



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*

The United States gave Ukraine more than \$100 billion in aid to continue the war—a staggering sum that's likely to increase in 2023. At the same time, both the U.S. and Western Europe are doubling down on their backing

Commentary...

The Ukraine War Starts to Undermine Israeli Security

By Jonathan S. Tobin

For the last 11 months, Israel has sought to signal its opposition to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine while avoiding being dragged into a war that compromises its own security and interests. Threading that needle has been a difficult task, but it was an issue on which both Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his main political foe—Yesh Atid Party leader Yair Lapid—have been in agreement.

Nevertheless, Israel is now being made to pay a steep price for the war. The news, broken last week by The New York Times, that the U.S. is emptying the strategic reserve of arms and ammunition it has stored in Israel for Middle East emergencies, as well as for the Jewish state to draw on in the event of its being attacked, marks a turning point.

Should a conflict with either Hamas in Gaza or Hezbollah in Lebanon break out at the behest of Iran, or, in a nightmare strategic scenario, with both simultaneously, consequences for the Israel Defense Forces could be serious.

Israel has sent humanitarian aid to Ukraine, including a temporary field hospital on the Polish border when the fighting in that region was at its height. It also has taken in refugees and provided intelligence to the Ukrainians.

But with Russia occupying part of neighboring Syria and granting Israel overflight rights to strike Iranian and other terrorist targets, the Jewish state needs to avoid a conflict with Moscow. Similarly, with Russia's remaining Jewish population essentially being hostages held by President Vladimir Putin, Israel has every reason to remain neutral.

This hasn't prevented Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy from subjecting Israel to a ferocious campaign of pressure aimed at forcing it to ally itself with Kyiv.

It began with a virtual speech to the Knesset last spring, when Zelenskyy, who is Jewish, engaged in what amounted to Holocaust denial. During his address, he falsely claimed that Ukrainians had stood in solidarity with Jews during the genocide, when, in fact, they were the most enthusiastic of Nazi collaborators.

He has stopped at nothing to leverage sympathy for his country's plight in order to persuade the Israelis to join the war. Curiously, his attempts have not been accompanied by a willingness to back Israel against the campaign of delegitimization against it in international forums. To the contrary, Ukraine's anti-Israel votes at the United Nations have coincided with its harsh accusations that Jerusalem isn't doing enough to defeat Russia.

If that wasn't bad enough, Zelenskyy then attempted to blackmail Netanyahu into giving him some of his country's vital air-defense systems, in exchange for Ukraine switching its vote on an anti-Semitic U.N. resolution targeting Israel.

Nothing the Ukrainian president actually does outside of his war leadership is given much coverage in the mainstream corporate press. His suppression of political rivals and opposition press outlets—not to mention churches that he has labeled as traitorous for having ties to religious authorities inside Russia—are all ignored. Belief in the myth that he's the second coming of Winston Churchill and the pristine leader of a Jeffersonian democracy remains widespread.

Sympathy for Ukraine's suffering people and admiration for its armed forces' performance in the face of the Russian invasion are nearly universal. So is support for the country's right to self-determination.

by providing heavy weapons like tanks.

These moves come at a time when it's clear that the Russian invasion has been stymied, and the fighting has become a bloody stalemate that's starting to resemble trench warfare in World War One. Neither side can win the decisive victory it wants.

Still, President Joe Biden and other allies are backing Zelenskyy's maximalist war policy. His goal is the eviction of Russian forces from what remains of the territory it overran last winter, most of which has been retaken by Ukraine, as well as the parts of Eastern Ukraine and Crimea that have been in Moscow's hands since 2014.

No serious person believes such a total Ukrainian victory is possible. By the same token, Putin's incompetent military—which many in the foreign-policy establishment still foolishly speak of as if it were the powerful Red Army that defeated Hitler and threatened Western Europe during the Cold War—has no prospect of achieving its original aim of conquering all of Ukraine.

