



NEWS REVIEW

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I am not Jewish but...

Rupert Murdoch | The Jerusalem Post | 19 March

Over the years, some of my wildest critics seem to have assumed I am Jewish. At the same time, some of my closest friends wish I were.

So let me set the record straight: I live in New York. I have a wife who craves Chinese food. And people I trust tell me I practically invented the word "chutzpah."

Ladies and gentleman, I am humbled by the honour you have given me - because this award speaks more to your good work than it does to mine.

The American Jewish Committee started in response to the persecution of Jews in czarist Russia. And your response took a very American form: an organization that would speak up for those who could not speak for themselves.

In the century since your founding, the American Jewish Committee has become one of the world's most influential organizations. Yet though your concerns begin with the safety and welfare of Jews, these concerns are anything but parochial. The reason for this is clear: You know that the best guarantee of the security of Jews anywhere is the freedom of people everywhere.

Your good work has helped bring real and lasting changes to our world. Unfortunately, while some threats have been defeated, new ones have taken their place. And these new threats remind us the AJC's work is more vital than ever.

In Europe, men and woman who bear the tattoos of concentration camps today look out on a continent where Jewish lives and Jewish property are under attack - and public debate is poisoned by an anti-Semitism we thought had been dispatched to history's dustbin.

In Iran, we see a regime that backs Hizbullah and Hamas now on course to acquire a nuclear weapon.

In India, we see Islamic terrorists single out the Mumbai Jewish Center in a well-planned and well-coordinated attack that looks like it could be a test run for similar attacks in similar cities around the world.

MOST FUNDAMENTALLY, we see a growing assault on both the legitimacy and security of the State of Israel.

This assault comes from people who make clear they have no intention of ever living side-by-side in peace with a Jewish state - no matter how many concessions Israel might make. The reason for this is also clear: These are men who cannot abide the idea of freedom, tolerance and democracy. They hate Israel for the same reasons they hate us.

As I speak, the flashpoint is Gaza. For months now, Hamas has been raining down rockets on Israeli civilians. Like all terrorist attacks, the aim is to spread fear within free societies, and to paralyze its leaders. This Israel cannot afford. I do not need to tell anyone in this room that no sovereign nation

can sit by while its civilian population is attacked.

Hamas knows this better than we do. And Hamas understands something else as well: In the 21st century, when democratic states respond to terrorist attacks, they face two terrible handicaps.

THE FIRST HANDICAP is military. It's true that Israel's conventional superiority means it could flatten Gaza if it wanted. But the Israel Defence Forces - unlike Hamas - are accountable to a democratically chosen government.

No matter which party is in the majority, every Israeli government knows it will be held accountable by its people and by the world for the lives that are lost because of its decisions. That's true for lives of innocent Palestinians caught in the crossfire. And it's also true for the Israeli soldiers who may lose their lives defending their people.

In this kind of war, Hamas does not need to defeat Israel militarily to win a big victory. In fact, Hamas knows that in some ways, dead Palestinians serve its purposes even better than dead Israelis.

In the West we look at this and say, "It makes no sense." But it does make sense.

If you are committed to Israel's destruction, and if you believe that dead Palestinians help you score a propaganda victory, you do things like launch rockets from a Palestinian schoolyard. This ensures that when the Israelis do respond, it will likely lead to the death of an innocent Palestinian - no matter how many precautions Israeli soldiers take.

Hamas gets away with this, moreover, because it does not rule Gaza by the consent of those it claims to represent. It rules by fear and intimidation. It is accountable to no one but itself. This is the chilling logic of Gaza. And it helps explain why even a strong military power like Israel can find itself at a disadvantage on the ground.

THE SECOND HANDICAP for Israel is the global media war. For Hamas, the images of Palestinian suffering - of people losing their homes, of parents mourning their dead children, of tanks rolling through the streets - create sympathy for its cause.

In a battle marked by street to street fighting, the death of innocents is all but inevitable. That is also true of Gaza. And these deaths have led some to call for Israel to be charged with war crimes by an international tribunal.

But I am curious: Why do we never hear calls for Hamas leaders to be charged with war crimes?

Why, for example, do we hear no calls for human rights investigations into Hamas gunmen using Palestinian children as human shields? Why so few stories on the reports of Hamas assassins going to hospitals to hunt down their fellow Palestinians? And where are the international human rights groups demanding that Hamas stop blurring the most fundamental line in warfare: the distinction between civilian and combatant?

