



OPINION and ANALYSIS

Vol 1, Number 35: 7 June 2013

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

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A small, but increasingly vocal number of Muslims are rejecting radical hate speech and combating anti-Semitism in the Muslim world.

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While most Muslims laud Hamas and scorn Israel, for me, an observing Muslim, Israel's war against Hamas remains my struggle – my jihad.

(3) Nathan Thrall and Robert Blecher, Palestine's changing politics
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This last year has been the most tumultuous in Palestinian politics since 2007 when Hamas seized Gaza from Fatah. West Bank violence has spiked since Operation Pillar of Cloud; the November 2013 Gaza-Israel conflict, giving rise to predictions of a third intifada. The PA found itself in a financial crisis, unable to pay salaries or halt economic decline. Prime Minister Salam Fayyad resigned.

(4) Dennis Ross and David Makovsky, Iran's nuclear games demand a tougher U.S. approach
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As the conflict in Syria rivets international attention, Iran's nuclear program continues apace. Unfortunately, while the Iranians install the next generation of centrifuges — machines that can produce enriched uranium three to four times faster than before

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**(5) Ben Levitas, Troubling “Nakba” day speech in South Africa
*Jerusalem Post, 29 May 2013***

As long as Maulanas like Hendricks preach such hateful and hurtful untruths in their mosques, the Palestinian people will be caught up in a vortex which will transform their struggle into a religious and irrational dimension, with no hope of resolution.

**(6) David Horowitz, Memo to Kerry: It’s not the economy, stupid
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**(7) Anne Bayefsky, Another scandalous session of the UNHRC
*Jerusalem Post, 28 May 2013***

The poisonous role of the UN human rights world in demonizing and isolating Israel cannot be overestimated. Israel cannot alter the twisted sense of right and wrong favored by its enemies, but there is an answer to the United States and Europe. The cornerstone of every credible human rights institution is equality.

**(8) Simon Round, In praise of compromise- Interview with Amos Oz
*Fathom, Summer 2013***

Amos Oz has lived through every one of Israel's wars and fought in two of them. He has seen hope in the peace process replaced by disappointment, compromises almost but never quite reached. Now at the age of 73, despite rockets whizzing over the border from Gaza, the threat of nuclear proliferation in Iran and little or no progress in the peace process, he remains remarkably upbeat about the possibility that, one day, his country will live in peace with its neighbours. Moreover, he asserts that, culturally, Israel is living through a golden age.

**(9) Abdullahteef al-Mulhim, Arab Spring and the Israeli Enemy
*Arab News, 6 October 2013***

The question that no Arab national wants to ask is: What was the real cost for not recognizing Israel in 1948 and why didn’t the Arab states spend their assets on education, health care and the infrastructures instead of wars? But, the hardest question that no Arab national wants to hear is whether Israel is the real enemy of the Arab world and the Arab people.

Muslims combating anti-semitism

Anav Silverman, *The Algemeiner*, 30 May 2013

<http://www.algemeiner.com/2013/05/30/muslims-combating-anti-semitism/>

A small, but increasingly vocal number of Muslims are rejecting radical hate speech and combating anti-Semitism in the Muslim world. In the recent Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism held this week in Jerusalem, Palestinian Media Watch director, Itamar Marcus and Dr. Boaz Ganor organized a panel discussion with Muslim activists actively rejecting hate rhetoric.

Two of the panel speakers included Kasim Hafeez, a British Muslim who runs The Israel Campaign and Rev. Majed El Shafie, a human rights advocate originally from Egypt. Ahmad Mansour, a Palestinian living in Berlin, who is a policy adviser for the European Foundation for Democracy, was also scheduled to speak but was unable to attend.

“When people say that anti-Semitism exists in the Muslim world because of Israel, that is simply an excuse,” says Kasim Hafeez, born in Britain to a Pakistani Muslim family.

“People here [in Israel] get Islamic anti-Semitism. In Europe, we deny it,” Hafeez expounded.

“As a university student, I would attend radical anti-Israel rallies in Trafalgar Square. Here I am standing in London in the middle of a European capital – chanting ‘death to Israel’ and nothing was ever done.”

He compares those rallies with the Ku Klux Klan. “An Al-Quds Day rally in London is equivalent to a KKK rally in the US,” he stressed.

Hafeez told Tazpit News Agency that he began to change his thinking when he read *A Case for Israel*, by Alan Dershowitz.

Hafeez explains that he read the book in order to learn how to further deconstruct Zionist propaganda. “But I began to see that I could no longer support my convictions because I had no answers to the arguments that were made for Israel,” he explains.

“I found that the radical Islamic doctrine that I grew up with and my own belief in violent jihad could no longer support the truth I once believed in.”

That realization prompted Hafeez to visit Israel. “I kind of hoped that the visit to Israel would be a negative experience, that it would enable me to go back to my former beliefs,” he told Tazpit News Agency.

But the visit was eye-opening for Hafeez, who says he fell in love with Israel during his first trip. “It’s hard not to support Israel,” says the soft-spoken Hafeez, who recently participated in the Jerusalem Marathon. “I encountered Israelis who weren’t anti-Arab, or anti-Islam and saw that this wasn’t some apartheid state.”

However, coming out in support of Israel hasn’t been easy. Hafeez has become isolated from his friends. “It’s a lot of hassle – it really disrupts your life when you become vocal and open about your support for the Jewish state.”

“What people don’t understand, is that it doesn’t matter if you bend over backwards for radical Islamists. If you are Jewish, they will hate you no matter what,” Hafeez said.

Rev. Majed El Shafie, the founder of One Free World International (OFWI), a leading organization which advocates for religious minorities globally, echoed similar sentiments. A Muslim who converted to Christianity, he found political asylum in Canada and believes that the silence of moderate Muslims is more dangerous than the rise of extremists.

"They [moderate Muslims] must speak up," says Rev. El Shafie. "Anti-Semitism is everyone's problem. The moderate Muslims don't understand that after the radical Muslims finish with the Christians, Bahai, and Jews, they will come after them. The minute we stop fighting for each other, we lose our humanity," he added.

Rev. El Shafie believes that education is the solution to radicalization and is the only way to bring forth democracy in the Middle East. "The Arab Spring is a cold deadly winter. Whoever came up with the term 'Arab Spring' must have been a guy in a suit behind a desk who had no idea what was really going on."

"Today all these dictatorships that have been overthrown are filled with extremist governments. There is no separation of religion and state and no freedom of religion in the Middle East. Education must come before democracy"

As for Israel, Rev. El Shafie declares that there are two things that the Jewish state cannot be questioned for. "When Israel's right to exist and Israel's right to defend itself, come into question, a line has been crossed," he stated. "The new anti-Semitism today is to hate Israel."

Israel's jihad is mine

Qanta Ahmed, The Times of Israel, 29 May 2013

<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/israels-jihad-is-mine/>

As Israel considers building a new fence to contain the Syrian conflict to the north, which fences can keep out Hamas's even more lethal ideologies? While Gaza and the Muslim Arab world continue to claim victory in the recent Israel-Hamas conflict, for the sane observers among us, there is only ever defeat – the defeat of morality in the desecration of a great religion. While most Muslims laud Hamas and scorn Israel, for me, an observing Muslim, Israel's war against Hamas remains my struggle – my jihad.

