



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*

capital of Israel under Israeli sovereignty."

Annexing Judea and Samaria will dash the delusions of those who continue to cling to the idea of the creation of "Palestine." And with the incoming Trump administration set to assume power in two weeks, now more than ever must

Commentary...

Welcome to the Post-Palestine Era By Michael Freund

Finally, after decades of perseverance, one of the most energetic and enduring diplomatic delusions of the modern era is at last giving way to reality.

Notwithstanding the recent UN Security Council vote regarding Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria, and US Secretary of State John Kerry's subsequent temper tantrum on the same subject, it is time to formally pronounce the death of the so-called two-state solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

This is not a matter of wishful thinking, ideological zeal or messianic fervor. It is a cold, hard fact and the Left and the international community need to accept that we have now entered the post-Palestine era.

Just take a look at the numbers. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, there are currently some 400,000 Israeli Jews living in Judea and Samaria. Add to that the more than 200,000 Jews living in eastern Jerusalem and the sum total of Jews residing in the areas liberated by Israel in 1967 is more than 600,000.

That means that nearly one out of every 10 Israeli Jews, or 10% of the Jewish population, live in "the settlements."

And their number continues to grow at a pace that is more than twice as fast as the rest of the country, averaging around 4% per year.

Indeed, since 2001, despite waves of Palestinian violence and terrorism, including stabbings, shootings and stone-throwings, and various building freezes imposed by the Israeli government, the number of Jews calling Judea and Samaria home has more than doubled.

Remarkably, over the past 15 years, without exception, the settler population has grown annually irrespective of the economic, diplomatic or security situation.

So whether Meretz, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas or US President Barack Obama like it or not, the Jewish communities of Judea and Samaria, along with eastern Jerusalem, are here to stay.

There are over 130 Jewish communities spread throughout the territories, as well as dozens of undocumented outposts. Does anyone really think it would be possible or even desirable to forcibly evict so many people from their homes? Even the Palestinians have come to accept this reality. In poll results published last week by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, a whopping two-thirds of Palestinians said they no longer believe the two-state solution is viable because of the growth of the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria.

Hence, it appears that the only people remaining who continue to believe in the establishment of a Palestinian state are those who frequent smoke-filled cocktail parties on the diplomatic circuit, where free-flowing alcohol makes the mantra of an independent "Palestine" still sound germane.

And that is precisely why recent calls by Education Minister Naftali Bennett and Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked for Israel to start annexing Judea and Samaria make so much sense.

Since Palestine cannot and will not arise, there is no reason for Judea and Samaria's Jews to continue to live under military rule. Residents of Shiloh, Hebron and Tekoa are tax-paying citizens, so it is only fair that they be extended the rights that the rest of the nation enjoys.

Extending Israeli law to places such as Ariel and Kiryat Arba will once and for all remove any question marks hovering over their status in the eyes of future Israeli governments.

Bear in mind that even among the broad public there is widespread consensus that places such as Ma'aleh Adumim must remain part of Israel.

The community was built and expanded by none other than Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, both of whom repeatedly stated over the years that Ma'aleh Adumim was an inseparable part of the Jewish state.

In 1994, just a year prior to his death, Rabin told the Knesset, "A united Jerusalem will include Ma'aleh Adumim, as well as Givat Ze'ev, as the

the Jewish state press forward with practical plans to annex the areas.

This coming May will mark 50 years since our brave soldiers liberated Judea and Samaria and reunited Jerusalem after 19 centuries of foreign occupation. The best way to celebrate this momentous anniversary would be for the Israeli government to end five decades of ambiguity and finally send a clear message to the international community: the Jewish people did not return to Zion in order to hand it over to our foes. (Jerusalem Post Jan 4)

Losing all Proportion By Boaz Bismuth

This is a sad story about "our kid" (may the chief of staff forgive me for calling him that), Sgt. Elor Azaria, who was convicted of manslaughter by a military court on Wednesday -- for killing a terrorist.

The court convicted him, but the public acquitted him. Because in the crazy reality in which we live, it is a little difficult for the public to accept a terrorist as victim and an IDF combat soldier as guilty. Nothing good has come of this whole story, and there are no winners.

Even the family members of the "victim," Abdel-Fattah al-Sharif, who along with his friend that fateful morning merely wanted to murder some Jews -- are disappointed in the verdict, because they thought Azaria would be convicted of murder. There truly is no shame. Perhaps they will be the first to appeal the court's ruling.

