

**Why Israel Needs a Better Political Class**

By Evelyn Gordon

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**Its twin coronavirus and budget crises are problems caused by—and only fixable by—political leaders, not bureaucratic maneuvering.**

Israel's current political crisis exemplifies the maxim that hard cases make bad law. This case is desperate. Six months after the coronavirus erupted and nine months after the fiscal year began, Israel still lacks both a functioning contact-tracing system and an approved 2020 budget, mainly because Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is more worried about politics than the domestic problems that Israel now confronts. The government's failure to perform these basic tasks obviously invites the conclusion that civil servants' far-reaching powers must not only be preserved, but perhaps even increased.

This would be the wrong conclusion. Bureaucrats, especially when they have great power, are vulnerable to the same ills as elected politicians. But unlike politicians, they are completely unaccountable to the public.

That doesn't mean Haviv Rettig Gur is wrong to deem them indispensable. They provide institutional memory, flesh out elected officials' policies, and supply information the politicians may not know and options they may not have considered. Yet the current crisis shows in several ways why they neither can nor should substitute for elected politicians.

First, bureaucrats are no less prone to poor judgment than politicians. As evidence, consider Siegal Sadetzki, part of the Netanyahu-led triumvirate that ran Israel's initial response to the coronavirus. It's unsurprising that Gur never mentioned Sadetzki even as he lauded the triumvirate's third member, former Health Ministry Director General Moshe Bar Siman-Tov; she and her fellow Health Ministry staffers are a major reason why Israel still lacks a functional test-and-trace system.

Sadetzki, an epidemiologist, was the ministry's director of public-health services and the only member of the triumvirate with professional expertise in epidemics (Bar Siman-Tov is an economist). As such, her input was crucial. Yet she adamantly opposed expanding virus testing, even publicly asserting that "Too much testing will increase complacency." She opposed letting organizations outside the public-health system do lab work for coronavirus tests, even though the system was overwhelmed. She opposed sewage monitoring to track the spread of the virus. And on, and on.

Moreover, even after acknowledging that test-and-trace was necessary, ministry bureaucrats insisted for months that their ministry do the tracing despite its glaringly inadequate manpower. Only in August was the

job finally given to the army, which does have the requisite personnel. And the system still isn't fully operational.

None of this absolves Netanyahu, who could have overruled Sadetzki but didn't because he also opposed involving the army, out of reluctance to share power with his defense minister. It merely shows that letting the "professionals" take charge wouldn't guarantee a better outcome.

Nor is that the only problem. Civil servants are also just as vulnerable as politicians to letting extraneous considerations influence their decisions. Both often abhor sharing power. Health Ministry bureaucrats opposed outsourcing contact tracing to the army for the same reason Netanyahu did: they didn't want to cede control. Both can also have conflicts of interest.

Shaul Meridor, the treasury budget director whose resignation opens Gur's article, is a perfect example, as a Ha'aretz report in September shows. Back in 2012, as a less senior treasury official, he was actively involved in the Tzemach Committee, which drafted Israel's natural-gas policy. He pushed for letting more gas be exported rather than reserving it for domestic consumption, a position the gas companies favored. The lawyer representing the companies at that time was none other than his brother, Mattan Meridor. Later, in 2015, Shaul was appointed director general of the Energy Ministry and put in charge of implementing the new policy. Mattan therefore stopped representing the companies in negotiations with the ministry, but his firm continued to do so.

Former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was convicted of breach of trust in 2012 for not dissimilar behavior: in his previous role as industry minister, he made decisions benefiting corporate clients of a lawyer friend rather than recusing himself due to a conflict of interests. But there's one significant difference: ministry bureaucrats had opposed some of Olmert's decisions, which was considered evidence that he was motivated by favoritism rather than policy considerations. Meridor can never be accused of disregarding the bureaucrats' judgments, because he is the bureaucrat making the judgments.

To be clear, I don't think Meridor did anything criminal. (I wouldn't have convicted Olmert in that case, either; I think politicians are allowed to disagree with bureaucrats.) Nor do I blame him for the sweetheart deal the companies received, which left Israelis paying well above market rates for natural-gas even as promised billions in royalties never materialized; Netanyahu badly wanted to get the gas flowing and pushed for major concessions to the companies to do so.

But it's hard to deny that Meridor had an egregious conflict of interests, of the type that would have outraged the legal establishment and the media had he been a politician. (The Justice Ministry did eventually step in, but very belatedly.) Being an apolitical civil servant doesn't immunize anyone against extraneous considerations.

A third problem is that bureaucrats are often poorly attuned to political sensitivities. Granted, that's sometimes an advantage: Netanyahu has repeatedly gutted measures to curb the spread of the virus because he's overly attentive to his *haredi* allies. But sometimes, it's a huge disadvantage—as demonstrated by that very same issue.

One reason the *Haredim* have repeatedly resisted such measures is because they feel singled out for censure from other Israelis who also haven't been paragons of good anti-viral behavior. Objectively, they haven't been singled out. Health officials have targeted yeshivas and synagogues rather than, say, the mass anti-Netanyahu demonstrations that have been taking place in Israel for months because infection is more likely to spread indoors than outdoors. And officials have sought tighter restrictions on *haredi* communities because *Haredim* account for a disproportionately high share of COVID-19 infections.

Nevertheless, *haredi* grievance didn't emerge from nowhere. Even during Israel's first lockdown, long before evidence emerged that demonstrations pose a limited infection risk, Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit and other senior legal officials insisted that protests be exempt from lockdown rules—not on health grounds, but because protesting is a fundamental democratic right. That remains their position to this day.

But legally speaking, it's not clear why freedom to demonstrate trumps free exercise of religion or freedom to earn a living—all are fundamental rights. Indeed, the last could arguably claim precedence in Israel's legal system, since it's the only one explicitly protected by a quasi-constitutional Basic Law (the Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation). Thus by according the right to protest special privileges, legal officials were making a value judgment—one that happened to favor the needs of secular leftists, who comprise the bulk of the anti-Netanyahu protesters, over the needs of *Haredim*, for whom yeshiva study and synagogue worship are far more important than demonstrations. That rankled deeply, and it bolstered *haredi* opposition to the latest restrictions.

The bureaucracy obviously isn't solely to blame for anyone's noncompliance. *Haredim* are far from the only people flouting the rules. And their legitimate grievance doesn't excuse the prime minister's capitulation to their demands. Nevertheless, this is a classic example of how bureaucrats' political tone-deafness can undermine their ability to implement the apolitical policies at which they ostensibly excel.

The final problem is that unless Israel abandons democracy entirely by stripping elected officials of any real power, civil servants' ability to compensate for politicians'

follies will always be inherently limited. Indeed, Gur's article underscores that point: the fight between the "treasury youth" and the politicians over Israel's coronavirus spending ended in the bureaucrats' complete defeat. They resigned from the treasury, while the politicians are still riding roughshod over budgetary norms.

For all these reasons, governance salvation cannot come from bureaucrats; it can only come from inculcating greater responsibility in our politicians. And in this regard, the bureaucrats' already immense power is clearly counterproductive.

As Gur correctly noted, the fact that unelected bureaucrats now decide the "fundamental questions that . . . are considered the heart and soul of politics" has produced a "trivialized" politics and irresponsible politicians. Once, people entered politics to shape the country's future. But for today's Knesset members, convinced that they have little chance of actually affecting policy, garnering media attention through ever more outrageous statements and bills is one of the few things they can do to feel like they matter. Thus if Israel wants a responsible political class, it must reduce the bureaucrats' power and thereby enable politicians to make their names through policy rather than sensationalism.

