



Commentary...

Repeating Failure in Gaza By Caroline Glick

If additional proof is needed that Israel is in desperate need of a new government, one needs to look no further than the situation in the South.

After the Olmert-Livni government failed to defeat Hizbullah in the 2006 war, the public demanded that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert resign and enable the people to elect a new government capable of defending the country and fixing the damage that he and his colleagues had just wrought. Olmert refused. He justified his contempt for the public by claiming that since he was the one who had failed, he was in the best position to fix the mess he created.

His reasoning was not simply self-serving. It was strategically devastating. His stubborn insistence on remaining in power made it impossible for the country to embark on a new course.

And today, with the South under siege, the hollowness of Olmert's assertion that he and his colleagues could be trusted to learn from their mistakes is unmistakable. On Sunday the IDF was forced to order schools around Gaza to bar children from playing outside. And as Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) director Yuval Diskin acknowledged at Sunday's cabinet meeting, their fate may soon be shared by hundreds of thousands of other children.

Diskin announced that over the past six months of Israel's one-sided cease-fire with Hamas, Hamas expanded its rocket range from 20 kilometers to 40 and is now capable of attacking the outskirts of Beersheba, Ashdod, Gedera, Kiryat Gat and Kiryat Malachi in addition to Ashkelon, Sderot and Netivot. So due to the so-called cease-fire, Hamas now has more than a million Israelis at its mercy.

SINCE IT abandoned Gaza in September 2005, the government has more or less stood down and allowed Hamas to build its armies and terror arsenals unchallenged. But with the February 10 general elections swiftly approaching, and with public anger at their abandonment of the South daily rising, on Sunday Olmert's ministers decided that the time has come to launch a military offensive into Gaza.

To prepare the ground for the promised offensive, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni has ordered the diplomatic corps to build international support and understanding for the planned military action. Of course, as Likud Knesset candidate and former chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. (res.) Moshe Ya'alon pointed out on Israel Radio Monday morning, the very fact that Israel today lacks international support for defending the country against Hamas's illegal terror offensive shows how empty pledges made by Livni and Olmert on the eve of the 2005 surrender of the Gaza Strip truly were.

At the time, Livni, Olmert and their colleagues promised that after Israel left the area, if the Palestinians dared to attack the country, Israel would have full international backing to defend itself. Now, with an Iranian proxy in control of its southern border, Israel finds itself condemned for every action it takes to secure its citizens from murder.

At any rate, the cabinet decided that whenever Livni, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Olmert feel comfortable with the international climate, the IDF will gradually escalate its currently anemic operations in Gaza. Presently the IDF is not even going after Hamas targets, just Islamic Jihad ones. And on Monday morning Barak announced that every additional operation will require prior approval by the government.

While the government is congratulating itself on its willingness to defend the country after three years of negligence, the fact is that its strategic aim is not to defeat Hamas. This fact was made clear in the summary of the government's decisions reported in the media on Sunday afternoon. The government made clear that the aim of both the diplomatic and military offensives is to pave the way for the "international community" to intervene in Gaza to protect Israel from Palestinian terrorism.

IF THAT sounds familiar, it is because it is. It is the same strategy, and the same strategic goal, that the government adopted during the 2006 war with Hizbullah. After reacting helter skelter to Hizbullah's initial aggression which began the war, Olmert and Livni decided that Israel shouldn't bother trying to defeat Hizbullah. Instead of ordering the IDF to defeat the enemy, they ordered

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it to put on a sound and light show replete with aerial bombing and some good photo-ops of ground forces raising the flag in Bint Jbail and other villages. The aim of their military extravaganza was to convince the "international community" to deploy forces to Lebanon's borders to protect Israel in place of the IDF.

In defending their strategy to the public both during the war and in its aftermath, Olmert and Livni refused to acknowledge the prohibitive cost of

surrendering borders to terror armies. Instead, they spoke darkly of the cost to Israel of controlling its own borders as part of an ongoing "occupation." In Lebanon, Olmert and Livni succeeded in expanding the size of the UNIFIL force deployed along the border. And they presented the expanded force as proof of their strategic genius. But UNIFIL is a disaster.

It has consistently refused to lift a finger to prevent Hizbullah from rearming and reasserting its control over the border area. Rather than contend with Hizbullah, UNIFIL devotes its time to condemning the IAF for conducting surveillance flights over Lebanon. Those flights enable Israel to keep tabs on the Iranian and Syrian weapons shipments to Hizbullah that UNIFIL has refused to prevent.