From the very beginning of this affair, we wrote that Azaria was certainly not a hero, but neither was he a murderer. We never claimed he acted properly. The IDF is not lacking in heroes.

Azaria, however, became a hero unintentionally. All those who made headlines at his expense will now search for a new current event, but Azaria will be left to serve the punishment. Alone. With his devastated family. Wednesday was a hard day -- because of the court's decision, which must be honored; because of the violent demonstrations outside the courtroom, which we must denounce; and also because this trial was so unnecessary. Azaria is not a hero, but neither are those who sought his conviction. This is a story without heroes, just victims. Even the terrorist. And that is what is so upsetting.

Perhaps Azaria made the terrorist a victim and himself guilty. It's possible that his defense team managed the trial incorrectly. It's also possible that he received bad advice along the way. All these things could be true.

But it may also be true that we, Israeli society, could have spared ourselves this trial, and spared the IDF as well. The world will remember the shot, not the conviction. The human rights groups' cameras will continue searching out soldiers, not terrorists. This trial, which focused on re-establishing the proper rules of engagement (which must be heeded, and which Azaria did not heed), will perhaps make IDF soldiers more hesitant when shooting a terrorist is actually necessary. The video footage of the terrorist attack at the airport in Istanbul, Turkey, last June shows the terrorist detonating his bomb next to a police officer, who moved too late to neutralize him.

There were other ways to handle this case. Then-Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon and IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot should not have responded so hastily following the incident simply because it was caught on film. The soldier could have been dealt with differently by the army he holds so dear, and not necessarily less effectively. He could have gone through the military's disciplinary channels, rather than a military court, in handcuffs, led around by guards.

It has been explained that the moment the Military Police's Investigative Unit entered the picture, the court was the only option. But this was a military issue, and it should have been open and closed within the army. It's safe to assume Azaria would have been found guilty of disobeying a standing order, such as opening fire in breach of the army's rules of engagement, which also jeopardized our own forces on the ground. It was not the first time that has happened. The video

documentation of the incident convicted Azaria before the trial had even begun. The footage decided the verdict. Without the film, things would have ended differently.

For instance, on June 21 last year, 15-year-old Palestinian Muhammad Badareen was killed on Route 443 by IDF fire while traveling in a car with his family. He was not involved in stone throwing or any other violent act. An IDF investigation determined that the boy was shot by mistake. Another IDF investigation found that around 1 a.m. that day, a civilian on a bus and two tourists in a different car had been wounded as a result of rocks and firebombs. An officer and his troops from the Kfir Brigade arrived at the scene, identified the wounded civilians, and began a pursuit after the perpetrators. During that pursuit the soldiers mistakenly fired on the car carrying the Palestinian family.

Badareen's family did not accept the findings of the investigation. "I don't think he [the soldier] acted mistakenly, because I was there and I saw how the soldiers were behaving," the father said. But does anyone remember the incident? It wasn't filmed and wasn't documented, so no one remembers it. Just the family, and the soldier who fired his weapon. Is there any investigation?

The scene of a terrorist attack is difficult and complex. The verdict states that Azaria, or to be more precise his defense attorneys, were unable to convince the court of their case. What is frustrating for the Israeli public is that extenuating circumstances are often cited for excusing terrorists (occupation, desperation, etc.), while no such extenuating circumstances exist for IDF soldiers. If this had been a case of a man being killed simply because he was an Arab, we would be appalled. The fact that he was a terrorist makes us less sure than the court that Azaria was guilty of manslaughter.

But that was the court's ruling and that is what needs to be honored. An appeal against the ruling would be perfectly fine. And something better can be also be done: a pardon. Even MK Shelly Yachimovich from the Zionist Union party, who could never be accused of disrespecting the courts, recommended that Azaria be pardoned. In this story, she understands that it is the conviction that is important, not the punishment. Azaria has been punished enough.

Azaria became a test case for the army's senior command. There were those who called it a watershed moment. They turned his case into a battle in the name of the IDF's purity of arms. The Azaria trial became a trial for us all. We went from victims of terrorism to murderers after neutralizing terrorists.

Some people want to turn this story into much more than it really is. For those who covered the trial, the prosecution, the defense, it's over, pending any appeal. Azaria and his family, meanwhile, will be left with the difficult conviction.

