



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...

Not Getting the 'R' Word By Lela Gilbert

It was New Years Eve 2008, and my son Dylan and I gathered with close friends for our annual holiday festivities. In past years we'd celebrated in Rome, Sydney and Vienna. Now in the waning days of 2007, we found ourselves in Mumbai, India and thanks to our hosts' generosity, our gala was to be held at the city's beautiful Taj Mahal Palace Hotel. We checked into our exquisitely appointed rooms a couple of days before the party. After having spent the last week and a half in Bangalore, Delhi, Agra and elsewhere, we were particularly impressed with the old world elegance of Mumbai. We took photographs of the impressive boulevards, colorful gardens and regal buildings. But the Taj Hotel was especially lovely, overlooking the harbor, its fairy-tale architecture serving as a beloved landmark both to tourists and the local population. We, too, fell in love with it.

On December 31, after drinks and snapshots, we settled down to dinner. Two friends, with whom I've written other books - Paul Marshall and Roberta Green Ahmanson - and I were discussing our most recent offering, the soon-to-be-released *Blind Spot: When Journalists Don't Get Religion*. We had worked as editors and contributors for this Oxford publication, which focused on the fact that some journalists, especially those who are not religiously observant themselves, frequently overlook, misunderstand or under-report the importance of religion to current events.

OF COURSE it never crossed our minds that in less than a year, we would be seeing the very setting of our conversation and celebration destroyed by Islamist terrorists. Or that the reporting of Mumbai's siege would so aptly illustrate the thesis of our book.

Late last Wednesday night in my Jerusalem apartment, I was checking the headlines. All at once I found myself frantically trying to make sense of a growing number of news bulletins, video clips, live feeds and photographs coming in from Mumbai. It seemed that a murderous assault on the city had been launched, and one of the two five-star hotels attacked was our beautiful Taj Mahal Palace. Of course the grisly scenes of people gunned down in cold blood were the real tragedy. But for me, it was also jarring to see places inside the hotel where I had walked, shared a drink with friends, laughed with my son and welcomed in the New Year now smeared with blood and littered broken bodies. It was impossible to stop watching, and sleep was out of the question.

I was vaguely aware that the perpetrators were being identified mostly as "militants," their presumed motives as "economic," their targets as "Western" and their description - more than once - as "so young, dressed in casual clothes..."

Even though it was clearly a terrorist attack, most of reports avoided the words "Muslim" and "Islamic." It was, in fact, a while before the noun terrorism was employed.

On some Web sites there was occasional speculation about possible al-Qaida connections. Yet even in that context, any religious aspects of the attacks remained unmentioned.

Then reports began to emerge that Mumbai's Chabad House had been attacked by "militants," with Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg, his wife Rivka and others held hostage. Mumbai's population is nearly 13,000,000. Its dwindling Jewish population is estimated to be around 4,000. But along with two world-famous hotels, the city's splendid and historic Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus train station, the Cama Hospital for women and children and a local police station, was it just bad luck that the humble little Lubavitcher center was also targeted?

Eventually reporters acknowledged that this wasn't simply an incident of

continuing Pakistani vs. ד"ס
Indian hostilities - although those hostilities are very real. After the Chabad House invasion, after a group calling itself the "Deccan Mujahideen" took credit for the battering of Mumbai, the Muslim theme began to be repeated more frequently. A smattering of commentators and bloggers even recalled Osama bin Laden's inflammatory statements, especially since 9/11, and his repeated calls for

international jihad.

Of those statements Paul Marshall writes in *Blind Spot*, "These religious themes have continued. On April 23, 2006, while castigating the United Nations, bin Laden denounced 'pagan Buddhists,' presumably the Chinese. He claimed that the 'world's crusaders alongside pagan Buddhists hold the five permanent seats' in the UN Security Council. Bin Laden also stressed India's role and referred to a 'Crusader-Zionist-Hindu war against the Muslims...'"

