



**ISRAEL NEWS**  
*A collection of the week's news from Israel*  
*From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of*  
*Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

## Commentary...

### The Death of Bipartisanship and Israel By Jonathan S. Tobin

One of the constant refrains of pro-Israel activists is the need to keep support for the Jewish state a bipartisan concern, rather than something the major parties battle over. They're right about that. But what happens when bipartisanship fails? More to the point, how is bipartisanship possible in a political environment where the center has collapsed?

That's the question the pro-Israel community should be pondering as the 2020 presidential race gets under way.

The collapse of the center is illustrated by the reaction to former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz's plans to run for president as an independent. Schultz is a lifelong Democrat, and his positions on most topics are predictably liberal—from divisive social issues to foreign policy. Yet he feels that in a Democratic Party that is lurching to the left, there's no room for a pro-business candidate in next year's presidential primaries.

Another Jewish billionaire, former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, disagrees. While he has as many millions to squander on an independent candidacy as Schultz, Bloomberg has looked at history and the way the American political system works, and not unreasonably came to the conclusion that a third party run was an exercise in futility.

Bloomberg is almost certainly right that only the nominee of the Democrats or the Republicans can be elected president, yet it's just as hard to argue with Schultz's conclusions about the state of the Democrats these days. Even some of the contenders who want to be thought of as less left-wing than the likes of Sens. Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren are embracing some radical schemes about an expansion of entitlements that both Bloomberg and Schultz are pointing out cannot be paid for by merely soaking the rich.

Indeed, the conceit of the scenario for Schultz's candidacy is that in a contest between a left-wing Democrat and U.S. President Donald Trump, there would be plenty of room for a candidate who sought to occupy the center of the spectrum. Yet even if that was how the 2020 race campaign out, it's far more likely that a centrist who was running as more of a Democrat from a previous generation would ensure Trump's re-election than to steal the race for him or herself.

In other words, even if candidates who might be perceived as not even trying to capture the middle of the political spectrum dominated the presidential race, there is still probably no room for a centrist.

While we'll have to wait more than a year to find out who will win the Democratic nomination and how electable he or she might be, there's one thing we do know for sure about the current state of American politics: The collapse of the center is bad for Israel.

To state that there is a problem is not to claim that support for Israel is declining in the United States. To the contrary, polls consistently show that backing for the Jewish state either on its own or in questions asking whether Americans support Israel or the Palestinians, the overwhelming majority say the former. The only disturbing thing about those polls is that the numbers are so skewed on along partisan lines with 79 percent of Republicans backing Israel and only 27 percent of Democrats agreeing.

But the one point that gets lost in that discussion is the fact that most Democratic officeholders, and especially the leadership of their congressional caucuses, are solidly pro-Israel. This means that despite the vitriol that is an inescapable part of the politics in 2019, there ought to be no trouble in finding common ground between the parts in support of key issues concerning the U.S.-Israel alliance.

The trouble is that in a political environment in which the center really has collapsed, the space for Democrats and Republicans to come together is shrinking.

That's what happened in the last week as the latest controversy concerning Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) broke out. She disingenuously

apologized for a past tweet in which she used a classic anti-Semitic trope about Israel "hypnotizing" the world. But then she doubled down on her hate for the Jewish state by comparing it to Iran, mischaracterizing the nation-state law it passed last year and reiterating her

support for BDS and anti-Zionism, which is by definition an expression of anti-Semitism. And rather than being punished by her party, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi gave her a coveted spot on the House Foreign Relations Committee.

While some Democrats—like the new Democratic Majority for Israel group—took issue with Omar, most were either silent (like Pelosi) or forgiving, such as House Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), who could do nothing more than say he hoped she would "grow" in the future.

It was left to Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-N.Y.) to publicly challenge her in a way that most in her party refused to do. This is to Zeldin's credit, though the interesting aspect was that none of the moderates in the Democratic leadership thought to back his stand or defend him against the libelous claim of Omar and her left-wing allies that calling her to account for her hate was "Islamophobic" because he is identified as a strong supporter of Trump.

After Zeldin prompted Omar to denounce an anti-Semitic voicemail he had received, the congresswoman invited him to Somali tea in her office. But it would take more than that to bridge the gap between her anti-Semitism and his ardent support for Israel.