Under the protective gaze of UNIFIL forces, which Livni and Olmert promised the public would protect Israel from Hizbullah, Hizbullah launched a successful coup against the pro-Western democracy forces in the country in May and gained control over the Lebanese government. And under UNIFIL's protective gaze, the Lebanese army - which has both the US and Russia standing in line to sell it state of the art tanks, fighter jets, helicopters and precision bombs - has actively colluded with Hizbullah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards in south Lebanon.

AND NOW, rather than learn from their mistakes in Lebanon, Livni, Olmert and Barak are seeking to repeat them in Gaza.

In moving to implement their tried and failed "war" strategy in Gaza, Livni, Olmert and Barak are abandoning their tried and failed and tried again and failed again "cease-fire" strategy. Unlike their war strategy, which has only been tried and failed in Lebanon, their cease-fire strategy has been tried and failed in Lebanon and Gaza.

Barak was the first leader to adopt the cease-fire strategy. He implemented it in Lebanon after he surrendered Lebanon's southern border to Hizbullah in May 2000. At the time, as prime minister, Barak announced that Israel would use overwhelming force to combat Hizbullah if it dared to attack after the withdrawal. But then when Hizbullah kidnapped three IDF soldiers along the border in October 2000, Barak refused to take action.

Barak's one-way cease-fire with Hizbullah was exploited by the group to build up a formidable missile arsenal, to organize and train its forces and to construct its warren of underground bunkers and command and control centers which it used to such great effect in the 2006 war. Moreover, emboldened by successive Israeli governments' refusal to lift a finger against Hizbullah, the Iranian-proxy trained, funded and directed Fatah terror cells in Judea, Samaria and Gaza in their attacks against Israel.

In Gaza, the Sharon government first enacted the one-sided cease-fire with Palestinian terror groups led by Fatah in June 2003. In exchange Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas promised to take action against Hamas and Islamic Jihad rocket squads. Of course he never did. And of course, all Palestinian terror factions used the cease-fire to rebuild their forces and expand the range of their rockets - at the time from six to eight kilometers to 15-17, placing Ashkelon under attack from the first time.

Israel finally decided to end its non-aggression pledge in the aftermath of a joint Hamas-Islamic jihad massacre of 20 children and their parents travelling on a bus on their way home from the Western Wall in August 2003. The response involved taking out a Hamas terror commander in Gaza.

Not surprisingly, supported by Egypt, the EU and the Israeli media, all Palestinian terror groups were quick to blame Israel for ending the "truce." The unilateral cease-fire strategy in Gaza was never replaced by a plan to have the "international community" deploy forces to defend Israel. This was the case mainly because no one ever expressed any interest in sending forces to Gaza. In the absence of a foreign deus ex machina to save the country, Ariel Sharon, Olmert and Livni decided to follow the path blazed by Barak in Lebanon and simply surrender Gaza to the terrorists.

Before the government sends IDF forces into harm's way to put on a pre-election show for the public and invite an international force to come to Gaza

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and protect Hamas from the IDF, the public would do well to consider whether we are truly limited to repeating failed strategies over and over again. Is there perhaps an option other than failure we could choose?

The answer to that question is yes. There is an alternative strategy, and it has already been tried. And it succeeded. That strategy is the strategy of victory adopted in Judea and Samaria during Operation Defensive Shield in 2002. In Defensive Shield, IDF forces were sent into Palestinian terror centers with orders to defeat enemy forces. And they did. In succeeding months and years, IDF forces were ordered to remain in place and prevent enemy forces from rebuilding their capacity. As the absence of rocket arsenals in Judea and Samaria and the near disappearance of suicide bombers from Israeli cities shows, the strategy has worked.

THE PROBLEM with repeating the successful strategy used in Defensive Shield in either Gaza or Lebanon is that doing so would require politicians to admit that they have made mistakes. Livni, Olmert and Barak have all based their careers on their advocacy of the view that Israel must not "occupy" land to defend itself, but rather should subcontract its security to peace treaties, to its enemies and to Europeans and Americans. They cannot implement a strategy that requires them to recognize that the price of defending ourselves is smaller than the price of surrendering our security to our enemies. Doing so would be tantamount to acknowledging that they have led the country astray. And as they demonstrate through their stubborn maintenance of tried and failed strategies, this is something they will not do.

