Commentary…

Legitimize Settlement by Law

By Haim Shime

Fifty years after the liberation of Judea and Samaria, the time has come to legally legitimize our return to those parts of our historic homeland. The 1967 Six-Day War was forced upon us, and when it ended we were privileged to see the dream of the generations of Jews who had prayed, hoped for, and believed in the return to Zion come true. We didn’t take over someone else’s land; we returned to the land of our forefathers that had been conquered illegally, and from which we were sent out into a 2,000-year exile of slaughter and annihilation.

The Jewish people thank everyone who made or is making efforts to pass the outpost regulation bill. We aren’t Crusaders in our homeland. There are few historic moments at which the roots of the past, the challenges of the present, and hope for the future converge for all time. It doesn’t matter if at the end of the process the settlements are codified through the regulation bill or in any other way that is acceptable to the attorney general and the Supreme Court. The end result is what matters.

The settlement of the land must be carried out with integrity and justice. Land is never stolen. There is no legal, moral or ideological justification for building on privately owned land. We must never do to others what we would not have them do to us, and what was done to us by other people. There is enough state-owned land in Judea and Samaria that is ready to take in many more Jews who want to exercise their freedom in the land of Israel.

The settlers of Amona, beloved pioneers, are being forced to pay a heavy price. But thanks to their determination, a solution will be found for many others. They aren’t leaving the hilltop – they’re moving nearby, and we’ll see what happens. The land of Israel was procured through trouble, and the distress of the move is small compared to legitimization and regulation. I suggested that they refrain from violent demonstrations. Anyone who doesn’t settle in the hearts of the world will not settle the land.

“Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and they that return with righteousness” (Isaiah 1:27). There are judges. Without the authority of the court, people would turn on each other. A country in which court rulings are not implemented is like a ship being tossed about on open water, without a compass, rudder or anchor. Rulings may be criticized, but we have no authority not to enact them.

It is unfortunate that MK Tzipi Livni, one of the heads of the camp that is called the Zionist Union, a camp that years ago was at the forefront of regulation. I suggested that they refrain from violent demonstrations. Anyone who doesn’t settle in the hearts of the world will not settle the land.

“Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and they that return with righteousness” (Isaiah 1:27). There are judges. Without the authority of the court, people would turn on each other. A country in which court rulings are not implemented is like a ship being tossed about on open water, without a compass, rudder or anchor. Rulings may be criticized, but we have no authority not to enact them.

It is unfortunate that MK Tzipi Livni, one of the heads of the camp that is called the Zionist Union, a camp that years ago was at the forefront of building and defending the country, is working with the heads of the Joint Arab List, the Knesset representatives of the Palestinians, against regulation of the settlements. One can understand the concern of Joint Arab List chairman Ayman Odeh, who has trouble swallowing Israel under the 1948 borders, but not the concern of Livni and her colleagues, who cannot accept the post-1967 borders and are seeking a withdrawal.

The battle for Israel didn’t end with the outpost regulation bill. The nations of the world find it difficult to accept the Jews’ return to their homeland. So it’s important to build more, talk less, and remain patient until the new U.S. government is in place. (Israel Hayom Dec 6)

Good Riddance, John Kerry

By Ruthie Blum

Every time a member of the Obama administration makes a statement about domestic or foreign affairs, one is reminded why Donald Trump was elected president last month. Many of those who voted for him despite concerns about his unconventionally brash persona did so in the hope that he would not have the top jobs would compensate for his own lack of experience in Beltway politics.

So far, it appears, this was more than a smart gamble. But one of the highest positions, which has yet to be determined, is that of chief diplomat. The list of Trump’s possible candidates now includes former Gov. Mitt Romney, former CIA Director David Petraeus, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Bob Corker, former UN Ambassador John Bolton, former ambassador to China Jon Huntsman, Exxon Mobile CEO Rex Tillerson, Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin and retired Navy Admiral James Stavridis.