Mumbai's Hindu population certainly bore the brunt of the attacks. Thanks, no doubt, to Bin Laden's rhetoric, Hindus were clearly targeted. And whether the Mumbai attacks were the specific handiwork of al-Qaida or not, the global religious war took on new proportions last week. Time magazine on-line quoted French terrorism specialist Roland Jacquard: "This didn't involve suicide bombers and booby-trapped cars that we commonly see in Islamist terror attacks - ones which usually end with the explosion-deaths of the kamikazes carrying them out. This is essentially a small army sent into the heart of society with orders to kill and keep killing as long as possible." For three days, the city was under siege, and more than a few described Mumbai not just as a site of selective terrorist attacks but as a war zone.

Tragically, it was the murders of Rabbi Gabriel and Rivka Holzberg and their fellow-hostages that made the nature of the conflict clear to the world.

That beautiful, hospitable couple were not killed for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. They weren't caught in the crossfire between Muslims and "Western targets." They weren't players in any Pakistani-Indian conflict. The Holzbergs were not murdered for anything other than being Jews. Their son is an orphan because his parents were Jews. The Holzbergs were casualties in a religious war that has cost millions of lives in Sudan, and thousands in Nigeria, Bali, Indonesia, Madrid, New York, London and, of course, here in Israel.

Clarity about the Mumbai atrocities will not be available overnight, and there will be much to learn from the tragic details. But one thing is certain. Whatever we choose to call it, this global conflict - which is rooted in centuries-old religious Islamist ideology - is far from over.

The writer has authored or co-authored more than 60 books, primarily in ecumenical Christian non-fiction. Her work includes the recently released biography Baroness Cox: Eyewitness to a Broken World and the award-winning Their Blood Cries Out, co-authored with Paul Marshall. She is an Adjunct Fellow at the Hudson Institute. (Jerusalem Post Nov 30)

The Jihadist-Multicultural Alliance By Caroline Glick

Doctors at the Mumbai hospital who treated the victims of the past week's jihadist attacks were rendered nearly speechless by the carnage. As two doctors explained to the Indian news Web site rediff.com, violent gang wars and previous terror attacks didn't hold a candle to what happened.

The bodies of the victims showed clear signs of preexecution torture. The worst tortured, they said, were the Jewish victims. As one doctor put it, "Of all the bodies, the Israeli victims bore the maximum torture marks. It was clear that they were killed on the [first day of the assault]. It was obvious that they were tied up and tortured before they were killed. It was so bad that I do not want to go over the details even in my head again." India's Intelligence Bureau revealed that a captured jihadist explained that they were instructed to seek out foreign and especially Israeli victims.

In the aftermath of the Mumbai massacres, it is hard to imagine that there is anything as pernicious as the jihadists who sought out and murdered non-Muslims with such cruelty. But there is. Their multicultural apologists, who

Readers are requested to please mail contributions to: BAYT - re: *Israel News*, 613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario. L4J 5V3
Annual Rates: Friend - \$36, Supporter - \$50, Benefactor - \$180. Dedications are welcome at \$120/week. Call (905) 886-3810 for further info.

See *Israel News* on the internet at www.bayt.org and www.frumtoronto.com

Opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the views of BAYT. Thank you to Continental Press for their ongoing support.

enable them to continue to kill by preventing their victims from fighting back, are just as evil.

The jihadists in Mumbai, like their counterparts throughout the world, were motivated to kill by their adherence to totalitarian Islam. Totalitarian Islam calls for the annihilation of the Jewish people and the subjugation of all other non-Muslims.

The jihadists in Mumbai, like their counterparts from Gaza to Baghdad to Guantanamo Bay, have been defended, and their acts and motivations have been explained away, by their allies and loyal apologists: Western multiculturalists. Multiculturalism is a quasi-religion predicated on both moral relativism and a basic belief in the inherent avarice of the West - particularly of the US and Israel. Multiculturalists assert that Westerners - or, in the case of India, Hindus - are to blame for all acts of violence carried out against them by non-Westerners.

