



## ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel  
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee  
of Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

### Commentary...

#### **The Myths of Peace and the Reality of our Dead Boys** By Naomi Ragen

I want to tell you the story of two boys: twenty year olds; both of them in the elite of elite army units; both of them from rabbinical families; both of them living in Kiryat Arba, the Jewish neighborhood of Hebron.

Achikam Amichai and David Rubin were out on leave from their IDF units, enjoying a well-earned holiday. They decided one Friday afternoon to take a little hike in their backyards. Their friend, Naama Ohayon, went with them. It was a beautiful day, beautiful scenery, wild and open, as it is in that part of the land of Israel.

They passed an Arab, who asked them for water. The boys gave it to him, then waved goodbye and went on their way. A short while later, alerted by the Palestinian they had shared water with, three armed terrorists - who had been lying in wait for an opportunity to kill Israelis and steal their weapons - drove by and opened fire on the three young people.

Our boys, ambushed and badly wounded, nevertheless, began firing, killing the terrorist driver of the car. The other two terrorists then hopped out of the car, put their guns at point-blank range to the fatally injured boys and fired. These "big heroes" then threw their dead comrade out of the car like so much garbage and took off, back to Hebron where they live.

Hiding in the forest, Naama Ohayon, who had miraculously escaped, used her cell phone to contact Israeli security forces. They praised her unbelievable cool in the face of the horror she had witnessed. Security forces rescued her, but it was too late for the boys.

Meanwhile, Shimon Peres found time for a photo opportunity, shaking hands with a member of Abu Mazen's government who expressed his "condolences." This, of course, before it became known that the killers were Abu Mazen's paid employees.

According to Efrat Weiss, writing for Ynet, sometime on Friday evening, the Palestinian Authority started the rumor that it wasn't a terrorist attack at all, but a "drug deal" gone bad. This went all over the Israeli news; and you can just imagine how the parents must have felt. Others said the boys had no right to go hiking. (Right, let's all stay in our homes and quake.)

Meanwhile, the two murderers, fearing the IDF was closing in on them, turned themselves over to Palestinian security forces, who didn't say a word about this to the Israelis. However, when Israeli security asked them pointedly to turn over the weapons of the murderers and the victims, they did. But they didn't turn over the killers, whom they were still "interrogating."

Surprise, surprise. They weren't Hamas operatives. They were salary-earning members of the Palestinian Authority, paid for by US and European Union donations to Abu Mazen. He's the "good Palestinian," as opposed to the Hamas, who are terrorists and "bad Palestinians," the ones we need to weaken by supporting Abu Mazen and his gang of thugs.

The names of the murderers are Omar Badar Ali-Halim Teha - a resident of Hebron, 26, a "soldier" in the Palestinian National Security Forces and an active member of Fatah - and Ali al-Hamid Regev Dindis - a 24-year-old Hebron resident who is a clerk in the Sharia Court of the Palestinian Authority and also connected to the Palestinian Secret Service. The dead driver is 23 year old Radil Abdul Naim Natshe.

There are many conclusions to be drawn from this story. I will leave you to draw those concerning the myths of making peace with the Palestinian Authority. (IsraelINN.com Jan 31)

This week's issue is dedicated  
in honour of the Bar Mitzvah of  
**Aaron Zeifman**  
Mazel Tov!

#### Habash's Last Laugh

By Caroline Glick

Where does Arab fanaticism come from? Does it come from the mosque? Or does it come from the fanatics' intended targets refusal to close down the mosque? The death by natural causes of George Habash on January 26 indicates strongly that the latter is the case.

Habash, the founder and commander of the Popular Front for the Liberation

of Palestine was a repugnant, fanatical, mass-murderer. Habash's terror specialties included airplane hijacking, hostage taking, massacre, assassination, and suicide bombings. Far from an Islamic supremacist, Habash was a Christian.

One of Habash's signature tactics was his use of Nazi-style "selections." After his henchmen hijacked passenger jets, they would walk among their hostages, separating the Jews from the non-Jews, or sometimes the Jews and the Americans from the non-Jews and non-Americans. They would let the non-Jews and non-Americans go, and hold the Jews and the Americans hostage.