I suspect the answer has to do with the same grim logic that leads Hamas to provoke a military battle it knows it cannot win. Whether Israel is ever found guilty of any war crime hardly matters. Hamas gets a propaganda win simply by having the charge made often and loudly enough.

In this, Israel finds itself in much the same position the United States found itself in Iraq before the surge. There, al-Qaida realized that it was in its interests to provoke sectarian violence between Shia and Sunni - no matter what the cost to innocent Iraqis. That is the nature of terror. And what we are seeing in Gaza is just one front in this much larger war.

IN THE WEST, we are used to thinking that Israel cannot survive without the help of Europe and the United States. Tonight I say to you: Maybe we should start wondering whether we in Europe and the United States can survive if we allow the terrorists to succeed in Israel.

In this new century, the "West" is no longer a matter of geography. The West is defined by societies committed to freedom and democracy. That at least is how the terrorists see it. And if we are serious about meeting this challenge, we would expand the only military alliance committed to the defence of the West to include those on the front lines of this war. That means bringing countries such as Israel into NATO.

My friends, I do not pretend to have all the answers to Gaza this evening. But I do know this: The free world makes a terrible mistake if we deceive ourselves into thinking this is not our fight.

In the end, the Israeli people are fighting the same enemy we are: cold-blooded killers who reject peace, who reject freedom and who rule by the suicide vest, the car bomb and the human shield.

Against such an enemy, I will not second-guess the decisions of a free Israel defending her citizens. And I would ask all those who support peace and freedom to do the same.

From a speech by the chairman and CEO of News Corporation to the American Jewish Committee on receiving its National Human Relations Award

The folly of "investigating" Gaza

Alan M. Dershowitz | FrontPageMagazine.com | 19 March

On March 16, 2009, a group of 16 self-described experts on "international justice and reconciliation of conflict" including Bishop Desmond Tutu, who has characterized Israeli self-defence actions as "un-Christian"—called for the establishment of "a United Nations Commission" to conduct an "independent and impartial investigation" of war crime allegations growing out of the Gaza conflict.

There is of course no need to conduct any investigation of whether Hamas has committed war crimes: they readily admit—indeed they boast—that they are trying to kill as many Jewish Israeli citizens as their anti-personnel rockets are capable of killing. They also acknowledge, as a Hamas legislator did on television, that they use women and children as "human shields."

The only real target of this investigation is Israel, which, according to British military expert, Richard Kemp:

"had very little choice other than to carry on with its military operations until it reaches the conclusion it needs which is to stop Hamas from firing rockets at its people in its territory...."

I think – I would say that from my knowledge of the IDF and from the extent to which I have been following the current operation, I don't think there has ever been a time in the history of warfare when any army has made more efforts to reduce civilian casualties and deaths of innocent people than the IDF is doing today in Gaza.

Hamas, the enemy they have been fighting, has been trained extensively by Iran and by Hezbollah, to fight among the people, to use the civilian population in Gaza as a human shield.

Hamas factors in the uses of the population as a major part of their defensive plan. So even though as I say, Israel, the IDF, has taken enormous steps...to reduce civilian casualties, it is impossible, it is impossible to stop that happening when the enemy has been using civilians as a human shield."

Only a group as skewed against Israel as this one is would regard the United Nations as capable of conducting an "independent and impartial investigation" of anything involving Israel. Such an investigation would not "help build a better peace." To the contrary, it would encourage Hamas and other terrorist groups to persist in their tactic of targeting civilians from behind human shields.

Moreover, no commission could credibly investigate what Israel did, unless it first set out with clarity what it believed Israel should have done and could have done under international law to prevent Hamas rockets from continuing to target a million Israeli civilians. A United Nations

investigation of Israel—in the face of that body’s absolute refusal to investigate Russia, China, Zimbabwe, Iran and so many other countries that routinely violate human rights in an egregious manner—would constitute a major victory for the Hamas double war crime strategy. It would send a powerful message to all terrorist groups that provoking democracies into responding to attacks on its civilians will result in United Nations condemnation.

Let the international community, led by the so-called experts who signed this letter, first decide what the appropriate response is for democracies faced with attacks on its civilians by terrorists who hide behind their own civilians. Only after it is first decided, in a neutral manner, what rules of self-defense should apply to all democracies faced with terrorism by those who hide behind civilians, could an independent body then credibly apply these standards to the actions of a particular country. To conduct a witch hunt against one country, which is what any United Nations Commission would do, before articulating the neutral standards applicable to all democracies, would constitute Alice-In-Wonderland justice: Verdict first, trial to follow. That is the kind of “justice” the United Nations has typically administered when it comes to Israel.