It also needs to create personal accountability for MKs. Israel is virtually unique among Western democracies in that its MKs aren't directly elected and therefore never answer to the voters for their conduct. Since Israelis vote only for parties, MKs' political futures depend solely on their placement on their party's slate. In parties without primaries, that placement is determined by the party leader. In parties with primaries, it's determined largely by so-called vote contractors—representatives of special-interest groups who can mobilize large numbers of party members behind their preferred candidates.

Solving this problem doesn't require replacing Israel's current proportional representation system with an Anglo-American constituency system. There are various methods of directly electing MKs while maintaining proportional representation, and most Western parliamentary democracies use them. It's long past time for Israel to do the same.

Finally, there's simply no avoiding the fact that Netanyahu's current behavior, following four terms of largely responsible leadership, is due entirely to his criminal indictment. As Gur noted, he's played politics at the expense of both virus-fighting efforts and the economy because the only way he can secure immunity from prosecution is by holding new elections that he hopes will give him the parliamentary majority needed to amend the law and save him from standing trial.

Thus, even though an indicted prime minister is an unprecedented event for Israel that hopefully won't recur, legislation is needed to address the possibility. One option is to bar anyone under indictment from forming a government, but that would give the legal bureaucracy far too much power to determine who may or may not be

prime minister. The other option is the route taken by most Western democracies: immunity from prosecution while in office coupled with term limits to prevent that immunity from becoming permanent.

If Israel wants to remain a democracy, expanding civil

## Should Israel Worry about the Sale of Advanced Aircraft to the UAE?

By James Stavridis

bloomberg.com

### Two opinions.

The landmark peace deal between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain is great news in terms of constructing a regional coalition against Iran. It may also help convince the Palestinians that they are no longer at the center of Arab politics, and bring them to the negotiating table. It perhaps gives the administration of President Donald Trump a minor talking point that won't really matter to most Americans.

But the most complex and controversial aspect is that the deal may create the conditions for massive U.S. arms sales — including fifth-generation fighter aircraft — to Arab nations, beginning with the UAE. While Trump said he has “no problem” selling the advanced planes to an Arab nation, it raises legitimate concerns for Israel's security.

Let's start with the importance of the F-35 Lightning, also known as the Joint Strike Fighter. It is the dominant combat aircraft in the world today, bar none. (Disclosure: I have consulted in the past for Northrop Grumman, one of the subcontractors.) It has a highly stealthy profile, advanced human-machine interfaces and powerful command-and-control features that integrate it into broader combat networks.

Israel is one of the key international partners in the program; it received its first F-35s in 2016 and plans to purchase 50 or more.

The problem with providing the F-35 and associated combat systems to Arab states, at least with all their technological capabilities, is that it might erode Israel's “qualitative military edge,” or QME — an assurance from the U.S. that it will not sell its most advanced weapons to Israel's potential military opponents.

There is precedent going back to the Camp David accords in the 1970s of giving advanced military technology to Arab states — Israel's then-enemies Jordan and Egypt. Opponents of any new sale in Congress and Israel, however, correctly point to U.S. law on the matter, which guarantees that Washington will not allow the QME to be weakened.

The Emiratis, whose interests in Washington are skillfully represented by Ambassador Yusef Al Otaibi, say that a new deal would be exactly that — a new arrangement for a new era. They point out that unlike Egypt and Jordan, they have never attacked Israel.

What are the biggest considerations in deciding whether any sale should go forward?

First, the U.S. must look at how the technology that would be shared in an F-35 sale would be protected. When

servants' already excessive power is no solution. The only option is to start the long, hard work of building a more responsive and responsible political class.

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I was supreme allied commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, we were negotiating F-35 sales to the European allies, and the first conversation was always about security issues.

These included physical protection of hangars and airfields, and of any manufacturing conducted in a foreign country; the guidelines under which the maintenance process would be conducted; what cybersecurity barriers would be in place; and the reliability of the security-clearance process for all those in possession of the technology (from commanders to pilots to wrench-turning jet mechanics).

A second factor in the U.S. decision is the regional geopolitics. The UAE has been a reliable contributor to U.S. and allied operations. Its forces played roles in the Balkans, Somalia, Afghanistan, Libya and against the Islamic State. As NATO commander, I was deeply impressed by the Emiratis' military professionalism, especially during the Libyan campaign. My counterpart at U.S. Central Command (and future defense secretary), General Jim Mattis, called the UAE “little Sparta.”

While Washington has broadly opposed the UAE's participation in the Saudi-led military campaign against rebels in Yemen, the overall alignment between the nations is high.

Providing the Emiratis with advanced weaponry would not only strengthen the alliance against Iran, it would help avoid arms-sales competition from Russia and China. A cautionary example is the purchase by Turkey, a NATO partner, of the S-400 anti-aircraft missile system from Russia, which will probably cost the Turks their participation in the F-35 program.

A third element is the so-called “under the table” relationship existing between UAE and Israel for more than a decade. As head of U.S. European Command, which includes the military relationship with Israel, I saw firsthand the nascent cooperation between the Israelis and the Sunni Arab states in Special Forces, air defense, cybersecurity and long-range surveillance. The F-35 deal, should it come to fruition, would seem to be a logical extension of that cooperation.

It could also be a magnet that eventually pulls Saudi Arabia into similar peace arrangements with Israel, and into high-tech arms deals with the U.S. This would have even more geopolitical advantage for Washington than the UAE deal.

Finally, the views in Israel must be considered. Domestic politics there are always fractious, and the

coalition government does not seem fully aligned over bringing the UAE into the F-35 program. The sale probably has the blessing of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — although he is denying it — but not of Defense Minister Benny Gantz, who under the complicated power-sharing agreement is slated to become prime minister late next year.

If all these political and foreign-policy considerations can be ironed out, the debate ultimately becomes a fairly technical military discussion. Would Israel possess “superior military means,” as the QME law stipulates, even after the F-35 becomes part of the Emiratis’ inventory?

The answer depends on the precise configuration of the F-35 that is sold to the UAE (there are several variations, and it’s possible to sell a version without all its advanced technology); the capabilities of Israeli’s air defenses (first rate now, and not entirely dependent on U.S. equipment); and the degree to which Israel and the UAE can set up integrated air-surveillance and communication systems.

I participated in these sorts of technical discussions at the Pentagon on several occasions. They can get emotional, and take months or even years. Conversations we had for several years with Brazil about technology transfer and sharing with the F-18 Hornet ultimately failed, and the Brazilians ultimately purchased Gripen fighters from Sweden. Yet the Trump administration seems motivated to declare victory on the deal before the November election.

This circled can be squared, but maintaining the QME

will require the U.S. to increase its support to Israel more broadly. This can be done first by allowing accelerated procurement under the current Memorandum of Understanding — a 10-year agreement with the Israelis on aiding their overall security — which would bring not only the F-35 but also new F-15X fighters and KC-46 refueling tankers.

The U.S. could also increase the quantity and lethality of precision-guided munitions in the War Reserve Stocks, a cache of weaponry maintained by the U.S. inside Israel for use in an emergency.

Washington could increase the intelligence flow to Israel (already high, but not quite at the level of the Five Eyes program of English-speaking nations) and conduct more technology sharing in cybersecurity; cyberwarfare can provide enemies strong counters to new kinetic technology like the F-35. Finally, as the Israelis normalize relations with increasing numbers of their neighbors, Washington may want to sign a formal mutual defense treaty with Tel Aviv.

Given the rising threat of Iran, the U.S. would be smart to improve the UAE’s defenses. But protecting commitments with Israel takes priority. It will be a complicated process, one that can’t be rushed to meet the exigencies of the U.S. electoral calendar.

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## Russia Is Trying to Drive the U.S. Out of Syria

By Jonathan Spyer

So far, America has pushed back.

