



Jerusalem 7:00
Toronto 8:35

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

בס"ד

with Israel, Hamas used ambulances as "transport vehicles" and hospitals as "command centers."

Since its creation as a Muslim Brotherhood spinoff in 1987, Hamas has made its objectives clear. The group's founding charter calls for the destruction of Israel and the genocide of Jews — even approvingly quoting

Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf. Since Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Hamas has launched no fewer than three wars against the Jewish state — in 2008, 2012, and 2014 — in addition to the frequent rocket attacks that began shortly after the group seized power in 2007.

Yet, this history and Hamas' genocidal objectives have largely gone unmentioned by many media outlets covering the latest round of violent demonstrations at the border. Instead, many in the media have uncritically echoed casualty claims made by the "Palestinian Health Ministry" — a Hamas-controlled entity that shares the terror group's objective of delegitimizing and destroying Israel.

It's hard to imagine the press echoing the claims of other Islamist terrorist groups, such as ISIS or Al Qaeda. Yet with near ubiquity they've done so with Hamas while ignoring video and photographic evidence showing Palestinians planting explosives, carrying firearms, knives, and Molotov cocktails, and even launching kite bombs embroidered with swastikas. As one 19-year-old Gazan proudly told an NPR reporter, "We want to burn" the "Jews. ... [T]his is actually what we want them to know."

But as usual, when it comes to Israel, there is a double standard. The terrorist perpetrators are treated as privileged victims instead of human beings capable of independent agency. To many in the press, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of dueling narratives, as opposed to cold hard facts — as unpleasant as they might be. And the facts remain: Hamas is a genocidal terrorist group. Peaceful protests don't involve violence. And no matter how many times headlines blare it, terrorists are not protesters. (Algemeiner May 29)

The writer is a Senior Research Analyst for CAMERA.

Commentary...

Here's Why the Media Got the Gaza Violence Wrong By Sean Durns

A Palestinian rioter on the Israel-Gaza Strip border, May 14, 2018. Photo: Reuters / Ibraheem Abu Mustafa.

Western journalists covering the Arab-Israeli conflict are in need of an intervention. Many of them have spent the last several weeks regurgitating claims by Hamas and confusing terrorists with "protesters." In so doing, they have helped the US-designated terror group in its attempt to delegitimize and destroy the Jewish state. And they should have known better.

Since late March 2018, Hamas has been sending terrorists — interspersed with unarmed civilians serving as human shields — to try to breach the Israel-Gaza border.

Hamas has dubbed this long operation — whose participants have included members of other US-designated terror groups, like Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) — the "Great Return March." These terror groups hope to sacrifice their own people and place Israel in a no-win situation. If terror operatives are able to cross the border, violating Israel's sovereignty and endangering its citizens, it's a win. If Israel defends itself and Gazans die in the process it will be condemned by self-styled human rights arbitrators, fueled by a gullible media.

As Matti Friedman, a former IDF soldier and AP journalist, recently observed, Hamas knew that, "The press could be trusted to present dead human beings not as victims of the terrorist group that controls their lives, or of a tragic confluence of events, but of an unwarranted Israeli slaughter."

And Hamas has pulled out all the stops to put on a grotesque show, paying and busing in demonstrators, and bringing children and the disabled to the border in the hopes that they catch an errant bullet. Indeed, the group has even burned tires and used mirrors to obscure the vision of IDF snipers, who are seeking to specifically target the terror leaders hiding among civilians.

During the round of border violence that began on May 14, 2018, as many as 62 Gazans were reportedly killed, prompting front-page headlines by The New York Times, The Washington Post, and others — all repeating claims provided by the Hamas-run Health Ministry — about "protesters killed" and "indiscriminate" and "excessive" use of force.

Some outlets, such as USA Today, uncritically quoted declarations by anti-Israel UN official Michael Link that the "demonstrators" were "largely unarmed." Many pundits also contrasted the bloodshed in Gaza with ceremonies on the same day for the dedication of the newly-moved US embassy in Jerusalem — even claiming that the embassy move was responsible for the violence.