The point here goes beyond the kerfuffle involving two junior members of Congress. It is that as much as some in both parties would wish it otherwise, this incident proves that the center is disappearing. Under those circumstances, the lesson goes beyond the need to back Zeldin and resist Omar. It's that when the loudest voices in both parties are not moderates who are capable of working across party lines, then the notion of a bipartisan consensus on any issue—let alone Israel—becomes a dubious theory rather than a reality. (JNS Feb 4)

### The State of the Union is Pro-Jewish By Abe Greenwald

On Tuesday, President Trump used his State of the Union address to celebrate the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, call out Iran on its genocidal Jew-hatred, confront anti-Semitism generally, and tie his conception of American greatness to the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. This was one pro-Jewish speech.

For Trump, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital was, as he put it, a matter of "principled realism." Based on that realism, his administration "proudly opened the American embassy in Jerusalem." Nothing here about both sides having to bend or about Israel now having to "do its part for peace." The president of the United States simply noted that he recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital because it is. And that's the most powerful thing he could have said on the matter.

On Iran, Trump did something remarkable—he spoke the truth. The president called Iran "the world's leading state sponsor of terror" and emphasized that "it is a radical regime." He went on: "We will not avert our eyes from a regime that chants 'death to America' and threatens genocide against the Jewish people." No garbage about make-believe moderate mullahs, no specious conflation of the Iranian people and the regime, no wishful fantasies about Iran's tyrannical theocracy showing heartening signs, and, finally, no equivocating about the nature of its obsessive anti-Semitism. In all, a welcome return to moral sanity.

After that, Trump talked briefly about anti-Semitism in general. "We must never ignore the vile poison of anti-Semitism, or those who spread its venomous creed," he said. "With one voice, we must confront this hatred anywhere and everywhere it occurs." He didn't couch this point in a larger abstract discussion about accepting people who are different from you, etc. Trump focused on anti-Semitism as the singular phenomenon that it is. And as a result, his concise remarks actually meant something.

In talking about anti-Semitism, he moved on to last October's

shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. Trump honored Timothy Matson, one of the SWAT officers who went into the synagogue and apprehended the killer. He also celebrated the life of Judah Samet, an 81-year-old survivor of both the synagogue shooting and the Holocaust.

This brought Trump back around to his opening theme—the heroism of American soldiers on D-Day. He introduced a second Holocaust survivor, Joshua Kaufman, along with Herman Zeitchik, an American sergeant who stormed the beaches at Normandy. “Almost 75 years later, Herman and Joshua are both together in the gallery tonight—seated side-by-side,” Trump said, “here in the home of American freedom.” The two men—liberated and liberator—rose together for a round of applause.

Trump talked about a great many other things, but it’s remarkable the extent to which his speech acknowledged, celebrated, and urged on America’s doing right by the Jews. It would be welcome enough if he emphasized such things in an address to an exclusively Jewish audience, but this was a State of the Union speech, and so his righteous words were meant to shape our very understanding of America. This takes on additional importance because Congress is now home to some anti-Semites of unprecedented ferocity and because the larger left has failed to call out the Jew-hatred that now permeates its ranks. Say what you want about Trump, this was glorious. (CommentaryMagazine.com Feb 6)

---

### **Why Democrats Embrace Anti-Semitism and Anti-Israel Bias**

By H. A. Goodman

In 2012, US Rep. Ilhan Omar tweeted “Israel has hypnotized the world, may Allah awaken the people and help them see the evil doings of Israel.” Not only did the Democratic congresswoman win over 78% of the votes in Minnesota’s 5th congressional district during midterms, but she’s the newest member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The progressive politician also wrote that Israel is an “apartheid” regime, and she supports the BDS movement.

In addition, Democratic Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib also supports boycotting Israel and the BDS movement.

Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has condemned Israel’s “occupation” of Palestine and answers “no comment” to whether or not she supports BDS like fellow Democrats Omar and Tlaib.

How did someone with such anti-Israel views become a Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee? How are there two Democrats in Congress, and possibly a third, who support boycotting the Jewish state?