While there is much talk about not wanting to grant Putin any legitimacy or a moral victory, those who think sinking more arms and money into this war will lead to his fall are engaging in wishful thinking.

The sensible response to this crisis should be to push for an end to a war that is causing so much suffering and death. But Washington is so besotted with Zelenskyy that it is prepared to risk a confrontation that could lead to a catastrophic World War Three nuclear scenario.

What's more, Biden is stripping the American military of its supplies of arms and ammunition in order to feed the Ukrainian military's insatiable demands. That has already left U.S. military forces in a dangerously low state of readiness.

Supporters of unlimited aid to Ukraine say they are sending a message that the West will not tolerate aggression. But the astonishing decision to treat the territorial integrity of Ukraine as the Number One U.S. security priority has had an unintended consequence. It has created a situation in which the West would be unable to come to the aid of Taiwan, should it be invaded by China, the nation that is, contrary to the overblown fears about Russia, by far the most potent threat to American security and global influence.

That's the context for the decision to empty out the American strategic reserves of arms and ammunition located in Israel. Sacrificing the ability to respond rapidly to a threat to American allies and interests in the Middle East is a steep price to pay to help Ukraine sustain an endless and unwinnable war.

It's also one more sign that the Biden administration, like that of former President Barack Obama and in contrast to that of Donald Trump, has downgraded its support for Israel and moderate Arab states in favor of a new strategy that sees them as a burden rather than vital allies.

This move, which makes Israel less secure and may embolden Iran and its terrorist auxiliaries, ought to have generated a firestorm of criticism. But Jerusalem is rightly afraid of pushing back too hard against the pro-Ukraine consensus.

It nevertheless should stick to its refusal to be drawn into a conflict that has unknowable consequences for its security. Biden's helping to escalate a war that he should be trying to end won't lead to a Ukrainian victory. What it will do, like his unsuccessful efforts to appease Iran, is make the Middle East an even more dangerous place for Israel and other U.S. allies. (JNS Jan 25)

It Isn't Bad for Israel if the Palestinian Authority Collapses

By Efraim Inbar

One of the challenges of the new government is the potential for the collapse of the Palestinian Authority, bringing about a deterioration in the security situation. Mahmoud Abbas, the PA's leader, seems unable to rule effectively, i.e., maintain a modicum of law and order in the territories under his control.

He lost Gaza to Hamas in 2007, and we now see the "Lebanonization" of the PA taking place in the West Bank: the emergence of a myriad of armed groups, with some displaying only limited loyalty to the PA, and others, especially the Islamists, trying to undermine the current regime.

In addition, the deteriorating economic situation resulting from years of declining international aid, unsustainable public patronage, and questionable fiscal policies have pushed the Palestinian government and banking sector to the brink of insolvency, further eroding the PA's authority and legitimacy.

The PA increasingly fails to provide basic governance, leading to a widespread Palestinian perception of the ruling elite as corrupt and authoritarian. We may well see the breakdown of the PA into various sectors, effectively ruled by new local barons who maintain a monopoly over arms in their fiefdoms.

The PA may become a failed state, a phenomenon characteristic of other Arab states such as Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, and Yemen. A violent succession struggle following the death of Abbas only enhances the probability of such a scenario.

The premise of the two-state solution (2SS) paradigm, was that given the opportunity, the Palestinians would be able to establish a state and prevent terrorism against Israel, similar to Egypt and Jordan. Yitzhak Rabin hoped for a state "without the Supreme Court and B'Tselem" to govern effectively, while Israelis were led to believe that the Palestinians could establish a Palestinian entity that would have good neighborly relations with Israel. That did not work very well.

Yasser Arafat and his successor, Abbas, were unwilling to confront the armed opposition groups (Hamas and Islamic Jihad) which continued to engage in terror against Israel. They refrained from engaging in a civil war to secure the monopoly over the use of force, the required feature of a modern state. This avoidance led to the emergence of two Palestinian entities (Gaza and the West Bank) and the potential for further fragmentation.

