

Tolerating Terror - Testing Our Limits

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For generations Jews have provided the perfect scapegoat: landless, powerless and different, Jews not only were hated but also became a convenient and easy target to blame for the ills that inflicted society. Blaming Jews for the plague at once showed the helplessness against a natural tragedy. Coupled with the need to attribute blame Jews were - and are - perceived to be responsible for everything antisemites fear ("Blaming the Jews," Dennis Prager, *The Edge*, 26 March 2004).

Indeed, against the ultimate power of the sword - or the gas chambers - denials, arguments or wishful thinking - proved to be insufficient weapons and historically many Jews who were given the "choice" between conversion and death preferred the latter ("Confessions of an Antisemite," Amotz Asa-el, *The Jerusalem Post*, 25 March 2004).

Against this backdrop it is not surprising the anticipated report on (increased) antisemitism by the European Union was met with sharp accusations of under-reporting the scope and severity of the phenomenon ("EU 'Covered Up' Attacks on Jews by Young Muslims," Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, 1 April 2004). While the report acknowledged the alarming rise of antisemitism (hate rhetoric and violent acts) it has minimized the role North African and Arab residents in Europe played in these attacks ("EU Report 'Covered Up' True Perpetrators of European Antisemitism," Ellis Shuman, *israelinsider*, 1 April 2004). One author of the report charged that "the latest findings had been consistently 'massaged' by the EU watchdog to play down the role of North African youth."

Twenty centuries of entrenched antisemitic traditions cannot be detached overnight ("[Antisemitism: Integral to European Culture](#)," Manfred Gerstenfeld, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Post-Holocaust and Antisemitism, No. 19 1 April 2004). But what is frightening about the new version of antisemitism is its mutation of alignments one would not normally expect, such as between other "traditional" enemies such as Islamists and the European Left ("Europe's Old Disease Returns Militant Islamists are forming a twisted alliance with Europe's Left to spread virulent antisemitism that targets both Jews and America," Fred Siegel, DLC, *Blueprint Magazine*, 23 March 2004).

It is alarming enough for some who noticed from numerous entries displayed in a Google search for "Jew" that the first was an antisemitic site ("Antisemitic 'Jew' Site Top of Google Search," Michael Mylrea, *The Jerusalem Post*, 31 March 2004). Protests have been raised to try to change the manner in which search results are displayed.

The European Union may downplay the severity of antisemitism that stems from Islamists sources within Europe but such denial does not make the problem go away. The origin of Islamist antisemitism in Europe can be traced on one hand to European xenophobia of Muslim immigrants and their need to find a scapegoat. The Jews so conveniently again provide it for both. For the Muslims it allows focusing their anger on Europeans (Jews) but not the majority Christians (at least not yet). For the Europeans it is the reverse ("foreigners" but not the Islamists

they fear but do not know how to handle) and so the Jews find themselves in the middle - victims of both.

But the Europeans only need to read the writing on the (official) wall (of Arab media). An analysis of four years of articles and cartoons in the leading Egyptian government weekly shows a virulent antisemitic and anti-American motif. For the Europeans this means only one thing: they can blame the Jews, they can allow their Islamists to vilify the Jews, but the Europeans themselves are not far behind as the real target ("[Anti-American and Antisemitic Cartoons in Leading Egyptian Government Weekly Al-Ahram: 1998-2004](#)," Steven Stalinsky, MEMRI, Special Report - Egypt/Arab Antisemitism Documentation Project, 2 April 2004, No. 28).

Islamists did not invent antisemitism, but they have perfected their own version that was strongly influenced by European blood libels such as the [Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#) (which also serves as an "inspiring gospel" to the Nation of Aztlán, a California-based Hispanic nationalist group supportive of Palestinian terrorism and - [according to the ADL](#) - is virulently antisemitic and in turn inspires official Syrian propaganda).