Israel's eight-day operation "Pillar of Defense" sought to dismantle the Hamas apparatus from within Gaza. The predictably seamless alignment of the Muslim world against Israel was even more breathtaking than usual in the face of Syria's 22 months of systematic genocide, one which has consistently failed to trigger unanimous Muslim protest. What does this say about us as Muslims?

We are hypocrites.

While Muslims define Israel as the enemy, we ignore Assad, and diabolically laud Hamas. Hamas is never sated – each year it devours ever more Palestinians, regardless of age or gender. If Israelis lose fewer citizens than the Palestinians in these conflicts it is for the same reason Israel exchanges more prisoners for each captive soldier: quite simply Israel values human life more than does Hamas, which *relishes* ground operations taking place among densely populated civilian areas.

Explaining this to Muslims in the Twitterverse, I get sharply reminded that Hamas does not have the "luxury of launch sites" that Israel enjoys. Have we lost our minds, Muslims? How can we speak of 'launch sites' as 'luxuries' while disregarding the culling taking place in Syria? Perhaps we have not lost our minds, but we have most certainly lost our religion.

As I am not one to speak for others, allow me to let Hamas speak for themselves. They are bald-faced about their mission, seeking glory through death, annunciation through annihilation:

We are ready to offer 1,000, 2,000 or even 10,000 martyrs every year. We are ready to keep offering martyrs for twenty years because we are sure we are moving in the right direction and that we will prevail in the end" (Hamas leader Khalid Al Mish'al in Gaza"

To Hamas, a Palestinian life is worth more when “martyred,” a dead child more of a blessing than one living. “The children of the kindergarten are the shaheeds [martyrs] of tomorrow,” reads a sign displayed at a Hamas-run kindergarten. The martyrdom mantra is their anthem.

While observers speculate Hamas will shortly usurp the crumbling Fatah leadership and ideologically annex the West Bank, we must remember Hamas’ *raison d’être*: Islamist nihilism, a totalitarian ideology, jet-fueled on the language and images stolen from mighty Islam. Israeli negotiators who must engage with this opponent are walking on the sharp-edged sword of Damocles and unlike Muslims, the Israelis certainly know it.

Coloring their fascism with Islam, Hamas claims religious legitimacy to openly seek destruction of the Jewish state and eradication of the Jewish people. By grafting themselves onto Islamic ideals – the vertebral column of that which is most sacred to Muslims – they render Islam itself heinous, representing their true ruthlessness: theirs is a willingness to sacrifice anything –including Islam – to portray Israel as evil.

This ethos was captured in a single unprecedented obscenity: Hamas’ morbid motorcade. Cocksure thugs, defiantly cruising on motorcycles trailed exposed cadavers of Palestinians – Muslim men – trousers pooled at dead ankles. To chants of ‘Allah-hu-Akbar’ as dozens of Palestinian onlookers silently watched, Hamas took its ghoulish victory lap explicitly to show Gazans how they execute ‘suspected informers to Israel’. *This is the Islam of Hamas.*

This is why Hamas does not represent me, or other believing Muslims. This is why Israel’s battle is mine. This is why Israel’s struggle – Israel’s jihad – is mine. These are the ‘Muslims’ that Israelis must confront and these are the “Muslims” who intimidate innocent Palestinians into subjugation to their monstrous political Islamism.

But we Muslims in particular, more than conflict-hardened Israelis, should hardly be surprised, for it was Muslims who were once forewarned of scourges such as Hamas.

The Prophet Mohammed (SAW) was once asked what he most feared for his followers. Centuries later, his response, recorded in the hadith, haunts, stating he feared those who:

...Interpret verses of the Qur’an out of context...A people that recite Qur’an....but it will not go past their throats, a people with excellent words and vile deeds. They will pass through the religion (of Islam) like the arrow passes through its quarry. They will no more come back to the religion than the arrow will come back to its course. They are the worst of human beings and the worst of all creation. They summon to the book of Allah, but they have nothing to do with it. Whoever kills them is closer to Allah than they.

This is the true nature of Hamas, which recites the Quran yet doesn’t hold it in their hearts, that “summon to the book of Allah but have nothing to do with it.” By the above, it would seem the IDF (that eliminates Hamas) is surely closer to Allah than Hamas.

Yet instead of condemning Hamas, and recognizing them as imposters among us, the Muslim world celebrates them, even as Hamas violates the most profound Islamic principle: the sanctity of life, a right man must protect even in preference to any rights God claims from man.

When Muslims support Hamas, we support no less than the signatories to Islam’s collective extinction. Muslim support renders Hamas legitimate, their methods acceptable, their ideals valid. Our support as Muslims is their lifeblood. In supporting them, we hemorrhage our only currency, our only asset – our great monotheism.

Two years into the Arab Awakening, the freshly turned soil is ripe for the seeding. Hamas operatives everywhere are already celebrated as 'liberators' of Gazans, when they have actually long been their jailers, 'victors' over Israel, when Hamas is the personal death knell of all pluralism in the region. Gazans so recently celebrating in the street are no more than hostages afflicted with the worst Stockholm Syndrome imaginable, heading to their own death through their misplaced hope in their virulently Islamist leadership.

During Operation Pillar of Defense, Jewish friends said "this must be such a difficult time for you, but I am glad of our friendship" implying that because I am Muslim, my loyalty must surely be to Gaza, my enmity automatically aligned with Israel.

Not so. As a Muslim, I am clear: my loyalty is with Islam, and therefore explicitly with justice, justice for all humanity, a humanity that must include Jews. Hamas is obscenely unjust, so how can my loyalty be with them? To be loyal to Hamas is no less than to abandon Islam. To be loyal to Hamas is the ultimate blasphemy.

While I understand the need for Israeli negotiators to engage with Hamas first to secure the current ceasefire and then for some sort of functional peace, the reality is their militant ideology must be suffocated out of existence or else the détente is little more than an illusion. For this, unlike for suicide bombers or Syrian rockets, there are no Israeli fences or walls, no Iron Domes, only Muslim barriers – robust barriers of counter-ideology.

It is Muslims who must take the first steps to excoriate Hamas, to expose them as the ruthless nihilists they explicitly announce themselves to be. We must scorn Hamas for masquerading among the poor as their savior when they are instead their executioner. Muslims must hold all media accountable for telling the truth: Palestinians are the Muslims orphaned not by Israel but by the entire Muslim world itself. Land-grabs and permanent refugee camps are testament to such.

We must ask ourselves the difficult questions. Does Hamas, who prostitute their progeny in the service of terror, represent Islam? Is Hamas emulating our Prophet as they rain rockets on unarmed, civilian, non-combatants? Do their Fajr missiles, named after Muslim prayers no less, encompass the spirit of Islam as was revealed to its followers? Do Hamas' stated goals – including elimination of Israel – represent coexistence with the People of the Book, who are cherished in the Quran as dear to God and their Messenger, Moses, particularly admired by our Maker for his courage in the face of fear?