The answer lies in the Democratic Party’s tolerance of anti-Semitism and anti-Israel bias. While it’s difficult to know exactly what’s in Omar’s heart, her singular focus on Israel and her claim Israel “hypnotized” the world correlate with long-standing anti-Semitic myths. Omar would likely never state Hamas “hypnotized” the planet to ignore its execution of 23 Palestinians or its “systematic arbitrary arrests and torture” according to Human Rights Watch. Also, everyone from progressive pundits on YouTube to Democratic candidates for Congress routinely expresses anti-Israel sentiments, without pushback from mainstream Democrats or liberal voters. It’s accepted to blame Israel for retaliating when Hamas, Islamic Jihad and others within Gaza launch hundreds of rockets to murder Israeli civilians.

Furthermore, as International Holocaust Remembrance Day evokes the memory of six million Jews murdered by Hitler, why have many Democrats jettisoned support of the Jewish state for extreme positions like BDS?

According to a Pew Research report titled “Republicans and Democrats Grow Even Further Apart in Views of Israel, Palestinians,” the political landscape of liberal America has shifted away from backing Israel.

The partisan divide in Middle East sympathies, for Israel or the Palestinians, is now wider than at any point since 1978. Currently, 79% of Republicans say they sympathize more with Israel than the Palestinians, compared with just 27% of Democrats.

Since 2001, the share of Republicans sympathizing more with Israel than the Palestinians has increased 29 percentage points, from 50% to 79%. Over the same period, the share of Democrats saying this has declined 11 points, from 38% to 27%.

Since only 27% of Democrats side with Israelis, while Republicans overwhelmingly support Israel, the shift in public sentiment among liberals has resulted in Democrats appeasing anti-Israel and sometimes anti-Semitic viewpoints. Ultimately, it comes down to votes.

Democrats need the votes of people who hate Israel; sad but true. In doing so, politicians such as Nancy Pelosi within the Democratic establishment look the other way when certain viewpoints correlate to antisemitism.

The Democratic Party caters to these sentiments because liberal voters

are far more critical of Israel than conservatives. This criticism almost always morphs into hyperbole and vitriol, blaming Israel for human rights violations while overtly ignoring the crimes of Hamas. Even the latest Women’s March faced accusations of anti-Semitism, proving such views could be present within all elements of liberal politics.

Anti-Semitic flyers were spread recently on the UC Berkeley campus, blaming Jewish students for sexual assaults. Today’s antiwar movements on college campuses involve focusing all attention on Israel for the Middle East crisis, while seeing the Palestinians only as an innocent and oppressed people with every right to launch rockets. Progressive Democrats, the most idealistic base of a political party that cheated Bernie Sanders in 2016, view Israel as a Goliath and the Palestinians as a David, and America’s Left often sides with the perceived underdog. As I explained in my previous op-ed, even the murder of Jews in a synagogue is weaponized by Democrats to blame President Donald Trump.

Ultimately, Democrats need the votes of anti-Israel voters and will overlook anti-Semitic sentiments, even by their own politicians. Unfortunately, this is a reality of American politics that Jews around the world must recognize. The days of liberals supporting Israel, or condemning statements that used to be seen as overly anti-Semitic, are likely over. (Jerusalem Post Feb 4)

---

### **Liberal Zionists must take up the fight against BDS, not ally with it**

By Jonathan S. Tobin

There was a time when Israel and the organized Jewish world didn’t hesitate about supporting left-wing Jewish student groups. Back in the late 1960s and early 1970s, groups like the North American Jewish Students Network were often harshly critical of the government led by Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir in the years after the Six-Day War. But Meir and her colleagues still considered such groups to be allies in the struggle to defend Israel against an Arab world that was determined to stick to its stance of “no peace, no recognition and no negotiations” with the Jewish state.

While left-wing Zionists differed with Israel’s government, they were still playing a valuable role confronting the virulent anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism that had emerged among the so-called “New Left” in the 1960s. Whereas Socialists had heretofore identified with the Jewish people’s struggle for self-determination, the movements that emerged during the Vietnam War protests instead bought into the lie that Zionism was a form of colonialism. And the people who were most adept at answering these lies were left-wingers, who were able to make the case in student forums that being a Zionist wasn’t incompatible with being a progressive.

Flash-forward 50 years later and some still make the same claim. The conceit of the J Street lobby is that it is following in the footsteps of those students with its “pro-Israel, pro-peace” mantra. J Street thinks its critiques of the Netanyahu government give it the standing to speak for the tradition of liberal Zionism that is in tune with the political leanings of the vast majority of American Jews.