But let’s face it: Even Bozo the Clown would be better than Secretary of State John Kerry.

To be fair to Kerry, he was following the foreign policy spelled out by Obama four years earlier: that America was about to embark on a new path, reaching out to enemies who would suddenly transform into friends when faced with a more gentle and multicultural America – one that “leads from behind.”

Nevertheless, it was Kerry who did most of the shuttling, predominantly to the Middle East, alternating between his many trips to Europe to grovel before his Iranian counterpart, and visits to Israel, where he expressed severe displeasure with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for not behaving similarly with the Palestinian Authority.

In what was hopefully one of his last public appearances in this role this week – at the 13th Annual Saban Forum in Washington, DC, where he delivered the keynote address – Kerry highlighted the disaster that constituted his tenure, without an iota of remorse – other than in his failure to force Israel to create a Palestinian state.

On the third and last day of the conference – hosted by the Brookings Institution and titled “Challenges for the Trump Administration in the Middle East” – Kerry reiterated his position in an on-stage interview with The Atlantic’s Jeffrey Goldberg.

“I come to you as somebody who is concerned for the safety and the security of the state of Israel — for the long-term ability of the state of Israel to survive as a Jewish and democratic state and state of the Jewish people,” he said.

Kerry could have pointed out that attempting to get “from here to there” has been his guiding principle – one that he has been putting into practice with every Arab and African country that is open to it. This year alone, he has forged friendly relations and cooperation with Cairo. He has even made enormous strides with the Saudis, who consider Israel an ally in preventing Iran from acquiring the nuclear weapons that Kerry and his boss handed the mullahs on a silver platter.

Kerry’s report card: Nevertheless, Kerry asserted with almost palpable disgust, “There will be no separate peace between Israel and the Arab world… I’ve heard several prominent politicians in Israel sometimes saying, ‘Well, the Arab world’s in a different place now. We just have to reach out to them, and… then we’ll deal with the Palestinians. No. No, no and no. There will be no advance and separate peace with the Arab world without the Palestinian process and without the Palestinian peace.”

He continued by lambasting settlements, while claiming he understands that they are not the root cause of the conflict, saying he “cannot accept the notion that they do not affect the peace process — that they aren’t a barrier to the capacity to have peace.”

And here was the clincher. He said he knows this, because “the Left in Israel is telling everybody they are a barrier to peace and the Right that supports it, openly supports it, because they don’t want peace.”

And there you have it. Kerry’s utter gull. His accusation that most Israelis oppose peace. Not that we long to live without fear of being stabbed, car-rammed, torched, blown up by bombs and hit by rocket-fire by hate-filled terrorists bent on our annihilation. Not that we have relinquished most of the West Bank and all of Gaza to those killers. Not that every territorial withdrawal has been accompanied by an escalation in violence against us.

Netanyahu also addressed the Saban Forum, via video feed. His remarks were decidedly different from Kerry’s. He stressed the danger of the Iran nuclear deal; reminded everyone that the Palestinian Liberation
Organization was created in 1964, three years before the Six-Day War, which led to Israel's taking control of the territories it is accused of "illegally occupying." He also pointed out that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not about settlements or Palestinian statehood, but rather part of the "battle between modernity and medievalism."

If Netanyahu is waiting with bated breath for Trump's inauguration in January, it is with good reason. If only never to have to hear from the inscrutable Kerry, who quipped that his wife complained over the years about his spending more time conversing with the Israeli prime minister than with her. (Algemeiner Dec 6)

Minimize Middle East Mistakes
By Daniel Pipes
All 177 foreign embassies located in Washington, D.C. are no doubt attempting to read the tea leaves and figure out what President-elect Donald Trump will do for foreign policy. But his inconsistencies and contradictions render this nearly impossible.

Therefore, rather than speculate, I'll focus on what U.S. policy in one region, the Middle East, should be, starting with some general guidelines and then turning to specifics.