Habash was not simply a sworn enemy of the Jewish people, Israel and the United States. He was also the enemy of the Hashemites in Jordan. In August and September 1970, Habash conducted five sensationalist airline hijackings. The hijacked aircraft and his Jewish hostages were sent to Jordan. Habash's hijackings were a central component of the PLO's campaign - backed by Iraq and Syria - to overthrow the Hashemite dynasty and to replace it with a Communist Palestinian Soviet-satellite state. The PLO's aims were only scuttled because Israel answered the late King Hussein's pleas for help and stopped the Syrians and Iraqis from invading Jordan.

Rather than hang Habash, Jordan gave him a home. Habash wasn't buried in a potter's field. Thousands attended his funeral and hailed him as a hero for his massacre of Israelis and Jews. And this, 13 years after Jordan signed a peace agreement with Israel.

HABASH'S EVASION of justice for his crimes is typical. In his first term of office, President George W. Bush railed against this harsh reality of non-accountability by referring to it as the "soft bigotry of low expectations." Bush pledged to work to replace Arab bigotry and tyranny which breed fanaticism and embrace terror with tolerance and freedom.

Six years later, Bush is not only ignoring his word, he is undermining it by rewarding regimes and societies that lie to him and systematically break their word to him.

Case in point is Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. In his State of the Union address last week, Bush praised Abbas as a leader who "recognizes that confronting terror is essential to achieving a state where his people can live in dignity and at peace with Israel."

But two days before Bush reaped such praise on him Abbas declared three days of official mourning for Habash's death in the PA and ordered flags to be flown at half mast for the entire mourning period. Abbas referred to Habash as "an historic leader" and declared his death, "a great loss for the Palestinian cause and for the Palestinian people for whom he fought for 60 years."

Rather than hold Abbas and his colleagues accountable upholding mass murderers as heroes, Bush insists that they must be given a state before he leaves office. And last month Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice paved the way for the international donors' conference in Paris where the international community pledged \$7.4 billion in financial assistance to Abbas and his Habash and Arafat worshipping government.

THE US POLICY of ignoring Arab culpability extends far beyond Jordan and the PA. US policies towards Syria and Saudi Arabia illustrate the breadth of the problem. Syria supports and engages in terror, proliferates weapons of mass destruction, allows terrorists and terror weapons to transit its territory en route to Iraq and Lebanon, and has allowed itself to become an Iranian

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protectorate. Yet the US invited it to the Annapolis peace conference and is planning to sell it dual-use computers.

Saudi Arabia supports Hamas, and al-Qaida. It is warming its ties with Iran. It finances jihadist indoctrination throughout the world. It refuses to increase its oil output to stabilize the world economy. And it has no human rights to speak of. Yet the administration embraces the Saudis as moderates and Congress is poised to approve the sale of \$20 billion in advanced weaponry including JDAMS to Saudi Arabia.

BACK IN the days when Habash was hijacking airplanes, there was a hierarchy for not giving in to his extortion. At the bottom were the British, who insisted on giving in. Then came the Americans who thought the British shouldn't give in unless absolutely necessary. Finally there were the Israelis who said that terrorists must never be negotiated with. Period.

Thirty years later, the British are giving extra welfare checks to polygamists for each extra wife. The Americans are pushing for terror states and Israel is too timid to enforce its laws towards its Arab minority.

Not only did the Olmert government never considered demanding that Abbas apologize for celebrating Habash. The Olmert government couldn't even see the need to condemn the decision by three Israeli Arab MKs, Ahmed Tibi, Jamal Zahalka and Wasal Taha to travel to Amman to participate in Habash's funeral. There they upheld as a hero the man who hijacked an Air France passenger jet to Entebbe in 1976.

This isn't the first time that these three have acted in a seemingly traitorous manner. In September 2006, just a month after Israel's war with Hizbullah ended, Zahalka and Taha travelled to Beirut with former MK Azmi Bishara who has been on the lam since last April after having been indicted for spying for Hizbullah during the war. MK Tibi for his part has openly served as an agent for the Fatah terror organization since 1994.

The Israeli legislators followed up their trip to Amman with a memorial service for Habash in his birth city Lod where they demanded that he be reinterred. Lod's significance in Habash's life is not limited to the fact that he was born there. In 1972 Habash ordered the massacre at Lod airport which left 27 Israelis murdered.

The Arab legislators' embrace of a sworn enemy of the country whose laws they took an oath to defend came just ahead of their call this week for a nationwide Arab strike. Israel's Arab leaders' newest beef is Attorney-General Menachem Mazuz's decision not to indict policemen for their actions in quelling the Israeli Arab riots of October 2000 during which 13 rioters were killed. Mazuz, who is usually only too happy to appease Israel's Arab leaders, is constrained in this case by the absence of any evidentiary basis for indicting police officers for using undo force in quelling rioters who were throwing firebombs at them and causing general mayhem while targeting Israeli Jews for attack.