J Street argues that if the only voices speaking up for Israel are those identified with the Israeli right or supporters of the Trump administration, then it will turn off young Jews. Youth culture in the United States skews hard to the left, making any cause that isn’t somehow linked with progressive orthodoxy to be beyond the pale.

Radical anti-Zionist groups like Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), and their Jewish auxiliaries at IfNotNow and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), maintain a strong presence on many campuses these days. As a result, liberals believe that only groups with a progressive orientation like J Street U, which is deeply critical of Israeli policies while still claiming to be pro-Zionist, can effectively represent Jewish interests and, in effect, save Jewish youth for the pro-Israel camp.

It makes sense. Or at least, it would if that’s actually what J Street U was doing.

In the past few years, there have been many reported instances in which J Street U chapters have made common cause with SJP or JVP in criticizing the efforts of pro-Israel groups like the Maccabee Task Force or Hillel in order to castigate those organizing trips to Israel or holding events with Zionist speakers. In many other instances, J Street U chapters have jointly sponsored events with SJP or JVP groups.

J Street dismisses these charges as unimportant. It takes the position that it’s only natural for student groups to make alliances where possible, and that this doesn’t mean that J Street has abandoned its core principles. They say that by engaging with the far left, they are building understanding and enabling people who hate Israel to see that not all Zionists are bad guys like Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu,

AIPAC representatives and others who have different opinions about the conflict.

Let's leave aside for a moment, the obnoxious and dangerous assertion that it somehow makes sense for liberals to encourage Israel's foes to divide the Jews into two groups: "bad Jews" who support Israel and "good Jews" who are uncomfortable with it. The problem with outreach to Jew-haters is that far from persuading them to think more kindly of Israel and the Jews, appeasing them in this way actually reinforces their conviction that supporters of the Jewish state are pariahs who can and should be isolated and destroyed.

The only people who appear to be influenced by such contacts appear to be those who cling to the title of liberal Zionists, but who don't seem comfortable with any assertion of Jewish nationalism or even the most minimal form of self-defense on the part of Israel. More to the point, the line between J Street U, JVP and IfNotNow—groups that actively oppose Israel's existence and even at times engage in anti-Semitic libels—is rapidly being blurred as they form alliances on campuses to try to isolate groups like the highly effective Maccabee Task Force or even the centrist and non-partisan Hillel chapters, which are home to much of the Jewish activity on most college campuses.

It's still true that for many young Jews, anything that can be branded as non-progressive—let alone pro-Trump or pro-Netanyahu—is anathema to their worldview. Mainstream Jewish groups, including those that identify with the Zionist right, need to take into account that reaching Jewish millennials requires a different approach than the ones that worked with their parents and grandparents, who identified with the struggle for freedom for Soviet Jewry or who remember what a world without a Jewish state meant for persecuted Jews around the world.

But it is also true that a Zionist approach that eschews support for Jewish rights and self-defense—and which is neutral about anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist groups that seek Israel's destruction, as well as to stigmatize its supporters here—is not doing the Jewish people any good. To the contrary, alliances with Jew-haters only strengthen the enemies of the Jews and make it that much more uncomfortable for Jews to be open about their identity on college campuses.

If J Street U can't be relied upon to fight JVP and IfNotNow, then its claims to the mantle of progressive Zionism aren't merely falling flat, but are a lie that both liberal and conservative Jews with any sense of pride or a shred of principle must reject with contempt. (JNS Feb 4)

---

#### **A Moment of Truth** By Dror Eydar

About a month ago, long before the Prime Minister's Office was focusing on it, I called on Habayit Hayehudi to merge with Eli Yishai and Otzma Yehudit. The common ground between religious Zionism and these parties is far greater than what separates them. The union doesn't have to be complete; it just needs to be an ad hoc, pragmatic partnership for the sake of a supreme goal: preventing the right-wing bloc from losing precious votes in the upcoming general election.

We all lived through the trauma of 1992, which led to the rise of the government that agreed to the blood-soaked Oslo Accords, which brought a disaster down on us. In the last election, more than 120,000 ballots cast for parties in these two streams that didn't make it past the minimum electoral threshold were wasted. Isn't that a shame?