Given that this is perennially the most volatile area of the world, the goal is modest: to minimize problems and avoid disasters. The prior two presidents failed to achieve even this, and did so in opposite ways. George W. Bush tried to do too much in the Middle East: recall his goal of nations building in Afghanistan, bringing freedom and prosperity to Iraq, establishing democracy in Egypt, and resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict – every one of which spectacularly flamed out. Reacting against Bush's "imperial overstretch," Barack Obama did the reverse, withdrawing prematurely from conflicts, drawing red lines he later abandoned, declaring a fantasy "pivot to Asia," and granting nearly free reign to Kremlin ambitions.

America's future policy should find a median between these twin excesses: protect Americans, advance American interests, and stand by American allies. Don't aspire to fix the region but also don't retreat into isolationism. Make promises carefully and fulfill them reliably. Think before you leap.

Applied to the Middle East, how does this common-sense approach translate regarding major problems such as those involving Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Syria, Egypt, and the Arab-Israeli conflict?

Iran is overwhelmingly the greatest concern. The new administration should immediately and completely abrogate the weird non-treaty known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, a.k.a. the Iran deal. The president can unilaterally take this step and it should be followed by an ultimatum: unless the Iranians shut down their entire nuclear weapons project by a date certain, the U.S. government will accomplish this task on their behalf. Only in this way can the Islamic Republic of Iran certainly be prevented from acquiring nuclear weapons, something imperative not just for Israel and other Middle East countries, but also for Americans, as Tehran must be assumed to be building an electromagnetic pulse capability that could destroy the U.S. power grid and lead to the deaths of 90 percent of the population.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has long been a hostile ally of the United States, serving both as a crucial supplier of energy even as it sponsored an obscene form of Islam. Lately, Riyadh has taken on a new role, as the regional leading power standing up to Iran, making the monarchy's security more important than ever to Washington. Fortunately, the younger generation of Saudi leadership appears willing to moderate the traditional Islamist aggressiveness were the U.S. government to push hard enough.

While the Obama administration's once-active romance with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has slumped to its demise, Washington nonetheless pretends that Ankara remains a stalwart ally, publicly ignoring that the government has turned into a hostile dictatorship with growing ties to Russia and China. The make-nice school of diplomacy having clearly failed to arrest Erdogan's ambitions, the time has come to make clear to the Turks how much they will lose in terms of trade, military assistance, and diplomatic support unless they quickly change course.

Obama's indecision in Syria results from the hostility and repulsiveness of three out of the country's four main actors: the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS); the Turkish-, Qatari-, and Saudi-backed Sunni Arab rebels, mostly Islamist; and the Assad regime, backed by the Iranian and Russian governments. Only the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), consisting of the mostly-Kurdish People's Protection units (YPG), are decent and friendly. In a near Hobbesian state of all fighting all (except that ISIS and Assad seem clear of each other), the Obama administration cannot find a policy and stick with it. Commandably, it helps the SDF, but the over-emphasis on destroying ISIS leads it to misbegotten alliances with Ankara, Tehran, and Moscow. Instead, Washington should assist its only ally while encouraging the other three actors to battle themselves into oblivion.

Insisting on the principle of favoring democratic leaders, even if dubiously elected and hostile, the Obama administration has, by withholding armaments and aid, sought to punish Egypt's Abdel Fattah el-Sisi for coming to power through a coup d'etat. This gratuitous estrangement needs quickly to be changed so that Americans can help a barely-competent Egyptian leader stave off famine and defeat the Islamists, thus helping him to stay in power and keeping the Muslim Brotherhood at bay.