The United States this week reinforced its military presence in northeastern Syria. Six Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles were deployed to the area, and around 100 troops were added to the roughly 500 that are already present in Syria east of the Euphrates River. The US also continues to maintain a separate presence west of the Euphrates in the area around the base at al-Tanf, on the Syrian-Jordanian border.

The beefing-up of the US military presence appears to be a response to the increasing tempo of Russian attempts to harass US forces, and to expand Moscow’s presence in Syria east of the Euphrates. On August 26, four US troops were wounded when the vehicle in which they were traveling collided with a Russian military vehicle.

The incident took place outside the town of Derik/Malkiyeh, at the northeastern tip of Syria close to the Tigris River and the border with Iraq. This area lies far east of the Euphrates, and well inside of an area designated as a US-controlled security zone. That is, the Russian presence in the area was itself a provocation. The collision with the US vehicle took place at a time when Russian military helicopters were deployed above the area. It

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appears to have been deliberately initiated by the Russian force.

This incident reflects a broader pattern. Moscow considers that the American presence in eastern Syria lacks a clear strategic context, and hence may be withdrawn if sufficient pressure is applied to it. Moscow wants to see Syria reunited under the rule of President Bashar Assad, as a weak and dependent client of Russia. The Kurdish-controlled, US-guaranteed area east of the Euphrates, comprising around 25% of the area of Syria, currently stands as a barrier to the achievement of this goal. (The Turkish enclave further west is an additional obstacle. Arguably, the Iranian area of de facto control in the south of the country represents a third barrier to Moscow’s realization of its vision.)

The Russians therefore appear to be attempting to whittle away at the American presence, gradually expanding their own area of activities in the area, slowly and incrementally emptying the American presence of security content. This slow attempt at erosion appears to be the only option available to Russia in this area. Earlier they tried direct action. On February 7, 2018, a 500-man force led by fighters of the paramilitary Wagner Group

crossed the Euphrates in an attempt to seize the adjacent Conoco (Tabiyeh) gas field. This was clearly an attempt to test US allied will and to establish a precedent for unilateral seizure of territory. The Americans understood it as such, and the force was destroyed by US air power and artillery.

The Russians appear to have learned the lesson, but not in a way bringing resignation, or inaction. Rather, they have concluded that while direct confrontation may produce the Trump administration's instinct to hit back hard, a messy, ongoing campaign of daily harassment is likely to trigger the administration's equally developed low boredom threshold.

According to this view, if staying in eastern Syria starts to appear to be more trouble than its worth, then given the absence of a clear strategic logic for the American presence, this might produce another of the moments at which the president suddenly focuses on the area, and orders a US withdrawal. President Donald Trump, after all, has already announced such a withdrawal twice – in December 2018 and October 2019. On both occasions, efforts by officials further down the food chain prevented the full implementation of the pullout.

Parallel to the campaign of harassment, the Russians are seeking to slowly and incrementally draw the Kurdish ruling authorities in this area back under their political patronage. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with a delegation from the Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Moscow in early September. The delegation included Ilham Ahmed, head of the Syrian Democratic Council, the most senior executive body in the Kurdish-led de facto ruling authority. The visit forms part of an ongoing Russian-mediated dialogue between representatives of the Assad regime and the SDC.

Lavrov, in a statement issued following the meeting, spoke of the “promotion of inclusive constructive inter-Syrian dialogue in the interest of the soonest recovery and reinforcement of Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.”

This formal language and the political process of which it is a part fits comfortably with the ongoing process of harassment of US forces in eastern Syria. The intention is to convey a sense of the inevitability of the return of Assad and Russia to domination of the whole country, and therefore the pointlessness of the continuation of the small US mission, and the futility for US allies of placing any trust or capital on the American side.

So the contours of the Russian effort are clear. The question remains: has Moscow assessed the situation accurately? Is the ongoing harassment of the US presence, and the wooing of US Kurdish allies set to result in the speedy abandonment of eastern Syria by Washington?

Firstly, the modest beefing up of the US force in the area over the last week suggests that no immediate withdrawal is in the offing. Rather, the increase in the deployment seems to indicate US concerns of a possible uptick in Russian actions, perhaps in the hope of precipitating a withdrawal before the elections in November. The strengthening of the force suggests a US desire to deter any such effort.

Secondly, it would be mistaken to assume that there is no US plan regarding Syria. A strategy does exist. As formulated largely by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and those around him, the US intention is to prevent Assad from normalizing his control of Syria and obtaining the wherewithal to begin reconstruction. This forms part of the larger approach by the US administration to use primarily economic and financial muscle to achieve outcomes in the Middle East. The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act makes anyone doing business with the Assad regime subject to financial sanction.

But where does the modest deployment in eastern Syria fit in with this effort? The deployment keeps Syria's oil and some of its best agricultural land out of regime hands, and thus constitutes a further tool of economic pressure on Assad. Of course, the empowering of elements associated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in eastern Syria also angers Turkey. A quiet US effort is under way to sponsor talks between the Kurdish Democratic Union Party and the non-PKK-associated Kurdish National Council in Syria (ENKS), to create a more inclusive political authority. The US special representative for Syria engagement, Ambassador James Jeffrey, was in Syria this week in efforts to finalize this process.

Israel and Jordan would like to see the US deployment remain, because the US presence acts as a kind of tripwire for the Iranians and their associated militias.

The slow-moving contest over the ruins of Syria thus looks set to continue. The Russians like to try to convey a sense of their own inevitability. The US appears keen currently not to concede the matter. The six Bradleys that rolled across the border this week are a small but notable move in this ongoing contest of wills.

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## The Council on Foreign Relations Excuses Iranian Brutality

By Amir Taheri

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The “nevertheless club.”

For the past few years hosting the Islamic Republic's Foreign Minister, Mohammed Javad Zarif, has developed into an annual ritual of the New York based Council on

Foreign Relations (CFR). This year, however, CFR's invitation to Zarif raised a storm of protest beyond the bubble in which American foreign policy junkies play

games, indulge in fantasies, and address their principal task which is fund-raising.

What triggered the storm was the alleged murder in a Tehran prison of Navid Afkari, a popular wrestling champion and a pro-democracy protester. The killing sent shock waves throughout Iran, including even among some elements of the Khomeinist establishment.

The CFR received many emails and telephone calls demanding that, as a show of sympathy with Iranians, Zarif be disinvited.

The CFR, however, refused to do so. Its director Richard Haas, a former State Department official, published this tweet: "Like many others I condemn the execution of Navid Afkari. I also hold the view that human rights constitute an important dimension of US foreign policy. Nevertheless, I believe that CFR is correct to meet with Iran's foreign minister."

The tweet contains interesting indicators to how Haas tries to dodge the issue. He presents Afkari's killing as a judicial "execution", enabling Zarif to say "well, you have executions in some states of the US as well." Yet, Tehran authorities themselves speak of "qissas" (retribution) while Afkari's lawyers insist that neither he nor they were informed that there would be an execution. Next, Haas tries to soften Zarif's image by presenting him as Foreign Minister of "Iran" rather than of the Islamic Republic.

But the most interesting part of Haas's tweet is "nevertheless" because it puts Afkari's tragic end and CFR's supposed regard for human rights on the same level as the importance of offering a platform to a Khomeinist propagandist. The excuse is "nevertheless, we have to hear the other side".

To be sure, the CFR didn't invent the "nevertheless" club whose members are morally incapable, in Aristotle's term "akates", of understanding that it is wrong to assume equivalence between an ethically sound position and its sophistic negation.

Haas's "nevertheless" reminds one of other "neverthelesses" in literature and history.

There is Achilles saying to Priam at the end of the Trojan War: "Nevertheless, old man! You, too, were once happy."