Moreover, the PA does not show any inclination to compromise on its maximalist goals and live peacefully next to Israel. It still demands the division of Jerusalem, the relocation of numerous Palestinian refugees in Israel, and a withdrawal to the 1967 borders.

Its education system and media continue propagating tremendous hostility toward Jews, while blaming Israel for all Palestinian problems. Security cooperation with Israel primarily concerns apprehending armed activists from the Islamist opposition, as the PA often turns a blind eye to terrorist activities against Israel.

The desire to prevent the anarchical characteristic of failed states is understandable, which is the primary motivation for the attempt to save and strengthen the PA. Nevertheless, Israel should remember its limited capability for political engineering beyond its borders. Moreover, a belief that the Palestinians can change and behave reasonably, or that a vigorous PA benefits Israel is questionable.

In short, Abbas and his coterie are part of the problem and not of the solution. Jerusalem should thus think twice about promoting efforts to preserve the PA's rule and prevent a descent into chaos, while rejecting the reoccupation of the West Bank.

Chaos is indeed not a pleasant thought. Chaos in the territories poses a security problem for Israel, but is less acute if the Palestinian militias vying for influence compete with each other.

A succession struggle following the death of Abbas could divert attention from fighting hated Israel and prevent coordination in the low-intensity conflict against Israel. In addition, anarchy in the territories may legitimize a freer hand for Israel in dealing with the terrorists.

Furthermore, chaos might ultimately yield positive results. The collapse of the PA will weaken the Palestinian national movement, which heretofore has been a source of endemic violence and is a recipe for regional instability in the future. The PA has supported the policies

of radical regimes such as Iran. It is also thoroughly anti-American. Moreover, it threatens at least two "status quo" states, Israel and Jordan.

The collapse of the PA and the failure of the Palestinian national movement to establish a decent state might reduce the appetite of the Palestinians for an independent entity. The disintegration of the PA would be a public relations debacle for the Palestinians and reduce their appeal among naive Europeans and Israel-bashers worldwide.

The dysfunctional character of the Palestinian political entity would become apparent to all and elicit a more robust understanding of Israeli fears over the destructive implications of Palestinian nationalism.

Disorder in the territories could be the incentive for fresh thinking on the Palestinian issue on the part of the Palestinians and elsewhere. More chaos in the Palestinian-ruled territories might open up new opportunities to stabilize the situation. The disappointment of the PA falling apart could bring a more realistic and conciliatory leadership to the forefront.

The internecine violence of the previous Intifada led to the acceptance of the 1991 Madrid Conference formula – an indication of growing political realism among the Palestinians. The failed PA experiment could be an additional factor to a more politically mature body politic.

For example, the Palestinians in Gaza may ask the Egyptians to return, while in the West Bank, the rule of the Hashemites may look increasingly favorable compared with the PA's.

Despite its growing popularity, it is misleading to portray Hamas as the only alternative to the PA leadership. Indeed, the Hamas rule in Gaza is not a successful experiment; and the allure of Islamic radicalism is fading.

Chaos, as a temporary situation, is not necessarily the worst-case scenario. Israel should not shudder at the prospect of the PA taking a fall. (Jerusalem Post Jan 24)

Esther Hayut's War Against Democracy By Caroline Glick

Friday morning brought the first piece of good news from Israel's Supreme Court in years. Yediot Ahronot's top headline declared that Supreme Court President Esther Hayut intends to resign if the Knesset passes Justice Minister Yariv Levin's judicial reform package.

Hayut's stewardship of the court over the past six years has been disgraceful and destructive to both the court and the State of Israel. The Hayut court dropped even the pretense of judiciousness. Hayut cast the court on a course of ideological radicalism and politicization that has no parallel anywhere in the world.