The Arab-Israeli conflict, once the Middle East's most dangerous flash-point, has receded (at least temporarily) into the background. While low-level violence continues unabated, it has less potential to escalate in an era of Middle Eastern cold and hot war. The new administration must immediately signal that it considers Israel's closest and most important Middle East ally; it should also abort the endless pressure on Jerusalem to make concessions to the Palestinian Authority. Better yet, it should discard the nearly-25-year-old pretense that Palestinians and Israel's "partner for peace" and instead encourage Israelis to impress on the Palestinians the need for them unequivocally and permanently to recognize Israel as the Jewish state.

A simple policy of protecting Americans and their allies offers great opportunities to fix a legacy of ruinous bipartisan mistakes.

(boston globe Dec 8)

Disturbing Signs in the North
By Yoav Limor
The strike on an airfield near Damascus early Wednesday, ascribed to Israel, raises a number of questions, the answers to which could have significant ramifications on the northern area for the near future.

The first question has to do with the type of attack and type of arms used in it. The Syrian regime is claiming that it surface-to-surface missiles were launched, rather than the airstrikes employed in similar cases in the past. If this is true, it could indicate an Israeli attempt to reduce the scope of contact with Syria's air defenses, and the Russian umbrella defenses above it, which we can guess were put on higher alert after the widely reported attack on arms convoys and weapons stocks that was attributed to Israel last week.

Anyone familiar with the matter knows that in terms of weapons, this is no surprise: one only needs to track the platforms that Israel's military industries offer for sale throughout the world for proof that Israel has a variety of capabilities in this area.

The second question has to do with remarks by Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who in a meeting with EU ambassadors claimed that Israel was acting to prevent Syria from sending Hezbollah "weapons of mass destruction." As expected, his remarks were widely quoted everywhere, but it is likely that Lieberman meant to send a warning: In the past, Hezbollah has refrained from using unconventional weapons out of fear that doing so would prompt Israel to launch a war against it.

As has been reported, Hezbollah, in its unceasing race to arm itself, has focused on increasing the range and precision of its rockets, as well as on equipping itself with advanced anti-aircraft and surface-to-surface missile systems. Thus far, it has let its patrons in Syrian and Iran handle the weapons of mass destruction, with an emphasis on chemical weapons. If, heaven forbid, this scenario changes, we would be talking about nothing less than an earthquake that would obligate Israel to make some serious decisions.

The third question is what it means that both Syrian and Hezbollah admite d immediately that an attack had been carried out, and explicitly accused Israel. In the past, the Damascus regime has mostly preferred to deny that strikes had taken place or to hurl them up, knowing that if something hasn't been reported, it hasn't happened, and what doesn't happen doesn't necessitate a response.

The official report on Wednesday, the second in the space of a week, proves that Syria and Lebanon are no longer willing to remain silent about such strikes. For now, they are satisfied with making declarations, but at some point words might give way to action.

The starving of Syria and Hezbollah, as seen in the weapons smuggling operations that go on despite the strikes, is linked to their recent military successes in Aleppo, where the blows to the Islamic State are bolstering the stability of President Bashar Assad's government and therefore his self-confidence. For now, it looks like Assad and Hezbollah are focused mainly on the civil war in Syria and have no interest in a conflict with Israel, but Israel must follow these processes closely to prevent any miscalculation in which a tactical strike could devolve into an undesirable strategic mess. (Israel hayom Dec 6)
Hundreds of Thousands of Reasons to Appreciate Christian Support for Fire Victims
By Tuly Weisz

One of the terrible tragedies of the Carmel forest fire in 2010 was that the Interior Ministry rejected a number of essential fire trucks prior to the crisis, since they were donated by Evangelical Christians. As a result of the country’s lack of preparedness, 44 people died and over 5,000 hectares of precious land was burned in the worst natural disaster in Israel’s history. Instead of thanking our Christian friends, our utter lack of hakarat hatov or gratitude, perhaps contributed to the unnecessary loss of life.

Undeterred, Christian Zionists once again leapfrogged with an outpouring of love and support in response to the recent wave of forest fires and arson attacks that ravaged Israel last week.