In November 1938, a few days after Kristallnacht, the French ambassador to Berlin Robert Coulondre reported the event to Paris, describing the savagery in the heart of Europe, concluding that "nevertheless (neanmoins in French) one should understand German grievances against the Jews."

Western intellectuals who visited the Soviet Union under Stalin tacitly admitted that thousands were killed by the regime and millions starved to death but, using the "nevertheless" talisman, they also concluded that all was for the best in that best of all worlds.

British parliamentarian Konni Zilliacus used "nevertheless" first to justify his adulation for Stalin and then, after Nikita Khrushchev denounced the tyrant's cult of personality, against him. Edgar Snow was not myopic

enough not to notice the savagery of the gangs unleashed by his idol Mao Zedong. But, again using "nevertheless", he justified playing the role of propagandist for Chinese Communism in the United States.

French journalist Jean Lacouture used "nevertheless" to justify his support of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Yes, the Khmer were killing millions. Nevertheless, we could not condemn them because they were fighting American imperialism, always a noble cause.

Years ago, we asked the then German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, why he pretended that the Islamic Republic in Tehran was just like any other regime, albeit a bit more naughty. He claimed that, although there was a mountain of evidence there was, nevertheless, not enough information to make a judgement.

Some members of the "nevertheless" club use the quest for "more information" as an excuse for a "critical dialogue" with the Khomeinist regime and other weird actors on the international scene. They remind one of Jacob Bernhardt's mocking of those seeking "unwanted facts and useless information" (Quisquillienforschung in German).

Haas, too, talks of how listening to Zarif would help us better understand the power structure in the Khomeinist regime. And that reminds one of Montaigne's quip: "They are wonderfully acquainted with Galen but know nothing of the disease of the sick man."

Members of the "nevertheless" club also talk of the need for nuances to lubricate diplomacy, always a rough machinery. But, nuances may make sense only if a melody has been established. In this case one needs an overarching view of the Khomeinist regime to guide a long-term policy. Since the "nevertheless" club cannot develop such a policy its talk of nuances is an excuse for serving as an echo chamber for the Tehran mullahs.

Anyway, in his expose at the CFR meeting, Zarif repeated the same claims, not to say lies, that he has been dishing out to the illustrious audience for years. And it seems that they gobbled it up with the same appetite as before. To hoodwink his audience, Zarif never used the term "Islamic Republic" and pretended that "Supreme Guide" Ali Khamenei doesn't exist. Nor did he talk of Islam and Tehran's strategy to "export the Islamic Revolution" to the whole world, including New York where the CFR is located.

Portrayed by Zarif, the Khomeinist regime is a peace-and-love enterprise where the judiciary is independent, all freedoms are respected, and the strategic aim is to establish peace and harmony across the globe. There are no political prisoners in Iran. Tehran's support for Hezbollah and Hamas is cultural and Iranian presence in Syria is only advisory at the invitation of the Syrian government. There are, of course, no American and other foreign hostages in Iran. If there is trouble in the Middle East it is the fault of the United States, OK, not of good Americans like John

Kerry and Barack Obama but of people like Donald Trump and Mike Pompeo.

In the CFR echo chamber the airing of opinions without an ethical barometer is, at best, a trivial pursuit, and, at worst, a betrayal of scholarship.

## Why Qatar Is a Problematic Ally

By Efraim Inbar

**Anti-Semitic indoctrination, anti-Western propaganda, and funding terror shouldn't be ignored**

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Gulf Affairs Timothy Lenderking says the US hopes to move forward with designating Qatar as a major non-NATO ally. This status provides a country with US benefits in defense trade and security cooperation. Specifically, "Major Non-NATO Ally" or MNNA status gives a country preferential access to US military equipment and technology, including free surplus material, expedited export processing and prioritized cooperation on training. Currently, 17 countries have MNNA status, including the Gulf Arab states Kuwait and Bahrain.

American consideration of MNNA status for Qatar probably also reflects domestic and corporate interests: the desire to sell arms to one of the richest countries in the world. But this privileges domestic considerations over longer-term foreign policy considerations, namely the importance of bolstering allies against foes.

An American decision to designate Qatar as an MNNA would not be wise. Although Qatar hosts the largest US military facility in the region, it does not deserve to be considered a true ally of America.

Qatar spends enormous amounts of money in systematic support for the nefarious activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its branches all over the world. The Muslim Brotherhood is an anti-Western and anti-democratic organization. Qatar also funds numerous jihadist groups, and many Qatari citizens have been convicted of regional terrorist activities.

Qatar also uses its influential Al Jazeera television network to undermine the stability of its pro-Western Arab neighbors. The US recently concluded that Al Jazeera is not a media outlet, but a lobbying outfit. As far back as the so-called "Arab Spring," Al Jazeera fomented trouble. Today, Qatar seeks to subvert the regime of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (a regime that put an end to the dangerous Muslim Brotherhood-backed presidency of Mohamed Morsi).

Not surprisingly, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt have imposed a blockade on Qatar since 2017, in an attempt to check the subversive behavior of Doha, to little avail.

Qatar has called in Turkish help. President Recep Erdogan's Turkey (which also is associated with the Muslim Brotherhood) has stationed 5,000 soldiers on Qatar's soil in order to defend the sheikdom. Moreover,

(Full disclosure: I have been invited to address the CFR twice, both times on Iraq, never on Iran!)

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Qatar has supported Erdogan's adventurist foreign policy that is driven by Ottoman and Islamist impulses.

Qatar has helped Erdogan overcome the economic difficulties of recent years. Qatar is also financing the Turkish intervention in the civil war in Libya (on the side of the Tripoli government, whose Islamist links are well known) against Egypt, which backs the other protagonists in Libya.

Seeking short-term stability, Israel has allowed Qatar to regularly provide funds to sustain Hamas rule in Gaza. Hamas is the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, a terrorist organization intent on destroying Israel. (This Israeli policy is short-sided and foolish.)

Overall, the US has failed to discern the emergence of a not entirely new anti-Western axis in the Middle East, comprised of Turkey and Qatar. This is a dangerous radical Sunni alignment.

Both countries have opposed the US-orchestrated Israel-UAE peace agreement. Both countries are trying to undermine the stability of Egypt. (Stability in Egypt is a core American interest.) Ankara and Doha openly support Hamas and facilitate Hezbollah-Hamas cooperation. Turkish and Qatari actions accentuate tensions within the NATO alliance that could devolve into Greek-Turkish and French-Turkish military confrontations.

There are indications that the radical Sunnis are moving closer to the radical Shi'ites led by Iran. Qatar has been cozying up to Iran for quite some time. One indication of this is that Qatar Airways has been the only foreign carrier to land in Iran over the past six months. Therefore, one has to be concerned that US weapons sold to Qatar might be made available to Iran, thereby threatening US troops in the area.

It is noteworthy that for years Turkey has circumvented US sanctions on Iran. It has helped ISIS in many ways, particularly when the Kurds were ISIS's opponent. Ankara shares the same interests as Tehran in Syria; it seeks a dissected Syrian state, with weak central authority and even weaker Kurds.

Former US president Barack Obama foolishly believed that the Muslim Brotherhood could be a pro-democratic force in Arab politics. The US also has flirted with the radical Sunnis, including in Erdogan's Turkey. US President Donald Trump has continued Obama's policy of disengaging from the Middle East, a trend that has allowed greater freedom of action for regional actors. Turkey and Qatar have capitalized on the new circumstances to deviate from American preferences.



Instead of supporting the effort of its Gulf allies to pressure Qatar into responsible behavior, Washington sees the Saudi-Qatar rift as a threat to containment of Iran. It has tried to mediate with little success. Similarly, Washington mistakenly has tolerated Turkish mischief against America's traditional allies in the Middle East and in the eastern Mediterranean.