Don't be fooled by Hamas' *words* Muslims; we have a duty to judge them on their vile *deeds*. If Islam is to truly thrive, it will only do so when more and more anti-Islamist Muslims confront and extinguish radical Islamist ideologies. Otherwise, we stand to lose both Israel and Islam in one fell swoop of the Islamist axe. Whether rescuing Palestinians and Israelis captive to the whim of Hamas, or rescuing Islam from Islamist Hamas, this is truly *your* jihad and no one else's, which is why Israel's jihad is also mine.

Palestine's changing politics

Nathan Thrall and Robert Blecher, Foreign Policy, 29 May 2013

http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/29/palestines_changing_politics

Much ink has been spilled on U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's efforts to restart Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, including his announcement this week of a plan for increased West Bank economic development. Comparatively little has been written about where Palestinians and Israelis will find themselves should talks start and then breakdown. The last year has been the most tumultuous in Palestinian politics since Hamas seized Gaza in 2007. West Bank violence has spiked since Operation Pillar of Cloud, the November 2012 Gaza-Israel conflict, giving rise to predictions of a third intifada. The Palestinian Authority (PA) found itself in a financial crisis, unable to pay salaries or halt economic decline. Prime Minister Salam Fayyad resigned.

Protests over the economy (at their largest in September 2012) and prisoners detained by Israel (February and April 2013) led many to wonder if another major eruption, or even the end of the PA, might be on the horizon. Despite the ferment, such fears -- or what for others are hopes -- were overblown. As of yet, there is little indication that a critical mass of Palestinians will push their political system to the boiling point or move forcefully into confrontation with Israel, which is trying to avoid just such an eventuality by keeping the PA's economy afloat and limiting Palestinian casualties and especially fatalities. With no unified Palestinian leadership, no strategy, and the people themselves divided and exhausted, an uprising possesses limited popular appeal.

It is telling that PA finances and hunger-striking prisoners were the issues that galvanized large protests; while both are vital for individuals and in national life, they excite little dissent or rancor (beyond that directed at Fayyad). Both are non-partisan and tangential to the fundamental, strategic issues -- the Gaza-West Bank division and Israel's occupation -- that Palestinians confront. Secondary issues have traction precisely because it is only there that the major factions allow mobilization and that ordinary Palestinians feel empowered to demand change. Once protests threatened to exceed the boundaries the leadership had set, they were reined back in.

Some Palestinians would want to use the protests and underlying discontent as triggers for greater change, but relatively few seem willing to leap into the unknown. They are concerned about what radical revisions to the PA would mean for their national movement and personal welfare. Those who champion "ending Oslo" -- whatever that would mean -- have been unable to convince their compatriots to act, in part because it is unclear what that might entail, but also since there is no guarantee it would solve their problems.

For this reason, reports of the PA's imminent death seem exaggerated. Israel has shown that it considers the PA's existence, if not its flourishing, to be in its own national interest. The divide between Fatah and Hamas remains deep, giving the former an incentive to maintain the PA, its strongest institution. Western diplomats and many Palestinians believe that, for the foreseeable future, enough money will continue to flow to keep the PA alive, and President Mahmoud Abbas will stick around and do what he can to delay much-feared steps toward confrontation with Israel. Aid to Palestinians, and particularly to the PA, still literally buys time.

And yet. A page is being turned. Palestinian politics and the PA are being fundamentally transformed. Succession talk no longer is taboo. Abbas is 78. When he departs, an era will end for the national movement; he is the last leader, of national stature and possessed of historical legitimacy, truly committed to the kind of negotiated settlement the world favors. The "collapse" of the PA is less likely to be a discrete event, and its "dissolution" less a matter of conscious intent than a process: the gradual hollowing out of institutions that were never particularly strong.

These transformations are traceable not only to PA anemia but also to that of the Palestinian political system and, perhaps most fundamentally, to its absence of legitimacy, which -- within the context of occupation -- presents the greatest threat to West Bank stability. A legitimate system can bear significant strain; one that does not command genuine allegiance can bear very little. Buying time

through technical solutions, economic investment, and other palliative measures would serve a purpose and might postpone the government's disintegration but ultimately would be of limited effect. Managing potential triggers of conflict is increasingly akin to a game of whack-a-mole.

The resumption of negotiations also could help postpone a crisis. Though Palestinians don't have much faith in what they might deliver, they would give the Palestinian leadership a reason -- some would say an excuse -- to delay moves that could precipitate an escalatory dynamic, such as steps at the International Criminal Court (ICC) or other international bodies, and might convince some in the security forces that the PA has not yet run its course as a national project. The corollary, however, is that a breakdown in renewed talks risks accelerating the very dynamics they are meant to forestall. Negotiations for the sake of negotiations risk doing more harm than good.

However thick the PA's insulation, it is doubtful it can withstand the test of time or the pressures of mounting frustration. Objectively, many of the conditions for an uprising are in place: political discontent, lack of hope, economic fragility, increased violence, and an overwhelming sense that security cooperation serves an Israeli -- not Palestinian -- interest. At some point, perhaps triggered by an unexpected event, Palestinians may well decide their long-run well-being would be better served by instability, and only by rocking the boat might they come closer to their desired destination. The result likely will differ from the second intifada, as the second differed markedly from the first. But short of steps to unify and reinforce the legitimacy of Palestinian institutions and move Israelis and Palestinians toward a comprehensive peace, another destabilizing event is inevitable. In buying time, aid dollars go only so far.

Iran's nuclear games demand a tougher U.S. approach

Dennis Ross and David Makovsky, The Washington Post, 29 May 2013

<http://www.bicom.org.uk/comment-and-opinion/14748/>

As the conflict in Syria rivets international attention, Iran's nuclear program continues apace. Unfortunately, while the Iranians install the next generation of centrifuges — machines that can produce enriched uranium three to four times faster than before — the "P5+1" negotiations on Iran's nuclear program have ground once again to a halt.

While economic pressures impose a cost on Iran, so far they have failed to alter its nuclear program. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei may acknowledge that sanctions are "brutal," but he also seems to feel that Iran has endured worse. In light of President Obama's objective of preventing the Iranians from acquiring nuclear weapons, something has to give. At a minimum, the supreme leader must be made to feel that when the United States says the time for diplomacy is running out, we mean it — and that the consequence is likely to be the use of force.

Perhaps because of U.S. hesitancy on Syria, or our withdrawal from Iraq, or our transition out of Afghanistan, or talk of the U.S. "pivot" to Asia, Iranian leaders seem not to believe that we will use force if diplomatic efforts fail. Obama insists that he means what he says on preventing Iran from having nuclear weapons and that he will do whatever is necessary. The Iranian misreading of this determination could put us on a fast track to conflict.

If diplomacy is to be given a final chance, the United States needs to shift its negotiating strategy away from the confidence-building "step-by-step" approach — which only deepens Iranian

perceptions that they can string us along until we acquiesce. Instead, the United States needs to establish greater clarity about what we can and cannot live with regarding Iran's nuclear program and give further credence to the administration's statements that the time for diplomacy is running out.