Of course, there were those who sought to warn us against racism, against losing our humanity, against the extremism in our society and the dangers lying in wait around the corner. Indeed, a thousand people demonstrated in support of Azaria and several hundred took part in the violent protest on Wednesday, which deserves condemnation. Although it sounds like a lot, in actuality it is only a thousand people. The Israeli public supports Azaria, but does not support violence.

The people of Israel feel the pain of this trial and sorrow for the family. It would have been best had this entire affair been handled differently.

But the army's senior command chose what it chose. What is outrageous is that on the eve of the verdict, Eizenkot decided to say: "He's not our kid, he's a combat soldier."

Therein lies the crux of the matter: He's both. And despite the verdict reminding us that the rule of law supersedes all else, we should remember that compassion is permitted as well.

We should remember Golda Meir's famous line: "When peace comes, we will perhaps in time be able to forgive the Arabs for killing our sons, but it will be harder for us to forgive them for having forced us to kill their sons."

Sgt. Elor Azaria is neither a hero nor a murderer, but he is "our son," or at least he is for most of us. Including for me. (Israel Hayom Jan 5)

A Dangerous Development By Haim Shine

The trial of Sgt. Elor Azaria has finally ended. For everyone's sake, it would have been better if it had never taken place to begin with.

Had this happened in the armies of the United States, the United Kingdom or France, Azaria would just have been called up for a disciplinary hearing before his commanders for violating orders and would have received the appropriate punishment given the circumstances, and that would have been the end of the affair.

But what can one do? Here in Israel everything is political.

Every topic immediately becomes an issue between Left and Right, Tel Aviv and the periphery, liberation and occupation, especially when the media exercises its familiar methods of fanning the flames of rivalry,

resulting in a celebration of political interests at the expense of a soldier who patently committed an improper act.

I have no doubt that if then-Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon, as well as Azaria's supporters, had refrained from expressing themselves in his defense prematurely, it would have been possible to reach an agreement that would have balanced the army's values against the complicated situation of a soldier who, in a moment of poor judgment, shot a subdued terrorist.

The involvement of political officials in the case prompted the army to call up a veteran attorney to handle the case, which many felt was an overzealous move to ensure the soldier's conviction. At the same time, fund-raising campaigns were held to pay for Azaria's defense attorneys.

Unfortunately, the premature calls of politicians to pardon the soldier following his conviction are only exacerbating the already volatile situation, making it more difficult to pardon him. We must wait patiently for the sentence and deal with the issue of a pardon afterwards. Jumping the gun on this will only lead to a political battle, as is customary in our neighborhood.

Disapproval of the verdict is allowed, but we must accept it with humility and modesty. It was tough to witness the backlash of a handful of fiery protesters, as well as the gloating of several reporters.

Woe to the nation that lets the street and the media serve as judge, jury and executioner. This is a dangerous development that must be stopped.

Azaria's trial, verdict and subsequent sentencing are not a referendum, but a serious decision-making process that will determine his and others' fates, and must be conducted in accordance with the rules essential in a civilized society. Only the courts are qualified to decide a person's guilt or innocence.

The Jewish people have one army, and it is invaluable to us all. We waited 2,000 years for the time we could finally defend ourselves and stop being at the mercy of strangers, who always failed us. No one should threaten to evade service or refrain from sending their children to serve in the army because of one incident or another, provocative as it may be.

The Israel Defense Forces is an army of remarkable morality, for which we have very often paid a heavy price. And lest there be any doubt, the international community will not appreciate the moral values displayed in Azaria's conviction, but the opposite: It will portray IDF soldiers as reckless and trigger-happy.

And IDF soldiers will go on, with dedication and determination, defending the citizens of this country from vile terrorists. (Israel Hayom Jan 5)

It's All on Azaria's Shoulders By Dror Eydor

In July 1988, a terrorist attacked Yossi Hadassi, a soldier who had enlisted just three months earlier. Hadassi grappled with the terrorist and managed to kill him. He was awarded a citation of merit from the commander of the Engineering Corps.

Then the media hunt began, backed by the self-righteous Left, which accused the soldier of murder. On May 30, 1989, Yossi Hadassi committed suicide.