In the case of the Mumbai massacres, the jihadists' multicultural defenders began justifying their actions while they were still in the midst of their torture and murder spree. In Newsweek, Fareed Zakaria hinted that Indian Hindus had it coming.

"One of the untold stories of India," he explained, "is that the Muslim population has not shared in the boom the country has enjoyed over the last 10 years. There is still a lot of institutional discrimination, and many remain persecuted."

Then too, the multicultural media suppressed the fact that the jihadists were targeting Jews. Outside of Israel, it took the media nearly two days to report that the Chabad House had even been taken over by the jihadists. And once they did finally report that Jews were being targeted, they made every effort to downplay the strategic significance of the jihadists' decision to send a team off the beaten path simply to butcher Jews.

Emblematic of the Western media's attempts to play down the story was The New York Times. Two days into the hostage drama, the Times opined, "It is not known if the Jewish center was strategically chosen, or if it was an accidental hostage scene."

Jews were not the only ones who had their identity obscured. The jihadists did too. For almost an entire day, major news networks in the West suppressed the fact that the murderers were Muslim jihadists, claiming oddly, that they could also be Hindu terrorists. This was odd not because there are no Hindu terrorists, but because the perpetrators referred to themselves from the outset as "mujahideen," or Islamic warriors.

Once the jig was up on their attempts to hide the identities of the perpetrators and their victims alike, the jihadists' multicultural enablers started blaming the victims. For instance, on Sunday, The Los Angeles Times published an op-ed by University of Chicago law professor Martha Nussbaum attacking Indian Hindus. After blithely dismissing the atrocities that were still under way while she wrote as "probably funded from outside India, in connection with the ongoing conflict over Kashmir," Nussbaum focused her ire against India's Hindus. Recalling the gruesome and apparently state-sanctioned violence against Muslims in India's Gujarat state in 2002, Nussbaum cast the jihadists as nothing more than victims of a Hindu terror state which has been victimizing Muslims for no reason since the 1930s.

Nussbaum's essay was a patent example of selective multicultural memory. She apparently forgot about the Islamic conquests of India from the seventh through the 16th centuries in which India's Buddhists were wiped out and 70 million-80 million Hindus were slaughtered by Muslim overlords. She also forgot about the thousands of Indian Hindus who have been murdered by jihadists since the 1990s.

After ignoring India's long and recent history of jihad, Nussbaum condemned an imaginary double standard which she claimed labels all Muslims as terrorists and gives Hindus a free ride in subjugating them. Of course, thanks to multiculturalists like Nussbaum, the double standard we suffer from is the exact opposite of what she described: Muslim terrorists, we are told, are victims of persecution and represent a teensy-tiny fraction of Muslims. On the other hand, all non-Muslims involved in even marginally violent activities against Muslims are murderers, fanatics, extremists. Moreover, they are representative of their non-Muslim societies.

The attacks in Mumbai and the multiculturalists' rush to minimize their significance exposed two disturbing truths about the global jihad. First, they showed that the jihadists are quick studies. With each passing day, their capacity to attack grows larger.

The attacks in Mumbai were exceedingly sophisticated in design and execution. There were echoes of previous attacks, including the al-Qaida bombing of Mike's Place café in Tel Aviv in 2003, and its execution of Northern Alliance commander Ahmed Shah Massoud on September 9, 2001. But there was also a clear implementation of the lessons learned from those and other attacks carried out by al-Qaida and other terror groups.

By making clear their ability to improve their skills by drawing on lessons

from past operations, the jihadists in Mumbai were similar to their counterparts in Pakistan, Gaza, Lebanon, Iran, Syria and every other place where jihadists have safe operational bases. Their obvious knowledge of their enemies' weaknesses also calls to mind the sophisticated modes of operation of Islamic terrorists in the West and in Israel.

