



# NEWS REVIEW

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## Italian Parliament for Israel

*Fiamma Nirenstein, a journalist and some-time resident of Jerusalem, is a new Member of the Italian Parliament who is outspoken on Israel's behalf. She writes in her blog below that there is increasing understanding of what Israel is facing in its current war against Hamas.*

Dear friends,



We didn't expect what you see now in the picture. This is the square of the Italian Parliament in Rome, Piazza Montecitorio: you can see the Palace on top of the square, and in front a lot of Israeli flags. That was Wednesday night, January 14, from 6:30 to 9:30pm.

What you cannot see here, is the extraordinary number and variety of members of the Parliament, about 100 from all political sides, that took the stage during our marathon: for about three hours we have been speaking about the role of Israel, its right to self defense, its moral height, its fight in name of all of us, of our civilization and values, against the wild hate of the Islamic jihad represented by Hamas. It seems to me that for the first time in the too long history of the Arab Israeli conflict, apart from a minority of crazy leftists and fascists that took the street on anti-Semitic slogans, we have obtained a huge consensus about one critical point: this is not an episode of a local conflict, there is nothing in it that reminds the land for peace theme that has characterized the Palestinian issue. This is an episode of the attack against the western world, and Iran has a lot to do with it.

The change of attitude is great: the dictatorial religious nature of Hamas and the democratic, civilized nature of Israel are seen face to face for what they are at least by the European elite at large, dead and wounded notwithstanding, and there rises an identification with Israel against a regime that uses human shields and promises slaughters of Jews in its Chart.

What happens today, at least in Italy, is the defeat and fall of the leftist ideologies: ideology has been the fig leaf that has allowed to justify all the most violent crimes and most disgusting verbal attacks. If Arafat launched the terrorist Intifada, if he promoted the martyrdom of children in public speeches, the ideologists were ready to justify him with the issues of occupation, the Palestinian misery and loss of any hope. Not the same with Hamas.

History, in Italy, has brought to a profound crisis the ideology of revolution and the justification of any cruel attack against a pretended unjust imperialist order. That time is in good part over, nobody will see Hamas as the resolution of the problem and not as the problem itself. I also think that the word "peace" has lost that healing meaning that it had until yesterday. The new non-ideological point of view sees that there is no peace when one of the contenders doesn't want it, and that even if the world in the short run asks for a truce, in the long run requests a defeat of Hamas.

Well, yesterday night many people, Ministers and Members of Parliament, composed a very new, interesting puzzle of opinions. I think that when you are not overwhelmed by exotic thirdworldism, the images of children educated as hate machines, the speeches of jihad leaders, from Ahmadinejad to Nasrallah, to Hanje, that deny the holocaust and promise death to Jewish and Christians too, have on us a result of great disgust. Westerners, thanks God, can still be disgusted by an uncivilized level of political speech.

But most of all, in the Parliament square, many of the Parliament Members said: "I love Israel". You can't imagine how many. <http://www.fiammanirenstein.com/articoli.asp?Categoria=5&Id=2089>

## House of Lords debates Gaza - Motion to Take Note Hansard UK | 6 February

### *Baroness Deech (Crossbench)*

My Lord, I recently heard a speech by President Peres of Israel. He said that if we look back 50 years, who would have imagined then that the Soviet Empire would have ended, that the South African system of apartheid would have been dismantled and Mandela would have become president, that the Berlin Wall would have come down and that there would be a black president of America? He said that we should look forward 50 years from now in the same spirit. I want to start on that optimistic note because I believe that if we wait that long "no doubt beyond our lifetimes" there will be change for the better. I want to emphasise that because inevitably much of my speech will be rather gloomy.

No one can accuse this House of not focusing on the distressing situation in Gaza. In the past 12 months, there have been 161 Questions and Statements about Israel, Gaza and the Palestinians compared with, for example, 33 on Sri Lanka and 24 on Tibet. I mention Sri Lanka in particular because noble Lords will be aware that recently there was a well attended protest in Parliament Square about the terrible attacks on the Tamils, the hospitals under siege, the killing of 70,000 people and the many more thousands who are trapped and displaced from their homes. This has attracted little opprobrium and no calls for the obliteration of Sri Lanka or talk of its brutalisation.