But then, as Ya'alon noted in his radio interview Monday, that's why Israel is lucky to be a democracy. On February 10 we will have the opportunity to make clear our view that leaders who have failed cannot be trusted to clean up their messes. (Jerusalem Post Dec 22)

Liar, Liar, Pants on Cease-fire By Barry Rubin

If you can understand why Hamas is ending its cease-fire with Israel, you can comprehend Middle East politics. And if you can't, you can't.

From of a Western moderate pragmatist standpoint, Hamas's decision makes no sense for several reasons:

- Hamas cannot defeat Israel militarily. Thus, fighting won't improve Hamas's strategic situation or bring victory.
- Israeli counterattacks will cause both injuries and material damage in the Gaza Strip, inflicting big costs on Hamas's domain and subjects.
- Returning to warfare will ensure Hamas remains politically isolated and blocks international recognition or aid that would help its cause or end economic sanctions against the Gaza Strip.
- Going back to fighting makes certain that the Gaza Strip faces continued, even heightened, reductions in the material let in, thus ensuring more Palestinian suffering there.

And Hamas is seemingly making three additional mistakes regarding timing.

The first is that it is ending the cease-fire while George W. Bush is president. Certainly Israel feels freer to hit back at Hamas now than after Barack Obama is inaugurated simply because the new administration would want to avoid a crisis before it consolidates its plans and team. Also, the US is likely to prefer quiet as it begins withdrawing from Iraq.

Second, the cease-fire is being suspended on the eve of a major Palestinian crisis as Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas announces a self-extension of his term in office. One might think Hamas would prefer to keep the Israel front quiet for a while to focus on battling Fatah and the PA.

Finally, there's the Israeli election campaign. While this doesn't make large-scale retaliation inevitable, such a move would make the current government more popular with the electorate.

Therefore, Hamas's behavior, an outside observer can easily conclude, seems stupid. But having built a mass movement, sizable army, seized the Gaza Strip and built broad support throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds, Hamas may be composed of genocide-oriented fanatics but not fools. What then explains this apparently silly behavior?

HERE'S A case study of how Middle East politics really work:

- Hamas really believes its own propaganda, expecting victory despite the odds. Costs and casualties are irrelevant. The battle will go on until total victory even if that takes decades. This indicates Hamas will not moderate - the same applies to Hizbullah, Syria and Iran.

- At the same time, Hamas is not only indifferent to its own people's welfare, it actually seeking to inflict suffering on them as a political strategy. The worse off Palestinians are, Hamas believes, the more likely they will fight and die. This "the worse things are, the better they are" is the exact opposite of Western perspectives.

But Hamas goes even further. It knows suffering can be blamed on Israel. Western pragmatists reason that obviously the Palestinians must prefer peace, prosperity and statehood. Rejectionism must then be due to desperation and the lack of a good offer or faith in the West. In fact, though, the situation is not due to our mistakes but to their deliberate choices.

Thus, Hamas can well conclude that the best way to put pressure on Israel and - in its own mind at least - gain Western help is to be more radical, not

more moderate. To cite one example, what is considered America's leading newspaper recently reported that both sides violate the cease-fire: Hamas fires rockets at Israel; Israel retaliates by closing the border. By this definition, the fact that Hamas and its allies fire rockets at civilians doesn't allow any Israeli response, military or otherwise. This is the kind of thinking Hamas seeks to promote.

Then, too, setting off a crisis, Hamas expects, will draw peacekeepers like hardworking ants, giving press conferences in which they will insist that "something must be done to defuse the crisis." That "something" usually seems to be unilateral Israeli concessions. In short, the international community may rush in to save Hamas or the Palestinians in spite of themselves.

At the same time, though, Hamas believes that its intransigence and aggressiveness will increase support in the Arab and Muslim worlds. As with Hizbullah, waging a war and portraying it as victory - even though the facts are otherwise - makes one a hero and attracts financing. This is also a judgment regarding Palestinian responses. More popular support can be garnered by producing martyrs than by producing higher living standards. Thus, Hamas will do better in its rivalry with the PA by fighting Israel than by fighting poverty.