THE REASON that even Mazuz couldn't indict anyone is because at the instruction of the Arab MKs, the families of the 13 refused to cooperate with government investigators. They refused to permit autopsies of the deceased. They refused to respond to questioning from Israeli authorities. As one Justice Ministry official told ynet, "In a law-abiding state one does not submit indictments based on speculations and gut feelings. There is one criminal law, and it stipulates clear and strict conditions for indictments that apply to all men and all events."

THE AIM of the Israeli Arab leaders here is clear. By acting contemptuously towards Israeli laws and law enforcement officers, while stirring hatred and mayhem, Israel's Arab leaders are seeking to reach the point where any attempt by Israeli authorities to apply the laws of the land to Israeli Jews and Arabs equally will be perceived as a violation of Israeli Arabs' human rights. The very notion that Jews have the right to assert authority over Arabs is the primary target of their actions. And, like Habash with the Jordanian authorities and Abbas, Syria and Saudi Arabia with everyone, Israel's Arab leaders are not being held accountable for their actions.

Today the only place where we see Arab leaders acting with any semblance of accountability is Iraq. There ahead of the anticipated US and Iraqi offensive in Mosul, Iraqi leaders joined American military commanders in the city and pledged to purge it of terrorists. There every day Iraqi military forces are fighting al-Qaida and other terrorist forces with a tactical acumen and commitment that only grows over time.

The reason for the disparity is because Iraq is so far the only Arab society that is being given a real opportunity for freedom. And with opportunity comes responsibility.

That's the thing of it. In the name of Arab rights, Arab tyrants, be they terrorists like Habash or Abbas, or autocrats like Bashar Assad or King Abdullah or Saddam Hussein, obliterate the notion of individual rights and with them, individual responsibility. And in the name of tolerance, or progressive values and peace, Israelis and Americans pretend that Arabs can't

be held responsible for their actions because doing so will only make them angry and send them into the arms of the fanatics.

But it is the lack of accountability that does that. It is the double standard, the "soft bigotry of low expectations" that argues against applying laws and international norms equally to Arabs that instills in them a contempt for Israel and the West. And that contempt cultivates fanaticism. Whether they kill in the name of Soviet Communism as Habash did, or in the name of Allah as his friends in Hamas, Fatah, Hizbullah and al-Qaida do, terrorists must be held accountable for what they do. It is our willingness to see men like Habash die in their beds that tells people that it is okay to kill. (Jerusalem Post Feb 4)

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### Three Words Would Have Sufficed By Moshe Arens

The Winograd Report - a year-and-a-half's work by five high-powered and intelligent Israelis - had the entire Israeli public waiting with bated breath. The report's hundreds of pages can be perused and studied and interpreted, and will, no doubt, be argued about in the months and years to come. And yet, three words would have sufficed: We were defeated. That is the whole story. Everything else is redundant. Israel, with the strongest army in the Middle East, regardless of the shortcomings revealed during the war, was defeated by two thousand Hezbollah fighters in a war that lasted 34 days.

And that was known to most of the Israeli public a year-and-a-half ago, before the Winograd Commission began its work. And it was confirmed by the Winograd Commission when it released its partial report last year. Nothing else was really needed, despite the spin doctors in the Prime Minister's Office who kept insisting that the war had been a great strategic achievement for Israel.

The intervening year, since the publication of the partial report, which aroused mountains of speculation and anticipation regarding the final report's contents, only helped to obfuscate the sad truth that Israel had been led for the first time in its history to a military defeat in a war.

So who was responsible for this fiasco? Did we need the Winograd Commission for the answer to this question? Did we really need their long-winded explanations about the responsibility of the political echelon, and the military echelon, and the interface between them?

Is it not clear that in a democracy the elected leader carries the ultimate responsibility for failure. "The buck stops here" President Harry Truman said, pointing at his desk in the Oval Office. Not with the generals, bureaucrats, or advisors. He was responsible. And in Israel, it is the prime minister who is responsible. Others may have to carry their share of the responsibility, but the ultimate responsibility is his.