I raise that because I am interested in the particular focus on the Middle East that is expressed in this country. Part of the reason is that the war in Gaza has not been seen in perspective, but only as a minute fragment of what is, in truth, a larger picture. There is a wider war, of which Israel and Gaza are figureheads, and there is also a civil war. The talk about what is proportionate \*I prefer the word "necessary"\* has to be seen in the context of a response to an attack from Hamas designed not just to launch rockets at Israel\* 5,000 rockets deliberately aimed at Israeli civilians and schoolchildren at 7.45 in the morning\*but to end the state of Israel.

Hamas has vowed to have an Islamic state over Gaza, the West Bank and Israel as part of a wider Islamic empire. Israel has a 20 per cent Arab population, but not one Jew is to be allowed to live in this Islamic state. We can well imagine the fate planned for the millions of Israelis were this to come about. The response from Israel was, if anything, as restrained as it possibly could be. We should recall the detailed precautions taken by the Israeli army to avoid wherever possible harm to

civilians, bearing in mind the use of mosques, schools and hospitals, as has been referred to earlier today.

The charges of "disproportionate" were not made in relation to other wars that we have recently experienced; Kosovo, Georgia, Iraq or even Afghanistan, where people have died in their thousands. In fact, there has been some praise for the restraint that Israel has shown in trying to avoid civilian casualties. There is also a civil war in Gaza, which makes the prospects of peace unrealistic. The military dictatorship there did nothing to protect its own subjects, but took the opportunity of war to eliminate many of its Fatah political opponents. Other noble Lords have referred to the very cruel details of this. Even the Palestinian Authority's President Abbas said: " Hamas has taken risks with the blood of Palestinians, with their fate and dreams and aspirations for an independent Palestinian state".

The wider war is one of destruction of Israel, and those who criticise Israel's attack on Gaza must realise that they are unwittingly giving succour to that plan.

Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas all share that same aim of destroying Israel entirely and, indeed, Hamas has thanked Iran for its support in the Gaza war. As others have mentioned, the result has been that Jews all over the world have suffered for this. The attacks on Jews that have taken place here in the UK and elsewhere illustrate my theme of a wider war. It is Jews and synagogues in London and Venezuela, in universities, to their shame, and streets, that are attacked, with Gaza as the excuse, not Israelis. It is not Jews who see all criticism of Israel as anti-Semitism; it is some of the critics of Israel who vent their displeasure on Jews in general. The hatred of Israel, and sometimes Jews, is almost unique in international politics.

Then there is the propaganda war. I urge noble Lords not to believe all that they read in the newspapers about damage and killings in Gaza. We do not have the evidence. I cite just one case. The tragic killing of the three daughters of the respected Gazan doctor Izzeldin Abuelaish now seems to have been by Gazan rockets, not Israeli fire, according to the post-mortem examination of the fragments of their bodies.

On the humanitarian front, of course, it is exacerbated, because Hamas wanted civilian deaths to increase its worldwide exposure and sympathy. Humanitarian aid is another area where the wrong and pessimistic view has been taken. I noted with interest and approval that the BBC refused to screen the advertisement for aid and that it was backed by its own NUJ branch of journalists. It is not so good to hear talk of a Zionist lobby and Jews mugging protests and stemming disquiet in the United States, when you consider the very small numbers that there are. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency has a huge budget. We do not yet know what happened to the millions that Arafat salted away and took to his death. We note the failure of other Arab countries to come to the aid of their brothers. The oil revenue of the Gulf states in 2008 was \$562 billion; in Saudi Arabia it was \$260 billion\*one day's oil revenue would work a miracle for the West Bank and Gaza, but this is not forthcoming.

On the humanitarian front, Israel's Supreme Court in the past few days, a court known for its robustness, has examined the application of the Geneva conventions on humanitarian law and found them not to have been breached. Other Arab countries have not only not helped but have literally turned their backs on the Palestinians, as one can read regarding Syria in the report in the Times today.