That week, the poet Naomi Shemer published a message in Yedioth Ahronoth: "The soldier Yossi Hadassi killed his attacker, and a year later killed himself. It wasn't only Yossi Hadassi who committed suicide; an entire nation is committing suicide. An entire country is defending itself as its investigators, police, and poets drive it mad and convince it that it is a predatory wolf, Goliath, a monster. The intifada is the prelude and the excuse for the destruction of Israel. We are all Yossi Hadassi."

Hadassi's fate touched me. Naomi Shemer's courage touched me, too. She published her message after a decade in which her work had been viciously attacked because she was "right-wing."

I was reminded of that piece when the Azaria affair broke. We've thrown all the problems in Israeli society, the disagreement rooted in debate between Left and Right and the 100-year-old conflict between us and our neighbors, on to the bowed back of the young soldier. The mechanism of national suicide camouflaged as morality, too.

No, I'm not arguing that Azaria acted rightly. I don't know how I would have acted in his situation. But even if I don't think he's a hero, it's clear that he's no murderer, and that what I've written. He certainly should not have been put on trial; the matter should have ended with a disciplinary hearing in his unit. And he certainly should not have to carry the weight of Israel's foreign relations and the IDF's ethical code and the discussions that have used him as a beast of burden. Sgt. Elor Azaria killed a terrorist. The craziness around his case has to do with the accursed insanity and politicization of the public discourse.

Like Hadassi, Azaria comes from a humble family on which the uncompromising interest and self-righteousness of some of us came crashing down out of the clear blue sky and threatened to crush. No mercy was shown to Hadassi, may he rest in peace, or to Azaria, may he live a

long life. But unlike the 1980s, this time there is social media, which was able to help and support him. That's some comfort. Back then, I couldn't help Yossi Hadassi, but today I can express my own opinion wholeheartedly: We are all Elor Azaria. (Israel Hayom Jan 4)

Assad's Palestinian Mercenaries By Edy Cohen

Over the past century, various Palestinian leaders have fostered alliances that were either unsuccessful or not particularly useful to them.

Take the alliance formed by the grand mufti of Jerusalem during the British mandate period, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, who during World War II supported Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich. Al-Husseini hoped the Germans would win the war and Hitler would become fuhrer of the Middle East. After the Nazis lost the war, however, the West did not forgive al-Husseini, which severely damaged the Palestinian cause for over two decades.

Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat erred in 1990 when he supported Iraq in its invasion of Kuwait. Palestinian public support for the invasion led to a great deal of suffering for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians then living in Kuwait and the Persian Gulf, who paid the price for Arafat's support of the tyrannical Saddam Hussein.

Today, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas is maintaining ambiguity regarding the Syrian war, taking pains to avoid denouncing or supporting the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad. It appears Abbas has learned from history. However, tens of thousands of Palestinians are apparently fighting on behalf of the Syrian dictator, even sacrificing their lives for him. These Palestinians, who went to live in Syria in recent decades, are helping slaughter the Syrian people fighting for their freedom. The guest has turned murderer.

Among the Palestinians, the most fervent Assad supporters belong to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine's General Command, led by Ahmed Jibril. The organization is headquartered in Damascus and consists of thousands of fighters; Jibril's loyalty to the Assad regime has never wavered. His fighters are taking part in the war effort, even against their own people, their own flesh and blood. In one example, when Assad's army laid siege to the Yarmouk refugee camp, it was Jibril's fighters who provided the regime with intelligence information and ground support.

Liwa al-Quds ("the Jerusalem Brigade") was formed in 2013 and operates in the Aleppo sector. It comprises three battalions: the Lions of al-Quds; Deterrence; and the Lions of al-Shahba, named after an area in Aleppo. The brigade was established by Palestinian engineer Muhammad al-Sa'eed, also known as "The Engineer." Since 2013, it has taken part in every campaign in Aleppo, mostly with Russian coordination and support. Some of its fighters have even been awarded citations by the Russian army for their successful actions in Aleppo, including its recent liberation. The brigade receives directives from Assad's army and even fights alongside Hezbollah and Iranian forces against other rebel groups and Islamic State. Although the precise number of fighters in its ranks is unclear, estimates put the number in the several thousands. Assad's army sends the brigade to the front lines, which is why it has sustained a majority of the casualties: Since 2013, some 300 of its fighters have been killed and 600 have been wounded.