When the scope of the tragedy became clear last Sunday, I immediately sent a request for help to the primarily Evangelical Christian readers of Israel365, the bible-themed email newsletter that I have sent out each day for the past five years. Within days, more than 500 readers contributed over $50,000 to help Israeli families.

The donations arrived from countries with strong Evangelical communities like the United States, Canada and China, and many surprises as well, such as donations from Turkey, India and Pakistan.

What’s more touching than donations (averaging $97 per donation), were the numerous notes I received from Christians too poor to contribute financially, but who assured me they were praying up a storm for rain to fall in the Holy Land.

Early in the week, I spoke with Becky Brimmer, CEO of Bridges for Peace, a Jerusalem-based Christian organization, about the community of Neveh Tzuf. At the time they were looking for 25 washing machines for the displaced families in their temporary homes, and without hesitating, Brimmer readily agreed to provide the needed assistance.

Her only concern was that the Jewish families of Neveh Tzuf may not feel comfortable accepting her Christian gift and so she made sure to tell them: “We do not have an agenda. We do not proselytize.

We have great respect for the Jewish community and in fact feel that everything that is precious to us in our faith comes from Judaism.”

The best-known leader of Christian Zionists fund-raising efforts is Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein.

It was his International Fellowship of Christians and Jews that offered $50,000 to help Israeli families.

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The fire trucks in 2010, which MK Eli Yishai (Shas) rejected since he refused to take a photograph with Eckstein. Nonetheless, in response to the recent fires, the IFJ told me, “Rabbi Eckstein has approved funding of more than one-quarter million dollars to help repair the damage caused by huge wildfires that swept through northern Israel late last week.”

Many other pro-Israel Christian ministries such as the Center for Jewish Christian Understanding and Cooperation, Christian Friends of Israeli Communities and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, have also been inundated with prayers and donations to help the hundreds of Israeli families who lost their homes and personal possessions in the devastating fires.

Despite this outpouring of love and support for Israel, many Jews remain suspicious of what “really” motivates pro-Israel Christians. After all, for centuries, the Christian authorities taught replacement theology, which tragically led to forced conversions and brutal antisemitism.

Many Jews are still living in the past and believe that the only reason Christians support Israel is because it will enable them to convert or kill us.

Ironically, deeply ingrained misgivings toward Christians comes from two opposite camps within the Jewish community. Skepticism is most pressing among left-wing liberal Jews who are fundamentally at odds with fundamentalist Christians on nearly every political and social issue and therefore have no interest in repairing the ancient rift. On the other hand, ultra-Orthodox Jews, who are naturally slowest to adapt to change, are also suspicious of what they feel are the sinister motives behind Christian Zionists. This cynicism is what was behind Yishai’s fateful decision to reject the IFJ’s fire trucks back in 2010.

Thankfully, over the past several years Israel has learned valuable lessons from the Carmel Forest fire. The country upgraded its fire-fighting capabilities so that even though hundreds of separate fires were raging throughout the country at the same time, not one Israeli lost their life.

Hopefully, we can also learn another lesson, that it is time for all of us to say thank you to our Christian friends. We have hundreds of thousands of reasons to appreciate what Christian Zionists have done for Israel in this past week alone. (Jerusalem Post Dec 7)


Will the Obama Administration Attempt an Eleventh-Hour Peace push?
By Vivian Bercovich

Based on my anecdotal experience on the ground during the last ten days, the North America’s East Coast chattering class is abuzz with fear, mania and befuddlement.

It is deeply disturbing to North Americans, so accustomed to ease and dominance, to be at the epicenter of what may be a tectonic shift globally.

Is it Thumb? An alchemist of global chaos, ultra-nationalism and hate-saturated politics? Or, is his victory and approach a much-needed antidote to the choke hold of political correctness on expression and policy? Pollsters, experts and the media have scent credibility these days.

