Old News We Should Pay Attention To

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By Robbie Friedmann

Returning from a visit to Israel provides food for thought in quantities that require a special processor. So a couple of observations will suffice. First, the *cease-fire* is there only on paper. Shootings and stabbings continue and security forces daily disrupt potentially disastrous terror attacks. Even the Israeli papers do not report on five explosions in Jerusalem that turned out to be a robot shooting at a suspicious object. In Israel that is no longer news. Second, news becomes far more tabloid-like with attention to the trivial and with an uncanny push towards making *salient* realities by twisting facts. This is a fairly new phenomenon in Israel. The most recent example was a non-quote from the military Chief of Staff that became a headline in one tabloid ("we won"). That was an out-of-context editorial conclusion ("Pyrrhic Victory," Aharon Levran, The *Jerusalem Post*, 10 July 2003) and not what the Chief of Staff had actually said. But perhaps these kinds of twists provide Israelis with a much needed - even if destructive - sense of escapism from the daily existential threats. Almost as if the Chief of Staff had not said it Israelis would have had some consolation. Little does it add to a sense of comfort that indeed he did not. If all this makes sense you have understood Israeli existence. If it did not you have to be there to understand.

Indeed, the Palestinians are by no means resting on their terror laurels. They are attacking simultaneously on all fronts. In the realm of PR, propaganda, deception, and the creation of public opinion, they have learned from the best and imitate them (the Nazis) shamelessly. Now they focus their *rage* on Christians who support Israel ("Bethlehem Committee Meeting Calls for Repudiation of Zionist Christianity," Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, 3 July 2003).

They also successfully employ their terms of reference which are mistranslated into English. They use the term *hudna* which is erroneously translated as *cease-fire* without conveying the meaning of the term (regroup and hit when you are stronger) and various Palestinians - including Arab members of the Israeli Parliament - refer to *hudna* rather than to peace ("Hudna" - report update, Palestinian Media Watch, 26 June 2003). In the meantime they have no problem continuing to glorify arch-terrorists ("PA Names Summer Camp after Master Terrorist," Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, 15 July 2003). At the same time, despite Israeli reports about cosmetic cleaning of anti-Israel graffiti and a *perceived* decline in incitement, the actual level and scope of incitement, hate, and calls for violence have not abated among Palestinians and still constitute a serious challenge for Israel ("Watchdog group: Palestinian Incitement Still a Problem," Tovah Lazarof, The *Jerusalem Post*, 10 July 2003).

The false cease-fire in the region is nothing but a trap which often is even being admitted to being such by terror organizations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The more *moderate* groups are far from willing to give up the verbiage of *return* to Israel (which often serves as a euphemism to the destruction of Israel - after all, no Palestinian wants to *return* to Jordan which is also part of *Palestine*). For example, a recent statement by the Chairman of the Palestinian Legislative

Council argued that "[Bush's Words on the Jewish Identity of Israel Arouses Concern For the Right of Return](#);" and that "[Oslo Was an Achievement Because We Gave Nothing In Exchange](#)" (MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Palestinian Authority, 3 July 2003, No. 534). And a new Palestinian poll that suggested Palestinians have no real intention to *return* to Israel resulted in a mob storming the pollster's offices.

Therefore, it is imperative to put the issue of Palestinian *return* to rest or else it will be disastrous for Israel and all concerned including the U.S. ("A Blueprint for International Instability," Shlomo Avineri, The *Jerusalem Post*, 17 July 2003).

This so-called cease-fire in the area will not hold for yet another reason: heavy Saudi investment in terrorism that shows no indication of stopping ["[Saudi Royal Family's Financial Support to the Palestinians 1998-2003: More than 15 Billion Riyals ($4 Billion U.S.) Given to 'Mujahideen Fighters' and 'Families of Martyrs,](#)'" Steven Stalinsky, MEMRI, Special Report - Saudi Arabia/ Jihad & Terrorism Studies, 3 July 2003, No. 17].

The remnants of the former Iraqi regime are reminiscent of the Palestinian cruelty as U.S.-related news "creep-up" daily with the death of American soldiers from Iraqi ambushes. Yet what is so sinister about it is that these attacks are not as serendipitous as they seem but are rather part of a criminal plan which includes looting, burning, destroying, and killing ("[A Top Secret Document Dated January 23, 2003 From Iraqi Intelligence: A Plan for Action in the Event of a Regime Downfall](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Iraq, 17 July 2003, No. 538). In short, the same types of documents confiscated from Palestinians are now found in Iraq and pointing to the same criminal and vile nature of the regimes.

The Palestinians have produced, cultivated, and glorified a culture of hatred and death or what some call a culture of anti-history and anti-instinct fraught with fabrication of facts, denial of facts, and promotion of death and destruction of others and their very own ("Where Hatred Trumps Bread: What Does the Palestinian Nation Offer the World?" Cynthia Ozick, The *Wall Street Journal*, 30 June 2003).

This sense of *anti* seems to have guided the development of modern Arab nationalism as a poor substitute to "pro" forces. Negation rules. Yet, "being against" helped the Arab rulers and Arab societies deflect problems away from themselves and shift the blame onto others. It is for that exact reason that future developments in the region will be positive only if the Arabs in the area will focus on their frailties and try to fix them rather than shift the focus against others ("Jews and Anti-Jews: Hatred of Israel is a Crutch Arab States Have to Give Up." Ruth Wisse, The *Wall Street Journal*, 16 June 2003).

