

Jews and Public Safety in 5779

By Robbie Friedmann

The International Institute for Counter-Terrorism holds its annual conference in close proximity to Rosh Hashanah and I have just attended its 18th annual conference, which – as before – resulted in reflections about looming threats. I chaired a workshop on resilience and the message is clear: identify the threat, prepare for it, minimize the damage, and focus on recovery and continuity. As we mark the New Year 5779, we should focus on these exact elements, as there are threats to Israel from Iran and its proxies (Hamas, Hezbollah), Syria, and a host of other groups, and threats to the Jewish community in Europe, the U.K., the U.S. and elsewhere.

The danger to personal and public safety from vehicular accidents, drug abuse, natural disasters and numerous other factors has a tragic toll on human life, yet none captures the imagination as man-made disasters, namely, war and terrorism. Indeed, more of the same continues to be expected this coming year, with no end in sight. Israel is preparing for war against her, expecting massive casualties as the threats from Hamas and Hezbollah have increased, and the instability in Syria could yet open a third front, and Iran, a fourth.

As threatening as terrorism and wars are, for Jews there is yet another related dimension: war by other means. Namely, the modern incarnation of the old anti-Semitism. Arab and Muslim clerics from Iran, Lebanon and Gaza virulently scream to annihilate Jews and Israel, deploying the “new and improved” version of the Big Lie Technique. Jews and Israel are stereotyped as descendants of apes/pigs, thieves, usurpers, colonialist, racists, imposing an “apartheid state,” and are blamed for every ill on the planet. This hateful incitement is at the core of the BDS campaign against Israel and the Jews.

While (too) many in Israel dismiss the impact of the Boycott Divestments and Sanctions, that dismissal is unwarranted. Perhaps the economic impact is – for now – less than the BDS is aiming for, but the long-term effect of undermining the very existence of Israel is far from diminishing, and it has implications for Jews everywhere. BDS as an organization and as a campaign is soundly anti-Semitic. Such activities are on an exponential rise on U.S. and European university campuses and the vitriolic incitement is often translated into intimidation and violence. Examine U.K.’s Jeremy Corbyn: his anti-Semitic rants, phony apologies, embracing of terrorists and wild attacks against British Jews and Israel are giving legitimacy to what many thought was a bygone era. This is happening in a civilized country. Corbyn is an aspiring prime minister, yet the president of Turkey – likely in office for life – has venomous positions against Israel and Jews. Turkey used to be an ally of Israel and is still a member of NATO.

About two years ago Israel recognized the BDS as a strategic threat that needed to be addressed. In that regard, it is encouraging that the state of Tennessee passed SJR 170 (2015) stating that BDS is “one of the main vehicles for spreading anti-Semitism and advocating the

elimination of the Jewish state.” Since then, 25 states joined with similar resolutions and laws against the BDS.

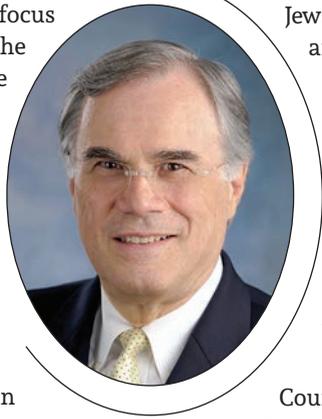
Criticism of Israel is legitimate, yet the efforts of the BDS are not meant to improve and correct flaws in Israel. Rather, it aims at eliminating Israel altogether. Under the guise of “human rights,” the BDS is striving to deny those exact rights from Israel and from Jews. The fact that some Jews and Israelis take an active role in the BDS campaign does not make it any less anti-Semitic. It is not who one is, but rather what one does that defines one’s position. The BDS attempts to cut the cooperative relationships between law enforcement agencies and the Israel Police and are aimed at weakening Israel until it breaks. These efforts are doomed to fail, but should not be ignored.

Earlier this year, the Durham City Council passed a resolution 6-0 to stop any military and police training with Israel. Not that any exist. This resolution was spearheaded by the Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) and supported by Durham’s (Jewish) mayor. They tried this in Atlanta two years ago and failed. It is a safe bet that they see Durham as a pivotal victory and are trying to replicate it in other cities. The Jewish community in Durham was understandably shocked and hurt. The fact that the grounds for the resolution were unfounded makes little difference: BDS and JVP have marked their target and placed a bull’s-eye around it no matter how far away from facts it is. This is how the Big Lie Technique works. Lies be-come a reality

The community is doing its best to recover and be resilient against this vicious attack, and held a community meeting to explore steps to rescind this atrocious decision. JVP now complains in the letter published in The (Durham) Herald-Sun that the Jewish community is “erasing” JVP by not including its speakers in the event. Rather hypocritical coming from those who do all they can to erase Israel.

Israel developed an expertise in fighting terrorism and the Israel Police accumulated valuable professional and organizational knowledge that made it one of the best police forces around the world. It now works in partnerships with many sister agencies in many countries and it has a great deal to contribute to better policing, and is eager to do so. GILEE is proud to play a role in bringing law enforcement agencies in closer partnerships with Israel, working with more than 25 countries and 25 states to promote this life-saving exchange.

These partnerships and knowledge sharing are what constitute a contribution to, and an impact on public safety. Real public safety, not false human rights propaganda. In that sense, law enforcement agencies should be viewed as the best protectors of human rights. Indeed, the Thin Blue Line! Undermining Israel will not contribute to the betterment of life of Palestinians nor that of their



supporters. By denying Israel of what is seen as elementary for anyone else, the BDS-JVP efforts against Israel are doomed to fail, but not without proactively coping with this threat, addressing it head-on and recovering by demonstrating strong resilience.

The lessons of strong partnerships can and should be adapted from police practice to civil society. Partnerships offer an effective way not only to better serve citizens, but also to display fortitude and resoluteness against looming threats. Perhaps not less important, being proactive through building partnerships also pro-vides a moral compass that reinforces our well-being and sends a message to those who wish us harm that we are more than ready not to be taken for granted.

Shana tova. ■

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