I am not saying this strategy will work completely, but it does succeed in part. If one believes the short run is irrelevant and the deity is on one's side, reality looks rather different. In addition, macho militancy in the Middle East does bring popularity, both domestic and international. The last quarter-century has also shown that Western sympathy can be manipulated by increasing violence and blocking solutions to the conflict in a way that will be blamed on Israel.

Yet this world view is also illusory. Impoverishing one's people and destroying the infrastructure over which one rules makes such groups weaker rather than stronger, especially as Israel focuses on material gains. Western patience with the Palestinians has waned; Arab states are not so eager to help. A strategy depending on suicide bombers is also ultimately suicidal.

Ironically, too, regarding the West, Islamists cannot get away with what radical Arab nationalists can. Too many Western intellectuals, journalists, leftists and even politicians might have been carried away with revolutionary romanticism for Fatah - seeing Yasser Arafat as merely an ugly version of Che Guevara. Far fewer see radical Islamists as heroic liberators.

The bottom line is that Hamas will remain isolated and weaker than it could be if it kept things quiet, consolidated its hold on the Gaza Strip, built up its armies and base of support and had more patience.

But Hamas will also survive, ideology undiluted, able to utter war cries about wiping Israel off the map and intoxicated with the belief it is following divine will. That's enough for Hamas's leadership and followers. (Jerusalem Post Dec 21)

Time to Soul-Search By David Wilder

This is being written on Erev Hanukka, the holiday of light. In Hebrew we greet each other with the traditional blessing, "Chag Urim Sameach" - "Have a happy holiday of lights." I just came inside from photographing two wondrous events. First, the construction of a huge Menorah on the Abu-Sneh hills, opposite the Avraham Avinu neighborhood. It was from these hills that infant Shalhevet Pass was murdered by a terrorist sniper over eight years ago. It was from these hills that such terrorists shot at Jews in Hebron, in their homes, on the streets, into their automobiles, for two years. Tonight, the light of Hanukka will shine forth from these hills, radiating the brilliance of the miracle of the Maccabee's victory against Hellenization, as far as the eye can see.

When I finished filming the menorah from afar, I found Hebron's kindergarten and nursery school kids playing outside in the newly renovated playground, the Hyman and Ruth Simon play center. Some of the children were adorned with crowns on their heads, the remnants of the just concluded Hanukka party. They looked so happy, their faces so full of delight, that I stopped and photographed them too.

So, on the face of it, the article should be filled with festivity and joy. But, alas, the events filling our lives are not always so enchanting. Shabbat, for example. Two young women, aged sixteen and seventeen, were walking down from Kiryat Arba in Hebron at 10:15 in the evening. When they reached the bottom of the hill, at the crossroads leading to Ma'arat HaMachpela, two Arab men started walking towards them. The girls took off. One of the Arabs caught up to B., knocked her down and sat on top of her. The other girl, behind her, started throwing rocks at him, while at the same time both began screaming. No one heard them. There weren't any soldiers to be seen. (However, about 100 meters up the road at least a dozen border police were guarding the sealed up Beit HaShalom, ensuring that no one try to retake the structure.) B. struggled with her attacker, and somehow, miraculously, in her words, managed to escape from under him.

The girls finally found an army jeep and reported the attack. However the soldier and officer in the jeep didn't take them seriously enough to report the attack to their superior officers. Hebron's security chief wasn't informed about

the attack until 12:30 at night. The army had totally ignored it.

The next morning the girls and their families met with the military commander of the area, Col. Udi Ben-Mocha. When they complained that there weren't any soldiers in the area he replied that he didn't have enough manpower to place soldiers everywhere (except, of course, next to Beit HaShalom.) This, in spite of the fact that numerous times Israelis are attacked at the very location where the girls were attacked, on Shabbat and during the week, when rock-throwing Arabs hurl blocks at passing automobiles.

And now to the main task at hand.

Since the expulsion from Beit HaShalom, many articles have been written lambasting the Hebron Jewish community and the struggle against the expulsion. I previously wrote an oped piece which was printed in the Jerusalem Post. However, it seems that was not enough. I don't have the time or stomach to respond to each and every article written, but I have no choice but to deal with one of the most problematic of these essays. I hope my response will satisfy all those who have requested my reaction to each and every one of these articles.

Before responding: I know that my response will upset some of those who read it, perhaps even people I work with and have dealings with. However, I cannot sit back and quietly accept such hateful slander, which is based on outright lies.