Alan Dershowitz is a professor of law at Harvard. He is the author of many books, including, most recently, “The Case Against Israel’s Enemies”

Palestine victim of Arab betrayal

Nonie Darwish | The Australian | 20 March

International donors pledged almost \$4.5 billion in aid for Gaza earlier this month. During the past few years it has been very painful for me to witness the deteriorating humanitarian situation in that narrow strip where I lived as a child in the 1950s.

The media tends to attribute Gaza's decline solely to Israeli military and economic actions against Hamas. But such a myopic analysis ignores the problem's root cause: 60 years of Arab policy aimed at cementing the Palestinian people's status as stateless refugees to use their suffering as a weapon against Israel.

As a child in Gaza in the '50s, I experienced the early results of this policy. Egypt, which controlled the territory then, conducted guerrilla-style operations against Israel from Gaza. My father commanded these operations, carried out by Palestinian fedeyeen (Arabic for self-sacrifice). Back then, Gaza was already the front line of the Arab jihad against Israel. My father was assassinated by Israeli forces in 1956. It was in those years that the Arab League started its Palestinian refugee policy. Arab countries implemented special laws designed to make it impossible to integrate the Palestinian refugees from the 1948 Arab war against Israel.

Even descendants of Palestinian refugees who are born in another Arab country and live there their entire lives can never gain that country's passport. Even if they marry a citizen of an Arab country, they cannot become citizens of their spouse's country. They must remain Palestinian even though they may have never set foot in the West Bank or Gaza. This policy of forcing a Palestinian identity on these people for eternity and condemning them to a miserable life in a refugee camp was designed to perpetuate and exacerbate the Palestinian refugee crisis.

So was the Arab policy of overpopulating Gaza. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, whose main political support comes from Arab countries, encourages high birthrates by rewarding families with many children. Yasser Arafat said the Palestinian woman's womb was his best weapon.

Arab countries always push for classifying as many Palestinians as possible as refugees.

As a result, about one-third of the Palestinians in Gaza still live in refugee camps. For 60 years, Palestinians have been used and abused by Arab regimes and Palestinian terrorists in their fight against Israel.

Now it is Hamas, an Islamist terror organisation supported by Iran that is using and abusing

Palestinians for this purpose. While Hamas leaders hid in the well-stocked bunkers and tunnels they prepared before they provoked Israel into attacking them, Palestinian civilians were exposed and caught in the deadly crossfire between Hamas and Israeli soldiers.

As a result of 60 years of this Arab policy, Gaza has become a prison camp for 1.5 million Palestinians. Both Israel and Egypt are fearful of terrorist infiltration from Gaza - all the more so since Hamas took over - and have always maintained tight controls over their borders with Gaza. The Palestinians continue to endure hardships because Gaza continues to serve as the launching pad for terror attacks against Israeli citizens. Those attacks come in the form of Hamas missiles that indiscriminately target Israeli kindergartens, homes and businesses.

And Hamas continued these attacks more than two years after Israel withdrew from Gaza in the hope that this step would begin the process of building a Palestinian state, eventually leading to a peaceful, two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There was no cycle of violence then, no justification for anything other than peace and prosperity.

But, instead, Hamas chose Islamic jihad. Gazans' and Israelis' hopes have been met with misery for Palestinians and missiles for Israelis.

Hamas, an Iranian proxy, has become a danger not only to Israel but also to Palestinians as well as to neighbouring Arab states, which fear the spread of radical Islam could destabilise their countries.

Arabs claim they love the Palestinian people, but they seem more interested in sacrificing them. If they really loved their Palestinian brethren, they would pressure Hamas to stop firing missiles at Israel. In the longer term, the Arab world must end the Palestinians' refugee status and thereby their desire to harm Israel.

It's time for the 22 Arab countries to open their borders and absorb the Palestinians of Gaza who wish to start a new life.

It is time for the Arab world to truly help the Palestinians, not use them.

*Nonie Darwish, who grew up in Gaza City and Cairo, is the author, most recently, of **Cruel and Usual Punishment** (Thomas Nelson).*

Muslim leaders to guard shul

The Scotsman | 19 March

The leaders of a Muslim community in Edinburgh, Scotland this week offered to protect their Jewish brethren in the wake of what was seen as a probable anti-Semitic attack on a synagogue.

Ken Imrie, chairman of the Scottish Islamic Foundation, wrote to Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation's Rabbi David Rose to express his group's "revulsion and horror" after the synagogue's windows were smashed. According to a report on the unusual offer published in The Scotsman, Imrie added in his letter, "We trust you have adequate security arrangements in place, in line with places of worship across the country. If not, such is our strength of feeling on this matter, we would wish to physically guard the synagogue ourselves.