Everyone is confused as to where to turn for reliable information, analysis, reassurance. Some portend an alt-right (nobody knew what that was until two weeks ago) surge in North America and Europe. Most are anxious about the imminent Trump era.

And then there is the concern that President Barack Obama may act intemperately in his lame duck days to impose some form of negotiation outcome on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, lashing out desperately to force the olive branch and ensure his legacy and Nobel Peace Prize are unimpeachable.

In Israel and elsewhere, speculation has been rife for months about this possibility.

The tea-leaf reading spiked on Sunday, following US Secretary of State John Kerry’s feisty outburst at the Saban Forum in Washington. He excoriated the Netanyahu-led coalition for cynically manipulating the peace process to build more settlements and imperil the possible outcome of the two-state dream.

He breezily dismissed Israeli concerns regarding the ongoing Palestinian refusal to recognize Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish homeland; the incitement and hate taught in Palestinian schools; the glorification of terrorists by Palestinian media, and leaders, and society; and the deep fear that a territorial compromise, which, at this time would turn the West Bank into another Gaza.

After reciting his laundry list of Israeli concerns, Kerry dismissed them: “I’ve heard all of that.”

Whatever. As if they are random, baseless, speculative fears.

And then, he lapsed into the lazy, disingenuous equivalence that gives solace to so many; on the one hand, on the other hand.

The Palestinians, he said, believe that the Netanyahu government will never accede to a two-state compromise and will push on with its settlement land grab and occupation, leaving them hopeless.

“That,” Kerry solemnizes, “is what they believe.” He uncritically accepts their “beliefs.” Holus-bolus.

Many Palestinians also believe the blatant lies propagated by PA President Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah party about Jewish designs to invade the Temple Mount and disrespect the prophet Muhammad. Many Palestinians were motivated by that illusionary propaganda last year to stab scores of Israeli civilians standing at bus stops and otherwise going about their business.

I hope and believe that Kerry’s tirade is an isolated moment and reflects nothing more than his personal funk.

President Obama has his hands full trying to preserve a shred of his major policy accomplishments: the Iran deal and Obamacare. His legacy is in peril. Should he invite an eleven-hour foreign policy crisis, in the form of an imposed peace outcome, it would almost certainly fail, further tarnishing his presidency.

It is astonishing that Secretary Kerry, on Sunday, conceded that the failure of the Obama administration to act on its “red-line” threat three years ago – that the US would react with military force to Syria’s use of chemical weapons – just, well, never happened. It withered. And Kerry acknowledged that this outcome damaged US credibility in the Middle East.

And then he went on about the fact that they didn’t decide not to act, they just felt, for political reasons, that they had to wait for approval from Congress. REALLY? By all accounts, Secretary Kerry is a well-meaning, legendarily hard-working public servant. He was just unable to see things as they are and not how he wished them to be.

His paradigm was utterly unsuited to the Middle East. His approach to negotiations was misguided in the extreme, starting with his declaration at the outset of the failed peace talks in 2014-15, that he would achieve a conclusive agreement within ten months.

Negotiation 101 – you never predict outcomes, certainly not publicly. Accordingly, in the negotiation process, Secretary Kerry criticized Israel for every problem and exonerated Abbas, even in the face of overwhelming evidence that the latter had no intention of rolling up his sleeves and sitting at the table. Quietly, many observers are incredulous about this approach: They blame Israel for all and coddle the Palestinians, creating a clear disincentive for them to, well, actually negotiate.
American Jewish Liberals have Lost the Plot  By Isi Leibler

Throughout the 2000 years of Jews living in the Diaspora, there has been no precedent comparable to the behavior of major liberal mainstream sectors of the American Jewish community. They are undermining themselves and provoking massive waves of resentment from Americans, many of whom were favorably disposed towards them.

