



Commentary...

Barak's Target Audiences By Caroline Glick

What on earth could have prompted the Israeli government to negotiate the current "cease-fire" with Hamas? What could have brought the government to negotiate with this Iranian proxy group which makes no bones about its intention to use the lull in fighting to expand its arsenal and army ahead of the next round of fighting? What could have motivated Jerusalem to pave the way for Hamas's acceptance as a legitimate regime in the international arena?

The most vocal advocate of embracing Hamas has been Defense Minister Ehud Barak. And on the heels of the "truce," Barak and his associates are now pushing for the government to approve Hamas's demand that Israel release of up to a thousand terrorists from its prisons in exchange for Gilad Schalit, who was illegally kidnapped to Gaza two years ago.

In an attempt to explain his actions, Barak spoke last week to sympathetic Ha'aretz columnist Ari Shavit. In a supportive column, Shavit explained that Barak himself is under no illusion about the nature of Hamas or the chances of reaching a long-term accommodation with the Iranian-controlled jihadist movement that seeks Israel's destruction. The rationale for the move, he explains is Barak's assertion that the only way to justify a military operation - which will involve military and civilian casualties - is to first demonstrate that Israel had no other recourse but to act in its own defense.

As Shavit put it, "Since the repercussions of an operation could be grave, it is necessary first to try the other alternative - so that every mother liable to lose her son in the Gaza alleyways will know. So that every civilian in the Gaza envelope liable to get hit during the fighting with Hamas will know. So that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak will know that Israel did not choose a military move, which the Egyptians fear, before giving a chance to the diplomatic move they initiated."

SINCE THIS is the line being offered by the government today to justify its actions, it is worth considering it. The first question that arises is whether Barak's expressed concern about mothers of soldiers and Israelis who live within Hamas's rocket and missile range is genuine.

At Sunday's cabinet meeting, Shin Bet Director Yuval Diskin gave the government his first post-cessate-fire intelligence briefing. Diskin told the cabinet ministers that since Thursday, Hamas has stepped up its arms smuggling and military training. The significance of his statement is clear. The Hamas that Israel will confront in the aftermath of Barak's cease-fire will be a more formidable foe that it was before the cease-fire. And consequently, more soldiers will need to sacrifice their lives in the postponed confrontation. And since Hamas is using this lull to expand its arsenals, it will no doubt expand the range of its missiles. Consequently, more Israeli civilians will be attacked by Hamas rockets and missiles in the inevitable, delayed showdown than would have been under fire if it had been launched this week.

In other words, far from being informed by his concern for Israeli civilians and the families of soldiers, Barak's embrace of Hamas as a negotiating partner has ensured that more Israelis will be burying their loved ones when the cease-fire leads inevitably to war. Indeed, it is because of this that residents of Sderot have been the loudest proponents of military action and the angriest opponents of the government's cease-fire agreement with Hamas.

So if Barak is unconcerned with the lives of Israeli soldiers and civilians, who is he playing to in negotiating the cease-fire?

LIKE MANY Israeli leaders in recent years, Barak is concerned with how the Israeli appeasement lobby will react to a confrontation. He hopes that by appeasing Hamas now, these people - many of whom are Labor Party members and voters - will forgive him when the inevitable occurs.

Israel's appeasement lobby is comprised of Israeli Arabs, the Meretz party to which post-Zionist Labor voters and politicians can always defect, university professors, and small but well-funded pressure groups like Uri Avineri's Gush Shalom organization and Peace Now. Here it bears mention

ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
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that the Labor party's membership drives in Arab villages in recent years have given its Arab members - who vote as a bloc - a controlling influence over the results of Labor party primaries that determine the identity of the party leader and Labor's Knesset faction. Many Labor leaders - like former party chief Binyamin Ben Eliezer who was unseated by Arab Labor party members - have bemoaned this fact and noted

that Arab members of Labor don't even vote for the party in general elections.

What is most disturbing about Barak's pandering to Israel's appeasement lobby is that past experience has shown clearly that Israel's appeasement lobby is itself unappeasable. That is, there nothing that Israel's enemies can do that will cause members of Israel's appeasement lobby to support IDF operations.