Hayut's radicalism was well known in the legal community. She wasn't then-justice minister Ayelet Shaked's first choice for the court's top slot. But Shaked had no say in the matter. Israel's current judicial selection process protects justices from accountability to the public and its elected representatives. Supreme Court justices have a veto over nominees to the court, so everyone who gets the nod from the Judicial Selection Committee, including ostensibly conservative jurists, must embrace the organizational culture and values of the sitting justices.

The justices also control who serves as president. Under the current selection system, the president is the senior associate justice when the sitting president reaches retirement age. By controlling who gets appointed when, the justices are able to predetermine the identity of the president. In 2017, Shaked tried but failed to cancel the seniority selection process, and Hayut was promoted.

Outside observers were exposed to Hayut's radicalism immediately before she took office. She set it out in a speech before the Bar Association in September 2017. Not one for understatement, Hayut compared herself and her colleagues to God.

As she put it, "There's a disadvantage that we flesh and blood judges have in comparison to the Creator of the Universe. Even in the situations where we understand fairly quickly the dilemma that brought the petitioners before us, it often happens that the solution we view as just and proper isn't possible under the practice and requirements of the law. These situations in my view are among the

most difficult and complex ones that we as judges are called upon to contend with.”

She continued: “How do we bridge the gap between the law and what is right? Finding an answer to this question, discovering the secret ... ‘spice’ is perhaps one of the greatest tasks that lies before us as judges.”

By the time Hayut gave her speech, the court’s penchant for political judgments was well documented, and in the context of those judgments, her intentions were self-evident. On the eve of her inauguration as president, Hayut declared that the court would disregard the law whenever it contradicted the justices’ values. And given the ideological conformity of the court, those values would without question be aligned with the leftist fringe of Israeli society, a fringe that would never, ever win an election.

Over the past few years, the Hayut court followed her non-legal judicial philosophy to the letter. An examination of a selection of her judgments suffices to demonstrate how it has worked.

In March 2020, without a shred of legal authority and in clear contravention of Basic Law: The Knesset, Hayut and her associates ordered then Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein to convene the Knesset plenary to vote on his replacement.

Following the third of four Knesset elections that took place between April 2019 and March 2022, after Benjamin Netanyahu was unable to form a 61-seat coalition, the mandate to form a government was transferred to the Blue and White Party leader Benny Gantz. When it grew apparent that Gantz would also fail to form a Knesset, Gantz’s party decided to add dynamite to Israel’s political maelstrom.

Under Israel’s Basic Law: The Knesset, during the tenure of a caretaker government, the Knesset Speaker will remain the speaker elected under the previous Knesset. That is, from the moment a government loses a confidence vote in the Knesset and new elections are called, until a new government is sworn into office, the incumbent Knesset Speaker will remain in office.

In the face of political deadlock that prevented both Netanyahu and Gantz from forming a government, Gantz and his then partner Yair Lapid petitioned the Supreme Court to coerce Edelstein to convene the Knesset to elect a new speaker. The idea was that Blue and White would govern from the Knesset while Netanyahu would be completely paralyzed as caretaker prime minister.

The Supreme Court had no legal power to intervene. Basic Law: The Knesset stipulates explicitly that the Knesset “shall determine its procedures.” And as professor Talia Einhorn explained at the time, the Knesset Speaker is solely responsible for implementing the Knesset’s procedures.

Despite its utter lack of legal authority, the Supreme Court accepted Blue and White’s petition, and in record time ordered Edelstein to convene the plenary immediately to choose his successor. Not wishing to openly defy the court by refusing to execute its illegal ruling, Edelstein resigned.

After her predecessor Miriam Naor’s court overturned three laws that sought to compel illegal aliens to leave the country in various ways, in March 2020, Hayut and her associates struck down the Knesset’s only remaining law to incentivize illegal aliens to depart the country. The law in question, dubbed, the Deposit Law, required work migrants to deposit a fifth of their earnings in a trust, and for their employers to deposit 16 percent of their national insurance deductions into the same trust. The funds would be paid to the migrant, with interest, upon his exit from Israel.