Olmert knew when he assumed the office of prime minister that the responsibility for the fate of the State of Israel now rested on his shoulders. That this was not just another job, and the Prime Minister's Office was far more than just a place of work. He would need good cabinet ministers, and good advisors, and he knew that he would have to listen to the opinions of the military brass, and then solicit the opinions of others who had amassed the relevant experience, but when all was said and done the decision would be his, and the responsibility would be his. That is what it means to be prime minister. The buck stops here.

Did Olmert, with so many years of political experience behind him, having held so many positions in government, know this? Of course he did. And he called the shots. On July 20, 2006, the ninth day of the war that he launched, he said to then chief of staff Dan Halutz: "So I tell you, to provide you with direction, if it [a proposal to launch a large-scale ground operation] should come up with the generals, or in one of the forums that decides on steps to be taken - I will not approve a large ground operation." And that sealed the fate of this unfortunate war.

How did this mindset, so obviously wrong, come to dominate Israel's strategy in the Second Lebanon War? It was the unfortunate symbiosis between Olmert's determination not get stuck in the "Lebanese quagmire," and the chief of staff's idee fixe that the Air Force was all-powerful. According to Halutz, there was no need to put boots on the ground, which was music to Olmert's ears. That was exactly what Olmert, who only a few years earlier had declared that "we are tired of fighting, and tired of defeating our enemies," wanted to hear.

Olmert's staff may continue to raise their champagne glasses, and spout nonsense about their determination to study the report and correct all the failings listed, and that all and sundry should apologize to Olmert now that he has been cleared by the Winograd Commission, but nothing can remove the responsibility he carries on his shoulders for the fiasco of the Second Lebanon War. The historical record will show it for years to come. (Haaretz Feb 4)

## Were They Really So Wrong? By Jonathan Tobin

As George W. Bush heads into his last, lame-duck year as president, the postmortems have already begun. And in the eyes of most of the pundits who have already begun shoveling dirt on the legacy of the 43rd president, there's little doubt about the chief culprits for the disasters of the last years: the neoconservatives.

Regardless of its origins, the term is now an all-purpose term of art to describe a group of advocates of an aggressive policy against Islamist terrorism and support for the State of Israel. Their supposedly nefarious influence on the Bush administration is an article of faith for those who see them as authors of all that is wrong about American foreign policy.

Indeed, the dust jacket of Jacob Heilbrunn's recent book on them, *They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons*, screams that they are "the most feared and reviled intellectual movement in American history" and a "tight-knit cabal that ensnared the Bush administration." The text of Heilbrunn's scathing tome doesn't quite live up to that level of hysteria, but the fact that the publishers felt free to throw such words around show how widely reviled anyone who can be labeled a "neocon" is these days.

INDEED, A founding father of neoconservatism who is still an active force on the scene, former Commentary magazine editor Norman Podhoretz, has gotten a full measure of scorn from most of the chattering classes for his recent book *World War IV*. In the view of his many critics, Podhoretz merely follows the logic of past neocon blunders in the Middle East and calls for an all-out Western effort to combat "Islamofascism."

But the chorus of neocon-bashers see the attempt on the part of Podhoretz to confront Iran and to preempt its effort to attain nuclear weapons as nothing short of insane. The recent release of the US government's dubious National Intelligence Estimate, which appeared to debunk the idea that Iran is pursuing nukes merely adds to the sense among those who write about the movement that the obsessions of the neocons are based on fantasies.

Heilbrunn goes into great detail about the Jewish intellectual origins of the movement. The fact that many of the most famous and most influential neocons, such as senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick or William Bennett, were not Jewish is merely a detail.

For the author, as well as other even more extreme commentators on the subject, neoconservatism is an idea rooted in Jewish insecurity left over from the Holocaust, which seeks to impose a moral clarity on a world more aptly illustrated in shades of gray than in the stark black-and-white of the neocons.

Indeed, for writers like Slate.com's Timothy Noah, who wrote in *The New York Times* recently that "to be neoconservative is to bear almost daily witness to the resurrection of Adolf Hitler," the obsession with avoiding a repeat of Munich is an absurdity.

Thus, even Heilbrunn cannot escape from an obsession with America's Israel policy. While he concedes that neoconservatives, like the overwhelming majority of Americans, see the interests of the two democracies as largely congruent, their devotion to Israel's survival is, in his view, a fatal flaw that's leading us astray. As Heilbrunn writes, "none of the Democratic candidates [for president in 2008] have uttered even a mild word of criticism of Israel." He adds ruefully that "this, too, must be counted as neoconservative success."