On June 1, 2001, a Palestinian bomber exploded himself at the Dolphinarium nightclub in Tel Aviv and murdered 21 Israeli teenagers. The public outcry was deafening. Popular support for a counter terror offensive aimed at destroying the Palestinian Authority and killing or expelling arch-terrorist Yassir Arafat was at an all-time high as the dimensions of the massacre, and the identity of the victims became clear.

Yet then-prime minister Ariel Sharon ignored the public and refused to act. As his spokesmen made clear, Sharon was concerned that the Israeli appeasement lobby would join forces with Europe to condemn such an IDF operation. And so, in an attempt to appease his far-Left antagonists, Sharon waited ten months to act. During that time, he engaged in fruitless US and European sponsored talks with the Palestinians. He bowed to their pressure and began referring to Judea and Samaria as "occupied," and so demoralized his own constituents. And as he took these steps, another 250 Israelis were murdered by the Palestinians.

Sharon approved Operation Defensive Shield in the aftermath of the Palestinian massacre of 30 Israelis celebrating the Passover Seder at the Park Hotel in Netanya. While his supporters often laud Sharon for his courage in acting, the fact is that had Sharon not acted after the Passover massacre, the public and his party would likely have booted him out of office.

Sharon's long refusal to defend his citizens from murder by the Palestinian massacre machine did not win him any sympathy with the appeasers. During Defensive Shield Uri Avineri from Gush Shalom and Israeli professors like Niv Gordon rushed to Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah to act as "human shields," physically opposing IDF operations. Israeli professors signed petitions calling for foreign divestment from Israel and urged their students to refuse to serve in reserve duty. Arab Israeli leaders like MKs Ahmed Tibi and Azmi Bishara similarly joined forces with Arafat. And of course, Europe experienced its worst wave of anti-Semitic attacks since the Holocaust as European leaders, joined by then UN secretary general Kofi Annan, and their media organs and international human right organizations lined up behind Arafat and accused Israel of committing war crimes.

IN THE end, the only ones who actively supported the IDF's 2002 counter-offensive were the Israeli public, the US public, and world Jewry. And ironically, these were the same forces that would have supported an IDF offensive after the Dolphinarium massacre ten months earlier. The US government - which did not stridently object to Operation Defensive Shield - acted no differently than it would have if Israel had taken action at that earlier juncture. So Sharon's decision to avert confrontation for ten long months - during which 250 Israelis were murdered and thousands were wounded - accomplished nothing.

But what about Barak's argument about Egypt? Will Egypt support a future IDF operation in Gaza when the cease-fire it has mediated falls apart? The answer here is similarly obvious: Of course not. Since 2000, when Egypt began hosting "cease-fire" talks among various terror masters in Cairo, the Mubarak regime has done more than any other government to legitimize Hamas.

Moreover, in diplomatic forums, Israel has no greater enemy than Egypt. Cairo uses every international and regional stage to attack the Jewish state.

Then too, Egypt has permitted Hamas to use its territory as its logistical base for arming Gaza and sending hundreds of terror operatives to Iran and Lebanon for training.

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Egypt has done all of this because it believes that its national interests are advanced by weakening Israel. Were Egypt to support an Israeli offensive against Gaza, it would be strengthening Israel. And so under no circumstances will Cairo ever support an IDF operation against Hamas. Pretending it will is to engage in reckless fantasizing.

SO THEN, why has Barak led the government to embrace Hamas as a negotiating partner and a legitimate regime in Gaza?

We are left with two possible explanations. Either Barak is risking the lives of Israeli soldiers and civilians to pander to the most radical elements of Israeli society while seeking to win sympathy points from Cairo in a general election campaign, or he is gullible enough to believe that Israel's radical left and the Egyptian regime are moved by facts rather than interests.

It is hard to know which explanation is more distressing. (Jerusalem Post Jun 23)

Peace Offensive By Martin Peretz

In Middle Eastern wars, the United Nations is almost always hectoring Israel for being reluctant to seek peace. So it was a stunner when Terje Rød-Larsen--U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's "special coordinator" in the occupied territories, Kofi Annan's "personal representative" to Yasir Arafat, Ban Ki-moon's "special representative" for overseeing the cease-fire agreement ending the second Lebanon war, and in his next posting "envoy to the personal representative of the special coordinator for planetary salvation"--lambasted Israel for its recent negotiations with Syria: "Israel has given Syria a huge gift, without thus far receiving anything in return."