In all places where jihadist forces operate in secure bases, they are becoming more sophisticated in their tactics, training and doctrine. Their weapons are increasingly advanced.

Jihadist regimes, like their terror proxies and allies, are not only increasing their direct support for jihadist terrorists. Regimes, and particularly Iran, are matching their increased support for terror groups with their own nonconventional weapons programs. So, in the case of Iran, its takeover of Lebanon and Gaza through Hizbullah and Hamas is being made even more dangerous by its progress in its nuclear weapons program. So too, nuclear-armed Pakistan's military and ISI are expanding their support for al-Qaida and the Taliban at the same time they are facilitating jihadist attacks in Pakistan's large cities as well as in India. This progressive improvement in the capabilities and tightened coordination between jihadist regimes and jihadist groups lends credence to the view that the probability increases with each passing day that a jihadist regime will arm jihadist groups with nuclear weapons.

The second truth about the global jihad that the Mumbai attacks exposed is that there is nothing that jihadists can do to make the multiculturalists stop defending them. And there is nothing effective that democratic governments can do to defend against the jihadists that multiculturalists will deem acceptable. This is the case because multiculturalists cannot accept the fact that the jihadists are waging war against the West without disavowing multiculturalism itself. And since they will not disavow what has become their religion, they will never be convinced that they must stop defending jihadists. In line with this basic fact, it is worth returning for a moment to Nussbaum.

The only advice she offered the Indian government that had just absorbed a coordinated attack, launched and planned by domestic as well as foreign operatives on sea and on land, was to treat terrorists like regular criminals. As she put it, "Let's go after criminals with determination, good evidence and fair trials, and let's stop targeting people based on their religious affiliation." And of course, Nussbaum herself is little different in her refusal to acknowledge the fact of the global jihad than many of the governments principally targeted by jihadist regimes and terror armies. Take the incoming Obama administration for example.

Iran daily threatens to destroy the US, annihilate Israel, close the Straits of Hormuz, use nuclear weapons and proliferate nuclear weapons to other states. It controls Syria, Lebanon and Gaza. It is the primary sponsor of the insurgency in Iraq and, with Pakistan, the major sponsor of the insurgency in Afghanistan. It has cultivated strategic ties with US foes in the Western Hemisphere like Venezuela, Nicaragua and Ecuador.

Yet one of the first foreign policy initiatives promised by the incoming Obama administration is to attempt to diplomatically engage Iran with the aim of striking a grand bargain with the mullahs.

Or take Israel. The outgoing Olmert government may well lead the Western world in its attempts to deny the existence of the global jihad which has marked Israel as its central battlefield. During his visit to the White House last week, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was confronted by an incredulous US President George W. Bush who simply couldn't understand his strange enthusiasm for the prospect of giving Syria the Golan Heights. Bush couldn't fathom Olmert's fervent, if rationally unsupportable belief that if Israel gives Syria the Golan Heights, Syria will happily abandon its best friend and overlord in Teheran. What he apparently didn't realize is that Olmert's championing of an Israeli surrender to Syria stems from his devout adherence to multiculturalism. If Syria can't be peeled away from Iran, that means that Israel can't be blamed for Syrian aggression. And that is a prospect that Olmert simply cannot abide by.

Some commentators dismiss the danger emanating from the global jihad by noting that its global designs are not matched by global capabilities. They argue that when the West finally decides to defeat the jihadists, they will be utterly vanquished.