The point of the anti-neocon narrative is that the verdict of history, as written in the dust of the quagmire in Iraq, is that the neocons were wrong - wrong about Iraq; wrong about Iran; wrong about the nature of the threat from the Islamists; wrong about identifying Israel's interests with those of America; wrong even about their earlier warnings about the Soviets.

YET EVEN when we discard the allegations of conspiracies that have been put about by foes of Israel, such as John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, the authors of *The Israel Lobby*, the problem with these critiques is that the verdict of history is by no means as definitive as the neocon critics would have us believe.

After all, neoconservatism gained notice in the 1970s specifically because the neocon rejection of the notion that appeasement of Soviet communism was either effective or sensible in the long run was entirely correct. Neocon intellectuals helped rouse an America mired in memories of Vietnam to reject the détente policies of the "realists" of that era.

Similarly, are the neocons today wrong about the threat from the Islamists, and the need to spread support for democracy in the Arab and Islamic world? If some perceive would-be Hitlers - like Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his Hamas allies, as well as al-Qaida operatives in Iraq and elsewhere - as being a clear and present danger to the West, can it be credibly asserted that this characterization is false?

It is a fact that the execution of Bush's goals in Iraq was often as incompetent as its response to Hurricane Katrina. The goal of transforming the region via democracy was surely too ambitious. But that didn't mean the stakes

there were not worth fighting for. Indeed, the recent improvement in Iraq - once better military leadership and strategies were substituted for faulty ones - shows that defeat is nowhere near as certain as some thought a few months ago.

Moreover, what exactly do the critics of the neocons offer as an alternative to dealing with the threat of the Islamists? Their answer is a combination of a return to the old "realism" that dominated the failed policies of previous administrations, which left America stuck backing unpopular authoritarian Arab regimes, appeasing Iran, and trying to force a peace between Israel and the Palestinians that the Arabs don't want.

With the "realists" now taking back control of foreign policy in Bush's last months, does anyone really believe that more pressure on the Israelis or a rapprochement with the mullahs in Iran would yield peace or security for anyone?

BUSH'S SUCCESSORS may well continue this shift. But they won't be able to avoid the conflict with Islamism that neocons worry about. Nor can any of them chart a course that won't require the sort of US resolve the neocons have preached. Podhoretz ends his latest call to arms by asking whether Americans are capable of "beating back the 'implacable challenge' of Islamofascism" as their forebears defeated Nazism. Writing at a time when he conceded the prospects for victory were "bleak," his answer was still yes.

In that sense, Jacob Heilbrunn's right when he concludes by warning that the neoconservatives are far from done. Podhoretz's optimism will ultimately be vindicated, if only because the alternatives to his views are simply implausible.

Like it or not - and notwithstanding the mistakes that were made in the last eight years - America is still locked in a worldwide struggle with Islamists that can't be wished away by blaming it all on the neocons. (Jerusalem Post Feb 2)

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## Let's Correct the Leadership Deficit By Isi Leibler

There is an old Yiddish saying that a fish stinks from the head. This certainly applies to our nation, whose leaders are unfit to lead.

It is somewhat bizarre to hear our prime minister employing his renowned talent for spin and shamelessly portraying the Winograd Commission report as having "cleared my name" and "lifted the moral stigma from me." Whereas the report did exonerate Ehud Olmert from being motivated by personal considerations in launching the controversial ground operation at the end of the war which resulted in the deaths of 33 soldiers, surely that was never really the central issue. It may in fact have been a red herring.

The devastating report, compiled by a committee personally hand-picked by the prime minister, reiterated its initial condemnation of Olmert's flawed judgment throughout the course of the war, which resulted in a "major and grave missed opportunity" to inflict a major defeat on Hizbullah and restore Israel's shattered deterrence.

Winograd went out of its way to stress that "our refraining from pinpointing individual responsibility should not be interpreted as concluding that such responsibility does not exist." The report, which employed the term "failures" 190 times and "flaws" 213 times, stated unequivocally that the "same serious failings and flaws" in "decision-making procedures" and in "strategic thinking and planning" identified in the preliminary findings prevailed throughout the entire 34 days of the war.

NEVER HAS an independent Israeli tribunal been so explicit in blaming our political leaders for failure in a war. For Olmert, who had arrogantly vowed that he would retain office irrespective of the findings of the report, to cynically claim that such findings exonerated and even vindicated him makes a mockery of public accountability and severely compromises the nation's democratic ethos. It will only intensify the widespread rage shared by Israelis across the entire political spectrum.

