simply that those professing to be so broken up about the blockade and Israel's enforcement of it have been remarkably subdued whenever suffering is inflicted by someone other than Jews. For further instance, according to Amnesty International's 2010 report . . .

- Palestinians in Lebanon "continued living in overcrowded and often squalid conditions in 12 official refugee camps. Nearly 422,000 registered Palestinian refugees faced discriminatory laws and regulations, denying them the right to inherit property, work in around [sic] 20 professions, and other basic rights."

- In Saudi Arabia, "The authorities used a wide range of repressive measures to suppress freedom of expression and other legitimate activities . . . Shi'a Muslims and others were targeted for

practising their faith . . . Torture and other ill-treatment of detainees were systematic and carried out with impunity. Sentences of flogging were regularly imposed. The death penalty was used extensively. At least 69 people were executed, including two juvenile offenders."

•In Yemen, "The long-running conflict in the northern Sa'da Governorate between government forces and armed supporters of the late Zaidi Shi'a cleric Hussain Badral-Din al-Huthi resumed with new intensity from August, when the government launched a military offensive codenamed Scorched Earth that included aerial bombing and deployment of ground troops. Over 190,000 people had been displaced by the fighting since 2004, according to UNHCR, the U.N. refugee agency, in December, and an unknown number of civilians were killed in 2009. Both sides were believed to have committed serious human rights abuses . . . " Etc.....

World reaction to all of this? Once again, a shrug.

Nor did the world object as more than 10,000 rockets rained down on Israeli civilians over the course of several years. It was not until Israel finally had had enough and began going after those firing the rockets in late 2008 that the world sat up and began to insist the fighting stop. On one side, anyway. Across Europe, protesters and vandals went after Jewish synagogues, neighborhoods, and congregations. Attacking Jews in the West, in other words. As if it were somehow their fault.

Nor have there been any marches in the street to protest the behavior of those who organized the flotilla and assaulted the Israeli commandos. There has been equally little objection to the footage from al-Jazeera of men on board the flotilla, the day before the fiasco, chanting "[Remember] Khaibar, Khaibar, oh Jews! The army of Muhammad will return!" Khaibar was the last Jewish village taken by the Prophet Muhammad in 628. These are peace activists?

So what's the real problem with Israel's assault on the flotilla? Not the loss of life. Not the suffering of Palestinians. The real problem is that Jews defended themselves. That is the one offense in the Middle East the world simply will not forgive.

Anti-Semitism is Salonfähig (socially acceptable) again

Leon de Winter (Dutch journalist), Wall Street Journal, 14 June 2010

It's a fascinating phenomenon: Why do people and organizations that present themselves as progressive team up with reactionary Muslims?

The Free Gaza group is just such a Leftist-Islamist alliance. Well, Gaza is already free. Israel withdrew from the narrow strip five years ago. And there is also no need for any humanitarian aid. Well over a million tons of humanitarian supplies entered Gaza from Israel over the last 18 months, equaling nearly a ton of aid for every man, woman and child in Gaza.

But Gaza's population voted in democratic elections to be ruled by a party whose hatred of Jews is [the](#) cornerstone of its existence. Anyone who doubts this should read the Hamas manifesto on the Internet. The fact that Gaza is completely "judenrein" isn't enough for Hamas. It wants Israel to be "judenrein" too. The Israeli blockade for "strategic goods" is therefore not designed to punish ordinary Palestinians but to prevent Hamas from obtaining heavy weapons and building bunkers. It's as simple as that.

Contrary to Gaza, Chechnya, for example, isn't free. The Russians have crushed the struggle for independence of the Chechens by carpet-bombing their capital. And a Kurdish state? The Turks and Iraqis have inflicted unspeakable horrors on the Kurds. And yet, there are no Free Kurdistan flotillas sailing toward Turkey, and Russian officials don't fear being arrested in European capitals for war crimes.

Here are some more facts - lousy, stubborn facts. Let's look at the infant mortality rate in Gaza. It is a key number that says a lot about the state of hygiene, nutrition, and health care. In Israel the infant mortality rate is 4.17 per 1,000 births, which is about the same as in Western countries. In Sudan the rate is 78.1, that is, one in 13 infants die at birth. In Gaza, infant mortality per 1,000 births is 17.71. Yes, that's higher than in Israel, but much lower than in Sudan. And Turkey's infant mortality rate? Well, that's 24.84. Yes, more infants die at birth in Turkey than in Gaza.

Here is another fact. Life expectancy at birth is 73.68 years in Gaza. And in Turkey, Gaza's new protector, life expectancy is only 72.23 years. If the Israelis really wanted to make the lives of Palestinians short and nasty, then they are obviously doing something wrong.