Last Shabbat one Rabbi Mitch Wohlberg, rabbi of a Baltimore 'modern orthodox' congregation, spewed out a sermon whose subject was terror. The sermon, widely disseminated on internet is titled, "*Terrorists in our midst.*" I will try to relate to this work of self-hate point by point, but not necessarily in the order it appears in the sermon.

How does Wohlberg relate to building?: "*The settlers who took over a home in Hebron under questionable circumstances, spurring confrontations with the Israeli government and with the local Arabs, called the home "Beit Ha-Shalom – House of Peace... occupied by settlers in Hebron...."*

Wohlberg has already decreed that the 'occupation' is 'questionable.' Why? Brooklyn resident Morris Abraham paid some one million dollars for the building and has the documents to prove the purchase. A film of the Arab counting the money appears on internet, as does a cassette of him stating that he sold the building.

"*The police and soldiers were acting by orders of the government, which in turn was acting by order of the Supreme Court.*" This is not true. The Supreme Court did not order the government to expel the Jews from the building. They ruled that the state was legally enabled to expel us, but did not order them to do so. The decision to go ahead with the violent confrontation was made by Ehud Barak in the midst of high-level discussions with leaders of the Hebron community aimed at preventing the confrontation.

"*...there are Jews living in Hebron and across the West Bank who do not accept the decisions of Israel's Supreme Court or of its government leaders.*" My article in the Jerusalem Post relates to the judicial terror used against Hebron.

"*The settlers who took over a home in Hebron...spurring confrontations with the Israeli government and with the local Arabs...*" This is a lie. Jewish families lived in Beit HaShalom for twenty months 'peacefully,' with almost no confrontations with the Arabs living in the area. The Jews and Arab walked the same street in front of the building, without any misconduct by any of the Jews living or visiting there.

"*these same Jewish terrorists have thrown stones at Israeli police and soldiers. They have uprooted the olive trees of Arabs, attacked Arab women and old people, have vandalized mosques and Muslim cemeteries...*" Again, these accusations are out and out lies. In January, 2008, Efrat Weiss writing in the Hebrew internet site ynet and the daily newspaper Yediot Achronot wrote: "The head of the Israel Police's Hebron district, Commander Avshalom Peled told Ynet that 'from my experience in the Hebron and Gush Etzion area, the activity on the part of the militant left can be severe and dangerous.'"

Hebron police have recorded a drop in disturbances involving Jewish settlers over the past year and noted an improvement in the dialogue between the settler community and police..."In the past we did not have any problems with the leftist organizations, but all this changed recently," another police official said. "Their activity has become more extreme in nature, and it may result in (an eruption of violence)."..."The leftists antagonize the settlers in the hope that the settlers will attack them," a police official said. The left-wing organizations have become an even greater threat than the anarchists."

What factual evidence can Wohlberg supply to prove that Jews in Hebron have uprooted olive trees, vandalized mosques and desecrated cemeteries? Unfortunately, the opposite is true. The ancient Jewish cemetery in Hebron, as well as Ma'arat HaMachpela have been desecrated time and time again, without any reaction by Israeli security forces or international media, or, for that matter, Rabbi Wohlberg.

It is true that about 2 weeks before the expulsion a small group of kids drew Jewish stars on stones at an Arab cemetery and wrote slogans on a nearby mosque. They were immediately requested to leave the building and the vicinity and the others were instructed, in no uncertain terms, that this was not to happen again. Again, for almost 2 years Jews lived in that building

without any such incidents at the cemetery or mosque.

What does Wohlberg call us?: "*So what should we call Jews who similarly threaten people? There is only one word: 'Terrorists.'*"

Rabbi Wohlberg, how many Arabs were injured or killed by 'Jewish terror?' Why did you neglect mentioning Eliyasaf Asban, a sixteen year old who was hit in the head by a block hurled by an Arab. Eliyasaf was standing next to Beit HaShalom speaking to his brother and friends when the attack occurred. His skull was crushed and he was nearly killed, remaining unconscious and in critical condition for days after being hit. The Arab who tried to kill him still hasn't been arrested, despite the fact that the police know his identity. Yet the Jews are terrorists, being compared in the same breath with the monsters who murdered hundreds, including Jews, in India: "*The terrorists who attacked in Mumbai were members of a terrorist organization called Lashkar-E-Taiba...*"

Wohlberg, at the beginning of his sermon, describes what he calls a 'pogrom.' Yet he refrains from describing the 'attempted lynch' against two Jews from Kiryat Arba who were trying to get their kids out of Beit HaShalom and were forced to shoot in order to save themselves. One of the men is under house arrest, despite demands by the prosecutor's office that he be kept in jail, because a magistrate court judge stated that it is not clear that he was responsible for the events which forced him to shoot in self defense.