What of the future? Gaza could have had a future. Every Israeli soldier and civilian was removed from there. Everything was ready for the Gazans a few years ago to start a new period of economic development. There was no blockade, and it remains true that Egypt could open its crossing if it wanted to. It does not, of course, because it no more wants an Iranian state on its borders than Israel does. Instead the rockets and the tunnels came, and the sad destruction of the very greenhouses where flowers and fruit were grown and could have continued to be grown.

What can the UK do? It can support Egypt, which is acting very well in this crisis, albeit for its own reasons of survival. It can help block Hamas from smuggling more arms by sea. It can press for the release of Gilad Shalit, who has been a hostage in Gaza for two and a half years with no access to the Red Cross or any other international agency. It can persuade Hamas to change the charter and

remove mention of destruction. Above all, your Lordships should lend your voices to the end of the demonisation of Israel and to calm down the surging anti-Semitism. Your Lordships should recognise the need of Israel to exist and its legitimacy. It is no more arriviste in the Middle East than the other 22 Arab states to be found there. There can be no further removal of six million Jews from the Middle East. We must do nothing to feed the hatred that surrounds this issue and we must do everything to look to the future.

The entire debate can be found here: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldhansrd/text/90206-0001.htm#09020644000547>

## **The US planning Durban II -A disaster in the making**

**Anne Bayefsky | National Review Online | 17 February**

Yesterday in Geneva, President Obama unveiled the new look of America's foreign policy — obsequiousness. It was Day One for his emissaries to the U.N. planning committee of the Durban II conference. This is the racist “anti-racism” bash to be held in Geneva in April. The U.S. and Israel walked out of the first go-round in Durban, South Africa in September 2001. Ever since, the U.S. government has refused to lend any credibility to the Declaration adopted after they left. That is, until yesterday.

U.S. representatives were addressing a human-rights negotiating committee with an executive consisting of a Libyan chair, an Iranian vice-chair, and a Cuban rapporteur. Russian Yuri Boychenko was presiding over Monday's “human rights” get-together. Before them was a draft document which participants plan to adopt in finished form at the conference itself. The draft now contains mountains of offensive references to limits on free speech, anti-Israel and anti-Jewish provisions, and incendiary allegations of the victimization of Muslims at the hands of counter-terrorism racists.

Here is how the American delegates responded to a proposal they understood was incompatible with U.S. interests (“Brackets” denote withholding approval at any given moment in time.): “I hate to be the cause of unhappiness in the room . . . I have to suggest this phrase remains in brackets and I offer my sincere apologies.”

Having watched U.N. meetings for the past 25 years, I can't remember a U.S. representative in a public session so openly obsequious, particularly in the presence of such specious human rights authorities. And yet the U.S. delegates appear happy to be there and convey the marching orders of their new commander-in-chief.

Unfortunately, while Obama's calling the tunes, items like freedom of expression are being rearranged. On the table was a provision which “Calls on States to ensure that lawmakers discharge their responsibilities in conformity with . . . article 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination . . .” What did the American delegation have to say about that? Among other things they proposed: “add after article 4, ‘and 5(d)(viii) of the Racial Discrimination Convention.’”

Flashback to 1994. The United States Senate imposed a reservation on U.S. ratification of the Racial Discrimination Convention concerning article 4 because it restricts free speech. Article 4 aims to limit incitement to racial hatred, but is open to an interpretation in direct conflict with the First Amendment.

Obama's delegation, however, did not object to the proposal to ensure lawmakers adhere to article 4. Instead, they suggested adding a reference to another part of the Racial Discrimination Convention that guarantees an equal right to freedom of expression regardless of race. This idea does not in any way meet the Senate's command to ensure that the Constitution trumps the treaty in matters of free speech.

There is no escape from Durban II — at least not with our vital principles intact.

On Monday, President Obama's decision to wander into the Durban II sinkhole also raised concerns in the Jewish community. In deciding to attend the planning session, Obama had ignored the direct plea from Israel's Foreign Minister to stay away, along with Israel and Canada. Instead, on Monday the President sent reassuring messages via phone calls from senior White House and State

Department officials.

According to reports, these officials claimed “that Washington’s decision to participate in the conference was being coordinated with the Israeli government.” That would be true — if “coordination” meant announcing hours in advance that the United States intended to do the opposite of what had been requested.