The progressives don't care for any other group of poor or suppressed Muslims. They only cry for the "victims" of the Jews. Why is that so?

One reason is Yasser Arafat, whose genius was to redefine the Palestinian cause in neo-Marxist and anti-imperialist rhetoric. He created a new context for his people: The struggle against colonialism and racism. He was a classic corrupt warlord with an amazing talent to play the Western media and politicians. The progressives adopted the Palestinians as their favorite, quintessential victims of imperialism and colonialism as epitomized by the Zionist state.

But there is another reason why Western progressives hate Israel but are indifferent toward human rights abuses in Turkey, Iran, or Russia. It's because of the Holocaust.

Europeans, who represent much of what goes for world opinion, have grown tired of carrying the guilt for the destruction of the Continent's Jews. They have started to long for some form of historical release. That comes in the form of Israel's military response to Islamist attacks and terror. The Europeans couldn't suppress the chance to defame the Jews and redefine Israel's defense measures as either "disproportionate" or outright aggression - war crimes in other words.

In progressive European eyes, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict became a conflict without comparison, a unique phenomenon of European victims creating Palestinian victims, which seemed to diminish the weight of the ordinary European mass-slaughter of the Jews.

Watching Israel's demonization, the attack on its right to defend itself as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, it becomes clear that there is a deep need among Europeans to call the Jews murderers. This is why the Palestinians, as "victims" of the Jews, are more important than the numerous Muslim victims of Muslim extremists; this is why millions of other Muslims living under worse conditions than the Palestinians hardly get any mention in the media; this is why Gaza is compared to the Warsaw Ghetto or Auschwitz. By calling the Israeli Nazis, the original Nazis have been legitimized. It feels as if the Europeans, led by the progressives, want the Arabs to finish the job. Enough with the Jews. It is what it is - we see Europe's liberation from the legacy of the Holocaust.

For decades, our progressive, peace-loving Western activists have been fooled and manipulated by Arab tyrants and now by Turkish and Iranian Islamists. They have allowed themselves to assist in efforts to destroy one of the greatest adventures in modern times: the creation of the State of Israel.

What we have witnessed with the Gaza flotilla is the perfect execution of a masterful piece of Islamist theatre. The media's wild indignation, an orgasm of hypocrisy, marks the next chapter in the long story of European hatred toward the Jews. It is salonfähig again to be an anti-Semite.

Who gets the benefit of the doubt?

By Arnold Ahlert (JWR, 14 June 2010)

Despite the willful denials of the Obama administration and progressives in general, most Americans understand we are at war with Islamic fascists determined to establish a worldwide, totalitarian, religious empire. Yet even most conservatives insist that such people are only a miniscule segment of the Muslim community. What if they're not? And if, as stated above, we are at war, why are we so hell-bent on giving so-called "moderate" Muslims the benefit of the doubt?

Perhaps for progressives, such "even-handedness" is atonement. During WWII, one of the left's most cherished icons, FDR, locked up American citizens of Japanese descent. Admittedly, this was long before the days when political correctness poisoned the minds of ordinary Americans. Unlike 9/11, people reeling from the carnage of Pearl Harbor weren't immediately reassured that the "vast majority" of Japanese were "on our side." FDR's response to that attack has been vilified - in retrospect, imposing modern-day "values" which didn't exist at the time. Did the president over-react? It's easy to say yes - *now*. But we know how the story ended *now*. If Japan had defeated the United States in WWII, what then? On the other hand, one aspect of FDR's decision is indisputable: he gave America, not its enemies, the benefit of the doubt.

If there is a crucial element missing from our reaction to 9/11, it is that same benefit of the doubt. Progressives, starting the White House and emanating outwards, are determined not to make the same "mistake" FDR did. If one opposes the construction of a mosque at Ground Zero? Bigotry. If one refuses to tip-toe around a religion which has amply demonstrated that even the slightest criticism of it can literally be deadly? Insensitive. If one believes Iran's ruling class poses an existential threat to the planet? Neo-con (read, Jew-lover).

The common thread? *Islam* gets the benefit of the doubt.

Such accommodation has reached incomprehensible levels. It is impossible to imagine any other president in the history of the United States giving "shut outs" during a press conference for almost three minutes--before getting around to mentioning that an Islamic terrorist killed thirteen American soldiers at Fort Hood. And in what other moment in American history would the Army's top general elevate a concern about diversity over the murder of American soldiers? To wit:

"Our diversity, not only in our Army, but in our country, is a strength. And as horrific as this tragedy was, if our diversity becomes a casualty, I think that's worse." General George Casey

Really, General? Perhaps a visit to Walter Reed is in order. You might discover soldiers enduring grievous, life-altering wounds who are under the "mistaken" impression they were protecting *America*, not diversity.