Unfortunately, this view ignores two things. It ignores the fact that the jihadists are devoting all of their energies to improving and expanding their capacity to fight their war. And it ignores the fact that the multiculturalists' influence is growing steadily and has repeatedly stymied Western attempts to confront the jihadist threat head-on. Unless something changes soon, the consequences of the jihadist-multicultural alliance will be suffered by millions and millions of people. (Jerusalem Post Dec 2)

The War Against Civilisation By Melanie Phillips

The atrocities in Mumbai have left reporters and commentators floundering for explanations. Why India? Was this a local terrorist group or al Qaeda? Why single out Americans and Brits if they also targeted Indians in the railway station? Why attack some obscure Jewish organisation? And so on. They are floundering because they still just don't get it. The atrocities demonstrated with crystal clarity what the Islamist war is all about and the western commentariat didn't understand because it simply refuses to acknowledge, even now, what that war actually is. It does not arise from particular grievances. It is not rooted in 'despair' over Palestine. It is not a reaction to the war in Iraq. It is a war waged in the name of Islam against America, Britain, Hindus, Jews and all who refuse to submit to Islamic conquest.

The Mumbai atrocities told us very clearly a number of things.

- * The Islamists want to murder as many Americans, Brits, Hindus and Jews as possible. That is because they are waging all-out war against civilisation.
- * They singled out Americans, Brits and Indians in the financial heart of India to break the ever-more important strategic alliance between India and the west.
- * They went to some lengths in addition to single out a centre for observant Jews. Rabbi Holtzberg and his wife Rivka were murdered not because of Palestine but simply because they were Jews. That is because hatred of Jews as Jews is fundamental to the Islamists' hatred of the west and of Israel.
- * The Islamists showed a degree of organisation and co-ordination which are more akin to commando raids by an army than acts of terrorism.
- * They have the capacity not merely to commit mass murder but to cause mortal damage to a country's economy.
- * If they can do this in Mumbai, they can do it in London or other British cities; the infrastructure of Islamist terror is more extensively developed in Britain, and the authorities more paralysed in the face of what they have allowed to grow in their midst, than anywhere else in the west.

And yet still the west is scratching its head... (Spectator Nov 30)

India and Israel: The Parallels By Barry Rubin

For years, India has been subjected to periodic terrorist attacks throughout the country. But what happened in Mumbai is something new and different: a full-scale terrorist war.

This is the kind of threat and problem Israel has been facing for decades. What are the lessons for India from Israel's experience?

First, India needs and has the right to expect international sympathy and help. It will get sympathy but will it get help? Once it is clear that other countries must actually do something, incur some costs, possibly take some risks, everything changes.

If the terrorists came from bases or training camps in Pakistan, India would want international action to be taken. Pakistan must be pressured to close such camps, stop helping terrorists and provide information possessed by Pakistani intelligence agencies.

But will Western countries make a real effort? Are they going to impose sanctions on Pakistan or even denounce it? Will they make public the results of their own investigations about responsibility for the terror campaign against India?

Not likely. After all, such acts would cost them money and involve potential risks, perhaps even of the terrorists targeting them. Moreover, they need Pakistan, especially to cooperate on keeping down other Islamist terrorist threats, not spread around nuclear weapons technology too much and cooperate on maintaining some stability in Afghanistan.

This parallels Israel's situation with Syria, Lebanon and Iran. For decades, the US and some European countries have talked to the Syrian government about closing down terrorist headquarters in Damascus. The Syrians merely say no (though sometimes they have just lied and said the offices were closed). The US even did impose some sanctions. But by being intransigent, pretending moderation and hinting help on other issues, Syria has gotten out of its isolation.

So, despite all the pious talk about fighting terrorism, in real terms, India-like Israel - is largely on its own in defending itself from terrorism.

Another problem India faces, like Israel in the case of Lebanon, is that it is dealing with a country that lacks an effective government. Pakistan is in real terms a state of anarchy. Even within the intelligence apparatus, factions simply do as they please in inciting terrorism. Given popular opinion and Pakistan's Islamic framework, even a well-intentioned government would be hard put to crack down.

In Israel's case, the whole rationale for regimes such as those in Iran and Syria is radical ideology. So pervasive is the daily supply of lies and incitement to hatred that popular opinion supports the most murderous terrorism. Murder of Israeli civilians brings celebrations in the Arab world. Appeals to law and order, holding governments responsible for their actions, shaming them or going over their heads to turn to the masses on humanitarian

grounds simply don't work.