The United States has been the home of the largest Jewish community in the Diaspora for nearly a century and was regarded by many Jews as the “goldene medina.” Traditional anti-Semitism is at an all-time low with the exception of the current anti-Israel agitation initiated on college campuses by Muslims and far-left radicals. Many Jews have become affluent, powerful and are highly respected by most Americans.

Until recently, all mainstream Jewish organizations sought to maintain Democrat and Republican bipartisanship with regard to Israel and major issues of Jewish concern. This, despite the fact that for complex historical reasons, the vast majority of American Jews were inclined toward liberalism and voted Democrat.

Even after eight years of President Barack Obama’s efforts to create daylight between Israel and the United States in order to appease Iran and the Arab countries and despite the extraordinary support for Israel expressed by all sections of the Republican Party, Jews still tended to vote Democrat. This contrasted sharply with Anglo-Jewry, whose members defected in droves from the British Labour Party when it became anti-Israel/anti-Semitic under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn.

Regrettably, a number of mainstream U.S. liberal Jewish organizations broke with all tradition and displayed unprecedented and extreme partisanship in the recent US election and its aftermath. This may have disastrous long-term repercussions on the standing and influence of the American Jewish community.

The Anti-Defamation League, a previously respected body whose principal mandate is to combat anti-Semitism, began crossing red lines as soon as its new CEO, Jonathan Greenblatt, a former Obama aide, assumed leadership after the retirement of Abe Foxman. Even before the elections, Greenblatt assumed a J Street profile and introduced left-wing policy initiatives, including pontificating about and criticizing Israeli policies, which were totally beyond his jurisdiction.

At the same time, he opposed legislation to prohibit anti-Israel boycotts, suggesting that many of its supporters were misled idealists seeking to promote the peace process. He also minimized concern for the rabid anti-Semitic platform of the Black Lives Matter movement, excusing it on the grounds that it was engineered by a small minority.

More significantly, he downplayed the escalating anti-Israelism and anti-Semitism on the college campuses initiated by Muslim and far-left groups – highly ironic for the head of the organization whose raison d’être is to combat anti-Semitism. But it was in the course of America’s most bitter and brutal electoral race that a number of liberal Jewish groups, headed by the ADL, initiated a partisan campaign against Republican candidate Donald Trump and his supporters.

Like most Americans, many Jews were distressed and polarized by the shameful and vulgar behavior of candidates. As individuals, American Jews have every right to express their political feelings. But officially, as Jewish mainstream organizations - as distinct from politically left Jewish groups - they had no right to speak on behalf of the Jewish community on issues unrelated to Jewish rights and interests.

It is also understandable that many Jewish long-time supporters of the Democratic party were bitterly disappointed with the unexpected outcome of the elections. But to hysterically proclaim the demise of democracy and the rise of fascism, or to compare the Trump ascendency to the 9/11 attacks and imply that Trump supporters - half of the electorate - are extremists, is sheer lunacy. The number of Jews who have reached such levels after the elections that a number of Conservative and Reform synagogues conducted formal mourning ceremonies is this truly collective madness.

Yet ADL officials, together with Reform and Conservative leaders, also publicly exploited anti-Semitism as a vehicle to slander the Trump campaign, hurling accusations of anti-Semitism and fascism. In so doing, these groups may have caused irreparable harm to the Jewish community from among Trump’s supporters, who comprise half of the American people, many of whom had previously been positively inclined toward Jews.

The false allegations and innuendoes of anti-Semitism were accompanied by counter-productive hysteria, warning of the threat emanating from marginal right-wing anti-Semitic groups, implying that these few hundred extremists were a critical component of Trump’s support and thus the entire party was compromised.

The Obama administration had eight years to spin its magic. The people have spoken. (Jerusalem Post Dec 7)

The writer is the former Canadian ambassador to Israel, and is a lawyer and writer. She lives in Tel Aviv.

The campaign against the extremist fringes and the national media exposure to these relatively unknown marginal neo-Nazis and degenerates, such as David Duke and Richard Spencer and the email hate peddlers, achieved the undesirable result of catapulting them into the national spotlight, which they could never have dreamed of occupying.