In what other moment of American history could one imagine the Attorney General of the USA bending over backwards to avoid making any references to Islamic terror with regard to the above massacre, the Christmas Eve underwear bomber or the Times Square bomber - despite the fact that all three perps had a relationship with an American terrorist cleric, Anwar al Awlaki? Eric Holder is an insult to rational thinking and honesty - and he's running the Justice Department.

Question: who can say - with *absolute certainty* - that so-called moderate Muslims have no relationship whatsoever with their terrorist co-religionists? Answer: no one.

And therein lies the crux of the issue. In order to give America the benefit of the doubt, it becomes necessary to admit we're in the middle of a war. In order to give the overwhelming majority of Muslims the benefit of the doubt, it becomes necessary to deny that we are at war.

In other words, context is everything.

And yet it is context which is being studiously ignored. Building a mosque at Ground Zero can be one of two things: a celebration of religious freedom enshrined in the Constitution - or the establishment of beach head within the "enemy" camp. Liberals, as always, can't even imagine that the latter - at this precise moment in history - is just as likely, if not more so, than the former. Context might provide some perspective: the Ground Zero mosque's leader, Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, is a key figure in the Malaysian-based Perdana Global Peace Organization - the *single biggest donor* to the Free Gaza Movement that tried to break the Israeli blockade.

Does he still get the benefit of the doubt?

In Liberal-Land he does. Liberalism is an ideology which countenances the wringing of hands over diversity before thirteen American soldiers are even in the ground. It is the ideology which reflexively goes for the "lone wolf" theory regarding the would-be bombers on Christmas Eve and in Times Square first, before it is completely discredited by overwhelming evidence to the contrary. It is the ideology that allows for the civilian trials of those who executed three thousand Americans on 9/11 for the *primary purpose* of demonstrating "superior" morality - to our *mortal enemies*. It is the utterly bankrupt ideology which gives the benefit of the doubt to anyone and everyone over America and our national security.

If one considers FDR's prescription for national security to be an over-reaction, is it so inconceivable to consider our determination to give moderate Muslims the benefit of every doubt, an equal but opposite over-reaction? For example, it is unreasonable to limit legal immigration from Muslim countries where a majority of the population has demonstrated anti-American sentiments? It is unreasonable to give greater scrutiny to madrassas that have graduated students who turned to terror? It is unreasonable to kick radical Muslim clerics out of our prison system? Is it unreasonable to assume that the building of mosques in America, proceeding at a break-neck pace, is part of a grand strategy of cultural infiltration?

No doubt for many liberals, even thinking such "impure" thoughts is evidence of bigotry. Yet what nation has ever completely ignored a "worst case scenario" with regard to national security? I'd like to think there are more than a few "bigots" in places like the CIA, the State Department and the National Security Agency. I'd like to think there are people far smarter than me thinking "impure" thoughts about Muslims, both radical and ostensibly moderate. I'd like to think there are people for whom America gets the benefit of the doubt, each and every time.

If that makes me a bigot, then so be it. I'd rather be a living bigot than a dead "enlightened" thinker.

The liberal approach to terror is a house of cards. It is one more domestic attack removed from the ash heap of history, an attack which will completely obliterate the left's steadfast denial of reality. If hundreds of Americans are killed by yet another group of Islamic radicals, their fellow Americans will be in no mood to hear about diversity, lone wolves, civilian trials or "overseas contingency operations." There will be no mosque built at Ground Zero.

There will be no more "benefit of the doubt" given to "moderate" Islam.

Intolerant? Only if the context of a worldwide clash of cultures is surgically removed from the equation. Only if one ignores that the struggle between the West and Islam has been going on for hundreds of years. Only if we're willing to judge people by what they say, even as we ignore what they do. Only if we're willing to consider the worst case scenario to be completely and utterly impossible.

There is a big difference between intolerance and ideologically-inspired stupidity. It takes a willful determination to ignore the advances being made by Muslims in Europe, which proceed apace, even as certain neighborhoods in France and England become "no-go" zones for local police. It takes rose-colored glasses to believe that, as Muslim populations swell and European populations decline, there will be no attempt to institute fundamental changes in jurisprudence with respect to Sharia Law. Incrementalism is history in slow motion, but the current trajectory is inexorable - as long as one side is promoting its culture and the other is apologizing for it.

It's time we stopped apologizing. And if that means we become less "flexible" with respect to so-called moderate Islam, then so be it. America is far better served by reserving judgment than making false assumptions - especially when those assumptions are foisted on us by people whose ideology has always demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of human nature. Call it "neutralism" for lack of a better term. I neither assume the worst about Muslims - nor the best.