Israel, it seems, is in a chatty mood these days. It is cutting deals with Hamas and prepared to talk with Lebanon (an imaginary country, really) over the fate of Shebaa Farms--a worthless tract the size of a table cloth. Wiseacres say that Israel's foray into parleying with its enemies is to save Ehud Olmert's prime ministerial hide, sandblasted for the umpteenth time by accusations of unethical personal conduct with other folks' cash. This may or may not be a plausible explanation. But the Israeli public would by far rather forfeit (Arab) parts of Jerusalem than give up the Golan Heights, from which for two decades Syrian artillery fire had targeted the kibbutzim and moshavim of the Galilee. And killed not insignificant numbers of Israelis.

It's not only Rød-Larsen who's unhappy that Jerusalem is negotiating with Damascus; Condoleezza Rice is plenty upset, too. And, of course, anyone with a brain grasps that there are only two concessions worth getting from Bashar Assad, and these are: a) detaching Syria from Iran and b) lifting Syria's hold over Beirut, which, alas, was just solidified by Hezbollah's quickie civil war in the capital and in the Shouf mountains and then ratified without real alternative by a summit of factional leaders convening in Qatar.

Proposition A is tied to Proposition B in that Hezbollah is an instrument of Iran and its Revolutionary Guards. Tehran's road to Beirut is through Damascus. And the co-dependence of these two propositions also highlights the fantastical nature of all this peace talk: Iran must respect Syria's historic ambitions for direct political dominion over Lebanon, and Syria must allow the Shia of Iran the religious sweep of their doctrine across the region. Oh, yes, I mustn't forget: Since 2006, Iran has been on both of Israel's northern frontiers and, in a meaningful sense, in Gaza, too. This is not a happy circumstance. If there is any development that will deflect the powers from squeezing the ayatollahs into giving up their nuclear aspirations it is the prospect of Israel living quietly with borders on which Iran sits.

Maybe the Israelis think they will disentangle Syria from Iran. They cannot. The alliance fulfills Assad's Lebanese dreams, and the Golan Heights means almost nothing to the tyrant. Not since the Yom Kippur War has Syria made a move against the Golan. All its bloody mischief was funneled through Lebanon, and Lebanon was the name of his and his father's desire. Of course, Assad would take the Heights if Israel were silly enough to give it. But it would get nothing in return.

I am afraid that the false peace initiatives have already registered a "success" in Gaza. Hamas has announced and Israel has acquiesced to a cease-fire. I oppose this cease-fire for the same reason I opposed the wildly heralded one in Lebanon two summers ago. Then, of course, it was Rice who drove the international stampede that the IDF leave the country and that the ensuing disarmament and pacification of Hezbollah be assigned to unifil, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, which has been both interim and a flop since 1978. The dreary results of that assignment can be judged by indisputable facts.

Under the terms of the new truce in the south, Israel will reopen the supply lines to and from Gaza: fuel, food, trade. (Medicines had always been getting through.) Hamas promises not to hurl rocketry and missiles into Israel and, of course, Israel will not retaliate if there is nothing to provoke retaliation. But an armistice lasts only until it is broken. Just wait. In the meantime, Egypt and Hamas have committed themselves to prevent and interdict smuggling of weapons and weapons-grade materiel from the Sinai to Gaza. This is a

vocation that Cairo has never truly taken to, and the terrorist militias have always found ways to run contraband arms through tunnels in the sand. They are not likely to stop. Anybody want to bet?

As you already know, I'm no fan of Mohammed Abbas or his Fatah henchmen. But they have been designated as the Palestinian moderates. So, like Secretary Rice and in the awful circumstances that obtain, I suppose these are my favored Palestinians. They were also supposed to be Olmert's and Ehud Barak's. Therefore, it is often said that this new deal with Hamas cuts the legs from right under Abbas and chaverim. Well, I'm sorry, those legs were not at all sturdy. And, in the end, with American prodding, Abbas will negotiate the state that Hamas will inherit. That's the grim conclusion I have reached.