Washington should conduct an urgent review of its relations with these two very problematic Middle Eastern actors, Qatar and Turkey. America needs to be able to distinguish friend from foe. In this regard, awarding MNNA status to Qatar would be a serious mistake.

*Mr. Inbar is president of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security.*

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## How Palestinian Terrorists, Flush with European Gov't Cash Put a Member on Sanders's Campaign

By Yossi Kuperwasser

tabletmag.com

September 21, 2020

### The PFLP's polite faces.

The arrests in December 2019 of 50 suspected members of the sizable terrorist infrastructure of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in Ramallah, which was responsible for the terror attack in which teenager Rina Shnerb was murdered and her father and brother were injured last summer (Aug. 23, 2019), exposed the significant magnitude of PFLP terror networks and their capacity to strike within Israel. Perhaps more ominously, it also exposed the self-deception under which many left activists operate in Europe and the United States.

PFLP funders see or pretend to see the delegitimization activity performed by PFLP-affiliated organizations as peaceful/nonviolent actions that are unrelated to the terrorist operations of the PFLP. This hypocrisy reached a new peak in a letter sent recently by the European Union's representative to the Palestinian Authority, who guaranteed the Palestinian NGOs, many of which are affiliated with the PFLP, that the EU will keep funding them in spite of their affiliation with organizations that have been formally designated by the EU as terror organizations—a promise that came after the NGOs refused to commit to avoid such affiliations.

The PFLP is designated as a terrorist organization by the United States, EU, Australia, Canada, and Japan. Back when its terror unit was still called "The Red Eagles," PFLP won world attention because of its involvement in plane hijackings (Leila Khaled, who took part in two such attacks, is a member of the PFLP politburo and of the Palestinian National Council), and the massacre it carried out in Israel's Lod airport in 1972.

The PFLP's current terror arm, the "Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades," operates from a headquarters in Damascus, where it maintains operational cooperation with Iran and Hezbollah. The PFLP has active cells in many governorates of the Palestinian Authority with dozens of active members in Judea and Samaria. Through these terror arms, the PFLP perpetrated some of the most despicable terror attacks, including the murder of Israeli minister Rehavam Ze'evi (October 2001); six suicide bombing attacks during the Second Intifada that left 13 people dead including the Nov. 1, 2004, suicide bombing attack in the crowded Carmel Market in Tel Aviv that left three dead; and the attempt to murder Israel's former Chief Rabbi Ovadya Yosef in 2005 (Salah Hamouri, who

played a key role in planning the attack is a prominent activist in the PFLP-affiliated, so-called "human rights" NGO Addameer).

In November 2014, the PFLP carried out the vicious murder with axes and guns of five Jewish worshippers while they were praying at the Har-Nof synagogue in Jerusalem, as well as a policeman who tried to stop the attack. The attack was carried out by two brothers who were related to a former PFLP terrorist and the PFLP took responsibility for and praised the attack, though some sources dispute this. The PFLP performed numerous rocket attacks from Gaza during Operation Protective Edge in 2014 and participates in the operation room that led the terror attacks from Gaza in the many rounds of conflict that have taken place since.

For many left-wing organizations in the West, cooperation with the PFLP comes naturally. It is a reminder of the "glorious" era when the Soviet Union was a superpower competing for global dominance against "the corrupt capitalist West" (this vocabulary is still often used by PFLP). When the Soviet bloc collapsed, these groups had to find a new cause célèbre around which to unite. The PFLP was among the first groups to understand the potential of recruiting softer anti-Israel elements into its networks and to leverage those elements in order to gain financial support from naïve international donors.

Functionally, the PFLP is an entirely hybrid organization. On the one hand, some of its members (who altogether number in the low thousands) tirelessly promote terror attacks. On the other hand, the PFLP occupies the leading position among Palestinian NGOs conducting the international campaign to slander Israel and deny its legitimacy to exist as the nation-state of the Jewish people (PFLP supports a one-state solution that would abolish Israel).

Khalida Jarrar, 57, a leading political activist of the PFLP and one of the three PFLP members of the Palestinian parliament (the last elections for which were held in 2006), is a good example of the functional integration of the PFLP's "military" and "political" activities. Jarrar has been repeatedly arrested for her involvement in terror-related activity, and currently stands accused of filling a high-ranking role in the recently exposed PFLP terrorist infrastructure. At the same time, Jarrar has also played an integral part in the PFLP's delegitimization campaign in the West. She and several of



her terrorist infrastructure colleagues held key positions in the BDS organization Addameer, which tries to improve the conditions of Palestinian terrorists incarcerated in Israeli prisons. In the NGO universe, Jarrar and Addameer present themselves as human rights activists; in the Palestinian-Israeli sphere, they diligently promote vicious physical attacks on human life.

The PFLP was established in 1967 by Dr. George Habash, and sticks to the communist ideology and structure upon which it was built. It has a national conference that is convened every several years (the last meeting—its seventh—was held in 2013), which appointed Secretary General Ahmad Sa'adat, who is 67 years old and is currently imprisoned in Israel due to his role in the murder of minister Ze'evi.

The PFLP Central Committee has 76 members. 34 are from the West Bank and Jerusalem, 22 from the Gaza Strip, 15 are Palestinians who live abroad, and five are imprisoned by Israel. The Central Committee appoints the deputy secretary general; the current occupant of that position is 80-year-old Abu Ahmad Fouad, who was born in Silwan and is among the founding fathers of PFLP. He currently resides in Damascus. It also appoints a Politburo (made of 18 members—seven from the West Bank, six from Gaza and five from abroad) that is in charge of running the PFLP's daily affairs on the policy level. The head of the Politburo foreign relations committee is Maher al-Taher, a veteran activist who also lives in Damascus. The PFLP leader in Gaza is Jamal Mazhar. Other key members of the Politburo are Khalida Jarrar, Omar Shahada, Husein Mansour, Maryam Abu Daqqa, Kaid al-Ghoul, Ghazi Sourani, celebrity terrorist Leila Khaled, Marwan Abd El-Al and Abu Sami Marwan al-Fahoum. (Rabah Mihna, a dominant figure in the Politburo, passed away in 2019.)

The PFLP is a member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), through which it used to receive much of its budget from the Palestinian Authority, though it presents an opposition to the ruling Fatah organization. Part of its terror budget is covered by Iran. The PFLP maintains close relations with Fatah's arch rival Hamas and refrains from participating in the leading executive bodies of the PLO and the PA. Since 2017, the rivalry between the Fatah and the PFLP has led PLO Chairman Mahmoud

Abbas (Abu Mazen) to stop delivering money to the PFLP, which has reacted with fierce attacks against Abu Mazen.

The PFLP is able to maintain its terror infrastructure in spite of its disagreements with the PA mainly because in the eyes of Fatah leadership, all kinds of terror and violence against Zionism are legitimate, even if at certain times they are not recommended. This is why the PA never takes action against PFLP terror activists and pays handsome salaries to PFLP terrorists incarcerated in Israeli jails, and to the families of those who died in the context of the struggle against Zionism. As a founding organization of the post-1968 PLO, the PFLP gets a lot of respect from the PA and Fatah, even when relations between the two organizations are tense.

It should also be noted that the PA minister of foreign affairs, Riad al-Maliki, who was one of the leaders of the PA's process of joining the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a state, used to hold a leading position in the PFLP. The ICC's prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, met with two

PFLP-affiliated organizations disguised as human rights organizations (Al Haq and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights) during the deliberations that led to her decision to move forward with the PA's complaint against Israel. These organizations were also a key source of information for the investigation committees of the anti-Israel U.N. Human Rights Council against Israel. In other words, the members of the PFLP did not abandon their terrorist activities for civic struggle but rather added another layer to make their activity more efficient.