The court ruled that this was unfair because migrants make so little. The fact that the law was entirely legal made no difference to the justices. The law sat wrong with them, so Israel’s last legislative means to incentivize illegal aliens to leave was removed.

In his judicial revolution of the 1990s, Aharon Barak, the father of Israel’s judicial aristocracy, arrogated to the court the power to abrogate duly promulgated Knesset laws, with no legal authority. Last month, Hayut and her colleagues seized the Knesset’s power to write laws.

In a stunning ruling on Israel’s Citizenship Law, the court instructed the Knesset to expand the law to include four categories of persons eligible for citizenship that the Knesset had not included. The ruling constituted a breach of all the boundaries between the work of

the court and the lawmaker. It transformed the court into a super-legislator, empowered to dictate the terms of laws to the people’s elected representatives, based on the values of the justices.

Last May, the court gave standing to the government of Ukraine to seek the abrogation of the Interior Minister’s power to regulate entry of Ukrainian citizens to Israel. Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, millions of Ukrainians sought refuge in foreign lands. In an effort to prevent Israel from being flooded with tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugees, then interior minister Ayelet Shaked set a quota of five thousand Ukrainians that would be permitted to enter Israel. Last July, the Supreme Court sided with Ukraine against the government and ordered Shaked to abandon the quota and open the gates of Israel to Ukrainians, as if there were no war and no refugee crisis.

The capstone, to date, of Hayut’s seizure of the powers of the Knesset and government came last week, when she and her colleagues absconded with the Knesset’s exclusive power to approve duly constituted governments, and the prime minister’s exclusive power to appoint his ministers. Without legal basis, Hayut and her associate justices ruled that Health and Interior Minister Aryeh Deri, the leader of the Shas party, may not serve as a minister in the government.

Hayut and six of her associates ignored the fact that there is no legal basis for the ruling, and simply decided that it was “extremely unreasonable” for Deri to serve as a minister because he has a history of criminal convictions. Six justices also ruled that Deri shouldn’t be permitted to serve as a minister because in a plea deal last year, Deri agreed to resign from Knesset.

As understood by the state prosecution at the time, his resignation from Knesset only related to the 24th Knesset, not to future Knessets. Despite this, six justices claimed that by serving as a minister, Deri was breaking the terms of his plea deal (which in and of itself has no bearing on the legality of his service as a government minister).

Both grounds for Deri’s dismissal were rooted in Hayut’s notion that Supreme Court justices are endowed with special powers to discern right from wrong that mere mortals do not possess. The Deri decision effectively struck down the judgment of four hundred thousand Shas voters. Indeed, it struck down the ballots of 2.3 million Israelis who voted for Likud, the National Religious Party, Shas and United Torah Judaism, with the goal of forming the current Netanyahu government, in which, all concerned assumed, Deri would serve as a minister. The court’s legally unhinged decision also struck down the Knesset’s exclusive power to approve governments, and the prime minister’s power to appoint his ministers in accordance with law.

The Hayut court’s contempt for the public and its elected representatives is rooted in Hayut’s pseudo-historical understanding of Nazism. She explained her views in an address before the Israeli-German Association of Jurists in May 2019 in Nuremberg. After chronicling the manner in which the German courts were taken over by the Nazis in the early 1930s, Hayut made the preposterous claim that had the German courts been stronger, they could have prevented the Nazi takeover of Germany, and the Holocaust.

Hayut’s revisionist history was transparently self-serving, and deeply hostile to both the historical record of Nazism in Germany and to her own people. Her implicit thesis was that everyone has a Nazi inside of him. Left uncontrolled, democracy, wherever practiced, is liable to bring Nazis to power. Politics, culture, history have no impact on the character of a nation. The only way for the Nazis to be kept in the bottle, whether in Germany or Israel, is for the courts to be more powerful than the public and their representatives.