It used to be that Israel would move the heavens to rescue its kidnapped soldiers. This is one reason for the daring of so many of its fighting men. In recent years there has been an increase in kidnapping as a battle tactic by both the Palestinians and Hezbollah. Frankly, the Arabs play cruel games with these people (and their relatives), not saying whether they are dead or alive, even those who were captured decades ago. Are Eldad Regev and Udi Goldwasser still in this world? Nasrallah will not say. Gilad Shalit, it is believed, is still alive. Why was he not released in exchange for the last return of Palestinian prisoners? Liat Collins had a story, "Between life and the dead," in the Jerusalem Post some weeks ago detailing this manipulation of sorrow and fear. Dog tags and body parts are transmitted but not accurate information or men who are still breathing. Make peace with these people? This might be the only instance you hear me utter this: I wholeheartedly agree with the U.N. hack. (The New Republic Jul 9)

The writer is the editor-in-chief of The New Republic.

Israel's Lonely Last Resort By Hillel Halkin

So now it's official. Israel's air force is in an advanced stage of training to attack Iran's nuclear installations. If the massive overflight of the eastern Mediterranean by Israel's jets earlier this month was indeed the "dress rehearsal" for such an attack that it has been called, it was a rehearsal to which the public was invited - or at least, the intelligence agencies of the countries that tracked the operation on their radar screens.

You don't, of course, conduct such an operation when you have already decided to strike; at that point, the more secrecy, the better. You conduct it when you don't want to strike and think your only hope of avoiding it is to convince the world that you will do it unless you are given a good reason not to. This month's air maneuvers, it might be said, were Israel's plea to the world to be shown that such a reason exists.

But the world is not going to oblige. The same countries that were too short-sighted and greedy to do anything significant about stopping Iran's nuclear bomb program 10, five, or two years ago, when oil prices were low and Iran was vulnerable to economic and diplomatic pressures, are not about to lift a finger now. Even a year ago, when climbing oil prices had already ruled out the economic feasibility of an embargo on Iran's oil, a sudden freeze on Iran's assets and funds by Western governments could have caused Iran's leadership to think twice. Now, while these governments have predictably wasted yet another year by jawing toothlessly away about the need for sanctions, Iran has reportedly transferred most of those assets and funds elsewhere.

Nor is President Bush likely to leave the White House in a blaze of penetration bombs by ordering a last-minute American attack on Iran. The Republican Party wants to win the November election, and the president knows that Americans fighting in another Middle Eastern country and \$200-or-more-a-barrel oil is not going to help. Mr. Bush has talked more bravely about stopping the Iranians than any other Western leader, but what he has not done until now will not be done before his term is over - unless, that is, he chooses to do it between the elections and his successor's inauguration in January, which would be a historically unprecedented use of lame-duck power that is hard to imagine.

And Senator McCain? If elected, he might be Israel's last chance of not having to go it alone. But Mr. McCain himself doesn't know at this stage what he would do, and he is currently behind in the polls. Senator Obama would be only slightly more likely to attack Iran than Vladimir Putin. He has already made it clear that he would rather talk to Iran's government than fight them, and they will be delighted to discuss with him any subject he chooses while the centrifuges go on spinning in Natanz.

Of course, even a President Obama, let alone a President McCain, might be supportive of an Israeli attack should it take place. In general, as evidenced by the muted international response to the Israeli air exercise, the list of countries that might not mind seeing Israel stick it to the Iranians is a long one. Besides America, it might include quite a few European states and even some Arab ones. As long as they themselves don't have to run the risk of a) military failure, b) retaliatory Iranian missile and terror attacks, and c) being blamed for astronomical oil prices, plenty of governments would permit

themselves a hidden smile of satisfaction while voting to condemn an Israeli attack at the United Nations.