The Left, as usual, has started its pseudo-moralistic celebrations and within three seconds was referring to "Kahane-ism" and "Nazism." There isn't enough space here to elaborate on the hypocrisy of that bunch. They can't teach anyone about morality. If getting control of the government were in the balance, they themselves would make a deal with the late Meir Kahane. In effect, they do that in every election cycle: When they calculate possible coalitions, they count the Arab parties, all of which reject the right of the Jewish people to national self-determination and the idea of a Jewish state. Not to mention that they are identified with terrorists and the enemies of the Jewish state. And we haven't even mentioned the bigamists and the misogynists and the radicals. The Left is allowed to form alliances with all of them – "for the sake of peace," of course.

I'll say it again: Right-wing activist Itamar Ben-Gvir, for example, is much preferable to Hagai El-Ad, the head of B'Tselem, who travels the world spreading blood libels about Israel, thereby providing indirect justification for terrorism against the Jewish people and their state. To our disgrace, he isn't the only one the Left holds up as a moral role model. But we don't live according to their dictates. Let them go crazy and call us names. They did it to Menachem Begin and Ze'ev Jabotinsky, and even to Zevulun Hammer. As far as the Left is concerned, we've always been fascists, neo-Nazis, messianic, and a bunch of other curses. The Tehran-like

demand is aimed at the Right only. There is no morality in this "Tehranism," only a desire to control the boundaries of the political opponent's legitimacy and prevent unification. The Right losing votes is good for the Left. Writing here, I have opposed the disqualification of the Arab Balad party and the sanctions against MK Hanin Zoabi. Our democracy is strong enough, I said, to include even those extremist elements. So with all due respect, shouldn't we enjoy the same rights?

It looks like what most disturbs those who oppose unification on the Right is the prospect of the extreme right-wing drawing closer and becoming more moderate. Cooperating with more moderate ideologies will moderate the extremists among us. Not every tenet of the extreme Right is unacceptable. Love for the land, love for the people, and love for the Torah are things many people share. There is disagreement about how to express them, about what they mean, about conduct. It is better to talk about it than to marginalize them. But the Left can't control its need for the existence of an extremist specter that will allow it to tar the entire Right with the same brush – all settlers, all religious, all haredim and the rest of the colorful pejoratives.

This is a moment of truth for religious Zionism and the Right as a whole. Are we ready to free our thinking from the controlling grip of the Left, which for years decided how much legitimacy the Right would have? The insanity has gotten so out of hand that we've accepted the new geometry of the leftist propagandists: terms like "centrist," "neither Right nor Left," "Center-Left," which settled into our language, even though we know they're deceptive. These are different names for the same two tribes that since the start of the 20th century have been battling for control of the Zionist ship. Let's hope that our friends in Habayit Hayehudi will be wise enough to unite with other parties and hold on to valuable votes. Our lives depend on it. (Israel Hayom Feb 6)

*The writer has been appointed Israeli ambassador to Italy.*

---

#### **New Israel Fund Grantees Continue to Accuse the IDF of War Crimes** By Ronn Torossian

Radical leftist Israeli organizations backed by the New Israel Fund continue to work against the interests of the Jewish state; now, some are actively promoting the prosecution of IDF officers and soldiers for "war crimes."

Adalah, B'Tselem, and Yesh Din are cooperating with the UN Commission of Inquiry that is examining whether Israel is perpetrating war crimes in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, and East Jerusalem.

Last month, Yesh Din submitted a position paper to the commission, stating that Israel's legal position, which justifies the use of live fire in Gaza, is in the realm of a "total fabrication," and that the terror attacks by Arabs seeking to murder Israeli civilians and soldiers are not considered acts of war.

B'Tselem and Adalah also provided materials to the commission, which is due to publish its conclusions in March. An Adalah spokesperson told Haaretz that the organization is hoping for "the intervention of forces in the international community to bring about the accountability for the harm to the Palestinians."

The intense concern that these groups express regarding the insufficient prosecution of IDF soldiers for war crimes is starkly contrasted by their forgiving attitude towards Palestinian terrorism that kills Jews. In the position paper filed with the UN commission, Yesh Din levels harsh criticism at the Israeli Military Advocate General's definition of stabbings and car rammings against civilians and soldiers as incidents of "genuine warfare." According to Yesh Din, these are just "civilian incidents to which the normative response is law enforcement, not warfare." Yesh Din also does not define the violent activities as terrorism, but rather as "attempts to cause harm."

It is worth noting that the IDF is regarded as one of the most humane and moral armies in the world.