More frightening is that during the 18 months since the conflict, Olmert has failed to internalize the lessons of the war. Today, he continues implementing policies which have never formally been adopted, or even been adequately debated, in the Knesset. We are once more revisiting the discredited path of appeasement, making concessions to a duplicitous, make-believe partner who is incapable of reciprocating, and, in so doing, emboldening terrorists.

Olmert's concessions to Mahmoud Abbas include yielding our hitherto absolute insistence on retaining defensible borders; relinquishing previously non-negotiable security requirements which have already cost Israeli lives; floating offers to divide Jerusalem and handing over jurisdiction of the Temple Mount to the Palestinians; releasing hundreds of terrorists and undertaking to free more; and providing weapons to the Palestinians which,

in the future, will almost certainly be employed against us.

WHAT HAS Mahmoud Abbas provided in return? Precisely nothing! But our impotent peace partner did reiterate that he would never recognize Israel as a Jewish state; and describe as non-negotiable the "right of return" of Palestinian refugees, which would result in the demise of the Jewish state. The security forces on his payroll continue to kill Jews, and incitement in the areas under his jurisdiction, far from abating, is in fact at an all-time high, with kindergartens continuing to mold children to aspire to martyrdom by killing Jews.

And when Israel weighs a possible invasion of Gaza to stop Hamas launching missiles against Sderot, Abbas says he would side with Hamas.

FINALLY, ISRAELI citizens in Sderot and neighboring areas have been transformed into refugees in their own land. As the quality of the missiles and their range improves, greater areas of Israel will come within reach of missile attack. Having for years acclimatized the international community to missiles being launched against Israeli civilians, we are now expected to continue servicing Palestinians in these areas with electricity and fuel on "humanitarian grounds" - something no normal nation in the world would conceivably tolerate.

Worse, while Hamas attempts to replicate a Hizbullah infrastructure in Gaza, the Olmert government, which experienced the bitter consequences of having failed to take preemptive action in Lebanon, again remains passive, waiting for empowered Hamas terrorists to attack us at a time of their choosing.

Monday's attack on Dimona may well be the first sign of a Hamas emboldened by its latest achievements in Rafah.

Alternatively, the Israeli government may be waiting for the inevitable disaster when, God forbid, a missile ultimately falls on a kindergarten, hospital or key infrastructure, forcing it to respond.

IF OLMERT remains in office, it will virtually ensure that our relationship with our neighbors and the world will continue sinking into a bottomless pit. During these stormy times when we truly face existential threats, we cannot afford to be like a ship without a rudder. Should our sons be obliged to fight in a future war, we should more than ever hearken to the Winograd Report, which clearly says we require a prime minister whom the people can trust. We also need a leader who the nation is confident will be capable of negotiating peace without constantly being diverted by matters relating to his political survival.

Leadership must relate to our neglected social and economic framework, which also urgently requires attention. There is a need to reform the educational system, whose standards have eroded to an appalling level. The absence of a core curriculum to unify the secular, national-religious, haredi and Arab educational streams is encouraging tribalization where there should be unity.

The erosion of dialogue and mutual accommodation between religious and secular encourages growing polarization and extremism. An overhaul of the health, welfare, water and conservation systems is long overdue. There is a real need for long-term planning and reform. We cannot expect any of these crucial issues to be dealt with adequately by this government.

Under Olmert, Israel will remain a nation under siege, led by a failed leader who has not absorbed the bitter lessons of past mistakes. The burden of responsibility for change rests with those Knesset members who have hitherto failed to act in the national interest because of their selfish personal agenda.

THE ULTIMATE cynicism is exemplified by Ehud Barak, who shamelessly breached his pledge to resign after the release of the report; and by the Shas Party, which betrays their hawkish supporters for short-term lucre; and by those sanctimonious Kadima members who are waiting to see which way the wind will blow.

The other factor operating in Olmert's favor is the obsessive hatred of, and trepidation in the face of his most likely successor, Binyamin Netanyahu, as reflected in the Hebrew media.

We are blessed with an incredibly steadfast and creative people. Now, before it is too late, we Israeli citizens must exert people power, pressuring those failed and dysfunctional Knesset members who are more concerned about retaining their positions than promoting the interests of the nation to bring this government down.