Israel has every right to feel anger at such hypocrisy. True, a nuclear Iran would be more of a menace to them than to others, but it would be a menace to nearly everyone. There is something genuinely revolting about a world that preaches the need for peacefully dissuading the Iranians from developing atomic weapons while knowingly practicing a policy that in the end leaves Israel no choice but to send its planes into the air.

Israelis also have the right to feel fear. A lot could go wrong with an attack on Iran. Iranian targets could be missed or insufficiently damaged; dummy objectives could be hit while the real ones are kept secret in the earth; Israeli planes could be shot down and Israeli pilots taken hostage; Israeli towns and cities could come under heavy missile and rocket fire not just from Iran, but from Lebanon, Gaza, and even Syria; Israeli casualties could run into the many thousands. Anyone who thinks that Israel is straining at the leash to get at the Iranians has not the slightest conception of its society. Israelis are good and scared of attacking Iran, as they should be. They are just even more scared of an Iran that could annihilate them, as Iranian leaders have repeatedly said they would love to do.

But Israelis also have the right to feel pride - pride not only that they have one of the few air forces in the world with the military capability to stop Iran, but also that history has chosen them, even if they would rather it had chosen someone else, to be in the front ranks of the campaign. Even now, it is not too late for them to hope that they will have partners. And if it is not a hope that has much to lean on, at least this time Jews can lean on themselves.

The writer is a contributing editor of The New York Sun. (NY Sun Jun 24)

We're So Polite That We Can't See a Danger Hiding in Plain Sight

By Christie Blatchford

You know what is the really sobering thing about that ongoing terror trial in Brampton?

Clue: It's not that there was a plot to attack Canadian targets. And of course there was; the court has heard evidence up the ying-yang that there was just such an enterprise afoot. Was it the finest plot ever? Oh hardly. Were its members variously bumbler, what those who hang around courts call "yutes" or raving hotheads? Absolutely. But there was a plot.

It's not even the hate, chiefly for Jews and Americans, that one of the group leaders preached at the drop of a hat and the top of his lungs with almost magnificently ungrammatical, near-illiterate, Koran-ignorant hysteria.

It's that he felt so free to preach it.

It's that he felt comfortable enough to hand out jihadist CDs outside at least one Toronto mosque and to occasionally turn up in combat fatigues at another. It's that he giddily talked to one of his alleged co-conspirators about the obligation to kill Jews whenever one finds them. It's that the leadership of the group regularly met at a half-dozen mosques in the GTA, usually on Fridays, the day of communal prayer. It's that within minutes of meeting Mubin Shaikh, a fellow Muslim-turned-CSIS informant-turned-paid-RCMP agent, he was openly verbally indulging his bloodlust and "recruiting" Mr. Shaikh: Their shared religion was enough.

It's that one spring day in 2006, the leader played for a group of young men a nauseating beheading video on his laptop in a restaurant on Danforth Avenue, a main Toronto drag. The restaurant had a big picture window. Even if it was otherwise empty, presumably the owner or someone in authority was present. Yet no one appears to have uttered a word in protest.

It's that up at the much-maligned winter training camp held in December, 2005, near Orillia, Ont., members of the group regularly went to the local Tim Hortons wearing their camos - as Mr. Shaikh put it, as a bunch of predominantly brown-skinned, bearded young men, they were hardly the picture of subtlety. Yet they did it anyway.

The leader knew however blatant he might be, however crazily he might talk, however boldly he would zero in on the vulnerable young men who were his target group - and however a few brave souls in the Muslim community might try to talk sense into him or warn others away from him, as some did - nobody would actually stop him, or ban him from their premises, or outright blow the whistle on him.

And, because most of the group were born-and-raised Canadians, they also knew, it seems, that however suspicious someone catching a glimpse of them in their military gear might be, the odds were damned good the authorities wouldn't be called.

Where I feel fairly confident that such a group appearing at the Timmy's in Red Deer or Timmins or Rouyn would prompt a phone tip or 10, most Torontonians are crippled unto paralysis by the unique combination of innate Canadian politeness and the racial politics of their city, and these guys knew it.