The PFLP also maintains close ties and affiliation to former communist and radical parties around the globe and especially in Arab and Palestinian communities in exile; the party operates dedicated cells of supporters both in Palestinian universities and in universities abroad. At the same time, it also maintains close political and operational relationships with Hezbollah and Iran. These overlapping alliances have positioned the PFLP as a very useful axis for the "red-green" alliance against Israel in the West.

The grotesque terror-NGO hybrid that the PFLP has perfected is especially notable for its success in gaining

Organization	Based in:	Donations were\are given by:
AlHaq	Palestinian Authority	EU, Norway, Ireland, Italy, France, Spain, Germany, IHL Secretariat (joint funding from Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark and the Netherlands)
Addameer	Palestinian Authority	Ireland, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, IHL Secretariat (joint funding from Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark and the Netherlands); NGOs from Germany, Spain
Samidoun	Canada	Never disclosed financial information
The Palestinian Center for Human Rights	Palestinian Authority	EU, UN, Ireland, Spain, Consulate General of France, Norway, IHL Secretariat (joint funding from Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark and the Netherlands); NGOs from UK, Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, Netherlands, Germany
Union of Agricultural Work Committees	Palestinian Authority	EU, UN, France, Netherlands, Spain; NGOs from Norway, Italy, Belgium, Germany
Defense of Children International - Palestine	Palestinian Authority, Switzerland	EU, UN, Italy, Netherlands, IHL Secretariat (joint funding from Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark and the Netherlands); NGOs from Belgium, Canada, US (Rockefeller Brothers Fund)

Sources of funding to PFLP-affiliated NGOs NGO MONITOR REPORTS

funding from the EU and from individual European countries such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway, and Sweden (see table). These entities are entirely aware of these organizations' affiliation with the PFLP and the roles that terror activists play in the PFLP's network of "human rights" NGOs. Shawan Jabarin, who leads Al Haq, is a former terror activist; Moustafa Awad of Samidoun was trained by Hezbollah in Lebanon and recently spent a year in an Israeli jail for personally transferring funds for terror activities.

Nevertheless, European organizations and governments invite those activists and others such as Leila Khaled and Khaled Barakat (a member of the Central Committee of the PFLP who is involved in the activities of Samidoun, where his wife, Charlotte Kates, serves as international director) to speak and hold meetings in Europe, including in the European Parliament. Eventually, under Israeli protest, Leila Khaled was refused entry to Italy in 2017 and Barakat was refused entry to Germany in February 2020. Yet European assistance to these organizations helps the PFLP, which occasionally struggles with shortages in its budget, to pay its activists, who are helpfully registered as employees of European-funded NGOs. And while European states deny entry to PFLP activists, San Francisco State University (SFSU) is determined to host Leila Khaled for a Zoom lecture this coming Sept. 23, in spite of the fact that she is an active member of a terrorist organization and that she personally carried out terror attacks and has shown no remorse. Justifying this with the need and right to listen to a variety of opinions is of course outrageous.

Leftist activists in Europe and the United States who are mobilized for the Palestinian cause and organizations which present themselves as committed to human rights (such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and even U.N. agencies) see no problem with the PFLP's hybrid terror-NGO identity. For example, a delegation of the American organization IFPB (Interfaith Peace Builders, now known as "Eyewitness Palestine") was hosted in 2017 in the refugee camp Dheisheh near Bethlehem in the house of a PFLP terrorist who was also involved with an NGO. The IFPB knew that the terrorist was wanted by Israel. Members of the IFPB, who posted photos from the meeting on social media, were excited to tell that the same activist they met with was later killed in a confrontation with the IDF.

"Dream Defenders," a relatively small Florida-based radical organization that operates within the Black Lives Matter coalition and has on its board well-known figures like Angela Davis and Linda Sarsour, cooperates with the

### **Egypt Still Hasn't Escaped Nasser's Toxic Legacy**

**By Daniel Pipes**

[danielpipes.org](http://danielpipes.org)

**He made anti-Zionism the mainstay of Middle Eastern politics.**

Gamal Abdel Nasser, the charismatic ruler of Egypt, died 50 years ago today. During his eighteen years in

PFLP directly. For them, no fig leaves are needed; the PFLP itself is a symbol of struggle, apparently including its commitment to stabbing, shooting, and blowing up innocent people. Dream Defenders conducts annual trips to areas controlled by the PA, especially to the Dheisheh refugee camp, where the participants meet with PFLP activists in this stronghold of the terror organization. Earlier this year, Dream Defenders co-founder Umi Selah, also known as Phillip Agnew, was hired by the Bernie Sanders campaign.

Israeli leftist NGOs also occasionally cooperate with Palestinian NGOs affiliated with the PFLP (such as Al Haq, Samidoun, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, Defense of Children International—Palestine, and Addameer) as well as with organizations in which the PFLP is a key player, such as the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) and its Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI).

It should be emphasized in this context that the PFLP is a major partner in the Palestinian National and Islamic Forces (PNIF)—the umbrella organization of all Palestinian terror groups that is used to coordinate the Palestinian struggle against Israel. The PNIF was the tool with which the terror campaign known as the Second Intifada was coordinated and it played an important role in the escalation in Gaza that took place under the "March of Return" in the last two years, and is also the leading member of the Palestinian BDS National Committee. The PNIF serves as a meeting point where the PFLP may coordinate and cooperate with Hamas in spite of their ideological gaps to pursue their common interest of hurting Israel and promoting the delegitimization campaign.

Those who wish to convince themselves that cooperation with civic PFLP-affiliated organizations is a part of a peaceful fight against Israeli occupation in Judea and Samaria are similar to those who claim that a distinction should be made between the terrorist and political components of Hezbollah. The exposure of the PFLP's terrorist infrastructure should be considered a wake-up call to Europeans and to both the American and Israeli left to disengage from the PFLP and its affiliates; otherwise, they will continue to be directly responsible for the loss of innocent human lives.

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power, 1952-70, he dominated the Middle East and, even now, he remains an intense topic of interest. Beirut's "Al-Akhbar" announced on Sep. 24 that "A Half-Century after His Passing ... Gamal Abdel Nasser Is the Future."

According to Google's Ngram, the word "Nasserist" has steadily appeared more often in English-language books since 1970. A Lebanese newspaper article announced last week that "Nasser is the future," called him the "immortal leader," and proclaimed that he remains "a necessity to face current challenges even as his ideas and choices provide a solid bridge to deal with the future."

Reporting on Nasser's death, headlines in the New York Times succinctly conveyed both the benign, positive coverage he enjoyed among Westerners and their belief in his universal popularity among Arabs: "Blow to peace efforts seen," "U.S. officials see period of instability in Mideast," "The Arab world is grief-stricken." The real story, however, was quite different, with Nasser's rule bringing disaster to Egypt in the form of political, economic, and cultural decline.

A 34-year-old colonel when he took over through a coup d'état in 1952, Nasser was the first indigenous Egyptian to rule the country since the pharaohs. His ambitions were as immense as his ideas were delusional. He overthrew a king and installed an oppressive military rule that still endures 68 years later. He dispossessed grand landlords and small merchants alike, then chased out Levantine entrepreneurs – mainly Italians, Greeks, and Lebanese – who fueled the economy. He persecuted the small but thriving Jewish community of 75,000 to the point that it now consists of 10 (at last count) elderly women.

He aligned with the Soviet Union, industrialized Egypt along Soviet lines, and ruled with post-Stalin-like brutality. Bewitched by the mirage of bringing all Arabic-speaking countries under his control, Nasser unified with some of them and made war with others. More than anyone else, he installed anti-Zionism as the mainstay of Middle Eastern political life and transformed the Palestinian refugee issue into Palestinian irredentism. Along the way, he initiated the Six-Day War of 1967 and dispatched his armed forces to the most lopsided military defeat in recorded history.