The Egyptian weekly articles and editorials consistently vilify the U.S. by comparing it to Nazi Germany (conveniently forgetting that many in Egypt collaborated with the Nazis). They ascribe to Jews and the U.S. a variety of conspiracy theories, claiming the CIA and FBI as well as the Jews and the Mossad were behind the September 11 atrocities, and offering full support for suicide bombing. The [cartoons published by the Egyptian weekly](#) vilify the U.S. as the "bully of the world." They portray President George W. Bush as the "Crusader" and the U.S. as "sinister" and see the U.S. - British alliance as "evil." By implication, negation of Israel and the U.S. makes the Egyptians and the Arab world appear as both victim and superior at the same time, and Egypt as setting the tone for the Arab world as its leader.

Not surprisingly perhaps - though more than disappointingly - rabid antisemitism (disguised as anti-Zionism and anti-Israel "sentiments") is evident on university campuses in two formats: student activists who are funded by a variety of groups - and countries - that espouse such causes, and faculty. The latter constitute a dual danger: first, under the guise of academic freedom faculty are involved in an array of anti-Israel activities. They range from [divestiture campaigns](#) that are the brainchild of the old Arab boycott against "Jews and Zionist products" (which started in 1945 long before there were "occupied territories" or even the State of Israel for that matter but eerily coincided with the end of World War I) to those who purport to teach Middle East scholarship and widely use their academic classroom as a hate-base pulpit against Israel with many being funded by Arab sources ("Israel's Biggest Threat On Campus," Gary Rosenblatt, *Jewish Week*, 19 March 2004).

The Palestinian terror regime ("Jerusalem Post Op-Ed - Find the Differences: PA and Hamas Ideology Converge," Itamar Marcus and Barbara Crook, *Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin*, 28 March 2004) gets an incredible amount of credit not only with the European Union and the [World Bank](#) but also with various media outlets. Critics of Israel were quick to condemn the elimination of Sheikh Yassin, were quick to condemn the bombing of the Iraqi Osirak nuclear site in 1981 and condemned Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for not "giving enough" to the former Palestinian "prime minister" to guarantee his success. Tom Friedman actually went as far as suggesting Israel has given him nothing. This despite Israel's goodwill gesture of releasing hundreds of terrorist prisoners. Now the same "prime minister" (no one should take that title too

seriously) revealed that Arafat is the problem, not Sharon ("Abbas: I Will Never Take Job Again," Khaled Abu Toameh, *The Jerusalem Post*, 28 March 2004) and that he would never take the position again. Just do not hold your breath for a sincere apology from Friedman for yet another erroneous assertion. He is busy dealing with India.

The reverberation of the eliminating Sheikh Yassin from ever being able to order another murderous act is still felt from the Middle East to Australia. A Friday afternoon violent demonstration interrupting prayers in Jerusalem's Old City ("Violent Clashes Mar Friday Prayers at Temple Mount: Thousands of Palestinians barricaded inside mosque; dozens reported injured," Tal Yamin-Wolvovich and Marwan Atamna, *Ma'ariv Online*, 2 April 2004), taking advantage of more relaxed police protocol (so they would not be "humiliated"), was yet another public display of support for this arch-terrorist. In Australia, 300 supporters of Yassin demonstrated against "Sharon the terrorist" ("Australia: 300 Protest Yassin Killing," *Ma'ariv Online*, 28 March 2004). But increasingly support for the operation is being noticed.

The killing is justified on pure operational basis as eliminating the most important terrorist leader from being able to attack Israel ("Attacking Hamas: Killing of Sheik Was Justifiable," Barry Rubin, *Newsday*, 23 March 2004). The liberal San Francisco paper published an op-ed column expressing understanding for the killing of Yassin as a necessary option ("Responses to Terrorism: Targeted killing is a necessary option," Abraham D. Sofer, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 March 2004). Analysis of options or models of response to terror suggests the bureaucratic option of denial ("Europe is Not at War") and the keystone cops model (where 7,000 Pakistani soldiers bungled up the capture of al-Qaeda operatives) are poor alternatives to an assertive intervention as demonstrated by the Israeli handling of Yassin.

