

NEWS REVIEW



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Israel's latest sin—honouring its heritage

David Hornik | FrontPage | 1 March



When the Israeli cabinet announced the other day that the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, would be included in a list of Israeli "heritage" sites, it touched off a wave of Palestinian violence and threats—along with diplomatic protests that were all too concordant with the Palestinian bullying.

A few observations are in order. First, Israel did not announce that it was *annexing* the two sites, only that they had been added to a list designated for renovations and for encouraging *visits* by Israelis. Treating these two sites as major foci of the Jewish heritage is not a political statement; it is simply a recognition of reality.

Second, Israel's record in terms of honouring non-Jewish religious rights in the West Bank and Jerusalem is indeed exemplary—or even goes too far. That the Palestinian behaviour this week stems from an Islamic supremacism that Israel, with its democratic norms, is unable to appease—is a bit more reality than Israel's diplomatic critics want to contemplate. [READ MORE](#)

Mass grave of history: Vatican's WWII identity crisis

Julia Gorin | The Jerusalem Post | 22 February

The controversy over the canonization of Pope Pius XII concerns whether he spoke out enough against the slaughter of Jews during World War II. But that question is a red herring when trying to grasp the big picture of the Vatican's role during the war.

The real question is whether the Vatican supported the world order, or at least aspects of it, that the Third Reich promised to bring, a world order in which dead Jews were collateral damage - which Pius indeed regretted. The answer can be found in a region of Europe that is generally ignored despite being the nexus of world wars: the Balkans. [READ MORE](#)

The “Peace Partners” who never were

Joe Kaufman | FrontPage Magazine | 24 February

On February 14th, all of the major Palestinian terrorist factions met at the offices of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine for peace talks. But this was not about peace with the Israelis. When the 13 Palestinian terrorist groups met at the PFLP headquarters, they did so with an understanding – that even though they might have personal differences with each other, they are *all* united by an intense hatred of Israel.

It is this understanding that drives them to choose violence over peace, and it is this understanding that will always foil those who act to downplay terrorist groups and who push Israel into a treaty with entities, like Fatah, that wish for her destruction. [READ MORE](#)

New book details Hitler's courtship of Muslims

Adam Kirsch | San Francisco Sentinel | 20 February

Before World War II, German attempts to reach out to the Muslim world were made very awkward by the Nazis' racial doctrines, which held Arabs, Persians, and Turks to be biologically inferior to Aryans. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler openly declared, “I am prevented by mere knowledge of the racial inferiority of these so-called ‘oppressed nations’ from linking the destiny of my own people with theirs.” Accordingly, the Nazis frowned on marriage between Germans and Muslims; in 1935, the Hitler Youth expelled a boy whose father was Turkish, leading to a public-relations disaster in Turkey. When the 1936 Olympics were held in Germany, Egypt and Iran threatened to boycott to express their insulted racial pride. Significantly, what smoothed over these diplomatic quarrels were the Nazis' assurances, private and public, that their anti-Semitism was directed solely against Jews, not against other Semitic peoples.

Once the war began, Germany turned its attention to the Muslim world in earnest. In particular, the Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa were important to the Nazis' geopolitical designs. During World War I, the British had inspired the Arabs to revolt against Ottoman Turkey with promises of independence. But when peace came, the region was divided up between the British and French empires, breeding resentment among the Arabs comparable to the Germans' feelings about the Treaty of Versailles. Adding fuel to the fire was the Balfour Declaration, in which the British promised to support a Jewish home in Palestine. [READ MORE](#)

Pro-Israel groups set to counter campus apartheid claims

Ben Harris | JTA | 2 March

At universities across the globe, the annual springtime ritual known as Israel Apartheid Week is kicking off this week, and Jewish students and pro-Israel groups have been readying themselves to respond in force.

Unlike past years, when intense pro-Palestinian activity in the wake of Israel's offensives in Gaza and Lebanon caught many Jewish students off guard, this year the pro-Israel community is ready with initiatives of its own.