Nasser proved to be a master artist of deceit. He pretended to become a civilian while extending the military's monopoly of power over economic, security, legislative, and judicial affairs. He imposed a socialism that

administered city buses with two classes of service while enriching his cronies. His mock unity with Syria concealed a crude drive to dominate. His ostensible enmity with Islamists masked a sordid struggle for booty.

I arrived in Egypt a few months after Nasser's demise, in June 1971. It was an exciting time of witness as his successor, Anwar al-Sadat, opened up the country by cutting back on socialism, the Soviet connection, and the foreign adventures. Each day felt brighter than the one before.

And yet, Egypt has never escaped Nasser's legacy. The regime persists in a casual brutality toward dissidents and a dogged hostility to Israel that outlasts the peace treaty signed forty-one years ago. It lags economically, with retired military officers more important than ever and the

country unable to feed itself or produce goods the world wants. A population of 100 million stuffs itself almost entirely into the 4 percent of Egypt that comprise the Nile Valley and Nile Delta. Constant expansion onto agricultural land and the prospect of diminished Nile River water portend future crises. Even the famed Egyptian cotton is no more.

Thus did Egypt slide from its old status as the foremost of twenty Arabic-speaking countries to an afterthought.

Those New York Times headlines symbolized the West's cluelessness about the deeply malign nature of Nasser's rule. Blow to peace

efforts? Hardly: only post-Nasser could Sadat yank Egypt away from its debilitating confrontation with Israel. Period of instability? No, Nasser's death removed the region's most disruptive element. Arabs grief-stricken? Some, yes; but many others felt relief.

Egypt's modern history reconfirms that when a country falls into the hands of a despot, the return to normality can take a very long time. Russia, China, and Iraq provide other past examples; Venezuela, North Korea, and Iran provide more current ones.

Given Egypt's lugubrious immobility under Gamal Abdel Nasser's half-century-long shadow, I pessimistically predict that another fifty years hence, the Egypt of 2070 will yet suffer under his influence. Rulers will come, rulers will go, unable to break the boundaries he set so long ago.



### Unapologetic Zionist Unity Leads to Victory Against Zoom's Collaboration with Terror in California

By Moshe Phillips

israelbehindthenews.com

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Not a potential friend.

On September 22, 2020, #EndJewHatred, Herut North America, Almost Jewish, The Lawfare Project, Liberate Art, Inc. the Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel (IBSI), Yad Yamin, Shield of David, and Club Z

united to protest against Zoom in front of their headquarters in San Jose, California.

Zoom had allowed the promotion of Jew hatred as it was providing its platform to be used for a virtual roundtable discussion titled "Whose Narratives? Gender, Justice, & Resistance: A conversation with Leila Kahlid" at

San Francisco State University (SFSU), which was scheduled to take place on September 23, 2020 despite initial outcries.

Khaled is an unrepentant terrorist and international hijacker. She is a leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). She was a key part of the team that hijacked TWA Flight 840 on its way from Rome to Tel Aviv in August 1969. Then, the following year, Khaled again participated in an attempt to hijack an El Al flight, this time from Amsterdam to New York. Even though Khaled is banned from entering the United States, because she is a terrorist and is dedicated to spreading her hatred and murderous ideology, SFSU invited her to lecture students via the Zoom platform.

As a direct result of putting pressure on Zoom, Herut is excited to report that Zoom has agreed to de-platform Leila Khaled and issued the following statement:

“Zoom is committed to supporting the open exchange of ideas and conversations, subject to certain limitations

contained in our Terms of Service, including those related to user compliance with applicable U.S. export control, sanctions, and anti-terrorism laws. In light of the speaker’s reported affiliation or membership in a U.S. designated foreign terrorist organization, and SFSU’s inability to confirm otherwise, we determined the meeting is in violation of Zoom’s Terms of Service and told SFSU they may not use Zoom for this particular event.”

“This is an important victory for Zionist activists, and Herut is honored to have been a part of this unifying of pro-Israel organizations to fight against Jew hatred, but much is still to be done to stop SFSU and other colleges from providing terrorists like Khaled the opportunity to spread hate,” stated Karma Feinstein Cohen, the Executive Director of Herut North America. “Much credit for this goes to activist and Herut’s Director of Communications, Virag Gulyas, who helped organize this rally, coordinate the coalition, and who was one of the main featured speakers.”

## **RBG: An American Jewish justice warrior**

**By Melanie Phillips**

**Many have no awareness that the Jews are a historic nation, bound by their own system of law and a common language, history, institutions and culture, and that they are the only people for whom the land of Israel was ever their national kingdom.**

The obituary in Britain’s Guardian newspaper of the iconic liberal U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who died last weekend, provoked outrage among a number of Jews.

In the piece, Godfrey Hodgson wrote: “Ruth was brought up in a Conservative Jewish tradition and learned Hebrew as a child, but abandoned her religion because she was not allowed to join a minyan (a group of men) to mourn her mother’s death when she was 17.”

He also wrote: [In 1993, President Bill] Clinton was anxious to make the supreme court more diverse, so Ginsburg’s Jewish religion, which she had given up 46 years earlier, may have counted for more than a lifetime of commitment.”

This produced astonishment among people who knew that Ginsburg’s Jewish identity was threaded through her life and work.

After complaints, the Guardian changed the text to say that Ginsburg “... moved away from strict religious observance after she was not allowed to join a minyan (a group of men) to mourn her mother’s death when she was 17. Indignant at that exclusion, she nevertheless remained deeply committed to her Jewish identity.”

And the Clinton passage was also changed to say “... so Ginsburg’s Jewish identity may have counted for more than a lifetime of commitment to women’s equality before the law.”

Many American Jews will recognize in U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s life a reflection of their own sense of Jewish identity: distance from religious

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ritual, but an intense identification with Jewish culture and heritage.

The episode tells us some important things about attitudes towards Jews in the non-Jewish world, as well as towards religion on the left.

Ginsburg embodied a particular ambivalence in Jewish life that is found in no other faith community.

In acknowledgment of her stellar status as a jurist, she became this week the first woman to lie in state in the U.S. Supreme Court and the first Jewish woman to lie in state at the U.S. Capitol building before being buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

The fact that she was not buried immediately in accordance with Jewish tradition and will not lie with her people in a Jewish cemetery may grate upon religiously observant Jews.

But many American Jews, in particular, will recognize in Ginsburg’s life a reflection of their own sense of Jewish identity: distance from religious ritual, but an intense identification with Jewish culture and heritage.

Ginsburg’s husband, Martin, described the family as “not wildly observant,” although he said they went to a traditional Passover seder with relatives. Five years ago, Ginsburg co-authored a feminist reinterpretation of the Passover story with Rabbi Lauren Holtzblatt.

She and Martin sent their children to Hebrew school when they lived in the New York area, but Martin said they didn’t join a synagogue when they moved to Washington because the children had grown up.

U.S. President Bill Clinton announces Ruth Bader Ginsburg as the nominee for the Supreme Court on June 14, 1993. Photo by Sharon Farmer via Wikimedia Commons (National Archives and Records Administration).

Despite this lack of observance, there's no doubt that, as Ginsburg herself has said, she drew upon Jewish values for her inspiration.

She had a mezuzah fixed to her office door. A poster on the wall read Tzedek, tzedek tirdof—the Torah injunction meaning “Justice, justice shall you pursue.”

In 2004, in a speech at a Holocaust Remembrance Day event held in the Capitol, she declared that “my heritage as a Jew and my occupation as a judge fit together symmetrically. The demand for justice runs through the entirety of Jewish history and Jewish tradition. I take pride in and draw strength from my heritage.”