There were, as has been stated by myself and other representatives of Hebron's Jewish community, incidents which occurred before and during the expulsion which were not planned, nor are they considered to be acceptable or legitimate forms of protest. However, as repugnant as some of these events were, let's examine another, similar scenario:

Last week, (as reported in YNetnews and other media networks) Israeli security forces conducted a mass training exercise to ostensibly practice dealing with riots. However, sources participating in the exercise told that much of the time was spent practicing how to expel people from their homes. Some of the police played themselves – expellers, while others were transformed into 'settlers' being thrown out of their homes. As a result of this 'training exercise' fifty four police were injured due to the fact that "the rioters" apparently used excessive force on "peacekeeping" officers during a mock disturbance." In other words, police beat police – on both sides. The expellers beat the expellees, who hit back. And this is police vs. police!

So what, Rabbi Wohlberg, do you have to say to that?! If that's what happens during a 'mock disturbance' between police, what do expect kids to do in a 'real' situation?! And of course, will you condemn the Arabs who tried to rape and murder two young Jewish women on Friday night in Hebron, Rabbi Wohlberg?

I would like to now conclude with several comments:

1. As I wrote in the Jerusalem Post: "It should be clear. Hebron's Jewish community opposes and rejects any and all violence aimed at innocent people, be they Arabs, Jews or anyone else." By the same token, we reject desecration of any kind by anyone. We are not terrorists, Rabbi Wohlberg. We are Jews who love our country, our land and our people. And we live what we believe. Our lives are dedicated entirely to G-d, to the Jewish people and to Eretz Yisrael, and we do not, nor will we ever apologize for that.
2. Jews have not ever conducted 'pogroms' against anyone. You forgot, in your Shabbat spiel, to recall a true Hebron pogrom, which took place in August of 1929, when 67 Jews were murdered by Arab masses, with the survivors then expelled from the city of Abraham by the then occupying British. You also forgot to mention the war against the Jews, when Arabs shot at us for two years, killing scores, including a ten month old baby in Hebron proper.
3. I would like to see what you would do, Rabbi Wohlberg, when, due to growing anti-Semitism in the United States, one fine Saturday morning, masses of police, FBI, and other security troops show up outside your shul, while you are in the middle of a sermon, and start forcibly removing you and your congregation from you pulpit and your seats. Will you walk out like sheep on the way to the slaughter, or will you fight back, refusing to be treated like subhuman beings? After all, 'dina d'malchuta dina' – right, Rabbi Wohlberg? If they want to expel you, they can – that could be the law of the land, right, Rabbi Wohlberg?

Don't think it couldn't happen. In Germany they didn't think it could happen. In Hungary, they didn't think it could happen. Ditto other countries in Europe.

Rabbi Wohlberg, we will not be, here in Hebron or anywhere in Israel, sheep led to slaughter. We are being dealt with as 3rd class citizens with laws being circumvented and at best, rewritten, to deal with over 300,000 people, including 'settler fanatics' who live not only in 'occupied Hebron,' but in 'the occupied Jordan Valley' and the 'occupied Golan Heights.'

Don't fool yourself or your congregation Rabbi. You too will be thought of, and dealt with, as 'occupiers' of downtown Baltimore. I suggest you stop breathing fire against kids, who despite their good intentions may have erred, and begin soul-searching yourself: who are you, what are you, and what do you really believe in? Because, judging from last week's sermon, the answer to these questions are very very unclear. (Jewish Community of Hebron Dec 21)

Confront the Depths of Evil By Frimet Roth
Despite critics' advice, media coverage must not downplay horrors of terror
"Ignore them dear, and they will stop bothering you."

Haven't we all trotted out that line when our children have come sobbing about school-yard bullies?

Terrorists need sensational media coverage; let's not give it to them

But is it sage advice for us – the targets of terror?