The largest effort, Israel Peace Week, is helping coordinate responses at 28 campuses and counting. [READ MORE](#)

For children of Russian immigrants, Jewish community remains elusive

Sue Fishkoff | JTA | 22 February

Eighty young professionals from New York and the San Francisco Bay area took part in a weekend leadership and identity-building seminar for Russian-speaking Jews as part of an increased effort to help immigrants from the former Soviet Union find a place in the wider American Jewish community. [READ MORE](#)

In Brief

Cleric's fatwa condemns martyrs to hellfire: A leading Pakistani cleric has issued a religious ruling in Britain condemning terrorism, saying suicide bombers are destined for hell.

Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri's 600 page religious ruling, or fatwa, is a very different message to the interpretation of Islam in which martyrs go to heaven. Dr Qadri says there is nothing written in the Koran that could be used to justify suicide bombings, rather, he warns that Islam condemns such acts. "These kind of activities will lead them to hellfire and they are not involved in any kind of martyrdom operation," he said. "Rather they are doing an act which is an act of disbelief."

Dr Qadri preaches in Pakistan, but says he wanted to spread his message in the western world where youths are being brainwashed and misguided on the concepts of Islam.

Polish cemetery returned to Jewish community: An ancient Jewish cemetery in Poland was ordered returned to the Jewish community.

The municipality of Przemysl in southeastern Poland took over the cemetery, which dates back to the 16th century, following World War II. At a meeting last week, the city was ordered by a government commission to turn over the cemetery to the Jewish community.

The cemetery has served Przemysl and neighbouring towns for hundreds of years. The decision by the Polish government's Regulatory Commission, which resolves claims regarding Jewish communal property, came after years of negotiations.

Przemysl was once home to about 20,000 Jews, most of who were murdered by the Nazis.

The Warsaw-based Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland led efforts to secure the cemetery. The group will now restore the site, which is overgrown, damaged and lacking a perimeter fence. It was severely vandalized by the Nazis, who used gravestones to pave their roads.

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Hungarian lawmakers make Holocaust denial illegal: Hungary's Parliament has passed a bill making Holocaust denial a criminal offence.

The legislation, which would mandate prison terms of up to three years for those found guilty of publicly "denying, questioning or making light of the Holocaust," was approved Monday night in the presence of Jewish community leaders. The law would bring Hungary in line with many other countries occupied by the Nazis during World War II.

President Laszlo Solyom must sign the measure into law or return the draft to Parliament for further consideration. Solyom has warned that he would approach any attempt at restricting the right of free speech with great caution. He upset the Jewish community when he declined to sign a similar bill in 2007.

The current proposal, which involves the changing of three lines in the criminal code, passed 197-1, with 142 abstentions by lawmakers from the center-right Fidesz Party and its allies after a Fidesz proposal to include the denial of Nazi and communist crimes in the bill was rejected. Polls indicate that Fidesz is heavily favored in the upcoming elections.

Hate speech and incitement to violence against minorities already are crimes in Hungary. Courts have thwarted other attempts to ban Holocaust denial as violating free speech.

The proceedings were observed from the visitors' gallery by Peter Feldmajer, president of the Coalition of Hungarian Jewish Religious Communities, and several Jewish-Hungarian Holocaust survivors including Gusztav Zoltai, the coalition's managing director.

Lawmaker condemns Hezbollah's posture: Lebanese political leaders blasted Hezbollah for making aggressive statements against Israel outside the confines of the parliamentary system.

Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah lashed out at Israel in a speech commemorating the assassination of several of the Shiite resistance movement's leaders. "If you hit our ports, we will bomb your ports and if you hit our oil refineries, we will bomb your oil refineries," said Nasrallah last week.

Samir Geagea, the leader of the Lebanese Forces political party and key pro-Western figure, said Nasrallah had no right to speak out against Israel, Hezbollah's al-Manar news service reports. "The Lebanese people have not granted Nasrallah the right to decide an all-out confrontation with Israel," said Geagea. "The Lebanese granted the 128 members of Parliament, the government and the president the right to determine their fate and they didn't grant it to one of the parties."

Hezbollah emerged from June parliamentary elections with two Cabinet positions -- agriculture and administrative reform. In violation of a U.N.-brokered cease-fire, Beirut in 2009 passed a measure that allows Hezbollah to maintain an armed resistance in the face of an Israeli threat.

Geagea said defensive measures, however, were a matter for the state. "Placing the decisions of war and peace with the Lebanese government is what spares Lebanon another war," he said.