Two days later, Salah Bardawil, a senior Hamas official, told Palestinian news outlet Baladna TV that "50 of the martyrs were from Hamas, and the other 12 were regular people." He added, "I am giving you an official figure."

In short, the overwhelming majority of the "protesters" killed were, in fact, terrorists.

And the media had every reason to expect that this would be the case. On April 26, 2018, the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center published a report showing that of the Palestinians killed up to that point in the "Great Return March," 32 — or 80 percent — were linked to terrorist groups.

Indeed, according to a translation provided by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), Hamas official Mahmoud al-Zahar admitted to Al-Jazeera on May 13, 2018 that the group was "deceiving the public" when it claimed that the March was one of "peaceful" resistance. This was, he proudly said, "a clear terminological deception."

Nonetheless, many journalists, including those at The Washington Post, The New York Times, USA Today, NPR, and others, continued to refer to the dead as "protesters" and omitted or minimized evidence that the "march" was a Hamas-run propaganda ploy. In short: they ignored what Hamas is and always has been.

Hamas has always targeted Israeli civilians and employed Palestinian human shields — a double war crime. The group has used schools to hide its weaponry, equipment, and fighters, and as recently as the 2014 conflict

Restart Construction in Jerusalem By Nadav Shragai

Here is a statistic that should raise a red flag with anyone who wishes to keep Jerusalem united and complete: The percentage of Jews in east Jerusalem has declined in recent years from about 50% to around 40%! Despite the fact that this important statistic is no secret, no one has yet given an opinion about it since it was published by the Jerusalem Institute of Policy Research in its Facts and Trends for 2018 report, which was published several weeks ago.

This has far-reaching significance — the reduced construction for Jews in the eastern part of the city over recent decades has taken its toll. This is not just a general concern about the ratio of Jews to Arabs in Greater Jerusalem, but rather the ratio between Jews and Arabs in the parts of Jerusalem liberated in the 1967 Six-Day War, where the Palestinians strive to make their capital.

This population reduction has been a consistent process and has one principal reason: Israel greatly reduced construction intended for Jews in the eastern part of the city because of pressure exerted by the U.S. during the Bush, Obama and Trump eras. The truth is that the last two neighborhoods Israel established in east Jerusalem were in the 1990s: Har Homa and Ramat Shlomo. Together, both of them number some 35,000 residents. To this day, both of them are subject to development and construction limitations in place due to U.S. pressure. Since Har Homa and Ramat Shlomo, Israel has not founded one new neighborhood in east Jerusalem!

East Jerusalem — if you need to be reminded — is not an isolated settlement or a fringe outpost. Some 40% of the city's Jews, some 215,000 people, live in east Jerusalem. Altogether, the area makes up about 61% of the total population.

Despite this, the "Biden protocol" is still valid. This refers to the protocols for Jerusalem's planning committees during the Obama era, requiring them to coordinate every building permit or development plan for Jerusalem land liberated in 1967 with the Prime Minister's Office. This protocol, whose very memory should disappear from the world, exists despite the great alliance between U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Because the approval of any building or development plan in east Jerusalem must be done through the Prime Minister's Office, construction in east Jerusalem is still approved sparingly today.

Readers are requested to please mail contributions to: BAYT - re: Israel News, 613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario. L4J 5V3

Annual Rates: Friend - \$36, Supporter - \$50, Benefactor - \$180. Dedications are welcome at \$120/week. Call (905) 886-3810 for further info.

See Israel News on the internet at www.bayt.ca and www.frumtoronto.com or email LWZ@Zeifmans.ca to request to be added to the weekly email.

Opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the views of BAYT.

In 2017, Trump's first year, only 451 new housing units for Jews in east Jerusalem were approved, even less than the yearly average for the eight Obama years, which stood at 555 housing units annually.

Make no mistake, this is a badge of shame, first of all for the Israeli government and only afterward for the American administration. Although it is the U.S. that presses to slow down and freeze construction, Israel is the one in practice doing the freezing. It has frozen construction in Givat Hamatos and in the planned neighborhood bridging between Maaleh Adumim and Jerusalem, known as the E1 plan. These planned neighborhoods have great strategic importance for the continuity of Jerusalem, to prevent its division, yet construction is frozen.