Another Palestinian faction fighting for Assad is the Galilee Forces or Galilee Brigade -- the military wing of the Palestinian Youth Return Movement led by Fadi al-Mallah, also known as Abu al-Fidaa. It was formed in May 2011, around the outbreak of the Syrian uprising, in the Khan Danon refugee camp in southern Damascus. The organization's goal is to fight for Assad, whose money has helped al-Mallah recruit hundreds of Palestinian fighters.

At present, thousands of Palestinians are fighting in Syria on behalf of Assad. Many Palestinian leaders have stood on the wrong side of history and on the wrong side of morality, particularly those waging war on the beleaguered people of Syria. These Palestinians were taken in and trained by the Syrian people, who gave them funding, shelter and protection. Today these guests are slaughtering those very people.

For whatever reason, the international community, which only becomes distraught when discussing the "poor Palestinians in Israel," ignores this fact just as it ignores the genocide taking place in Syria, mere kilometers from the Israeli border, perpetrated with the help of Palestinians. (Israel Hayom Jan 2)

After Obama, Israel should move closer to Moscow By Todd Wood

After eight years of US President Barack Obama, and the recent shenanigans at the United Nations by America's first Dear Leader, Israel should be thinking with friends like this, who needs enemies. In addition, Europe seems to no longer be Israel's ally. The one lesson that should be learned by the Jewish state from this presidency is that America cannot be trusted, that is when a leftist Democrat is in office. The Jewish, American

Left cannot be trusted. If America elects another globalist, who puts the interests of the elite in front of the American people's, America will not stand by its friends, in other words those who value freedom and democracy. The one thing Israel should learn from the Syrian civil war is that Russia does take care of its allies, no matter the cost in public opinion or civilian lives.

Israel is unlike any other nation state on the planet, except for maybe Taiwan. Israel cannot defend itself forever in the face of an overwhelming, determined force. It has to depend on its allies for support and protection if ganged up on by the Arab world. It is a tiny country, with not many natural resources or geographic barriers to entry. Yes, it reportedly has nuclear weapons, but soon so shall Iran and possibly Saudi Arabia, thanks to Obama and his senior adviser, Iranian-born Valerie Jarrett. Iran is rapidly developing its ballistic missile capability, again thanks to Obama. At some point, the real Islamic state, the Islamic Republic of Iran, may feel bold enough to launch a first strike in pursuit of its often stated goal of destroying the Jewish state. Iran possibly may feel it can ride out any retaliatory strike.

Yes, Israel needs friends, friends it can count on. With Obama in the White House, it doesn't have a friend in America. I've often said you cannot listen to what Obama says, you have to look at his actions and their results. These include the removal of American forces from the Middle East; an Islamic caliphate arising in the Middle East; a Russian/ Shi'ite axis of power in control of the Middle East; Israel's arch enemy, Iran, acquiring nuclear weapons and retooling its conventional forces with arms purchases from Moscow with the cash released under the Iran appeasement "deal"; and the United Nations passing devastating resolutions against Israel, one of which declares the Temple Mount exclusively Islamic.

So where does Israel find someone that can help guarantee its security if America one day again follows the agenda of the Left? No matter how devastated American Marxist globalists are after the 2016 election cycle, the pendulum eventually swings back the other way. Elections have consequences. It may take a couple decades, but it is possible that America may return the America-hating, freedom-hating, duplicitous, organized crime, payfor-play, parasitic Democratic Party to power. To further its security in the future, Israel should develop a stronger relationship with the new sheriff in the Levant and the Fertile Crescent: the Russian Federation.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu obviously recognized this necessity following the Russian expeditionary force entering Latakia, Syria. He promptly flew to Moscow to confer with Russian President Vladimir Putin and deconflict Israeli and Russian air operations in Syria. Israel seems to have secured from Putin permission to continue to destroy Syrian air defense systems that threaten the Golan Heights or other Israeli. Israel has struck several Hezbollah and Syria positions since Netanyahu's trip to Moscow.

The Russian and Israeli air forces seem to be operating successfully in close proximity. Of course Russia did bomb targets near American special forces positions in Syria, on purpose I believe, to show Obama who was boss. And Obama did nothing.