Adalah was also involved in encouraging the UN to open a different investigation against Israel. Adalah representative Soheir Asaad told a UN debate on the commission of inquiry that Adalah demanded not only the opening of an international inquiry, but also a promise that "the recommendations and results of the investigation be implemented so that Israel is not be able to evade the consequences of its actions, as it has done in the past."

According to NGO Monitor, in the past decade the New Israel Fund has transferred \$22 million to Adalah, B'Tselem, and Yesh Din. Is accusing Israel of war crimes, denying her right to self-defense, and enabling Hamas terrorists really what American Jewish donors to the New Israel Fund seek? (Algemeiner Feb 3)

## **Politicizing Human Rights in Hebron** By Itai Reuveni

The prime minister's decision to cancel the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron was criticized by the foreign ministers of the countries that comprise the force, chief among them Norway. Ironically, these same countries – Norway, Sweden, Italy, Switzerland and Turkey – are the most blatant violators of the Oslo Accords, and as has been documented for years, their representatives in Hebron were the first to violate their mandate by targeting the city's Jewish residents and IDF soldiers.

In 1994, at the behest of Yasser Arafat and in coordination with him, the TIPH mandate was created and implemented. With the years, TIPH's stated mission of protecting human rights was exposed as a cover for its political role. Norway, TIPH's chief coordinator and the first country to send observers, is a prime example. In conjunction with Great Britain and the European Union, Norway funds a mechanism for the submission of thousands of anti-Israel petitions, in coordination with the Palestinian Authority, to flood the court system and apply international pressure on Israel. It does this through the Norway Refugee Council, an NGO with an Israeli humanitarian visa that allows it to recruit and train TIPH observers. These observers, who serve in a supposedly neutral body, are recruited by a patently anti-Israel organization.

Norwegian involvement doesn't end there. TIPH's main partners in Hebron are activists from another NGO, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel, who enter Israel under the guise of tourists, document IDF soldiers in action and return to their home countries to spearhead anti-Israel campaigns. The primary church group that coordinates EAPPI's activities in Israel and across the globe is none other than Norwegian Church Aid, which is also operated and funded by the Norwegian government. In general, a litany of reports has shown that church-affiliated activists and organizations that are involved in anti-Israel activity are also involved in the TIPH mission and the EAPPI.

The other TIPH member countries also play a problematic political role and often violate certain clauses of the Oslo Accords. Italy and organizations operating on its behalf partake in illegal construction in Area C in Judea and Samaria; Sweden and Switzerland fund political organizations that violate the Oslo Accords and promote Palestinian rejectionism at The Hague; and Turkey has spread its tentacles to east Jerusalem, often with funding by pro-terrorist elements.

The politicization of TIPH has rendered it ineffective, if not outright incendiary. Hebron, one of the flashpoints of the Arab-Israeli conflict, is also fertile ground for the well-funded industry of anti-Israel activity that provides jobs under the guise of "human rights and international law." The city is the focus of numerous organizations, tourists in disguise, diplomats in their own minds and, until recently, TIPH observers. The cancellation of the TIPH mandate is a signal to governments and organizations: Choose human rights and humanitarian aid or the cynical politicization of these principles, which only amplifies friction between the sides. (Israel Hayom Feb 6)

---

## **When Tragedy Becomes Farce** By Alan Joseph Bauer

When I went back to pick up my son on King George Street after a Palestinian policeman had detonated a five-kilogram bomb strapped to his body, I did not know if our boy was still alive. He wasn't moving. He was face-down on the sidewalk and surrounded by smoke and destruction. One of the three Israelis killed that late afternoon just stared out nearby from his blackened face. I mistakenly thought that he was the terrorist, so I started cursing him.

In March, we will mark 17 years since the attack in which a young couple, she pregnant with twins, was murdered along with the fellow with the eyes staring out to nowhere. Outwardly, we have recovered. Internally though, the memory is still fresh. One reason is that we can't find closure. Like Groundhog Day, each day is the same thing. Every time we try to put the bombing behind us, it comes back and rears its ugly head.

In 2004, we joined 10 other families to file the lawsuit known as Sokolow v. PLO under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA). In early 2015 we had our day in court – and won. A \$655.5 million judgment was entered against the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the PLO. They were found guilty by a New York jury on 24 counts in less than two days of deliberations.