We do not know how long the Trump era will last, at least with its current attitude toward Israel. We should take advantage of it now to push for a great building campaign in Greater Jerusalem. This is a window of opportunity that comes once in a lifetime and must not be missed.

We should be investing much more to harness the friendship and understandings between Netanyahu and Trump. Netanyahu's power of persuasion with the current administration in Washington can relax American pressure and bring about a significant construction push in Jerusalem. If we do not rush to do this now, we will soon discover that the price of wasting this opportunity far outweighs the symbolic political advantage of transferring the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem. (Israel Hayom May 31)

The Two-State Solution That Never Was By Arlene Kushner

Formulations vary, but to this day the concept of two states for two peoples is promoted in certain quarters as the cornerstone of peace.

It is comforting to look forward with optimism. To assume that people from a vastly different culture will in the end want what we want. To believe that with good will problems can be overcome. But it is not enough. There is a broad context – historical, cultural and religious – that must be considered. Those who ignore it push Israel into an untenable position.

When we look backward, we see that the Palestinian Arabs have never demonstrated a genuine desire for a state next to our Jewish state.

In 1947, when the UN General Assembly proposed dividing Palestine, the Arab response was fiercely negative: acceptance would have meant acknowledging a Jewish state. Once Israel declared independence, the Arabs immediately launched war.

In 1964, the Arab League established the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Israel was still within the Green Line; Jordan held Judea and Samaria, and Egypt, Gaza. In its charter the PLO renounced all claims against Jordan and Egypt; the only thing it sought to “liberate” was Israel.

The 1973 Yom Kippur war was a watershed for PLO thinking. It was apparent that Israel could not be eliminated militarily in one fell swoop, and so, while the PLO's ultimate goal of destroying Israel remained the same, it changed tactics significantly.

The PLO instituted the “Phased Program,” to weaken Israel one step at a time. PA minister Nabil Sha'ath acknowledged this, when he said, “We decided to liberate our homeland step by step.”

The program endorsed giving a semblance of moderation. Diplomatic negotiations were permissible if they weakened Israel and secured concessions.

It is with regard to this tactic that many people – failing to differentiate between a semblance of moderation and the real thing – have gotten caught. Two-state adherents promote territorial concessions in the belief that a real peace will ultimately follow.

While “peace” advocates believe making concessions shows good will that invites reciprocity, the Palestinian Arabs see concessions as weakness that invites further demands. It is a win-lose mentality; when Israel makes concessions the Palestinian Arabs believe they are winning.

Yasser Arafat, in 1994, clarified PLO intentions toward Israel: days after signing the Oslo Accords, he gave a speech in a South African mosque. Unaware that he was being recorded, he said: “This agreement, I am not considering it more than the agreement which has been signed between our prophet Muhammad and [the] Quraysh.”

This was a peace pact Muhammad made in 628 C.E. with the Quraysh, who held Mecca. Once he garnered sufficient strength, he abrogated the pact, crushed the Quraysh, and took Mecca. Within Islam, this is seen as a model of how to behave with non-Muslims.

Twice we have seen the PLO turn away from solid proposals for a final deal: first in 2000, when Arafat rejected an offer by then-prime minister Ehud Barak, and again in 2008, when Mahmoud Abbas walked away from then-prime minister Ehud Olmert's even more generous offer.

The PLO will never sign a final agreement with Israel. This is in part because it would mean agreeing to end the conflict. PLO leaders are committed to continuing the battle with Israel until its demise. They fear assassination by their own, quite literally, should they renege on this.

Last year, journalist Khaled Abu Toameh recalled Arafat's explanation of why he rejected Barak's offer: “...the Jews wanted me to end the conflict ... who am I, Yasser Arafat, to end the conflict ... if I make such concessions, I will end up drinking tea up there with Anwar Sadat.”

The question that must be asked, then, is why? Why is there such dedication to the goal of eliminating Israel? There is the oft-cited Muslim belief that land once possessed by Muslims is Islamic land forever. Palestine was for many centuries occupied by Muslims, most recently the Ottomans.