Jewish leaders were also told that the U.S. presence was “an effort to change the direction of the conference.” Apparently, someone in the administration forgot to read the map. The conference objectives have already been unanimously agreed to by all participants, including the European Union. Objective number one is to “foster the implementation of the Durban Declaration” — the same one that claims Israelis are racists, in fact, the only racists U.N. member states could recall. Those directions aren’t going to be changed. On the contrary, the opening words of the Durban II document — also already accepted by consensus — read “reaffirming the Durban Declaration.” Change you can’t believe in, again.

Overall, on Day One, U.N. members were delighted by the new administration’s timidity. And they know exactly how to ensure those promises of change continue. In an entire day of a four-day meeting, they reviewed only 11 of the 140 paragraphs. The next set of meetings will be in April right before the conference itself. By the time somebody begins to suspect it might not change, it will all be over, in more ways than one.

## Boycott UN forum, says Israeli ex-envoy

Jason Koutsoukis in | **The Sydney Morning Herald** | 16 February

A former senior Israeli diplomat, Dan Gillerman, has urged Kevin Rudd to cancel Australia’s attendance at a United Nations forum on racism, saying it will be used as a platform to bash Israel.

In an interview with the *Herald*, Mr Gillerman, Israel’s ambassador to the UN from 2003 until September last year, also strongly rejected calls for war crimes investigations against Israeli commanders involved in the recent war in Gaza.

Speaking from Tel Aviv before a visit to Australia late this month, Mr Gillerman said this year’s UN World Conference Against Racism, also known as Durban II, and to be held in Geneva in April, was a charade.

"Keep away from Durban," Mr Gillerman said. "Countries like Australia who, to my mind, represent the best of what democracy and civilisation can be, shouldn't take part in this charade."

The Israeli Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, said in November that Israel would boycott the conference as "it was turning once again into an anti-Israeli tribunal, singling out and delegitimising the state of Israel".

Last month Canada said it would boycott the conference because the process was too flawed to make it worthwhile. Other countries, including France, Britain and the Netherlands, may also stay away, and the US is considering whether it will reverse a Bush administration decision not to attend.

A central Israeli objection is that the UN committee responsible for managing the conference is chaired by Libya, and includes vice-chairs from Iran, Pakistan, Cuba, Russia, Indonesia and Turkey.

"I think the less enlightened Western civilised societies attend the conference, the more it will be seen as the stage for anti-Semitism, racism and Israel bashing that it is," Mr Gillerman said.

"I would very much hope that Australia will also take the decision not to be there because I think it's taking part in something which is totally unacceptable." Mr Gillerman also lashed out at critics of the war in Gaza who wanted to prosecute Israeli commanders for alleged war crimes.

The International Criminal Court has signalled it is exploring ways to prosecute Israeli commanders over the use of white phosphorus in densely populated civilian areas.

"I think the Israeli troops should get a medal for the way they conducted themselves in that war," Mr Gillerman said. "I don't think any war crimes were committed."

The former envoy, who was called in by the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, to help frame Israel's international justification for the offensive, which killed more than 1300 people in Gaza, said civilian casualties were unavoidable. "There is no army in the world as moral and as careful about not hitting civilians as the Israeli army," Mr Gillerman said. He blamed the Palestinian organisation Hamas for the civilian casualties in Gaza, through its routine use of "human shields".

"For us, every dead Palestinian child is a horrible mistake and a tragedy. For Hamas, every dead Israeli child is a huge success and a cause for victory, and that's the kind of people we are fighting."

## **That's funny you don't look anti-Semitic**

**Julian Kossoff | The Telegraph UK | 11 February]**

The Jews are getting jittery. As bad news piles up they are bracing themselves for a new bolt of anti-Semitism.

Already, the blow-back from Israel's turbo-charged assault on Gaza has seen the number of anti-Semitic incidents in Europe and the USA leap exponentially.

In the UK daubings and desecrations of Jewish buildings, verbal abuse and isolated physical attacks a pogrom don't make, but the anti-Semitic static crackling through the Gaza antennae is increasingly unnerving.

The real nightmare is a band of terrorists doing a 'Buenos Aires' (when 85 people were killed in a bombing of a Jewish community centre in 1994) and indeed the Israeli press was recently abuzz with rumours of a thwarted Hezbollah spectacular in Europe.