As evidence of what I mean, let me tell you the true story of a neighbour of mine who once came home in the middle of the day to discover a young black

man rifling through his things; it was perfectly plain he had broken in and was in the midst of robbing the joint. But my neighbour merely gently pointed out that the young man was "in the wrong house" and kindly saw him out. The young fellow proceeded to move a few houses over and rob that place blind. I believe I may be one of a few people on my street to find this wildly amusing - and telling.

And remember how, when the arrests in the Toronto 18 investigation were made two June ago, the authorities at a huge press conference primly described those arrested as coming from a wide variety of backgrounds and never uttered the word "Muslim" - allowing the Toronto Police chief to brag at a second press conference "that there was not one single reference made by law enforcement to Muslim or Muslim community" at the first presser?

Well, guess what? Seven of those arrested that day have since had their criminal charges stayed or dropped, one is on trial now, and 10 others remain charged. Recent convert or raised in the faith, white or brown or black, guilty or innocent - the one sure thing is that they are all Muslims and that faith was what bound them together.

While some of this certainly illustrates the group's lack of sophistication and smarts (one of my favourite of Mr. Shaikh's stories is how the leader, paranoid that a building was bugged by CSIS, insisted instead on having a conversation in Mr. Shaikh's van, which actually was bugged), what it reveals is that, whatever else, this gang was hiding in plain sight, most often to fellow Muslims.

As Tarek Fatah writes in his new book, *Chasing a Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State*, "While the overwhelming majority of Canada's Muslims were stunned by the discovery of alleged terrorists in their own backyard, few can honestly deny that they had not seen this coming."

Even Mr. Shaikh, whose actions I consider principled and courageous despite the fact that he was a paid RCMP agent (he earned \$300,000 for his undercover work) and who I hesitate to praise only because I suspect it will hurt his reputation, considers himself first a Muslim. He may be as integrated a Muslim-Canadian as there is, and has always been an active participant in secular Canadian life (less so now than when he was a wild young man), he is a good and proud Canadian, yet he answers first to faith.

One day, the trial in Brampton heard of Muhammad Robert Heft, who runs a group called p4e, a sort of support group for Muslim converts with questions; the accused apparently had gone there but was deemed too young.

Anyway, I never heard of Muhammad Heft before, but Googled him, and what came up but an interview he'd done with the fifth estate on CBC some time after the arrests of the Toronto 18.

Mr. Heft appears to be, for lack of a better term, one of the good guys. He tried to counsel some of the accused, including the hysterical leader, and steer them away from extremism, at least on Canadian soil.

According to the CBC interview transcript, the leader once talked to him about the "martyrdom operation of Sept. 11," so Mr. Heft said, "I was telling him that it hasn't even been proven that Sept. 11 was actually done by 19 hijackers. That was just the alleged story of the U.S. government. All I tried to explain to him is that whoever did it was wrong ... And then I started to just talk to him about how we haven't even proven that the people who had actually did it were Muslims."

You see? 9/11 was wrong. But it hasn't been proven it was carried out by Muslims.

If I weren't an agnostic, I'd be on my knees, praying. (Globe and Mail Jun 21)

Kristof: Never Mind the Terrorists

By Steven Emerson

In his June 19th piece titled, "Strengthening Extremists," New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof lambastes the American and Israeli policy of isolating the terror group Hamas, alleging that Hamas' international isolation and resulting pressure have only managed to empower the so-called Islamic Resistance Movement.

And to "prove" his point, Kristof interviews two Gazans who, unsurprisingly, hate Israel. In Kristof's world, the siege of Gaza has only made Hamas more popular. Never mind that Hamas won the Palestinian elections before the siege began and after the Israelis had unilaterally withdrawn from Gaza. A withdrawal, by the way, which Hamas seized upon as a "victory" which, in turn, made Hamas more popular - enough to defeat rival Fatah in the elections.

So the Israelis give the Palestinians land for nothing in return, and Hamas gains popularity. According to Kristof, the Israelis isolate and attack Hamas in Gaza, and Hamas gains popularity. So when does Hamas lose popularity? Kristof claims that the recently minted "truce" between Hamas and Israel will somehow do the trick. Again, never mind Hamas' history of breaking such truces. Even the deferential Reuters news service said of the arrangement, "Israel-Hamas truce begins but duration in doubt."