John Kerry, the only human being with more hair outside than firing neurons inside, could not sit still. The idea of the PA having to pay a massive sum and pretend that it would be forced to go out of business (and Hamas would take over! Or worse, the Israelis would take over!) was too much for him. So, he came in on the side of proven terrorists and begged the court to allow the murderers to pay a token appeals fee; the court was

equally terrified of Palestinian insolvency (amazing how they bought a \$55 million private plane for their president at the same time), that it agreed. Our venue moved over a couple of streets to the Second Circuit where the appeals court said that the Palestinians were not "at home" in the US and thus could not be sued. I am always happy when terrorists are not in my home but in this case, it meant that our verdict was thrown out. That was a real bummer. Next stop – the US Supreme Court.

We applied for "cert" and the Court asked the new Trump administration what it thought about our case. We foolishly took it for granted that the America First administration would encourage the Court to hear our case as the right of Americans to seek justice as enshrined in the ATA was truly at stake. The scuttlebutt was that the initial statement prepared for the Court encouraged the latter to take the case. Then magically the document actually filed by Solicitor General Noel Francisco told the court to skip it, which it gladly did. Bummer #2.

Our lawyers were not deterred. They marshalled the true friends of American terror victims in the US Congress and succeeded in passing the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act (ATCA) that made any group receiving US aid and/or having an office in the US "at home" for the purpose of terror litigation. This law passed unanimously in both houses and after proper vetting was signed by President Trump in late October of 2018. Then all hell broke loose.

The Palestinian leadership (a true oxymoron) threatened that if it did not receive \$61 million in "security cooperation" money from the US government, it would stop cooperating with Israel, and you know what that means? The world will end. The dupes over at the State Department and the press bought it hook, line and sinker. Articles screamed that if the Palestinians received the money, ATCA will force them to pay "hundreds of millions of dollars" to those awful terror victims. The new law would ruin Mideast peace. But it was all "fake news." The law would require the Palestinians to accept jurisdiction, something that they have been avoiding for 20 years. They have always claimed their innocence and they have one of the most prestigious law firms in Washington representing them. What could go wrong? Are they afraid that they might be found guilty again? So, like a spoiled child reared on expensive gifts, the Palestinians dashed off a letter refusing to take any more American largesse and then sent copies to all of the relevant media outlets to show how angry they were. How dare the Americans demand responsibility in exchange for hundreds of millions in annual aid!

We now have Mike Pompeo mimicking John Kerry and begging Congress to destroy the ATCA, which only three months ago was passed and signed by his boss. You have Bibi and his US ambassador pushing Congress to cripple the law as well. A three-star American general was dispatched by David Friedman – who is the first ambassador since the bombing who has refused to meet us – to convince the Congress that if that Palestinians are forced to follow US law and possibly pay the American citizens whose loved-ones they maimed and murdered, World War III will be at the front door. And for what? To shill for the PLO? To provide money to the same "security" folks who tried to kill me and my son? That's what American generals do in their spare time? Instead of telling the Palestinians to settle with fellow Americans, Pompeo and his thugs at State are cajoling senators to give money to people who gleefully murdered Americans. In the indictment against the Palestinian intelligence officer who sent the aforementioned Palestinian policeman to blow himself up on the busiest street in Jerusalem, the latter was exhorted to "kill Jews, even just one" after he was taught how to detonate the bomb provided by the office of the Palestinian intelligence agency.

So the good guys are the ones paying terrorists in Israeli jails, and the bad guys are American terror victims who would like to finally put this chapter of their lives behind them. It is our hope that Congress will stand up to the State and Israeli bullies and tell them that the ATCA stays in place and the time has come for the Palestinians to learn the first lesson of earning the right to a state: taking responsibility for their actions. The time has come for them to pay up. Bibi and Pompeo could not care less if we never received a penny because it was not their child face down on the sidewalk. Maybe when they pick their loved one off the street, they'll remember how they tried to shaft those who came before them. Maybe all of those free cigars Bibi received from his billionaire pals have gone to his head. Pompeo also seems to have lost his mind. Shame on "leaders" who can't tell the difference between terrorists and their victims.

*The writer was born in Chicago and lives with his family in Jerusalem. He is chief scientist of Lishtot Detection, Ltd.* (Jerusalem Post Feb 4)

---