Hodgson's error was due to more than careless use of language or ignorance of Ginsburg's life. As is made particularly clear in the original Clinton passage, he assumed that Jewish identity was synonymous with the Jewish religion.

So Ginsburg's “Jewish religion” had apparently made her “diverse” to Clinton, even though she'd “given it up.” But, of course, it wasn't her religious observance that made her diverse in Clinton's eyes, but the fact that she was a Jew (and a woman). And being a Jew was something she certainly did not give up; nor could she have done so even had she wanted to.

Hodgson is hardly alone in this confused thinking about Judaism. Many if not most in the West, including secular folk, think about religion through the prism of Christianity. That's a confessional faith shaped by a theological creed. If you abandon that creed, you abandon the religion. You are no longer a member of the church; you have become an ex-Christian.

Many think Judaism works in the same way, and so if you abandon Jewish religious practice, then you abandon Judaism. They don't understand that, unlike Christianity, Judaism is a unique combination of religious laws, ethnic identity and a culture of historic peoplehood.

She had a mezuzah fixed to her office door. A poster on the wall read Tzedek, tzedek tirdof—the Torah injunction meaning “Justice, justice shall you pursue.”

A Jew can pay no or scant attention to Jewish religious laws or observances, and yet still identify passionately with Jewish culture and peoplehood.

So to suggest that Ginsburg had “abandoned” or “given up” her Judaism was totally wrong.

This failure to understand the complexities of Judaism and Jewish identity also fuels hostility to Israel. Many non-Jews, assuming that Judaism is merely a religion, cannot understand why a faith group should be entitled to a state.

That's partly why they think it's outrageous that the Jews have “colonized” land that they assume belongs to

Arabs, who they think do have a genuine national claim. They think it's a category error.

They have absolutely no awareness that the Jews are, in fact, a historic nation, bound by their own system of law and a common language, history, institutions and culture, and that they are the only people for whom the land of Israel was ever their national kingdom.

These Westerners may be aware that in the Bible the land was promised to the Jews alone. But in godless Britain, at least, that only deepens their hostility because they believe the Bible is a fairy tale. They have no idea that it operates on different levels, one of which is a historical record of the creation of the Jewish people.

Western secular progressives dismiss the Bible because they hate religion. They believe that it stands in the way of the liberal causes they hold dear to them. Ginsburg was a secular heroine because of her promotion of those liberal causes. So they can't process the fact that she drew on that same biblical text for her moral values.

Orthodox Jews, along with those from different religions and none who believe that today's progressive causes have repudiated the core moral tenets of the Hebrew Bible, may regard Ginsburg instead as the standard-bearer of American Jews who have regrettably made liberalism their religion under the mistaken assumption that it represents authentic Jewish values.

Justice and compassion—the core principles of the Hebrew Bible that are extolled by liberals—are, however, parts of a broader moral and ethical package. When detached from the Bible's other precepts, such as individual duty, responsibility and accountability for one's actions, they may be transformed into their diametric opposite and become instead the weapons of liberal “social justice” power politics.

One may be appalled by that and worry about the future of American Jewry as a consequence. One may regret Ginsburg's rejection of Jewish religious observance, just as one may regret its rejection by the majority of the American Jewish community and the moral confusion that has caused.

But no one can be in any doubt that this is an argument, however bitter and anguished, among Jews. And Ruth Bader Ginsburg died as she had lived—a rightly garlanded tribune of the incomparably disputatious, morally driven and law-bound Jewish people.

*Ms. Phillips, a British journalist, broadcaster and author, writes a weekly column for JNS. Currently a columnist for “The Times of London,” her personal and political memoir, “Guardian Angel,” has been published by Bombardier, which also published her first novel, “The Legacy,” in 2018*

## What Ruth Bader Ginsburg Taught Us About Friendship and Unity

By David Suissa

jewishjournal.com

September 21, 2020

**There's plenty to love about Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the trailblazing liberal justice who passed away on Sept. 18 at the age of 87.**

Many of her fans love her because she was a champion

of their cherished causes, from abortion to immigration to health care to women's rights to gender equality, among others.

In the Jewish world, there is obvious pride in having a



Jewish woman on the highest court in the land.

Even in popular culture, Ginsburg captured the nation's imagination. Her nickname, "Notorious RBG," is a play on the name of the rap star, The Notorious B.I.G. She earned it by tirelessly defending human rights, through her grueling workouts and her tenacity in surviving several bouts of cancer.

"Throughout Justice Ginsburg's entire career, there was sort of like nothing that could ever take her down," Julie Cohen, the director of the Oscar-nominated documentary "RBG," told Yahoo News. "If she got rejected, if she got discriminated against, if she got kind of dismissively pushed aside, her response to that was always just to push right past that."

Perseverance and resilience, then, are things we can learn from Ginsburg in this horribly challenging pandemic year.

But there is something else, something perhaps even more critical in these divisive times that we can learn from her.

It's well known that Ginsburg had a close friendship with a colleague who was her ideological opposite, the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

Ginsburg and Scalia were colleagues for years on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals before Scalia was appointed to the high court in 1982 by President Ronald Reagan. "I have missed Ruth very much since leaving the court of appeals," Scalia, who died in 2016 at the age of 79, told an audience years after he was appointed.

Considering how strongly Ginsburg felt about her liberal views, how could she be so friendly with someone who so sharply disagreed with her? And how could Scalia himself reciprocate such an extreme level of tolerance?

One possibility is that they didn't see their ideological differences as something to "tolerate"—like a bitter medicine or a nasty flu. Rather, they separated their ideology from their humanity. Easier said than done, right?

In our era of vicious political division, it's almost impossible to conceive of ideological rivals becoming such close friends. We've become so attached to our political worldviews it's hard to even fathom a deep friendship with someone on the "other side."

Maybe that's why in the eulogies of Ginsburg, we don't hear much about her friendship with her ideological opposite—it's too hard to relate to. It's easier to focus on Ginsburg's legacy, her remarkable character and her many legal accomplishments. After all, compared to the crucial

issues of the day, a friendship doesn't seem like much of an accomplishment.

We all value friendships, but we usually stick to like-minded friends. It feels more enjoyable, less stressful. Ginsburg and Scalia transcended that thinking. They found a way to stay true to their ideologies while honoring the timeless value of friendship.

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Their relationship was so special it spawned an opera, "Scalia/Ginsburg", inspired by their court rulings. After Scalia died, Ginsburg said:

"Toward the end of the opera "Scalia/Ginsburg", tenor Scalia and soprano Ginsburg sing a duet: 'We are different, we are one,' different in our interpretation of written texts, one in our reverence for the Constitution and the institution we serve. From our years together at the D.C. Circuit, we were best buddies."

In that statement is a pearl of wisdom. Ginsburg and Scalia differed in their interpretation of written texts, but they shared a reverence for the Constitution and the institution they served.

In other words, their friendship was not simply an expression of their humanity. It rested on a fundamental pillar they shared.

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Can we find pillars today which we share with our ideological foes? If anything, we're going in the opposite direction. We've become geniuses at finding the things which divide us. Those pillars that we thought we shared are crumbling beneath us.

As we honor the extraordinary legacy of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, as we recall her trailblazing accomplishments, as we sit shivah for a Jewish and American hero, let us not forget the part of her legacy that speaks directly to our divisive times.

Of all the things to love about RBG, "We are different, we are one" may be the one we need most.

*Mr. Suissa is President of Tribe Media/Jewish Journal. In 2015, he was awarded first prize for "Editorial Excellence" by the American Jewish Press Association. Prior to Tribe Media, David was founder and CEO of Suissa Miller Advertising, a marketing firm named "Agency of the Year" by USA Today. David was born in Casablanca, Morocco, grew up in Montreal, and now lives in Los Angeles with his five children.*