**'PERFIDIOUS JEWS':** Meanwhile, Holocaust denial (i.e. killing dead Jews) has reared its vile head in the controversy over the Pope's reinstatement of Bishop Williamson (winner of the 2009 Ahmadinejad Award for most perfidious priest). This liar in a mitre was welcomed back initially with little more than an insouciant shrug by the Holy See.

Jewish-Catholic relations were already rattled by disputes over traditionalist prayers and a compromised pope.

In January there was a spat over the prayers in the 1962 pre-Vatican II Latin Missal (whose wider use is being encouraged by Pope Benedict XVI) incanted at Easter containing an offensive reference to "perfidious Jews".

Apologists claim it has an innocent meaning; merely indicting Jews as unbelievers, rather than a landmark slur that for centuries marked Easter as the start of the Jew hunting season.

Prior, there was much bickering over the wartime Pope Pius XII currently being fast-tracked to sainthood but whose moral-compass on the Third Reich, opponents argue, managed to vaguely point in the right direction on a pitifully few number of occasions.

**BROTHER, CAN YOU SPARE A BILLION DOLLARS?** Then there are the economic woes of our age and dire warnings that it is the worst of times since the 1930s.

This sends a shiver down the Jewish spine. The misery Great Depression was ultimately distilled into the Devil's Brew that was the Final Solution.

## Become a Member

Ensure that the voice of your community is heard by supporting the work of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies.

Join us in the work of strengthening Jewish life.

Contact the Board for more information:

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Will it happen again? Will the spike in anti-Semitism incidents gel into a significant threat?

I am cautiously optimistic that the Jewish Diaspora - empowered by the existence of the state of Israel - can successfully resist a new anti-Semitic challenge.

One fear is that the myth of the Jewish banking conspiracy will be resurrected to exploit the fears of people faced with losing their jobs and homes. Apparently, American neo-Nazis have already toyed with resurrecting this tactic and drawn a blank. The bankers, they found, rather than being viewed as sinister, super-intelligent arch villains, were seen in the court of public opinion as a bunch of incompetent Rolex-wearing clowns.

Hence, Edgar M. Bronfman, one of the USA 's most influential Jews and former president of the World Jewish Congress, last month declared that, "anti-Semitism is no longer a significant force in American life."

Likewise, in the UK, a mature and civilised liberal democracy, the lessons of the Holocaust have been listened to and learnt. Indeed, the British people - from Cable Street, to the Anti-Nazi League - have a proud anti-Fascist tradition, and Anglo-Jewry has never 'bottled it' in the face of violent threats.

Since the sixties, anti-racism campaigns and multiculturalism (at times a dirty word in the Telegraph parish) have helped forge a tolerant British society in which the majority despise bigotry.

**PRAISE BE TO EL AL:** For example, when a Foreign Office (the government department long considered to be a last redoubt of upper-class anti-Semitism) diplomat openly abuses Jews, his fellow citizens immediately report him to the police. In the 1930s they would have either nodded in agreement or passively looked the other way.

In fact, it is here in this libertarian online world where anti-Semites have retreated to, pariahs in the real world.

On the world wide web the paranoid crazies roam the chat-rooms and comment threads and, like naughty children shouting puerile insults through a neighbour's letter box, seek to poison the blogosphere before scuttling back to the dank basements of their own inadequacies.

As for Europe, the situation is a positive-negative. The Holocaust did its work destroying a Jewish civilisation and the contemporary communities are indistinct shadows of their pre-war glory.

Outside France there is no country with a critical mass of Jews large enough to make a viable target.

Those looking for a scapegoat have post-colonial guest workers, desperate asylum seekers and impoverished illegals to round on. Most of all, and rich in irony, Muslims are now Europe 's 'new Jews.'

In the former Soviet Union there is more cause for concern. Age-old hatreds are never far from the surface and unchallenged and the super-rich oligarchs with Jewish sounding names will become the lightning rode for the blame game as the slump sets in.

Ukraine, home to 200,000 Jews, has been identified as a leading candidate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century's first concerted outbreak of violent anti-Semitism when, if need be, the 747's of Israel's national carrier will be ready and waiting.