It was another failed leader, minister of defense Ehud Barak, who not so long ago said: "We need a new leader we can trust, and who will place the interests of the nation ahead of his political survival and personal agenda."

Yet, paradoxically, the politician now most responsible for keeping Olmert in office is none other than Ehud Barak himself. (Jerusalem Post Feb 5)

## How to Turn Gaza over to Egypt By Daniel Pipes

"Listen to me carefully," President Hosni Mubarak, of Egypt instructed an interviewer on Jan. 30. "Gaza is not part of Egypt, nor will it ever be... I hear talk of a proposal to turn the Strip into an extension of the Sinai peninsula, of offloading responsibility for it onto Egypt" but Mubarak dismissed this as "nothing but a dream."

Hardly a dream. It's a reality that surfaced since January 23, when Hamas operatives breached large segments of the wall separating Gaza from Egypt. That unexpected step alerted the world that an Egyptian embargo, no less than an Israeli one, prevents Gazans from leaving their territory or trading with the outside world.

Given that Gazans have shown themselves incapable of responsible self-rule and Cairo has tacitly allowed the smuggling of arms since 2000, Mubarak needs to be made responsible for the Gaza Strip. As my column last week argued, "Washington and other capitals should declare the experiment in Gazan self-rule a failure and press Hosni Mubarak of Egypt to help." Hamas partially concurs: One leader, Ismail Haniyeh, hopes Gaza can "move toward economic disengagement from the Israeli occupation," while another, Ahmad Youssef, wants the Gaza-Egypt border opened to trade and Egypt to serve as Gaza's "gateway" to the outside world. As Hamas promises that Cairo's re-closing of the wall on Feb. 3 will not turn back the clock, Egypt's Muslim Brethren, a Hamas ally, demands the Gaza border be opened. Can Mubarak ignore these demands, popular among Egyptians? In effect, Gaza has already begun imposing itself on an unwilling Egypt.

SOME ISRAELIS wish to help it. Israel's Deputy Defense Minister Matan Vilnai, for example, holds that Cairo should take over economically. "When Gaza is open to the other side we lose responsibility for it. So we want to disconnect from it. We want to stop supplying electricity to them, stop supplying them with water and medicine."

The Israeli supreme court having ruled on Jan. 30 that the government may reduce supplies of fuel and electricity to Gaza renders a cutoff feasible.

How to achieve Gaza's transfer?

Robert Satloff of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy suggests to me that Jerusalem announce three steps: "a date certain for the severing of Israel's provision of water, electricity and trade access, free entry for replacement services through Egypt, and an invitation for international support to link Gaza to Egyptian grids."

Giora Eiland, a former Israeli national security adviser, would also detach Gaza from its customs union with Israel and the West Bank.

These Israeli initiatives would force the Egyptian hand. Sure, the Egyptians, with help from Fatah and even Hamas, will try to resurrect the border and put the onus back on Israel. But in the end, Arab solidarity demands that Egyptian "brothers" fill in for the Israeli enemy. Once Jerusalem cuts supplies, Cairo has no choice but to furnish them. Economic dependence would then further involve Egypt, which has further consequences. It:

- Revives the old idea of resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict via a three-way partition by Egypt, Israel, and Jordan.

- Permits Hamas to connect with its parent organization, the Muslim Brethren. Indeed, Egyptian security forces have already arrested at least 12 armed Hamas members in Egypt and other Gazans with suicide belts. Controlling Islamist violence out of Gaza will become an Egyptian priority - but Mubarak has coped with Islamists throughout his 27-year presidency and he can deal with this new challenge in ways that Israel cannot.

- Limits the freedom for Hamas and Islamic Jihad to attack Israel. Yes, Egyptians want rockets falling on Sderot, but Cairo knows that their continuation invites Israeli reprisals and possibly a full-scale war.

TO PREVENT Gazans from creating trouble in Egypt or attacking Israel requires heavy policing of their territory. This presumably means loosening the stringent restrictions on the deployment of Egyptian forces near the border with Israel in Annex I to the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Fortunately, Egyptian security services in Gaza need be only lightly armed and the Multinational Force Observers in the Sinai peninsula could add this monitoring duty to their tasks.

In brief, Gaza can be dumped on Egypt with confidence that the Egyptians must accept it and must impede Gazans from attacking Israel. Starting this "peace process," though, will require uncharacteristic imagination and energy from Israel and the Western states. (Jerusalem Post Feb 6)