Indeed, "While not perfect, robust anti-terror operations like targeted killings will remain among the most effective tools in a policymaker's arsenal when diplomacy and deterrence fail. These operations need supporting measures: interrupting terror financing, police coordination and most importantly, the 'war of ideas' -- the battle for hearts and minds of Muslims. In the absence of effective nation-states able to control global radical Islamist terrorist networks, from Madrid to Gaza to the North Western Province in Pakistan, targeted killings are legitimate acts of national self-defense" ("Which Anti-Terror Model Do You Like?" Ariel Cohen, Tech Central Station, 26 March 2004).

An excellent analysis in connection with Yassin's elimination places in proper context the sinister nature of the perpetrator ("A Legacy of Pain and Poison," Editorial, Fouad Ajami, *U.S. News and World Report*, 5 April 2004). According to the respected Fouad Ajami, "Terrorism probes the world, tests its limits and always redefines our moral awareness downward." But this new form of terrorism exploits religion in ways that reshape our definition of it: "The way to perdition had been found: The cult of 'martyrdom' had been sanctified. Religion had been remade; from solace and ritual it had been changed into a weapon of combat." While he refers to the terrorists as "religious die-hards," even this term loses meaning and might be better stated as "easy-dies-it." Just another example of how current language does not capture well enough the sordid reality.

Even those who justify the elimination of Yassin do not expect that with it terrorism will have been eliminated altogether. Reports about the director of Israel's security service's objection to

the elimination were taken out of context. He objected to a Yassin-only killing and instead was in favor of eliminating the entire Hamas leadership. His point has merit given that Yassin's replacement already has verbally assaulted the U.S. and drafted God to become the enemy of the U.S. only to tone down his rhetoric a couple of notches for external consumption ("Rantisi Calls Bush an 'Enemy of Islam': New Hamas leader lashes out at the U.S. President for vetoing U.N. condemnation of Israel for Sheikh Yassin assassination," Marwan Athamna, *Ma'ariv*, 28 March 2004). The threat was repeated by other Hamas leaders a day later specifically against visiting American diplomats and then toned down again ("Palestinian Militants Threaten U.S. Diplomats," Ibrahim Barzak, *Canoe*, 30 March 2004).

With the much-deserved criticism that French politicians, writers and media received in connection with their position on Iraq (not supporting the U.S.) and the Palestinians (openly supporting them), it is of little surprise the following joke was circulating widely as terror warning levels have been raised in Europe due to recent alerts: "In light of the Madrid bombing, France has raised their terror alert level from 'run' to 'hide.' The only two higher levels in France are 'surrender' and 'collaboration.'" It is therefore encouraging to hear a voice of reason coming out from France's libertarian-conservative movement that makes a very accurate and comprehensive observation: our tolerance of terrorism will bring our very own demise ("[Terror and Tolerance](#)," Jean-Christophe Mounicq, *Washington Times*, 30 March 2004).

Indeed, in the struggle against bullies who are determined to kill you for your mere existence, surrender, collaboration or even hiding are no longer acceptable terror threat levels. Not even as a joke. Appeasement has been tried and was paid for dearly ("[We Tried Appeasement Once Before](#)," Mark Steyn, *Jewish World Review*, 25 March 2004).

It is therefore imperative to unite in the war on terror and stop distinguishing between the terror against "us" and the terror against "them" ("[A Double Standard in the War on Terror](#)," Johannes Gerster, *Ha'aretz*, 1 April 2004). Objection to terror should be unequivocal with an all-encompassing moral clarity that unfortunately is lacking in the one place that without a doubt leads the fight against international terrorism ("The White House Lacks Moral Clarity When it Comes to Israel," Saul Singer, *National Review*, 30 March 2004): "So long as even the U.S. fears exposing the jihad against Israel, the war against global jihad cannot be won." By looking at the war on al-Qaeda as a non-negotiable conflict but looking at Palestinian terrorism as an element in a negotiable conflict, a terrible mistake is being committed that will indeed eventually harm not only Israel but the U.S. and the rest of the free world. Al-Qaeda terror and Palestinian terror sprout in the same [greenhouse](#). Yet another proof for this point was made earlier in the week when an Iraqi cleric condemned the mutilation of the bodies of the four Americans murdered in Fallujah, Iraq, but not the murder itself. Namely, giving legitimacy to murder.