Yet the problem is not limited to negative Arab postures against Israel. Modern antisemitism has shifted the blame from the Jews to Israel. It is easier, more focused, and it allows the resurgence of antisemitism without it being called so. It also provides some *cleansing* by making the Jews (Israel) appear as the perpetrators and not the victims. The problem with this new wave is that it not only supports the vicious Arab antisemitism but it also undercuts Israel's legitimacy from defending itself. It blurs victim and offender by reversing the traditional roles and doubly victimizing Israel as deserving of terror on one hand and not permitted to act against it on the

other ("How I Became an 'Unconscious Fascist'," Fiamma Nirenstein, Jewish World Review, 15 July 2003).

And by no means is the U.S. immune to this modern wave of antisemitism. Copying from European academic circles ("Outrage as Oxford Bans Student for Being Israeli," Julie Henry, *Daily Telegraph*, 29 June 2003) and adding a specialized American twist to it, universities are busy lambasting Israel and encouraging various types - of mostly economic divestiture - of boycotts against Israel ("If an Alien Dropped in Tonight," Alan M. Dershowitz, *National Post*, 9 June 2003).

Much of the modern vilification of Israel comes from "objective" sources that pass for icons of journalism. The BBC is one and it looks like the BBC scandals follow in the foot of another icon, the *New York Times*. At home it was accused of bias in its war in Iraq coverage (though it defiantly stood by its reports - "BBC Defends Itself Against Accusations of Bias on War," Warren Hoge, The *New York Times*, 15 July 2003) and abroad it continued with malicious and unfounded attacks against Israel, resulting in severing governmental support for its Israel staff ("Can the BBC Operate Responsibly?" Daniel Seaman, The *Jerusalem Post*, 15 July 2003): "Criticizing Israel's policies is the BBC's prerogative. However, an accumulation of grievances over a number of years leads us to believe that **t**he BBC has crossed the line from valid criticism into vilification and demonization of the State of Israel, to such an extent as borders on delegitimization of the nation itself. A direct cause of incitement, such treatment reinforces acts of antisemitism and violence against Israelis and Jews worldwide." Little wonder then to find it has long been on the watch-list of CAMERA.

It is that distorted bias which helps the unrelenting incitement and propaganda from the Arab world filter down to the West by uncritically using the terms of reference of the perpetrator. It is *Intifada* despite the fact that the three-year Arab wave of violence is not a *popular uprising* as the Arab term denotes (rather, it is a strategic calculated decision); or *hudna* which is translated as *cease-fire* when the meaning of the term is regrouping to strike again when convenient ("Hudna With Hamas: The Media Translate *Hudna* as *Truce*, Misrepresenting the Term's Religious, Historical and Modern Meaning." HonestReporting, Communique: 23 June 2003).

The problem lies in the perspective provided in reporting about incitement and propaganda. There should be little surprise that when the deaths of Israelis and Palestinians is attributed to a *cycle of violence* and laying *equal blame* on both sides then when it comes to propaganda that equality will miraculously disappear. Indeed, a story about incitement covers fairly well the Palestinian egregious conduct but is digging hard to find Israeli equivalences to make it appear as if the two societies suffer from the same syndrome and that they are not that different from each other ("A War on the Words of War," Megan K. Stack, *Los Angeles Times*, 17 July 2003).

Yet, the difference is not only in degree and quality it is also in how systematically different the two sides are. The Palestinians are carrying out a systematic strategic terror campaign that is laced (and triggered) by unrelenting incitement that is evident in text books, religious preaching, and media campaigns. In Israel there are various expressions of anti-Arab bias but they are limited to small and defined groups and by no means reflect an institutionalization of hate in the same systematic established fashion carried out not only by Palestinians but by Arabs and others

as well. Even a careful reading of the *Los Angeles Times* article leads one to conclude that the worse the Israelis have to say about Palestinians is that all of them are terrorists or question their social skills. This is more than understandable given that Israelis have been subjected to a cruel campaign of terror with more than 800 murdered and 5,000 injured in the last 32 months alone (equal to 40,000 American dead and 250,000 injured). Given all this, one may even be surprised that Israelis DO NOT have the systematic institutionalized hate, vilification, and incitement that so heavily permeated the Palestinian/Arab educational system, mosques, and media.

One would think that those immigrating to the U.S. adopt the American way of life; that stands even truer for those who came from difficult conditions, tyranny, or instability. Yet for some groups, despite their being far better off than in their home countries, the public statements they put forth show a false integration into American society. The Arabs/Muslims are exclusively dominated by advocacy and narratives that seem to adopt such values as civil rights but do so in a very limited and unidirectional fashion (namely, civil rights only for themselves with emphasis on rights and not on obligations). This community keeps complaining about "abuses" of Arabs/Muslims in the U.S., it fabricate facts to support such claims ("ISLAM: Muslim Group Urges Civil Rights Changes," Amen Corner, 3rd news item, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, 19 July 2003) but not once does it come up with unequivocal statements condemning terrorism beyond their narrow self-serving interests. To illustrate, since the atrocity of September 11th these advocacy groups have continuously blamed the U.S., accused the U.S. and even when issuing condemnations against terror did so with the caveat of *understanding* and *explaining* why terrorism was done, thus usually pinning it on U.S. policy (i.e., supporting Israel) or Arab *suffering* or *anger* and ending up justifying terror.

None of this is new news. These are all well known old items. If there is anything new here it is the length or prolongation of the same situation and risk of further exacerbation of the situation. The only question is how seriously will we take this and what will we be doing about it other than passively ignoring the grave danger this poses to our existence. And by our existence I refer to Western civilization as a whole.