

NEWS REVIEW



2 SEPTEMBER 2009

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Boycotts only harden Israeli opinion

Benjamin Pogrund | Guardian UK | 24 August

The most inaccurate way to describe Israel today is as an apartheid state. That's the exact opposite of what Neve Gordon said on Cif last week. Level whatever criticisms you want against Israel – start with West Bank occupation and oppression of Palestinians, and go on to the domestic discrimination suffered by the Arab minority – but the simple fact is that none of it is the apartheid of the old South Africa. Abundant evidence of this is readily available, in the Guardian and elsewhere.

Why then is the comparison so often made? One reason, in a different context, is in the words of American comedian Stephen Colbert: "Remember kids! In order to maintain an untenable position, you have to be actively ignorant."

For some, the apartheid accusation is the way to destroy Israel. If Israel can be linked with apartheid then it can be denounced as illegitimate as was white-ruled South Africa and hence be wide open to international sanctions.

Those who pursue this couldn't care less about facts. They have an agenda and are unscrupulous about distortion, lying and exaggeration. Their ultimate purpose is exposed by how they answer a basic question: whether or not they accept the fact of Israel's existence. [READ MORE](#)

Distorting the Holocaust: Why numbers matter

Dr Alex Grobman | History News Network | 31 August

Holocaust denial is ongoing challenge for the Jewish community. Equally problematic are those who acknowledge the Holocaust, but insist on being included in a way that distorts the history of the experience.

One of the most common errors in describing the magnitude of the Shoah is the number of people who died. Figures range from 50 million to 11 million, a reflection of a fundamental misunderstanding of the uniqueness of this catastrophe. The use of 11 million is a particularly egregious historical distortion as it equates the destruction of the Jews of Europe with that of the others who were murdered.

We study the Shoah to understand what transpired, why it happened and what it tells us about the attitude of Western civilization toward Jews and other minorities living in the West. It is not a contest to see which group suffered the most or sustained the greatest numerical losses.

If we are to learn from history, we must be concerned about objective truth, with transmitting

what actually ensued and not allowing those with their own particular agenda or ignorance to obscure our understanding of what occurred. Distinguishing between different historical events does not, and should not, lessen or demean the suffering of others. [READ MORE](#)

Following inflammatory article, Sweden to demand EU condemn anti-Semitism

Adar Primor | Ha'aretz | 31 August

Is the crisis in relations between Israel and Sweden coming to an end? That is what Italy's foreign minister, Franco Frattini, would like to believe.

Frattini said he recently met with his Swedish counterpart, Carl Bildt, and the two agreed that at a meeting of European Union foreign ministers later this week, they will work to pass a resolution making it clear that the EU, under the Swedish presidency, strongly condemns anti-Semitism and will take action against any manifestation of it on the continent.

Frattini said he intends to demand that the meeting's summary statement explicitly condemn the article published in the Swedish tabloid Aftonbladet, which claimed that Israeli soldiers harvested the organs of dead Palestinians. He said his proposed statement would declare articles of this sort to be "acts of blatant anti-Semitism." "There are limits to freedom of the press that stem from respect for the truth and the duty of every journalist to prove his claims," Frattini said. [READ MORE](#)

Palestine problem hopeless, but not serious

Spengler | Asia Times | 18 August

"The situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable," declared United States President Barack Obama in his June 4 Cairo address. Really? Compared to what? Things are tough all over. The Palestinians are one of many groups displaced by the population exchanges that followed World War II, and the only ones whose great-grandchildren still have the legal status of refugees. Why are they still there? The simplest explanation is that they like it there, because they are much better off than people of similar capacities in other Arab countries.

The standard tables of gross domestic product (GDP) per capital show the West Bank and Gaza at US\$1,700, just below Egypt's \$1,900 and significantly below Syria's \$2,250 and Jordan's \$3,000. GDP does not include foreign aid, however, which adds roughly 30% to spendable funds in the Palestinian territories. Most important, the denominator of the GDP per capita equation - the number of people - is far lower than official data indicate. According to an authoritative study by the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, the West Bank and Gaza population in 2004 was only 2.5 million, rather than the 3.8 million claimed by the Palestinian authorities. The numbers are inflated to increase foreign aid.

Adjusting for the Begin-Sadat Center population count and adding in foreign aid, GDP per capita in the West Bank and Gaza comes to \$3,380, much higher than in Egypt and significantly higher than in Syria or Jordan. Why should any Palestinian refugee resettle in a neighbouring Arab country?

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Very, very lost in translation

Raymond Stock | Foreign Policy | 24 August

How the Egyptian literary czar who wants to lead the world's top cultural body got caught up in his own country's rabid anti-Semitism.

To say that Farouk Hosni doesn't much like Israel is putting it lightly.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, he has called it "inhuman," and "an aggressive, racist, and arrogant culture, based on robbing other people's rights and the denial of such rights." He has accused Jews of "infiltrating" world media. And in May 2008, Hosni outdid even himself, telling the Egyptian parliament that he would "burn right in front of you" any Israeli books found in the country's libraries.

What's shocking is not just that Hosni has said these things, but that he is Egypt's culture minister -- and even more scandalous, that he is the likely next head of UNESCO, the arm of the United Nations sworn to defend cultural diversity and international artistic cooperation. Less surprising but also sadly true is that Hosni's opinions about Israeli culture are par for the course among Egypt's intelligentsia, for whom 30 years of official peace with the Jewish state, the longest of any Arab country, have done virtually nothing to moderate its rampant Judeophobia. If anything, the opposite might be true. [READ MORE](#)

Australia's terror TV

Mark Dubowitz & Roberta Bonazzi | The Wall Street Journal | 24 August

Australia has a record of success in fighting terrorism—witness the capture earlier this month of 18 terrorists who planned to attack a military base. But Canberra may be forgetting that the long war against violent extremism is a war of ideas as much as a war of arms. The decision last month to allow Hezbollah's al-Manar television station to begin broadcasting down under is a dangerous development for Australia and Indonesia and could reverberate around the world.

Free speech protections may protect the hateful content of their messages but should not cover the role of these media outlets as operational weapons. Radical groups like Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, Hamas, the Taliban, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and others use media outlets all over the world to plan attacks, recruit and train jihadists, fundraise, intimidate and incite. Hezbollah established al-Manar in 1991 as a tool to incite hatred and violence and recruit children and adults as terrorists. According to an al-Manar official interviewed by al-Manar expert Avi Jorisch, the station's programming is meant to "help people on the way to committing what you call in the West a suicide mission." Al-Manar reaches an estimated 10 to 15 million viewers daily and, before international action against the station, it had worldwide coverage through a network of 13 satellite providers as well as advertising support from western corporations. [READ MORE](#)