The confidence-building approach, which seeks to reach a limited agreement in a bid to buy time for a wider deal in the future, simply cannot do that. Even if it were possible now, it is not clear that such a tactic would be in U.S. interests. A limited deal is based on the notion that capping Iran's "medium-enriched" uranium at 20 percent enrichment will guard against it being able to upgrade its fuel to weapons-grade enrichment. Yet if Iran has a bomb's worth of uranium enriched to 20 percent, it would take only 30 to 40 days for it to produce weapons-grade fuel.

With Iran expanding its number of first- and second-generation centrifuges, even if its medium-enriched uranium were capped or shipped out of the country as part of some international agreement, the Iranians could surge to weapons-grade almost as fast with their four to five bombs' worth of low-enriched uranium.

Iran continues to stall negotiations under the cover of not ostensibly crossing a "red line." The United States and its allies must change gears. It may be best to do so before Iran's June 14 elections — not because a deal is likely to be reached before the vote but because the Iranians will need time to contemplate the meaning of an approach geared more toward a nuclear endgame.

This new approach would involve defining an acceptable civil nuclear capability for Iran — something that the confidence-building approach has largely avoided. It could mean accepting limited enrichment but with strict and verifiable restrictions. This would prevent Iran from being able to break out and present the world with a nuclear weapons fait accompli.

Practically, there would need to be limits on the number and type of centrifuges, maximum level of enrichment and amount of enriched uranium that could remain in Iran. Each of these amounts would have to be small. Clearly, if Iran is prepared to alter its nuclear program in this fashion, we should be prepared to lift the harsh economic sanctions. But the Iranians cannot get the latter unless they do the former.

Apart from taking away Iranian excuses, an endgame approach to the nuclear issue also has the benefit of creating far greater clarity in Iranian minds. It would signal that we mean what we say — that time is indeed running out. By offering Iran what its leaders have claimed to want, civil nuclear power, the United States could expose Iran's true intentions to the world, including its own people. Were Iranian leaders to turn down the opportunity to have civil nuclear capability, their real aims of acquiring nuclear weapons would be revealed. In such circumstances, the United States would be far better positioned to make the case to the international community that military action is warranted.

Coercive diplomacy succeeds when threats are believed and the game-playing and manipulation stop. Offering a credible endgame proposal could convince the Iranians that time is truly running out — and that we are setting the stage for the use of force if diplomacy fails. We should give Iran a clear diplomatic way out — and Iranians should understand the consequences if they don't take it.

Troubling "Nakba" day speech in South Africa

Ben Levitas, Jerusalem Post, 29 May 2013

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Troubling-Nakba-day-speech-in-South-Africa-314782>

The public sermon (*jumuah khutba*) delivered by Maulana Igsaan Hendricks, president of the Muslim Judicial Council of Cape Town, South Africa, at Masjid-Sulaimani on Friday, May 10, shortly before the Palestinian Nakba Day on May 15, and broadcast live on VOC, is immensely troubling.

Hendricks referred to the Balfour Declaration which, he said, in 1917 “promised this land to some other people, who never owned the land in the first place.” By “some other people,” Hendricks of course meant the Jews, who have a long and well-documented history binding them inexorably to the land of Israel. Although they were displaced from their land in many wars over many millenia, they always considered the land of Israel their only home.

While in exile – an unnatural state of existence – they yearned for their return to Zion (Jerusalem). As Jews they could not fulfill the *mitzvot*, or commandments, while living outside of Israel, because many could only be fulfilled at the Holy Temple.

These are deeply embedded principles of faith and tradition, that Hendricks cannot just dismiss. To state the Jews “never owned the land” is an outrageous lie. Jews are not mere colonists; they have always lived in Israel, and in Jerusalem they have always been a majority. For 400 years, two kingdoms of Jews reigned in Judea and Israel – as is recorded in the bestselling book of all time.

Hendricks then ventures to make the outrageous statement that, “Prior to 1929, there was absolutely no evidence of the Wailing Wall.” He then proceeds to say that “The Buraq Wall is an integral part of Masjidul-Aqsa. If any Muslim believes it is an exercise of interfaith or to recognize that the Jewish people have a right to be in front of the Wailing Wall, then it is a sign of extreme arrogance and ignorance.”

This is a provocative attack on the foundational truths of not only Judaism, but also Christianity. If Hendricks had any knowledge of the New Testament he would have read in Matthew (21:12), that Jesus chased Jewish “moneychangers” from the Holy Temple, Mark 11:12-19 refers to Jesus praying at the Holy Temple, and many other Christian references, several hundred years before al-Aksa was built.

Hendricks addresses the nakba (catastrophe), or birth of Israel, at length, and he is entitled to do so. But he neglects to mention that the Palestinians were offered half the land between the Jordan River and the Sea by the United Nations. While the Jews were prepared to share the land, the Palestinians preferred the path of war.

Hendricks is also wrong with his percentages, as the Jews were promised under the Treaty of San Remo, in 1922, the whole of Mandate Palestine, which included the land to the east of the Jordan – they were prepared to accept less than a third of the land approved by the League of Nations.

As a direct result of the war, and the attack by five Arab countries against a very weak fledgling state of Israel, 600,000 Palestinians were displaced. Their descendants may now number six million, but only 50,000 can directly trace their origins to Israel.

Hendricks then makes mention of “the famous refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila,” which he fails to mention are in Lebanon. He “speaks very loud of the very despicable conditions of the Palestinian people living there,” but fails to mention that the Arab people of Lebanon are responsible for keeping the Palestinians under these

pitiful conditions. It is not Israel's fault that these refugees have been denied rights enjoyed by refugees everywhere else in the world.

This ongoing crime against humanity, being perpetrated against the descendants of the Palestinian refugees, needs to be acknowledged and the blame for it rests squarely with the Arab governments of Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Egypt. If Hendricks were to be true to his next words, instead of identifying with the "Ummah of Islam" he should condemn it for the enslavement of the Palestinian people.

Hendricks continues to spin his web of lies: "So for the last 60 years, there has been no single archaeological evidence that the Temple of Solomon ever existed beneath al-Masjid Al Aqsa al- Mubarak." And as evidence he refers to "a leading Jewish archaeologist who is author of a book on the city of the domes now lives in exile in the United Kingdom and worked for 30 years on this project."

The evidence of this nameless researcher, when measured against the thousands of books and papers that have been written about discoveries in the past 60 years, of Jewish ritual baths, of altars, of stones like the "trumpeting place" discovered by Benjamin Mazar, of the City of David, of wells and of coins, can't be wished away or ignored by Hendricks.

So what is it in the minds of intelligent men like Hendricks – and there are others, such as Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority, his adviser Ahmad al-Ruweidi, and almost the entire Palestinian cabinet, clerics and ministers, all of whom used the term "alleged Temple" – that forces them to deny the Jewish connection to Israel? Nonnie Darwish, in her article "Why Muslims must hate Jews," posits an explanation, which is frightening in the extreme: "After a lot of thinking, analysis, research, and writing, I discovered that Jew-hatred in Islam is an essential foundation to the Islamic belief system that Muslims cannot seem to be able to rid themselves of. Jew-hatred masks an existential problem in Islam.

Islam is terrified of the Jews, and the number-one enemy of Islam is the truth, which must be constantly covered at any cost."