But eventually Israel may need more than the freedom to execute pinprick operations in Syria. It may need protection from a powerful entity if seriously threatened by Iran, or its proxy armies in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. Israel may someday be overwhelmed if Saudi Arabia goes nuclear as well as Tehran. If there is an Alinskyite again in the White House, Israel will need another friend, even if it is one that does not share its democratic ideals or view of the world. At that point, Israel will have to settle for pragmatism and that means finding a way to deal with Russia.

Israel does not have the luxury of seeing the world as it wants to see it, unlike the Obama administration of the elites in Europe as their women are raped and their culture destroyed. Israel cannot call Islamist violence "workplace violence" and be done with it. It cannot call terrorist attacks "man-made disasters" and ignore them. Israel, more than anyone, has to deal in reality, in what will strengthen its security, as the alternative is death and destruction.

After the recent UN Security Council resolution against Israel that US Secretary of State John Kerry and Obama orchestrated, Israel can no longer trust slightly less than half of America. It has gotten that bad.

Far too many American Jews would have no problem with Israel being destroyed, just as they would have no problem with America being destroyed.

Many say that the world is no longer in a struggle between communism and capitalism, but instead in a fight to the death between globalism, that feeds the elites, and nationalism, which protects the people. Israel may need to start seeing the world more in this light and move closer to Moscow; after all, there are a lot of Jews in Russia. (Jerusalem Post Jan 4)

The writer, a graduate of the US Air Force Academy, flew special

Obama's Role in the Passage of UNSC Resolution 2334: Fake News or Spin? By Vivian Bercovici

A year ago, few knew what fake news was. Now, everyone's talking about it.

What is it? Fake news is a false story that is disseminated intentionally. It is meant to manipulate and disrupt public opinion.

Deployed in digital media, its reach is amplified considerably.

The real question – which remains unanswered – is how much fake, or any news, for that matter – influences readers.

With Internet access, each person functions as their own editor – filtering information from a range of sources previously unimaginable. The democratization of access to information has reduced significantly our deference to traditionally respected opinion elites like journalists, business and political leaders. That's old-world.

Today, people are more empowered and autonomous, deciding independently what information is credible and what is not. And it seems that many people, in America and elsewhere, reject the crafty communications spin of the current White House.

This is where it gets really interesting; when we consider the difference between fake news and good, old-fashioned "spin."

Spin, in politics, is the art of manipulating truth to convey a biased message.

A fine case study: the conduct of the White House in the lead-up to and aftermath of its recent betrayal of Israel, the infamous "abstention" on the UN Security Council vote on Resolution 2334, which declares any Israeli settlement beyond the '67 lines to be in breach of international law.

Officially, the White House explained its abstention (de facto support) on the 2334 vote as a painful decision taken at the eleventh hour to ensure that peace remains achievable.

Was this spin or fake news? If we accept the White House version of events, we believe the following:

- 1) The Obama administration had no involvement in the planning or drafting of 2334;
- 2) That when Secretary of State John Kerry, National Security Adviser Susan Rice and senior Palestinian officials met in mid December, they did not discuss or strategize regarding 2334;
- 3) That the leaked transcript purporting to document a discussion between said American and Palestinian officials is a fraud;
- 4) That when Egypt reneged on its intention to introduce 2334, the Obama White House was unruffled;
- 5) That the White House did not engage in a furious scramble in the ensuing two days to wrangle New Zealand and Senegal to introduce the resolution;
- 6) That the diplomatic powerhouses of Senegal and New Zealand acted on their own, joint initiative, poring over and finessing the wording of 2334 in less than 48 hours;
- 7) That the United States of America, represented at the UNSC by its ambassador, the peerless anti-genocide activist, Samantha Power, had no foreknowledge of the fact that Resolution 2334 would come to the floor and, furthermore, that the US had given no advance consideration as to how it would vote;
- 8) That, as Power sat there, listening to the various delegations vilify Israel, attributing every failure in the resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict to the construction of "settlements," the US had still not formulated a position on this issue;
- 9) That, as genocide raged in Aleppo (along with the ongoing Yazidi horror), Power "abstained" in the 2334 vote out of a paramount and compelling concern for Israel and a belief that if the settlement issue is resolved, the lion will lie with the lamb; and
- 10) That in doing so, the White House did not act from pique – personal or other – but from a deep and abiding concern for the ongoing security and democratic health of Israel.

The Obama White House has demonstrated its proficiency at spreading information that has a tenuous nexus with reality. To wit: White House protestations for almost a year that it was not negotiating a "deal" with Iran.