So what's a country to do? It might consider cross-border raids against terrorist camps or retaliation to pressure the terrorist sponsor to desist. Sometimes it will actually take such action. But can India depend on international support for such self-defense measures or will it then be labeled an aggressor? How much is India willing to risk war with Pakistan even though it has a legitimate *casus belli* due to covert aggression against it by that neighbor country? And let's not forget that Pakistan has nuclear weapons, a situation which Israel may soon face in regard to Iran.

Now we can see the logic of terrorism as a strategy by radical groups and countries pursuing aggression by covert means. Their victims are not only put on the defensive but have to make tough decisions about self-defense.

Finally, there is the dangerous "root cause" argument. Many Western intellectuals and journalists - as well as some governments - are ready to blame the victim of terrorism. In Israel's case, despite desperate efforts to promote peace - concessions, territorial withdrawals and the offer of a Palestinian state - it is said to be the villain for not giving the Palestinians enough.

The terrorists and their sponsors use this situation to their advantage. By being intransigent - demanding so much and offering so little - they keep the conflict going and are able to pose as victims simultaneously.

Will some suggest that if India merely gives up Kashmir and makes various concessions, the problem will go away? This might not happen but it is worth keeping an eye on such a trend.

The Indian government is thus going to have some very tough decisions to make. How will it mobilize real international strategic support and not just expressions of sympathy for the deaths and destruction? How can it destroy terrorist groups, including installations outside its borders, and deter their sponsors?

Israel's experience offers some lessons: Depend on yourself, be willing to face unfair criticism to engage in self-defense, take counterterrorism very seriously, mobilize your citizens as an active warning system and decide when and where to retaliate.

Defending yourself against terrorism is not easy. Unfortunately, even in an era of "war against terrorism" those truly willing to help in the battle are few and far between.

Since radical Islamists really believe their own propaganda, however, they tend to minimize their allies and maximize their enemies. You don't want to make 900 million Hindus and additional other Indians, in South Asia and elsewhere, mad at you. There are about as many Hindus and Sikhs as there are Muslims and, as one Indian reader put it, "There is a Hindi saying: One and one makes 11. It is time for India and Israel to become allies. It is a jihad we are both facing." (Jerusalem Post Nov 30)

The writer is director of Global Research in International Affairs Center and editor of the Middle East Review of International Affairs Journal.

A Guide for the Bereaved By Sherri Mandell

To the families of those killed in the Mumbai terrorist attacks, It will take many years before you accept that you are the person whom tragedy has visited. Make no mistake; this tragedy will affect you for the rest of your life. You will long for the person who was murdered. You will long for the person you used to be.

People will ask you: Do you hate the killers. And when you answer no, they will think that something is wrong with you.

But hate is not something you have the energy for; you are too sad to hate. Besides you are a person who loves. To turn to hate would make you like the killers, and you refuse to let that happen to you. You will never have the happiness that you had, something will always be missing. The person you loved, as well as your belief that life was good.

Now you have experienced true evil. Your loved one was deliberately targeted. That evil does not go away from your eyes. When you close them, you see your loved one in his last minutes - you see yourself the moment you got the news. There are short-term therapies like EMDR that can help you deal with the shock of the trauma.

Don't forget your other children, especially if they are young. They are the silent victims. People think they don't understand and they understand everything. They know what has happened to their brother or father or sister or mother. But they don't want to talk about it with you. Make sure they have art or music or dance therapy, that they get to express what has happened inside them.

When people tell you to be strong, don't feel that you have to be. If you don't allow yourself to mourn, you will never again be happy. Mourning is the active process of transforming grief. It is a demanding process. You need support to engage in the work of mourning.

There are other victims of terror who have been through what you are now

experiencing. Sometimes it is other survivors who can best offer you support - not the experts who may not understand what you really need. Don't be afraid to tell others what you need.