Hendricks coasts close to calling for a religious war by fabricating a story about a Zionist plot to lock a door leading to an enclave of Sufi sheiks. "From 1967 till now, that Zawiya has been closed by the Zionists."

He fails to acknowledge that the whole Haram as-Sharif is closed to Israelis, and Jews are not allowed to enter. He fails to mention that al-Aqsa mosque is under the control of the Wakf, and instead tries to foment violence by making an emotional call to action, with the words.

As long as Maulanas like Hendricks preach such hateful and hurtful untruths in their mosques, the Palestinian people will be caught up in a vortex which will transform their struggle into a religious and irrational dimension, with no hope of resolution.

The words of Nonnie Darwish ring eerily: "When I was a Muslim, I believed that the one-sided story against Jews by Islam was enough to justify all the killing, terror, lies, and propaganda by Islamic leaders against Jews. To the average Muslim, routinely cursing Jews in mosques feels normal and even holy!"

Memo to Kerry: It's not the economy, stupid

David Horovitz, Editorial, The Times of Israel, 28 May 2013

http://www.timesofisrael.com/memo-to-kerry-its-not-the-economy-stupid/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=8205b6df99-2013_05_28&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-8205b6df99-54389993

On Sunday afternoon, at the World Economic Forum conference on the Jordanian side of the Dead Sea, a group of Israeli and Palestinian businesspeople unveiled an initiative designed to spur progress to an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord.

Hundreds of company bosses were signed up to the “Breaking the Impasse” project, reported its two trailblazers — the Midas of Israeli high-tech, Yossi Vardi, and the Palestinian oil-, gas- and much more besides-billionaire, Munib al-Masri. Later that same day, hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian signatories indeed rose to receive the applause of the two-thousand plus participants at the WEF’s closing plenary session.

Vardi and al-Masri stressed in their presentations that they were not prescribing the specific terms of a peace deal. They were, rather, offering the backing of their respective business communities to chivy the political leaderships toward agreed terms for a Palestinian state established in harmony alongside Israel.

Vardi, typically, was earnest and passionate, his remarks reflecting a sense that both sides were to blame for past failure; al-Masri, again typically, was more acerbic and blinkered, barely acknowledging Israeli suffering through our joint decades of bloody history. But the bottom line was identical: a plea for political courage. “Enough is enough,” they both said in their separate remarks to a well-attended press conference. Put aside the bitterness, the wariness and the cynicism. Knuckle down. Make peace.

And the caveat was shared, too: This was emphatically not a case of the Israeli and Palestinian business communities, despairing of their respective political leaderships, declaring that they henceforth would shoulder the burden and lead their peoples to normalization. This was not a case of trying to make economics work where diplomacy has failed. As Vardi put it, it was up to the political leaders, not the business community, “to make the painful compromises.” As al-Masri echoed, this was not some kind of “economic peace” initiative. The Palestinians want their own country. They want independence. A booming economy, working well with the Israelis next door, would be great too. But it’s not the economy, stupid. It’s the sovereignty.

In the course of the day, I was told by various insiders that US Secretary of State John Kerry was well aware of the initiative and its details. At some point, there was talk of a sit-down being planned between the secretary and the would-be impasse breakers.

That didn’t happen. And later on Sunday evening, in the penultimate speech of the WEF event, Kerry — a veteran of four Middle East shuttle missions in his less than four months in office — unveiled the fruits of his diplomatic labors. No, he hadn’t cut a peace deal — though he ad-libbed a fairly dumb joke about having an agreement with him if the previous speakers, Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas, were minded to sign it. No, he hadn’t prodded the Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table. In fact, no, he hadn’t even managed to arrange a meet between Abbas and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

So what magic had he wrought? What did he have to present to us all? An economic plan. Bigger and better and bolder and brighter than anything hitherto attempted for the Palestinians.

What? Foreheads furrowed. Fingers went to clean out eardrums. Were we hearing this right? The secretary was proposing a financially driven path to Israeli-Palestinian peace and happiness? Was he kidding?

As the audience took cover, the secretary let loose salvos of statistics: This could boost the Palestinian economy by 50% in three years. Agricultural production would triple. Tourism, too. One hundred thousand new homes would rise. Unemployment would fall by two-thirds. Wages would increase by 40%. "Is this a fantasy?" he wondered aloud. Well, duh. But, no, Kerry preempted, "I don't think so, because there are already great examples of investment and entrepreneurship that are working in the West Bank. We know it can be done..."

How? What? Who? Where? The answer to all such questions, it seemed, was: Tony Blair. The indefatigable former British prime minister, shaking hands with those sheikhs at the side of the hall, he was going to fix it. Somehow, Tony the economic tiger was going to rustle up the necessary \$4 billion in investment and — presto! — all our problems would be solved.

Last time we looked, the admirable Blair had been the Middle East Quartet's representative in these parts since June 2007. If there was \$4 billion to be had in private investment in the Palestinian economy, you can rest assured that Tony Blair would have found it. An irredeemable optimist, Blair has placed much emphasis on reviving the West Bank economy, to give the Palestinians a sense of stake in maintaining security and stability, as a vital, integral factor in diplomatic progress. But not, it ought not to require stressing, as the key catalyst of a political process. Not, that is, as the centerpiece of what the lame US secretary will from now have to carry around as the Kerry Plan.

Potential private investment is out there. And it can certainly flow into the Palestinian territories. But it will only flow — as opposed to trickle — *after* the conditions are created for long-term stability, not as the means to create those conditions. Twenty years ago, before the Oslo process had been doomed by Yasser Arafat's duplicity, private investment did flow into Gaza; expat Palestinians, evidently believing that everybody's troubles were coming to an end, began building apartment blocs in the Strip. Then came the suicide bombings of the early-to-mid 1990s, Arafat's immovable anti-peace stance at Camp David 2000, the strategic use of terrorism he fostered in the Second Intifada, and the Hamas takeover of the Strip after Israel's unilateral withdrawal in 2005. Even Blair's compelling mix of charisma, passion, smarts and optimism couldn't pry sizable outlays from anybody for Hamas-run Gaza now.

And investment in the West Bank today, though ongoing, is necessarily cautious and prudent — as befits the radical instability of the wider region, the potential for chaos extending to the West Bank, and ongoing local crises such as the recent ousting by Abbas of the single most credible figure for would-be West Bank investors, prime minister Salam Fayyad.

Before he took office, Kerry was touted as a secretary of state who truly believed he might succeed where his predecessors had failed, in brokering Israeli-Palestinian peace — and never mind the discouraging context: a weak PA president who failed to confront the false Arafat narrative that denies Jewish sovereign roots here; a region in free fall where the Hamas takeover in Gaza and the bloodshed on the Syrian side of the Golan constitute spectacular disincentives to relinquish territory; and a battered Israeli public who saw Ehud Olmert's unsurpassable peace offer brushed aside by Abbas in 2008 and now have a settler-sympathetic prime minister, with a heavy settler element in his coalition, who is in no mood to repeat it.