Stoking the fires of hatred after the elections, Greenblatt proclaimed at an ADL conference that anti-Semitism in the United States had never been as bad since the 1930s. He was not relating to the real threat of burgeoning campus anti-Semitism at the but referring to the few hundred Ku Klux Klan lunatics, white supremacists and neo-Nazis allegedly empowered by Trump. Whatever his failings may be, Trump is certainly no anti-Semite. He has a daughter who converted to Judaism and is religiously observant and he is surrounded by Jews. Greenblatt has now morphed into open anti-Semitism with increasing manifestations of violence. Freedom of expression is being denied to pro-Israeli speakers who are frequently howled down by these “progressives.”

Now that graduates from these institutions will become the leaders of the future, it is truly worrisome that they are being nurtured in such a hostile environment and that it requires courage to support Israel on many campuses.

Displaying double standards, incredibly the ADL provided an imprimatur to Congressman Keith Ellison to become the new head of the Democratic National Committee. Ellison is a Muslim who previously had ties with Nation of Islam head Louis Farrakhan and has a long record of anti-Semitic hostility. Yet Greenblatt went so far as to describe Ellison as “a man of good character... an important ally in the fight against anti-Semitism.” Instead of combating anti-Semitism, the ADL was whitewashing an opponent of Israel with an anti-Semitic background in order to promote its leftist agenda. However, the public outcry was so overwhelming that a week later Greenblatt was forced to state that after “disturbing” remarks expressed by Ellison, the ADL now had “serious doubts about his ability to faithfully represent the party’s traditional support for Israel”.

Alas, the extent to which the Democratic Party has veered from its traditional pro-Israel stance was exemplified by the fact that the Charles Schumer, the incoming Jewish Senate Minority Leader, shamefully reiterated that “I stand by Rep. Ellison for the DNC chair...” while I disavowed whatever support I had for him.

Fortunately, the new administration is unlikely to be anti-Semitic. Aside from other factors, Trump is surrounded by Orthodox Jewish officials who are also passionately pro-Israel. But nevertheless, these partisan mainstream Jewish interventions and refusal to accept the outcome of a democratic election create major tensions and have the potential to severely undermine the standing of the Jewish community.

The only major organization explicitly condemning this behavior is the Zionist Organization of America headed by Mort Klein.

To their credit, following the elections, Malcolm Hoenlein on behalf of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations and David Harris of the American Jewish Committee called on Americans to reunite as a nation, encouraged Trump to calm the passions, and asked that the incoming administration be judged on its actions.

This enlightened approach is highly commendable. But it is unlikely to suppress the hysteria among those sections of the community that define their Judaism as comprising liberalism and universalism while placing the welfare of Israel low among their priorities. Moreover the links between Orthodox Jews and the rest of the community, the assimilatory tendencies will further increase, which will lead to the ongoing contraction and quality of the Jewish community.

Far left-Liberals are as free as anyone else to engage in political campaigns, but those headed mainstream Jewish organizations must be compelled to cease exploiting their positions and using anti-Semitism as a vehicle to promote their partisan agenda.

They should also ask themselves one question. Who represents a greater threat to democracy and American Jews? A handful of marginal neo-Nazis and White Supremacists who nobody had ever heard of or a Muslim with a long record of anti-Semitism and hostility to Israel who heads the Democratic National Council? We don’t have to be so smart to know which is the more successful, powerful and respected Diaspora in Jewish history. If organizations like the ADL refuse to hearken to the wise counsel expressed by leaders like Malcolm Hoenlein, Mort Klein or David Harris but maintain their current politically partisan policies, American Jews will be marginalized and be perceived as the extension of a Democratic Party that is drifting increasingly further away from its traditional pro-Israel policy. (Jerusalem Post Dec 8)