(*Updated: Sure enough, rocket fire into Southern Israel Tuesday morning

violated the cease fire less than a week after it started.)

Kristof, of course, doesn't explain how even temporarily ending the siege on Gaza and allowing Hamas to take credit for better conditions in the territory will somehow lessen the group's credibility. But again, never mind that.

People should remember that Kristof has already rather famously embarrassed himself when it comes to his knowledge of Palestinian terrorists. In March 2002, Kristof wrote a column titled, "Putting Us to the Test," in which he vigorously defended Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operative Sami Al-Arian. Infamously portraying the terrorist leader as a "rumpled academic," Kristof described Al-Arian as someone who "denounces terrorism, promotes inter-faith services with Jews and Christians, and led students at his Islamic school to a memorial service after 9/11 where they all sang 'G-d Bless America.'" Never mind that Al-Arian has said that Allah has turned the Jews into monkeys and pigs, or that he wrote a letter in February 1995 soliciting funds for terrorist attacks. He wrote:

... I would like to discuss with you a very important matter concerning the future of work in Palestine and the ability of the Islamic movement to confront the great challenges before it. In short, you are well aware that this movement, represented by its branches, Hamas and the Jihad, is being threatened by the enemy, the neighboring regimes, and even worldwide. Preserving the spirit and flame of jihad against the enemy is a general Islamic responsibility and cannot be left to rest upon the shoulders of the few among our nation. Nevertheless, these few shoulder the responsibility of the nation's honor, even putting their souls in their hands to prove that Islam is capable of responding to oppression, aggression, and desecration of the sacred places and Muslims' dignity.

The latest operation, carried out by the two mujahideen who were martyred for the sake of G-d, is the best guide and witness to what the believing few can do in the face of Arab and Islamic collapse at the heels of the Zionist enemy and in keeping the flame of faith, steadfastness, and defiance glowing.

...The movement's financial situation is very difficult, and it cannot fulfill its responsibilities towards the martyrs and prisoners.

...I call upon you to try to extend true support of the jihad effort in Palestine so that operations such as these can continue, so that people do not lose faith in Islam and its representatives, and so that we can prove to the people and to history that Islam properly responded to the circumstances despite a difficult stage in time, and a terrible era.

In an interview on Fox News' O'Reilly Factor, also in March 2002, Kristof vociferously denied that the letter was an attempt to raise funds for terrorist attacks and described it benignly as nothing more than a "private communication with a Kuwaiti, that it was not ... it did not violate any federal law or any state law." So again, never mind that he was asking for money for terrorist attacks, or "operations," could continue. It was just a "private communication," says Kristof, so never mind.

Kristof went on to describe the scholarly nature of organizations run by Al-Arian. Never mind that one of those organizations, the World and Islam Studies Enterprise (WISE), was headed by Ramadan Abdullah Shallah - currently the Secretary General of the PIJ - and described as a "most wanted terrorist" by the U.S. government. When Shallah left WISE to become the commander of PIJ, Al-Arian lied - to both the media and his employers - about knowing who Shallah was, and his organization issued a press release stating that Shallah: "...left WISE for a research tour of the Middle East in order to write a book on Islamic banking, as well as to tend to his sick father who later passed away."

The statement went on to say that WISE "denies any knowledge" of Shallah's "association or affiliation with any political group or agency in the Middle East." During closing arguments in Al-Arian's trial, his own defense attorney admitted he lied repeatedly, and, in fact, was a PIJ member, as reported by the St. Petersburg Times:

Yes, said [Al-Arian's defense attorney] Moffitt, Al-Arian was affiliated with the cultural, charitable arm of the PIJ, and he lied to the media about it because he was afraid WISE would be shut down.

And never mind that Al-Arian's other organization, the Islamic Committee for Palestine (ICP) was described - on video - by its top fundraiser as "the active arm of the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine" and only called ICP for "security reasons." And never mind that the ICP held conferences to raise money for the PIJ and praise the killing of Jews. At one such event in Cleveland:

Fawaz Damra: ... person can come forward and donate. We are offering the opportunity. Anyone who has the wish can come forward and donate. We put them on the floor, G-d willing. Would anyone like to donate for the Intifada? For Islamic Jihad, I say it frankly: for Islamic Jihad.