Hayut then explained how Israel’s judicial aristocracy performs its function of guarding the people from their internal Nazis. German Jews in the 1930s, she argued, weren’t too concerned when Hitler rose to power, because the Weimar Republic’s constitution guaranteed their civil rights. They trusted that the Nazis would respect the constitution and the laws in force. In 1995, the Israeli Supreme Court used Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty and a means to transform itself into the protector of the liberal order from the politicians whose internal Nazis lurk under the surface, always.

As she put it, “One of the universal lessons that it is worthy to

learn from the historical events that I discussed here is that judicial independence and the absence of judicial accountability on the institutional and personal level, is one of the important guarantors that the individual will have a place to turn to protect his rights.”

In the face of Hayut’s transformation of the Supreme Court from one that had some discourse with laws to one where judges are free to follow their passions in usurping the powers of the Knesset and government and people, it is clear that the most urgent order of business for the Knesset and the government is to restore judicial accountability. (JNS Jan 22)

The Association for Jewish Studies has Become a Mouthpiece for Progressive Anti-Semitism By Joshua M. Karlip

The following anti-Semitic canards have so infiltrated progressive discourse that they hardly shock us anymore: 1) Orthodox Jews have developed a powerful political lobby that has misappropriated taxpayer funds for their undeserving schools. 2) The Orthodox Jewish community only cares about itself and silences the voices of women. 3) Israel’s policy towards Gaza mirrors that of Nazi Germany towards European Jewry. 4) Zionism is a racist form of settler-colonialism and Israel as the Jewish state should be dismantled.

Imagine my horror at reading these libels in the latest issue of *AJS Perspectives: The Magazine of the Association for Jewish Studies*.

Founded in 1969 by a small group of American Jewish studies scholars, the Association for Jewish Studies has grown into the largest scholarly association in the field, hosting an annual conference—attended by over 1,200 people last month—and publishing the academic journal *AJS Review* and the magazine *AJS Perspectives*.

For the first 45 years of its existence, AJS functioned as a nonpartisan organization that united Jewish scholars across all religious and political divides. Over the last six years, however, AJS has firmly aligned itself with the progressive left.

AJS’s adoption of the causes and tactics of the progressive movement reached its zenith with the forced resignation of its former president Noam Pianko. The pretext was Pianko’s virtual attendance at a Zoom conference also attended by sociologist Steven Cohen, who has been accused of sexual harassment by female Jewish scholars.

AJS has issued public resolutions on numerous issues, from a condemnation of “institutional” racism in the wake of the murder of George Floyd to a statement against Russia’s assault on Ukraine. Although it spoke out following the Tree of Life synagogue massacre, it has remained completely silent in the wake of the almost daily physical assaults on Orthodox men, some of them deadly, in the New York area. It has never condemned the increasing violence and intimidation directed against Jewish students at American universities.

In its just published “The Justice Issue,” *AJS Perspectives* had an opportunity to address the rich history of Jewish thought on the topic of justice. I was appalled to discover, however, that nearly the entire journal was dedicated to “justice” from the perspective of the progressive left. In their faithful reflection of current progressive orthodoxies, several of the journal’s contributors perpetuated anti-Semitic tropes regarding two contemporary targets of Jew-hatred: Orthodox Jews and Israel.

The journal’s arts section featured Meirav Ong’s performance “Mourners Kaddish (My Mother’s Yahrzeit),” in which she recited the Mourners Kaddish in various tones for 56 minutes. This was done in an apparently vain attempt to recover her “silenced voice” from her “first year in grief.” Reflecting on her recitation of the Kaddish that year in an Orthodox synagogue where women do not recite this prayer unaccompanied by men, Ong concluded, “My mourning taught me that as a woman, a Jewish woman, to speak my full voice is a radical act.”