"We wish you to know that the Muslim community stands full square with you in revulsion and horror at this vandalism. To violently damage any building is wrong. That this is a respected place of worship, faith and spirituality makes the crime even more heinous," Imrie wrote.

Two male suspects, aged 22 and 17, pleaded guilty at an arraignment on charges of malicious mischief aggravated by religious prejudice in Edinburgh Sheriff Court last Friday in connection with the attack. The two allegedly were holding a baseball bat at the time of the incident. The trial is set for April 8.

The synagogue, which serves the 700 Jews of Edinburgh, was also attacked once before, seven

years ago. Last week's vandalism appears to be part of a wave of rising anti-Semitism around the world after Israel's military operations in Gaza.

Mark Gardner, a spokesman for the Community Security Trust, said that there has been a growing number of anti-Semitic incidents in recent weeks. "This was a disturbing incident," Gardner said. "Scottish Jews do not expect to experience the relatively high level of anti-Semitism that has occurred during and since the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza at the turn of the year," he told The Scotsman. According to the organization, which protects British Jews against anti-Semitic violence, 10 anti-Semitic incidents have been recorded since January – the number Gardner said that the group would expect to see during the span of an entire year.

Haven for Jewish Refugees from Nazi Europe

The Edinburgh Jewish community can be traced back to a Minute of the Town Council in 1691, when application was made by David Brown to reside and trade in the city. There was an organized community by 1780, which consisted of twenty families by 1816. The community converted a property for use as their first synagogue in 1825.

Edinburgh's Hebrew Congregation was built in 1932 to accommodate 2,000 people. It was eventually converted in 1979 to considerably reduce the size of the prayer hall, with a community center built underneath.

The Scottish Jewish community was boosted by becoming a haven for refugees from Nazis during World War II. According to the 2001 census, about 6,400 Jews live in Scotland, most of whom are in Edinburgh (about 1,000), Glasgow (about 5,000) and to a lesser extent in Dundee.

Germany agrees to raise for Holocaust survivors

Needy Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe will receive major increases in monthly payments from Germany. The raise follows intensive negotiations between Germany and the Claims Conference that ended Thursday in Berlin.

According to the agreement, an additional estimated \$80 million will be paid over the next 10 years to approximately 13,000 Holocaust survivors in 22 countries. In addition, there will be major increases in monthly payments from the Central and Eastern European Fund, or CEEF, to survivors in European Union and non-EU countries, bringing the two groups to parity.

As of next January, recipients of CEEF pensions will receive about \$339 per month, which represents a 35% increase for those in non-EU countries and an 11% increase for EU residents.

The agreement "reinforces for me the commitment I saw during the lengthy negotiations [for the Clinton administration] with the Germans to continue their moral responsibility," Stuart Eizenstat, the former U.S. deputy treasury secretary and a special negotiator for the Claims Conference, said following Thursday's talks with the German Ministry of Finance, represented by state secretary Karl Diller.

Roman Kent, one of several survivors on the negotiating team and a board member of the International Auschwitz Committee, said that many of the survivors in Eastern Europe live well below the poverty level. "They lack money for food, medicine and fuel," he told JTA. "And time is not the best medicine for the survivor," many of whom are alone in later years. "And when you are older, you think about what happened not yesterday but what happened 60, 70 years ago."

Gideon Taylor, executive vice president of the Claims Conference, said there would be an unprecedented second meeting before the end of this year to deal with open questions such as home care funds for 2010. **(JTA)**

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Join us in the work of strengthening Jewish life.

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We're on the Web!

www.nswjbd.org

Welcome to our new website

The NSW Jewish Board of Deputies has launched a new website at its March 17 Plenum.

www.nswjbd.org



The leading portal for information about the NSW Jewish community, Judaism and Israel, the site includes a continuous news-feed with breaking international news from around the Jewish world.

A section titled JBD Perspectives contains current thinking on topics relating to the Arab-Israel conflict, antisemitism and other topical issues. Also available is information on Board of Deputies activities in the areas of social justice, interfaith and social inclusion, plus resources on Judaism, the Holocaust and Israel.

The website's 'Members Area' allows access for the Board's Executive, Deputies, members of the Educators Forum and others to register for passworded access. We urge organisations to add our website as a link on yours.

NSW Jewish Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff: "The site is a window into the Jewish community, Israel and the Jewish world. We encourage everyone to visit it and we welcome feedback."