Once the ongoing negotiations were exposed, the White House and State Department churned out semantic contortions regarding what, exactly, constitutes a "negotiation." It all harkens back to the agonized parsing by president Bill Clinton in the aftermath of the Lewinsky scandal over the definition of... oh, never mind. You get the point.

And then there was the pathetic spectacle of Secretary Kerry's panicked, rambling remarks a week ago, in which he presented US treachery as an expression of anguished, high-minded policy and support for Israel.

Here are some of the top fake news headlines of 2016: "Obama Signs Executive Order Banning Pledge of Allegiance in Schools."

"Pope Francis Endorses Donald Trump for President."

"WikiLeaks Confirms Hillary Sold Weapons to ISIS."

I'd add one more: "President Obama Has Israel's Back"

The writer was the ambassador of Canada to Israel until June 2016. She resides in Tel Aviv. (Jerusalem Post Jan 4)

Obama Sets the Stage for Another War in the Middle East

By Robert Sibley

Presumably Barack Obama will return his Nobel Peace Prize now that he's created the conditions for another Middle East war.

The American president's betrayal of Israel in allowing passage of a UN Security Council resolution declaring Israeli settlements to be illegal reveals Obama's bitterness at being denied world-historical status as the president who achieved a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. In 2009, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded Obama the Peace Prize, claiming he'd "created a new climate in international politics."

Seven years later, there's no denying this new climate. Only it's not one that provides much hope for the future.

On Obama's watch the Middle East descended into anarchy, millions of migrants fleeing the chaos have destabilized Europe, Russian and Chinese leaders, emboldened by Obama's redline retreats, have grown increasingly belligerent and Iran's theocrats were allowed to pursue their nuclear ambitions.

And then on the eve of Hanukkah, Obama capped his legacy of failure by setting up the diplomatic lynching of the singular liberal democracy in the Middle East. In having the U.S. abstain from voting on Security Council Resolution 2334, he allowed the council to approve a non-binding resolution that "reaffirms that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law."

This means, as some commentators have noted, that even Jews who pray at the Western Wall – the holiest site in Judaism – are to be regarded as criminals.

Last week, Secretary of State John Kerry gave only the briefest nod to Palestinian terrorism while claiming that Israel's settlement-building policies in the West Bank are the biggest obstacle to peace.

Perhaps a brief history lesson is warranted. What many forget – or ignore – is that the settlements in the West Bank – known to the ancient Kingdom of Israel as Judea and Samaria – are on lands granted to the Jews by the League of Nations under the 1922 Mandate for Palestine. The mandate affirmed the "historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their homeland" on land west of the Jordan River, or "Jewish Palestine." The land east of the river – basically, modern day Jordan – was "Arab Palestine."

These Jewish territorial rights were reaffirmed after the Second World War when the United Nations upheld the terms of the mandate, inserting "the Jewish People's clause" into the UN Charter.

None of this stopped the Arabs from attacking the newly founded state of Israel in 1948. Jordan occupied much of the West Bank while Egypt seized Gaza. Only in 1967, during the Six Day War, did Israel retake the land intended for a Jewish state.

In the decades since the Palestinians have used every means at their disposal – war, diplomacy, murder and terrorism – to deny Israel's right to this land. They have rejected numerous peace deals, including ones that gave them more than 90 per cent of the West Bank and a capital in Jerusalem. The reality is, the Palestinian leaders ultimately want nothing less than to see all the land west of the Jordan River Judenrein. They refuse to accept Israel's existence. This is the real obstacle to peace, not the settlements. Obama ignores this reality.

And therein lies the seeds for war. The Israelis learned the hard way that land for peace doesn't work. In 2005, responding to international pressure, they pulled a small Jewish settlement out of Gaza. Instead of making peace, though, Hamas moved mortars and rockets closer to Israel.

If there is any hope to be retrieved from Obama's historical naïveté, it is with his replacement. Donald Trump appears to be less tolerant of Palestinian terrorism. Who knows, if George W. Bush could scare Moammar Gadhafi into giving up his nuclear ambitions, maybe Trump will bring peace from the Palestinians. That'll be worth a Nobel.

(Ottawa Citizen Jan 3)

The writer, a veteran Ottawa journalist, holds a PhD in political science from Carleton University, where he lectures on political philosophy.