Some Israeli pundits seem to think so. Columnist Guy Bechor wrote recently on Ynetnews: "The more the media covers terror attacks, the more we encourage them... we must restrain the coverage, its sensationalism and its horrors." He was responding to Hamas' 21st anniversary rally. With characteristic sadism, the event included a skit performed by a terrorist pretending to be Gilad Shalit in an IDF uniform. Kneeling on stage before some 300,000 celebrating Gazans he moaned twice in Hebrew: "I miss my Mom and my Dad."

The call for self-censorship was echoed that evening by former Mossad chief, Ephraim Halevi, who accused Israeli television news producers of impropriety by broadcasting the Hamas anniversary performance. He insisted that Israel plays into the hands of its enemies by disseminating such attempts at emotional blackmail. They know how bound every Israeli is not only to his own, but to all Jewish children, especially those in uniform who risk their lives to defend the nation.

Not long ago, the Israeli reporters Ben Caspit and Yigal Ravid expressed related, though far more superficial sentiments. They lamented all the precious media time that was spent on terrorism reportage during the second Intifada. Yet they didn't voice any concern about its impact on terrorists. Presumably, it was just the tiresome repetition of it all – terror attack after terror attack – that irked them.

Bechor maintains that self-censorship was exercised in the 1990s in the wake of suicide bombings. "This neutralized some of the horror and achievements of terror," he asserts. He provides no sources for this brash claim and it doesn't ring terribly true. For one thing, in the '90s, the threat from terrorism was only a distant cousin of the tentacled monster that we now call Islamist Terror. There were simply fewer such attacks then. Media attention or not.

Second, it is a fact of life that terrorism, by its very nature, instills horror, regardless of whether or not that is the terrorists' aim.

Nevertheless, nobody can accuse Israelis of letting that horror paralyze them. On the contrary, we are consistently praised for our determined adherence to normality even under extreme conditions. Bechor's absurd call to "establish an international media convention... to minimize the achievements of Islamic terror..." sounds pointless. Not only haven't Israelis succumbed to fear, on the contrary, many have grown worryingly apathetic. A sizable portion of the public and its leaders are eager to engage with our most threatening neighbors in unconditional dialogue, to grant them concessions and to refrain from logical military responses to their actions.

Finally, the depraved Hamas performance last week is nothing new. It is reminiscent of earlier theatrics designed at once to "entertain," to emotionally torment and to incite Palestinians to fresh murders. Here is just one example:

In August 2001, a Hamas terrorist massacred 15 Jewish men, women and children in Jerusalem's Sbarro restaurant. My fifteen-year old daughter, Malki was among the victims.

In September 2001, Hamas set out to commemorate one year since the start of the Second Intifada. Toward that end, students at al-Najah University in Nablus erected a tent-replica of a Sbarro restaurant. Inside they displayed a grisly re-enactment of the August bombing, including fake body parts and pizza slices strewn on the floor. An Associated Press photograph of Palestinian students walking under the mock Sbarro shop-sign appeared in most international media services. Nobody argued then that the students' hateful handiwork ought to be concealed.

Confronting the depths of Hamas' evil can be painful. And burying your head in the sand can be awfully tempting. But we are all grown up now. If the terrorism of our neighbors is downplayed, widespread complaisance will set in. How can any government garner support for crucial deterrent and responsive strategies from a tranquilized public?

Journalists and editors, do your job. Report all current events, however heart-wrenching they may be. (Ynet Dec 21)

Norway - a Paradigm for Anti-Semitism By Manfred Gerstenfeld

"I would like to take the opportunity to remember all the billions of fleas and lice that lost their lives in German gas chambers, without having done anything wrong other than settling on persons of Jewish background."

This is what Norwegian comedian Otto Jespersen said on Thursday 27 November on the country's largest commercial TV station. Much worse, however, is that the director of the station defended this expression of "satire."

A week later Jespersen, in his weekly TV appearance, gave a "satiric" monologue of mixed anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli remarks. He concluded by wishing the Jews a happy Christmas. But then as an afterthought, he said this was not proper as the Jews had murdered Jesus. Two years ago the same

comedian burned pages from the Tanach in front of a TV camera, but this was no reason to terminate his employment. Jespersen explained that he wouldn't burn the Koran if he wanted to live longer than a week.