In historical terms, that puts me somewhere between FDR and Barack Obama.

Where do you fit?

The first rule of strategy

Caroline Glick, The Jerusalem Post 11 June 2010

www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/Article.aspx?id=178167

Israel's leaders get bogged down in details while Iran plays distraction game.

The first rule of strategy is to keep your opponent busy attending to your agenda so he has no time to advance his own. Unfortunately, Israel's leaders seem unaware of this rule, while Iran's rulers triumph in its application.

Over the past few weeks, Israel has devoted itself entirely to the consideration of questions that are, at best, secondary. Questions like how much additional assistance Israel should provide Hamas-controlled Gaza, and how best to fend off or surrender to the international diplomatic lynch mob have dominated Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's and his senior ministers' agendas. Our political leaders - as well as our military commanders and intelligence agencies - have been so busy thinking about these issues that they have effectively forgotten the one issue that they should have been considering.

Israel's greatest strategic challenge - preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons - has fallen by the wayside.

In the shadow of our distraction, Iran and its allies operate undisturbed. Indeed, as our leaders have devoted themselves entirely to controlling the damage from the Iranian-supported, Turkish- Hamas flotilla, Iran and its allies have had a terrific past few weeks.

True, Wednesday the UN Security Council passed a new sanctions resolution against Iran for refusing to end its illicit uranium enrichment program. But that Security Council resolution itself is emblematic of Iran's triumph.

It took a year for US President Barack Obama to decide that he should seek additional sanctions against Iran. It then took him another six months to convince Iran's allies Russia and China to support the sanctions. In the event, the sanctions that Obama refers to as "the most comprehensive sanctions that the Iranian government has faced," will have no impact whatsoever on Iran's nuclear weapons program.

They will not empower the Iranian people to overthrow their regime. And they will not cause the Iranian regime to reconsider its nuclear weapons program. They won't even prevent Russia from supplying Iran with S-300 anti-aircraft missiles to protect its nuclear installations from air assault.

Those long-awaited and utterly worthless sanctions underline the fact that life is terrific these days for Iran's leaders and their allies. A year ago, the Iranian regime was hanging by a thread. After stealing the presidential elections last June 12, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his boss Ali Khamenei required the assistance of all their regime goons to put down the popular revolt against them. Indeed, they needed to import Hezbollah goons from Lebanon to protect themselves and their regime from their own people. European leaders like French President Nicolas Sarkozy were openly supporting the Iranian people as they announced their intention to overthrow the regime.

But then Obama sided with the regime against its domestic, democratic opposition. Intent on giving his appeasement policy a whirl, Obama took several days to express even the mildest support for the Iranian people. In the meantime, his spokesman continued to refer to the regime as Iran's "legitimate" govt.

Obama's support for Ahmadinejad forced European leaders like Sarkozy to temper their support for the anti-regime activists. Even worse, by keeping the democracy protesters at arm's length, Obama effectively gave a green light to Ahmadinejad and Khamenei to resort to brute force against them. That is, by failing to back the democracy protesters, Obama convinced the regime it could get away with murdering scores of them, and torturing thousands more.

A year on, although the regime's opponents seethe under the surface, with no leader and no help from the free world, it will take a miracle for them to mount major protests on the one-year anniversary of the stolen elections. It is unimaginable that they will be able to topple the regime before it gets its hands on nuclear weapons.

A year ago Ahmadinejad was afraid to show his face in public. But this week he received a hero's welcome in Istanbul. He had a bilateral meeting there not only with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, but with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

In the past year Iran has deepened its strategic ties with China and Russia. It has developed an open strategic alliance with Turkey. It has expanded its strategic web of alliances in Latin America. Now in addition to Venezuela, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Bolivia, Iran counts Brazil among its allies.

Then there is Lebanon. Like the regime in Teheran, Iran's Lebanese proxy Hezbollah lost the Lebanese elections last June. And like the regime in Teheran, Hezbollah was able to use force and the threat of force to not only strong-arm its way back into the Lebanese government, but to guarantee itself control over the Lebanese government.

Now in control, with Iranian and Syrian support, Hezbollah has an arsenal of 42,000 missiles with ranges that cover all of Israel.

Then, too, Hezbollah's diplomatic situation has never been better. This week former US ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker called for the US to initiate a policy of diplomatic outreach to the Iranian-controlled illegal terrorist group. Ryan is the second prominent US official, after Obama's chief counter-terrorism adviser John Brennan, to call for the US to accept Hezbollah as a legitimate actor in the region.