As the businesspeople who fashioned "Breaking the Impasse" correctly recognized, the path to an accord requires compromise and pragmatism by the politicians. It requires a Palestinian leader like the English-speaking Abbas, who told Channel 2 last year that there would be no third intifada under his leadership, that he had no demands on pre-1967 Israel, and that he felt he had no "right" to return

to live in Safed, the town of his birth in today's northern Israel. It does not require a Palestinian leader like the Arabic-speaking Abbas, who went to the UN last November seeking statehood without the inconvenience of negotiating modalities with Israel, told the watching world Israel was born in fundamental sin through ethnic cleansing, and who, at the Dead Sea on Sunday, delivered a speech made all the more unpalatable and extreme by the plaintive call for peace from the business community that preceded it.

In the Abbas account of the conflict as detailed on Sunday, Israel's refusal to simply up and leave from the West Bank is plain incomprehensible. After all, he argued, the Palestinians have never and would never harm so much as a hair on an Israeli's head.

Why on earth, he wondered — this picture of bafflement, this elderly, well-intentioned gentleman, rendered impotent by the stupidity of those aggressors on the other side of that inexplicably constructed wall — would Israelis be wary of what might happen were they to pull out of the West Bank? What harm might possibly befall them? The Second Intifada? Obviously a figment of Israel's imagination. The no-nonsense ousting of Abbas from Gaza by Hamas, with its acutely worrying implications for a post-IDF West Bank? Presumably never happened.

Israel in 1999 threw out Netanyahu because it believed there was a peace deal to be made with Arafat, and that the intransigent prime minister was missing the chance. There was no such sentiment when Israelis voted four months ago — no sense that opportunities for peace were going begging because of obdurate, settlement-building Netanyahu. Arafat shattered Israelis' confidence in their Palestinian negotiating partners. Abbas has signally failed to restore it. And the collapse of stability in the Middle East is working against all those who seek to heal the rift.

Absurd rhetoric about billions in private investment is not going to change any of that. What it does, however, is make a fool of the secretary of state who utters it, and make plain that salvation from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, rarely more elusive than today, is not going to come from Washington, DC.

Another scandalous session of the UNHRC

Anne Bayefsky, Jerusalem Post, 28 May 2013

<http://humanrightsvoices.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=779a7657507fa1127185b036a&id=a877eae61d&e=6e148dde36>

It is opening week of another session of the UN's top human rights body, the UN Human Rights Council, and anti-Semitism will once again be promoted around the globe via an organization built on the ashes of the Jewish people and sworn to hatred's eradication.

In March of last year, Israel decided not to cooperate with a UN "human rights" establishment that promises equality and delivers discrimination.

Under heavy pressure from the Obama administration and European governments not to spotlight the dark anti-Semitic underbelly of UN "human rights" operations, however, Israel is considering reversing this decision.

Without fundamental reform, such an unfortunate about-turn by Israel would be a major boost to Israel's delegitimizers.

The current Council session in Geneva is a case in point. From the start on Monday, May 27, the UN human rights chief Navi Pillay issued an opening statement highlighting her major human rights concerns the world over.

Her preposterous series of countries having “crises” worthy of specific criticism were Syria, Myanmar, Iraq, the Central African Republic, Israel and the United States.

On the other hand, in Pillay’s view, Egypt, Libya and Yemen were “progressing in different ways and at different speeds.”

Omitted from her list altogether was the denial of elementary freedoms to a billion people in China, the downward spiral of rights and freedoms in Russia, the forthcoming sham elections of lead terror-sponsor Iran, or the degradation of an entire female population in Saudi Arabia.

But Israel, according to Pillay, was guilty of “the widespread detention of Palestinians – nearly 5,000.” It was irrelevant that the vast majority of these so-called detainees were prisoners, already tried and found guilty often of horrible crimes, in a country governed by the rule of law.

And that was merely the opening act.

On June 10, the Council will give the microphone to terrorist-sympathizer Richard Falk. He is the UN investigator on Israel who has made a career of justifying violent “resistance” from New York to Israel to Boston. A 9/11 conspiracy theorist, Falk recently generated disgust across America for suggesting the victims of the Boston marathon terror attack were “canaries” that “have to die” because of America’s “fantasy of global domination.”

Falk’s latest official UN report is outrageous.

Contrary to even the lip service paid by the UN secretary-general, but consistent with Falk’s fetishistic empathy for terrorists, he advises against “the value of direct negotiations at this time.” In one particularly repugnant line, Falk rails against Israel’s killing of Hamas “military leader” Ahmed Jabari because Jabari “kept [Gilad] Shalit... in good health while in captivity for several years.”

Later in his report Falk singles out, for abuse and harassment, corporations that do business with Israel. From his UN perch, he plugs the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign.

When Falk retires after his six-year time limit in 2014, he will be replaced by another such UN human rights “expert.” After all, his formal mandate is to investigate predetermined human rights violations, and only by one party to the conflict – Israel.

Following Falk’s performance, the Council will devote more time to Israel-bashing. Its permanent agenda has one item designated to the condemnation of Israel, and another to the remaining 192 UN members – if they should “require the Council’s attention.” The result of this process is that 39 percent of all Council resolutions and decisions condemning specific states for human rights violations have been directed at Israel alone.

Even the western democratic states that meet regularly during Council sessions refuse to allow Israel to attend their group gatherings. In Geneva, every UN member state is welcomed into one of the five key regional bodies that discuss policy, share information and divvy up UN jobs – except Israel.

Ironically, despite the entrenched discrimination, Israel finds itself pressed by democratic countries to get on the bus, move to the back and sit down. By refusing to play this game, Israel draws attention to the UN's institutional bias and undercuts the credibility of the UN's alleged "universal" human rights apparatus.

That's an inconvenience for the Obama administration, which has made membership and support of the Council a central component of its foreign policy.

The quandary for Israel, therefore, is this. The poisonous role of the UN human rights world in demonizing and isolating Israel cannot be overestimated.

It is imperative to delegitimize the delegitimizers. Yet Israel's failure to participate in its own execution is now being cast at the Council as uncooperative and aberrant.

Israel cannot alter the twisted sense of right and wrong favored by its enemies, but there is an answer to the United States and Europe.

The cornerstone of every credible human rights institution is equality.

Israel can and must articulate clearly identifiable sources of inequality that can be fixed – if the commitment to universal human rights standards is bona fide.

The UN Human Rights Council can modify its agenda to place Israel under the same item as all other states. The mandate of the Council special investigator on Israel can be changed to require reporting on the human rights abuses of all parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Western states in Geneva can end the exclusion of Israel from its regional group and abide by the UN Charter's promise of the equality of all nations, large and small.

A global vehicle for modern anti-Semitism or a human rights instrument? The ball should not be in Israel's court.

In praise of compromise- Interview with Amos Oz

Simon Round, Fathom, Summer 2013

<http://www.fathomjournal.org/conversation/in-praise-of-compromise/>

Amos Oz has lived through every one of Israel's wars and fought in two of them. He has seen hope in the peace process replaced by disappointment, compromises almost but never quite reached. Now at the age of 73, despite rockets whizzing over the border from Gaza, the threat of nuclear proliferation in Iran and little or no progress in the peace process, he remains remarkably upbeat about the possibility that, one day, his country will live in peace with its neighbours. Moreover, he asserts that, culturally, Israel is living through a golden age.