You will find gifts in your pain, new people, faith, things you didn't know. Embrace whatever blessings come to you.

People will be around you at first, but then eventually it's you and your family and your grief.

Let yourself cry now; otherwise you will be crying in the years to come. Don't let others tell you that your loved ones died for nothing. They died because they were innocent victims of radical Islamic hatred. They died because radical Islam is vicious and evil and worships destruction and stands against everything you hold dear.

When you refuse to be bowed by hatred and savagery, you honor your loved one by sanctifying life. For this reason it is paramount that you seek justice - but do not seek revenge. Revenge embitters you while justice elevates you. Justice is motivated by love; revenge is motivated by hatred. Revenge is the modus operandi of the terrorists, and their hatred for others will in the end be defeated.

Keep speaking about the evil that was perpetrated against your loved one. Don't allow the media or others to call the murderers militants or freedom fighters.

Insist that your loved one's murder be remembered. (Jerusalem Post Dec 2) *The writer's 13-year-old son Koby was murdered by terrorists in 2001. She and her husband Seth created the Koby Mandell Foundation which offers healing programs for families struck by terror (kobymandell.org). Her book The Blessing of a Broken Heart won a National Jewish Book Award.*

At a Time of Shared Grief, Let's Not Hurt Each Other By Kanchan Gupta

As a friend of Israel, I grieve as much for the six Jews, among them Rabbi Gavriel Noach Holtzberg and his wife Rivka, as for my fellow Indians and others who were killed in last week's mass slaughter by Islamic terrorists in Mumbai. As a father of two children, I weep for two-year-old Moshe Holtzberg.

Fear lurks at the back of my mind: Some day I could become a victim of jihadi terror and my children would be orphaned; worse, like many parents in India, I would live to see them killed by terrorists. It's all a matter of chance - of being in the wrong place at the wrong time: Life is uncertain in the bad times we are living in.

At this very moment, all of India is shocked, outraged and furious that such a terrible massacre should have happened on our soil. We feel frustrated that it could not be prevented. We feel angry that so many lives have been lost in so cruel a manner. We feel humiliated that a nation of more than a billion people has been made to look so vulnerable and weak.

Yet, in this gathering gloom, there is also steely determination. In cities and towns and villages, people are determined not to be overwhelmed by the violence unleashed by terrorists. We value our democracy and we cherish our way of life. Neither is negotiable, nor will we compromise on our open, plural society.

Based on my interactions with Israelis during my visit to Israel and from the many conversations I have had with Israeli friends in Delhi and abroad, I can safely suggest that these are values shared by both countries. It is because we are democracies and boast of open societies anchored in freedom of speech and human liberty that we continue to be targeted by Islamists.

This, in a way, is a shared experience, a shared tragedy, for India and Israel. Israel has suffered on account of Islamist terrorism for long. India has been bleeding since 1989. If we go back in history, we will find that the sword of Islam has been wielded with as much ferocity against Hindus as against Jews.

The past continues to cast a long shadow on our countries and our peoples. It is to Israel's credit that it has crafted an effective counterterrorism strategy and evolved admirable means and methods to keep the barbarians outside the gate. We are still grappling with the problem.

But we must remember that Israel has had far more time to frame its response and institutionalize it.

WE MUST also remember that till recently there were few countries willing to accept India's case; even now, the US and Europe, while grudgingly conceding that Pakistanis, if not Pakistan, are involved in waging a war of a "thousand cuts" against India, insist that India should hold its hand, that it should not strike out at the enemy.

Geopolitics and strategic interests of the West ride roughshod over the terrible death and destruction that we have been suffering for many years now. Israel should understand this more than anybody else as its voice, too, has been and continues to be drowned by the duplicity of Western democracies which are stirred only when the barbarians threaten to break down their gates.