LAST WEEK, on four consecutive days, there were anti-Israeli articles in Norway's second-largest daily Aftenposten. The first called for a general boycott of Israel. The second promoted an academic boycott, falsely accusing Israeli physicians of participating in torture and the Israeli Medical Association of remaining silent about it. Any honest debater would have reported that Israeli hospitals routinely treat Palestinian children, some of whom express joy when suicide bombers kill Israelis. One wonders whether any other country would allow this.

The third article stressed the right to criticize Israel. This is a typical attack on a "straw man," as nobody denies this right. The fourth claimed that Israel is not a democracy. Only thereafter a pro-Israeli voice was heard.

Two years ago the conservative Aftenposten got international attention when it published an op-ed by Jostein Gaarder which until this day remains the vilest anti-Semitic article published in a European mainstream paper since the Second World War.

Whoever wants to understand how Jews might live in a future democratic Europe if no major counter-forces are mobilized should study Norway. Among parts of the elite there, Jew-hatred and rabid anti-Israelism intermingle. The country's population numbers only 4.6 million. The Jewish population, even before the war, was never more than 2,000. It now numbers 1,300, of which only 700 affiliate with the organized community. Yet Norway must figure prominently in any future history of post-war European anti-Semitism.

Norwegian anti-Israelis keep repeating that their anti-Israelism is not anti-Semitism. One only has to check their statements against the European Union's working definition of anti-Semitism to see that this is often untrue. Norway has a long history of anti-Semitism. In 1929 a great majority of its parliament voted to forbid shechita (Jewish ritual slaughter) – several years before Hitler's Germany did so. It is still forbidden, although hunters, including government ministers, can legally kill animals in as cruel a manner as they want. Last year Norway aimed to kill 1,000 whales, but succeeded in finding only 500. If all needs for kosher beef were met by local shechita, it would require at most several tens of cows annually.

During the war, the Norwegians were the ones who rounded up Jews and robbed them before shipping them off to Auschwitz. After the war, emergency help was given to what the Norwegians called the two "hardest-hit groups" – fishermen and residents of the northern part of the country. The Jews, however, were robbed further by the Norwegian democrats. During the restitution process, they had to pay for the administration of those of their assets recovered from the looters. About 10 years ago a senior Norwegian Nazi official proudly told a Jewish visitor that he had no regrets, and still had paintings and furniture taken from Jews.

In the new round of restitution in the mid-1990s, several authorities did their utmost to avoid paying. Berit Reisel, the only Jewish member of the commission of inquiry, states that she was threatened by chairman Oluf Skarpnes, a former Justice Minister. He told her that if she didn't go along with his proposed report, it would cost her dearly as far as her life and health were concerned. Reisel added that a few days later she was attacked on a street in Oslo.

AFTER THE beginning of the second intifada, several Jewish children were harassed in school. The aggression was supported by teachers on several occasions. Since then, the Jewish community has kept a low profile. When asked by the press, its leaders will admit there is anti-Semitism, but claim that critics overstate it. They usually remain silent on the anti-Semitic aspects of anti-Israelism.

Norwegian hate cartoons often mix anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism. Some are straight-out anti-Semitic, such as one which appeared in the Labor movement daily Dagsavisen in 2003. It portrayed a Jew with a long beard reading the new Ten Commandments, including "murder, kill, liquidate, execute." During the Second Lebanon War, anti-Semitic incidents in Oslo were the most severe in Europe. The synagogue was shot at, the cantor was attacked on a main street and the Jewish cemetery was desecrated. The Jewish community's president Anne Sender was thereafter quoted in a European Jewish Congress report speaking of the considerable "atmosphere of intimidation and fear."

Anti-Israelism has been built up systematically in Norway by trade unions, media, some prominent Christians and politicians. The demonization is classic: major media report negative things about Israel while obfuscating or omitting Palestinian suicide attacks or declared genocidal intentions. The main counterforce is a small group of Christian friends.

NGO Monitor has analyzed how significant governmental development aid reaches NGOs engaged in political campaigning against Israel and in support of extreme Palestinian demands. The good the Norwegian government does, including subsidizing the rebuilding of synagogues in Poland, cannot be offset against the infrastructure of hatred it supports.

The writer's most recent book is Behind the Humanitarian Mask: The Nordic Countries, Israel and the Jews. (Jerusalem Post Dec 13)