Joshua Shanes’s contribution, “Social Justice and Orthodoxy,” was particularly offensive. Shanes has earned a reputation for demonizing Orthodox Jews and Israel via a series of popular articles. Referring to a recent *New York Times* exposé on the Hasidic community that was widely criticized as biased, Shanes wrote, “Orthodox Jews in New York work their political contacts assiduously to maximize public support for their heders and yeshivas.” Lurking behind this quotation and Shanes’s entire article is the age-old anti-Semitic stereotype of the

greedy, selfish Jew who manipulates non-Jewish society for his own profit.

According to Shanes, Orthodox Jews view the issue of social justice solely in terms of its impact on their communities and think only of how they can impose their values on everyone else. But how can one seriously discuss the relationship between social justice and Orthodoxy without writing about the legion of Orthodox charitable and volunteer-service organizations, most of which serve the entire Jewish community and beyond?

Shanes ended his screed by referring to a “smug confidence in Orthodox superiority” as “the cornerstone of Orthodox identity since its inception in Germany.” I doubt that AJS would have chosen to publish this if it had been said of Muslims or Catholics.

“The Justice Issue” also demonizes the State of Israel. The arts section featured a description of Ruth Sergel’s “Gaza Ghetto,” a social-media exhibit posted during Israel’s conflict with Hamas in 2014. Sergel, in an attempt to “recognize the fundamental humanity of the Palestinian people,” posted images of her arm inscribed with the names of Palestinians killed by Israeli bombs.

Given that a very large percentage of Palestinians killed in that conflict were Hamas operatives, Sergel was effectively memorializing terrorists directly responsible for trying to murder Israelis. Moreover, by inscribing their names on her arm, Sergel deliberately invoked the numbers tattooed on the arms of Holocaust victims, a classic case of an anti-Semitic inversion of history.

At least as offensive as Sergel’s images was Atalia Omer’s article “Jewish Justice as Historical Praxis in Israel/Palestine.” Omer’s assertions about the essence of Zionism and Israel read like Palestinian Authority chief Mahmoud Abbas’s dissertation, not a scholarly assessment. According to Omer, Zionists, through their “transnational discursive Hasbarah (or public diplomacy)” have made it “increasingly difficult to differentiate between Zionism and Judaism,” thereby “introducing an ahistorical attitude toward the praxis of Jewish justice.”

Omer further claimed that Zionists invoke the memory of the Holocaust to espouse a “Judeo-pessimism” that sees anti-Semitism as a permanent feature of world history. They do so to advance their plan for “Palestinian displacement and elimination” camouflaged as “self-defense.”

In addition, Omer decried the Oslo peace process as an “illusion and delusion,” a “profundity of injustice” and a “segregationist peace formula.” Ultimately, Omer chillingly concluded, the antidote to Oslo is the “restorative justice” of dismantling the Zionist project through the end of Israel as the Jewish nation-state. Omer called on “other victims of Jewish history” (read Zionism) such as Mizrahi and Ethiopian-Israeli Jews to liberate themselves from a “colonial identity” and ally themselves with Palestinians in the struggle to end Israel.

In her complete identification with the Palestinian cause, Omer does to Israeli Jews exactly what she claims they have done to Palestinians: She erases their agency and cultural identity by reducing them to the stereotyped role of aggressors.

In his introduction to “The Justice Issue,” AJS’s Executive Director Warren Hoffman wrote of the organization’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Taskforce’s creation of a Scholars of Color fellowship program and an annual “summer writing group geared toward women, transmen and non-binary folks.” It is ironic that, while reaching out to these groups, AJS has chosen to marginalize Orthodox and Zionist Jews.

AJS’s descent into ideological purity has transformed it from a representative of Jewish scholarship into a mouthpiece for the anti-Semitic demonization of Orthodox and Zionist Jews, as well as the State of Israel. I know that I am speaking on behalf of many colleagues when I say that the time has come for AJS to return to its proud past of non-partisanship. If it does not, those committed to that principle may be forced to found a new society for Jewish studies.

I sincerely hope that the Association for Jewish Studies will once again live up to its name and original mission, and open itself up to true diversity and the inclusion of all scholarly viewpoints.

(JNS Jan 26)