There has been criticism in Israel of the manner in which Indian security forces handled the hostage situation at Chabad House. I can understand

Defense Minister Ehud Barak's anguish, as well as that of other Israeli officials. Many things are said in grief and anger that are not necessarily meant to hurt a friend.

But four points need to be made, if only to dispel notions of failure on part of Indian security forces. First, Chabad House received as much attention as the other two establishments which were attacked: Taj Mahal Palace Hotel and Oberoi Trident Hotel. Second, in all probability, the hostages at Chabad House were killed even before our National Security Guard commandos could move in. The brutal slayings and the commando raid are not necessarily linked. Third, the commandos suffered casualties during the Chabad House raid. Fourth, it was Sandra Samuel, the 44-year-old Indian nanny of Moshe, who saved the child from a horrific death: Had she not shown exemplary courage, which was really far beyond the call of duty, we would have been grieving for one more life lost to jihadi violence.

The war that is being waged on India also affects Israel. It would be to our benefit if we were to join hands and stand together, and look our common enemy in the eye, not as two separate nations but as partners in a noble mission. Recrimination and accusation will serve little or no purpose, other than in strengthening those who wish to destroy both Israel and India.

India and Israel are hurting over the loss of lives last week. Why hurt each other at this time of shared loss and grief? (Jerusalem Post Dec 2)

The writer is associate editor of The Pioneer in New Delhi. www.dailypioneer.com

A 'Pressing' Tour of Samaria By Josh Hasten

Last month, my PR firm was hired by the Binyamin Regional Council to organize and lead a day trip exclusively for foreign journalists, allowing them to visit communities under the council's jurisdiction. About 25 journalists representing many of the major media outlets in both the US and Europe signed up for the tour, which included stops in Kochav Ya'acov, Ofra, Eli and Shilo. The purpose of the trip was to allow the journalists to meet with the residents to see what life is really like in "the settlements."

In each respective community, an English-speaking local greeted our bus to provide the journalists with background information on the community and to point out all the key sites from both a historical and modern-day perspective.

I understand that journalists have a job to do and are obligated to ask thought-provoking questions. But each stop turned into what seemed an interrogation session, in which residents were bombarded with rapid-fire questions asking them to justify their existence as Jews on land that Palestinians claim for their future homeland. Not one recognized Israel as having a legitimate claim to even one meter of what they referred to as the West Bank. In addition, a good portion of the conversation was focused on what the journalists called rampant "settler violence" against their Arab neighbors.

The Binyamin residents did their best to explain their rights to the land, and condemned the violence carried out by a tiny fringe minority of the population. Based on the internal conversations I heard among the journalists, I doubt if they were convinced by the locals' arguments. That said, I don't necessarily blame the locals for not making believers out of the foreign press after such a short visit. On the one hand, the Arabs operate a well-oiled propaganda machine specifically catering to the needs of the foreign media. That is how Yasser Arafat and his protégés succeeded in creating an entire people - the Palestinians - and a historical claim to a state basically out of thin air.

In addition, the current government of Israel also seems to be operating a well-oiled PR campaign against the entire population of Judea and Samaria. Recently, some of the country's highest-ranking leaders unjustly linked the entire settler community to a small group of law breakers.

Nevertheless, the Binyamin Regional Council should be applauded for its initiative. The Associated Press reporter who was on the trip wrote an article about his experience which was published in hundreds of newspapers around the globe. While the article wasn't "pro settlements" in nature, it did provide a platform for the residents to justify their existence in Judea and Samaria to the world's English-speaking population - something that doesn't happen very often.

I'm optimistic that the other councils throughout these regions will follow the Binyamin Council's lead and offer similar trips in the near future. This type of proactive PR approach is just what our brothers and sisters in Judea and Samaria need in order to be given at least the chance to explain their perspective. Maybe one day, they'll even get through to some of the correspondents. (Jerusalem Post Dec 2)

The writer is the president of Bar-Am Public Relations, a Jerusalem-based firm that works with non-profits and NGOs.