Politics and peace

Israel's greatest novelist and one of its most ardent peace campaigners is adamant that, sooner or later, the warring parties will have no alternative but to sit down together to hammer out a solution to their problems.

Oz was in London recently for the launch of two paperbacks; his new short story collection. *Scenes From Village Life*, and *How to Cure a Fanatic*— an analysis into and a response to the fanaticism facing the world. Over coffee in the office of his publisher, he speaks calmly in his perfect English – delivering his soothing words in a soothing tone. “This government or the next government, this Palestinian leadership or the next one will eventually come to an agreement. The fact is that no one has anywhere to go. We cannot form one happy family because no one is happy and we are not one family. So we need to separate. I don’t know how long it will take and I don’t know how much innocent blood will be shed. But I do think that the silent majority on both sides is unhappily ready for a compromise on a two state solution.”

He takes comfort in the fact that neither side will be totally content with the outcome. “Do they trust each other? They do not. Will they be dancing in the street when a two-state solution is implemented? They will not, either in Israel or Palestine. But they do know there is no alternative because no one is going to be moving out.”

While there have been failed attempts to get the process moving and many disappointments, Oz also sees hope in the fact that the rhetoric of the warring parties has evolved –despite the violence there is an implicit recognition of the rights of the other. “30 or 40 years ago, the Palestinians were maintaining that Israel was like a mobile exhibition – that if they scratched themselves hard enough the infection would go; that if they screamed hard enough the world would move Israel to somewhere else. Now they know that Israel will not be going anywhere. At the same time the Israelis maintained for many decades that there was no Palestinian issue. The Palestinian problem, they said, was a vicious invention of a pan-Arab propaganda machine aimed at embarrassing Israel. Now everyone accepts that the Palestinians are for real. This is the basis for compromise.”

Although many claim that time is running out for a two state solution, and that the future for Israel and Palestine might be in forming a single nation, Oz dismisses this possibility out of hand. “The one state solution is no solution. It is senseless to push together into a honeymoon bed two deadly enemies who have been involved in fighting, bloodshed and bitterness for more than 100 years. The one-state solution didn’t work in the Balkans, Cyprus or Lebanon. There are even cracks in Belgium and Canada.”

Oz laments the demise of the Israeli peace lobby which, he says suffered as a direct result of the withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. He recalls: “For decades my colleagues and I in the peace movement recommended an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. We said to our fellow Israelis that, if we terminate the military occupation of the Occupied Territories, peace will come. In 2005, Ariel Sharon conducted a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, removing every last soldier and settler. But the result was not peace but the rain of around 10,000 rockets and missiles on Israeli towns and villages. This doesn’t make it any easier for the Israeli peace movement to advocate land for peace.” After a moment of reflection, Oz adds that the mistake was to evacuate Gaza unilaterally. Had there been an agreement reached with the Palestinian Authority there would have been no Hamas takeover in Gaza and no cascade of rockets on Israel, he maintains.

While much of the world defines Israel as a trouble spot, Oz is uplifted by what he sees as a great age of cultural energy. He says: “There is so much happening in Israel. It is not possible for me to give you the names of three or four writers who are producing excellent work because that would be unjust on the others. But I would say that, by and large, Israel is undergoing a cultural golden age in literature, arts and sciences. There is so much creativity in the country, whether that is because of or despite the political troubles it would be impossible to say.”

He adds that while a golden age is usually identified in retrospect, in Israel’s case it is clear that the nation’s cultural life is more healthy and vibrant now than at any other time in its history. He feels that it has something to do with diversity. “We Israeli Jews arrived from 136 different countries. Everyone

has a love-hate relationship with the old country and this provides for a vibrant scene. There are tensions, rivalries, different philosophies and different ideas. The very variety of the scene makes for cultural vivacity.”

Life and literature

Oz’s sanguine view on the peace process and the creativity of his compatriots is not mirrored by his literature. *Scenes From Village Life* is not an optimistic book, featuring as it does, a variety of characters with interwoven lives in a small Israeli town, none of whom could be classified as happy. But for Oz, there is a clear dividing line between his polemical and his fictional writing. He even writes his novels and his political works in different coloured pens “I have never told a story in order to make a political point or in order to persuade people to vote one way or another. When I am in total agreement with myself I don’t write a story I write an angry article. But when I’m in slight disagreement with myself – when I hear more than one voice – that’s when I know I might be heading for a story.”

And that story tends not to be within Oz’s control. “There is a tension and a struggle between the characters and me. Sometimes I want them to go one way and they want to go another way and we struggle. I say, ‘you are working for me so you should do this and not that’. And they say ‘no you are working for us so shut up and just write’. Sometimes they take me to places that I had not foreseen at the beginning. The characters must have a life of their own, if they don’t then the story is dead.”

And as for the troubled characters in his books, well to Oz that is the very nature of fiction. “Almost the whole of literature is about unhappiness. A bridge that has been well-designed, is well built and carries 20,000 cars and 20,000 pedestrians across every day is not a story. A bridge which collapses is a story. Tolstoy starts his novel, *Anna Karenina*, by writing that all happy families are the same whereas every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. If you put a gun to my head and asked me to tell you in one word what my entire body of work was about, I would say families. If you asked me for two words I would say unhappy families. If you gave me three words? Well. You would have to read my books,” he says, a mischievous grin lighting up his face.

Oz, whose original name was Amos Klausner, was born in Jerusalem in 1939. His father, Yehuda, was a right-wing intellectual who worked as a librarian and writer. But there was darkness in his family. Oz’s mother, Fania, who had suffered from depression, committed suicide when he was 14 years old. Long before that, young Amos was already making up stories, largely to impress the girls, he claims. He spent hours of contemplation when his parents were holding long discussions with their friends in cafes, leaving their son to invent imaginary lives for those who sat at neighbouring tables as he awaited his promised ice-cream.

But shortly after his mother died, Amos decided to abandon any literary ambitions. In fact he decided he would become the very opposite of his father whom he blamed for his mother’s death. He moved to a socialist kibbutz – Hulda – and vowed to pursue a pioneering existence. “My father was a right wing intellectual, I decided to become a left wing tractor driver. He was a bookish man, I decided to become an un-bookish man. He was a short man, I decided to become a tall man. I didn’t succeed with that one,” quips Oz in deadpan fashion.

Despite optimistically renaming himself Oz, the Hebrew for “strength” he did not succeed in becoming a hardened manual labourer either. “Here I am sitting in a room full of books writing still more books, which is exactly what my father wanted for me. I am aware of the irony of the situation.”

Within a few years, he was applying to a rather nonplussed kibbutz committee for time off work to concentrate on his nascent writing career. Eventually they acceded, and as Oz’s literary career took off, he was ultimately rewarded with three writing days per week.

Appropriately enough his first novel, *Where the Jackals Howl*, written in 1965, was set on a kibbutz. He has recently re-read the book for the first time in years. "It was a book about strong urges, subterranean passions," he says.