As for Syria, it too has only benefited from its alliance with Iran. The Obama administration has waived several trade sanctions against Damascus. As it battles the Senate to confirm its choice for US ambassador to Syria, the administration has become the regime's champion.

Assuming the Senate drops its opposition, Syria will receive the first US ambassador to Damascus in five years as it defies the International Atomic Energy Agency and openly proliferates nuclear technology. Today Syria is both rebuilding its illicit nuclear reactor at Dar Alzour that Israel reportedly destroyed on Sept. 6, 2007 and building additional nuclear installations.

Luckily for Bashar Assad, the IAEA is too busy trying to coerce Israel into agreeing to international inspections of its legal nuclear installations to pay any attention. Since June 2008, the IAEA has carried out no inspections in Syria.

And that's the heart of the matter. The main reason that the past year has been such a good one for Iran and its allies is because they have managed to keep Israel so busy fending off attacks that Jerusalem has had no time to weaken them in any way.

It is true that much of the fault here belongs to the US. Since entering office, Obama has demonstrated daily that his first priority in the Middle East is to force Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians. As for Iran, Obama's moves to date make clear that his goal is not to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Rather, it is to avoid being blamed for Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons. Moreover, Obama has used Iran's nuclear weapons program - and vague promises to do something about it - as a means of coercing Israel into making unreciprocated concessions to the Palestinians.

The problem is that despite overwhelming evidence that Obama is fundamentally not serious about preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, Israel's leaders have played along with him. And in so doing they have lost control over their time and their agenda.

When Obama first came into office, he was committed to three things: appeasing Iran, attacking Israel for constructing homes for Jews in Judea and Samaria, and condemning Israel for refusing to support the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Obama was only partially dissuaded from appeasing Iran when Ahmadinejad rejected his offer to enrich uranium for the mullahs last December. As for his other goals, he coerced Netanyahu into agreeing to support Palestinian statehood last June and coerced him into ending Jewish home building in Judea and Samaria last September.

Ahmadinejad's rejection of Obama's outstretched hand forced Obama to launch his halfhearted drive for worthless UN sanctions. But he used this bid to coerce Israel into making still more unreciprocated concessions. After pocketing the prohibition on Jewish construction in Judea and Samaria, Obama moved on to Jerusalem.

From there he moved to forcing Israel to accept indirect negotiations with the Palestinians through his hostile envoy George Mitchell. And once he had pocketed that concession, he began pressuring Israel to surrender its purported nuclear arsenal.

Following that, he has moved on to his current position of pressuring Israel to accept a hostile international investigation of the navy's enforcement of Israel's lawful blockade of the Gaza coast. He also seeks to weaken Israel's blockade of Hamas-controlled Gaza and force Israel to accept a massive infusion of US assistance to Hamas-controlled Gaza.

This last Obama action plan was made explicit on Wednesday when the US president announced that his administration would give \$400 million in assistance to Gaza, despite the fact that doing so involves providing material aid to an illegal terrorist organization controlled by Iran.

Obama's actions are clearly disturbing, but as disturbing as they are, they are not Israel's main problem. Iran's nuclear program is Israel's main problem. And Netanyahu, his senior cabinet ministers and the IDF high command should not be devoting their precious time to dealing with Obama and his ever-escalating demands.

To free himself and Israel's other key decision-makers to contend with Iran, Netanyahu must outsource the handling of the Palestinian issue, the Obama administration and all the issues arising from both. He must select someone outside active politics to serve as his special envoy for this purpose.

Netanyahu's envoy's position should be the mirror image of Obama's Middle East envoy George Mitchell's role. He should be given a suite of fancy offices, several deputies and aides and spokesmen, and a free hand in talking with the Palestinians and the Obama administration until the cows come home.

In the meantime, Netanyahu and his senior cabinet ministers and advisers must devote themselves to battling Iran. They must not merely prepare to attack Iran's nuclear installations.

They must prepare the country to weather the Iranian counter-attack that will surely follow.

Those preparations involve not only fortifying Israel's home front. Netanyahu and his people must prepare a diplomatic and legal offensive against Iran and its allies in the lead-up, and aftermath, of an Israeli strike against Iran.

The most obviously qualified person to fill this vital role is former defense minister Moshe Arens. Arens has the experience, wisdom and gravitas to handle the job. Bereft of all political ambitions, Arens would in no way pose a threat to Netanyahu's leadership.

Whoever Netanyahu chooses, he must choose quickly. His failure to bear in mind the first law of strategy places Israel in greater and greater peril with each passing day.

NOTE: The views expressed in certain articles are not necessarily those of the SAZF