This Jihad, which is still blazing in Palestine, from village to village. I am telling you: not for the organizations or anything else, with due respect for everyone. But only for Jihad.

One of them goes out of his house with a knife to stab the Jews. Twelve

Jews, after the Gulf events. O brothers, the Intifada is calling upon you. \$500.00. Who is going to top the \$500.00? Who is going to top the \$500.00 for this medal?

And whoever wants to write a check, he can write it in the name of the Islamic Committee for Palestine, "ICP" for short. ICP, whoever likes to write a check. Is anyone going to top the \$500.00 Haj Ahmad?

But since that conference happened in 1991, and, as Kristof helpfully tells us, Al-Arian's own vile comments on video "were about a dozen years old, after all" - you know, never mind. Nothing more than a "rumpled academic," indeed. Al-Arian eventually pled guilty to conspiracy to provide material support to the PIJ. But according to Kristof's flawed logic, pointing out Al-Arian's ties to terrorism, arresting and prosecuting him, would likely only strengthen the extremists. Better to have him still at the University, running a think tank which sheltered leaders of a violent, religiously motivated eliminationist terrorist group.

Never mind that during Al-Arian's sentencing, the judge stated of Al-Arian: "You are a master manipulator. You looked your neighbors in the eyes and said you had nothing to do with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. This trial exposed that as a lie."

The judge continued: "And yet, still in the face of your own words, you continue to lie to your friends and supporters, claiming to abhor violence and to seek only aid for widows and orphans. Your only connection to widows and orphans is that you create them, even among the Palestinians; and you create them, not by sending your children to blow themselves out of existence. No. You exhort others to send their children."

On that, Kristof was strangely silent.

But back to Hamas and Gaza. Kristof claims that the American and Israeli policy of targeting the terrorist group in Gaza is "morally bankrupt - a case of collective punishment." Better to deal and negotiate with Hamas - an organization everyone should remember is sworn to Israel's destruction. The Hamas charter states, amongst other things: "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it."

But Kristof wants Israel to be nice to Hamas anyway. However, Kristof is hardly consistent when it comes to being against "collective punishment." In fact, to his credit, he has been one of the leading proponents calling for sanctions against the Khartoum regime (even though he admits that "Sudanese authorities may not have the money to feed their people") because of the atrocities committed in Darfur. But I guess it wouldn't be considered "collective punishment," in Kristof's mind, if any Sudanese civilians suffer from such sanctions and isolation of Islamist Sudanese government, as they most certainly would. It is tough to know where Kristof's selectivity (a less charitable description would be hypocrisy) on the matter originates, but his deferential treatment towards Sami Al-Arian might be one indicator. Indeed, Kristof has a documented history of blaming Israel and letting Islamic terrorists off the hook.

Writing on another issue which has received media attention, Kristof laments: "Israel's decision to block Gazans from studying abroad was particularly shortsighted. Educating Gazans might help build a contingent of moderates, but Israel has continued to block three Fulbright scholars from leaving for the U.S."

Kristof fails to mention that Israel has allowed four Gazans to leave and that the reason the three other Gazans have not been cleared to leave the Strip is that they have ties to Hamas, notably Hamas' main educational institution, the Islamic University of Gaza. From the June 20th edition of the New York Sun:

The Islamic University of Gaza is intertwined with Hamas. In his letter, (Illinois Congressman Mark) Kirk quotes Jameela El Shanty, a professor at the school who told the Baltimore Sun in 2006: "Hamas built this institution. The university presents the philosophy of Hamas. If you want to know what Hamas is, you can know it from the university."

Naturally, Kristof thinks that having ties to Hamas should yield no negative consequences whatsoever. Kristof ends his article stating, "Let's stop bolstering Hamas." This from a man who wants to give Hamas-linked individuals free educations at prestigious American universities, because to not do so would be "counterproductive" and "collective punishment." Kristof was wrong about Al-Arian, and he's wrong about Hamas. Sadly, he fits right in at the New York Times. (Jewish World Review June 25)

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