In Fallujah, four American civilian workers were ambushed, killed, mutilated and their bodies hanged over a bridge by a frenzied mob celebrating the act in absolute ecstasy. The horrifying scenes (mostly blurred on American TV networks) provided a glimpse of what could be done to all of us if the Islamists only had a chance. Whether these are Ba'athist, Shiite or Sunni, the thirst for blood is well ingrained in their very being. A number of commentators saw this as a watershed event that if not heeded will only accelerate and impact us in a worse manner down the line ("[A Message for Fallujah: Those behind yesterday's atrocity must pay--or we all will](#)," Peggy Noonan, *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 April 2004).

The lesson from the Fallujah murder-fest is not only what happened to the Americans in Iraq but what might happen to all of us ("Fallujah: A Reminder of What the Future Might Look Like if We Fail," Christopher Hitchens, *The Wall Street Journal*, 2 April 2004). Palestinians can scream "massacre in Jenin" even if it did not happen but few have any doubt that given a chance, they would butcher Israelis without any mercy. That is the precise teaching of the likes of Sheikh Yassin, his predecessors and his followers. As Egyptian radio broadcast announced in Hebrew to Israelis in 1967 just prior to the Six-Day War: "Satan will rise with his black gown, will wrap you all under it and take you to your death." One remains wondering why another lesson was needed. The writing has been on the wall for decades. From the assassination of Olympic athletes, the hijacking of planes, murdering passengers on board, on the tarmac and in terminals, the bombing of the marine barracks and the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, the pushing into the sea of a disabled American, the embassy bombings in Africa, the Cole and the numerous terror attacks that murdered Israelis in buses, cafes, stores, streets, roads, and of course, the 9-11 atrocity. It all comes from the same Murder Incorporated firm even if in different (explosive) packages.

One of the sad by-products of terrorism is the accompanying sense of loss of hope, internal criticism, internal finger pointing and despair that is representative of a certain segment of the "intelligentsia." To counter such winds, one Israeli observer acknowledges the pain and grief but suggests that rather than despair is the order of the day ("[Israel's Hope and Despair](#)," Judy Lash Balint, *FrontPageMagazine.com*, 31 March 2004). And an Israeli scholar argues ("From Left to Right," Ruthie Blum, *The Jerusalem Post*, 1 April 2004) that "the tensions of Israeli society are its life force, not its downfall. In spite of its imperfections...Israel is the greatest achievement of the 20th century." Perhaps others in the European continent could take note and learn from this.

The realities of the Middle East are such that one may be depressed yet not resort to despair. Perhaps this is the difference between reality and illusion. A veteran scholar who shifted positions on the Arab-Israeli conflict offers the following valuable observation ("[The Lonely Historian: Benny Morris discusses the new version of his famously controversial book, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, which has left him alienated from both the left and the right](#)," *Atlantic Unbound*, 25 March 2004): "...unless there is a basic change of heart and mind - a change of mindset - among Palestinians and in the Arab world in general about Israel, we are in for a continuous struggle over the coming decades. Basically what is needed here is a compromise based on two states, and that in effect requires Arab acceptance of Israel's legitimacy. But so long as there is this view of Israel as a cancer in the Middle East - which like a Crusader's stake must be uprooted and will be uprooted - there will be no compromise here. It does not matter what agreement is signed or what temporary ceasefires occur. In the long term of history, it is meaningless. So long as Israel's legitimacy is questioned, its existence is not assured."

Now all one needs to do is replace/add Europe, the U.S. and the rest of the free world to the equation above and the future suddenly becomes far clearer. It also becomes more sobering and painful, but clearer and instructive as to the nature of the threat and what needs to be done about it. No one should say "I did not know" and hopefully those who did will not be in a position to say "I told you so."