He feels the kibbutz of today is a very different place from the one where he spent more than 30 years of his life. "I think today's kibbutz is softer. The founding fathers and mothers of the kibbutz had a crazy dream. They believed they were going to change human nature in one blow. They thought that if they created equal conditions for everyone – equal work, equal shares, equal compensation and equal standard of living, then jealousy and pettiness and selfishness would disappear. Of course they were wrong because human nature is not changeable. But they lived in an ideological age when the world wanted to change human nature in one way or another. Today's kibbutz is much more tolerant and much more forgiving. And if I had to choose between living in the 1950s kibbutz or today's kibbutz, I would much prefer today's."

He likens the fading idealism of the kibbutz with the aspirations of the early Zionists. "Israel was born out of dreams. Everything that is born out of dreams is destined to disappoint to some extent. The moment you fulfil a dream there is bound to be a sense of disappointment. This is the case with Israel. The disappointment is not with the nature of Israel, it is about the nature of dreams."

Oz decided to leave Hulda in 1986 but it was not an ideological decision, rather one taken by he and his wife Nily to help their son, Daniel's asthma. The doctors said he required dry desert air, so they selected the town of Arad in the Negev. For some it may have been a strange decision. After all, Arad is a small, poor town, on the periphery of Israel's economic and cultural life. For Oz, it was all perfectly logical. He was exchanging one, small intimate community for another. And as he points out, all great literature is provincial. He says: "I like small places. It's a quiet place but it's also very cosmopolitan. There are Jews from 36 different countries of origin and many Arabs as well. I enjoy sitting down in a street café. Strangers recognise me because I'm on television sometimes and they immediately gather around my table and start a political argument with me. I enjoy that tremendously. They try to save my soul for me and I try to save their souls for them. And when I want to be on my own I have the privacy of my study."

When he is not travelling the world his routine is pretty much the same every day. He wakes at five every morning and walks in the desert for 40 minutes before drinking a cup of coffee and settling himself down at his desk. He says he works as if he were a shopkeeper in fact he describes his working day with the same equanimity, with which he talk about the quest for peace. "Every day I open for business like a shop does. If I have customers it's a good day, if I don't have customers I'm still doing my job by sitting there and waiting. So many days I just sit and wait. Sometimes people turn up and sometimes not."

Arab Spring and the Israeli Enemy

Abdullahteef al-Mulhim, Arab News, 6 October 2013

<http://www.arabnews.com/arab-spring-and-israeli-enemy>

Thirty-nine years ago, on Oct. 6, 1973, the third major war between the Arabs and Israel broke out. The war lasted only 20 days. The two sides were engaged in two other major wars, in 1948 and 1967.

The 1967 War lasted only six days. But, these three wars were not the only Arab-Israeli confrontations. From the period of 1948 and to this day many confrontations have taken place. Some of them were small clashes and many of them were full-scale battles, but there were no major wars apart from the ones mentioned above. The Arab-Israeli conflict is the most complicated conflict the world ever experienced. On the

anniversary of the 1973 War between the Arab and the Israelis, many people in the Arab world are beginning to ask many questions about the past, present and the future with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The questions now are: What was the real cost of these wars to the Arab world and its people. And the harder question that no Arab national wants to ask is: What was the real cost for not recognizing Israel in 1948 and why didn't the Arab states spend their assets on education, health care and the infrastructures instead of wars? But, the hardest question that no Arab national wants to hear is whether Israel is the real enemy of the Arab world and the Arab people.

I decided to write this article after I saw photos and reports about a starving child in Yemen, a burned ancient Aleppo souk in Syria, the under developed Sinai in Egypt, car bombs in Iraq and the destroyed buildings in Libya. The photos and the reports were shown on the Al-Arabiya network, which is the most watched and respected news outlet in the Middle East.

The common thing among all what I saw is that the destruction and the atrocities are not done by an outside enemy. The starvation, the killings and the destruction in these Arab countries are done by the same hands that are supposed to protect and build the unity of these countries and safeguard the people of these countries. So, the question now is that who is the real enemy of the Arab world?

The Arab world wasted hundreds of billions of dollars and lost tens of thousands of innocent lives fighting Israel, which they considered is their sworn enemy, an enemy whose existence they never recognized. The Arab world has many enemies and Israel should have been at the bottom of the list. The real enemies of the Arab world are corruption, lack of good education, lack of good health care, lack of freedom, lack of respect for the human lives and finally, the Arab world had many dictators who used the Arab-Israeli conflict to suppress their own people.

These dictators' atrocities against their own people are far worse than all the full-scale Arab-Israeli wars.

In the past, we have talked about why some Israeli soldiers attack and mistreat Palestinians. Also, we saw Israeli planes and tanks attack various Arab countries. But, do these attacks match the current atrocities being committed by some Arab states against their own people.

In Syria, the atrocities are beyond anybody's imaginations? And, isn't the Iraqis are the ones who are destroying their own country? Wasn't it Tunisia's dictator who was able to steal 13 billion dollars from the poor Tunisians? And how can a child starve in Yemen if their land is the most fertile land in the world? Why would Iraqi brains leave Iraq in a country that makes 110 billion dollars from oil export? Why do the Lebanese fail to govern one of the tiniest countries in the world? And what made the Arab states start sinking into chaos?

On May 14, 1948 the state of Israel was declared. And just one day after that, on May 15, 1948 the Arabs declared war on Israel to get back Palestine. The war ended on March 10, 1949. It lasted for nine months, three weeks and two days. The Arabs lost the war and called this war Nakbah (catastrophic war). The Arabs gained nothing and thousands of Palestinians became refugees.

And on 1967, the Arabs led by Egypt under the rule of Gamal Abdul Nasser, went in war with Israel and lost more Palestinian land and made more Palestinian refugees who are now on the mercy of the countries that host them. The Arabs called this war Naksa (upset). The Arabs never admitted defeat in both wars and the Palestinian cause got more complicated. And now, with the never ending Arab Spring, the Arab world has no time for the Palestinians refugees or Palestinian cause, because many Arabs are refugees themselves and under constant attacks from their own forces. Syrians are leaving their own country, not because of the Israeli planes dropping bombs on them. It is the Syrian Air Force which is dropping the bombs. And now, Iraqi Arab

Muslims, most intelligent brains, are leaving Iraq for the east. In Yemen, the world's saddest human tragedy play is being written by the Yemenis. In Egypt, the people in Sinai are forgotten.

Finally, if many of the Arab states are in such disarray, then what happened to the Arabs' sworn enemy (Israel)? Israel now has the most advanced research facilities, top universities and advanced infrastructure. Many Arabs don't know that the life expectancy of the Palestinians living in Israel is far longer than many Arab states and they enjoy far better political and social freedom than many of their Arab brothers. Even the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip enjoy more political and social rights than some places in the Arab World. Wasn't one of the judges who sent a former Israeli president to jail is an Israeli-Palestinian?

The Arab Spring showed the world that the Palestinians are happier and in better situation than their Arab brothers who fought to liberate them from the Israelis. Now, it is time to stop the hatred and wars and start to create better living conditions for the future Arab generations.

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

South African Zionist Federation
Tel : (011) 645-2505
Fax: (011) 640-6758
E-mail: froma@beyachad.co.za
Website: <http://sazionfed.co.za>

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