The time has come to stop pursuing the impossible. Our responsibility is to seek a realistic and humane solution to the conflict with the Palestinian Arabs, a solution that protects Israel's security and safeguards Israel's rights. (Jerusalem Post May 30)

The May Watershed and Lebanon By Mordechai Nisan

This month of May has been exceptionally hot in the Middle East, recording a number of major political events bound by a common thread. The primary focus is Iran and its proxies and allies, while America's President Donald Trump seeks to shape a new reality. The air is filled with anxiety, the inferno burns in Syria, Gaza, Iraq and Yemen.

- On May 6, amid charges of fraud and intimidation, Hezbollah achieved a victory in Lebanon's parliamentary elections. This does not change the confessional distribution of seats, fixed at 64:64 Christian-Muslim representation, with the Shi'ites awarded 27, but it does confirm that 67 of the 128 deputies are lined up with the Shi'ite Hezbollah militia. While Lebanese Prime Minister Sa'ad Hariri and his Sunni-led Future Party list declined, the “strategic alliance” binding Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah with Maronite President Michel Aoun and his Free Patriotic Movement – hardly free or patriotic – held fast. Meanwhile Hezbollah continues to thoroughly dominate Lebanon, an armed state within a faltering non-state, defining foreign policy, provoking Israel, monitoring the Beirut International Airport, smuggling weapons into the country and penetrating the command of the Lebanese Army.

- On May 8, the United States announced its withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, together with the imposition of new and harsh sanctions against the Iranian regime. President Trump's decision was followed by a major policy statement by Secretary of State Pompeo on May 22, when he outlined demands addressed to Iran: to cease its nuclear program and ballistic missile development, withdraw its forces from Syria, end support to Mideast terrorist groups – Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, stop threatening Israel with destruction, and end attacks against Saudi Arabia. The secretary inferred that the US would assure that all these demands will, if not fulfilled by Tehran's consent, be guaranteed by US action.

- On May 10, Israel responded to an Iranian-initiated rocket attack from Syrian territory toward the Golan Heights with extensive aerial strikes against Iranian targets – weapons sites and intelligence centers. Twenty-eight Israeli planes participated in the largest attack by Israel into Syria since 1974.

- On May 12, Iraqi parliamentary elections were held in the midst of multiple political challenges facing that war-torn, Sunni-Shi'ite religiously fractured, and Arab-Kurd ethnically divided country. The front-runner victor, winning a plurality of seats, was Muqtada al-Sadr, a patriotic Shi'ite cleric opposing Iranian intervention in Iraqi affairs. Despite the strong showing of the pro-Iranian Fatah party, al-Sadr's performance registered a certain setback for Tehran and its proxy militia in Iraq.

- On May 14, the US moved its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in recognition of Israel's legitimate capital city. The diplomatic uproar was more pronounced in submissive Europe than in the agitated Arab world. The American act, full of boldness and faith, conveyed the intensity of Washington's ties with Israel, and the significance of this for future regional developments. On the same day, 61 Arabs, mobilized by the terrorist Hamas regime in Gaza, were killed by the Israeli army when their violent protests threatened to spill over into Israel and threaten civilian Jewish communities.

- On May 23, Israelis and Lebanese recalled the IDF withdrawal from south Lebanon 18 years earlier in 2000. While there was an arguable security rationale for the decision, it was carried out in total deception and abandonment of Israel's South Lebanese Army (SLA) ally, whose soldiers and families were compelled to flee to Israel. The Lebanese lost their homes and country, and suffered humiliation. This moral scar on Israel's conscience has not been removed to this day.

Iran was definitely at the center of things, as it has been the engine of the evil axis since its Islamic Revolution in 1979. But now the tide was turning against her. Protests against the regime in Iran, from Mashed to Fars province, focused on the high cost of living, currency collapse, unemployment, and a regime marred by corruption and old age. The political ice in Iran was cracking at the end of the spring thaw.

The Iranian/Syrian occupation regime in Lebanon, spreading a pallor of fear in the country, executed its oppressive control over the decades by assassinating opposition figures from all religious denominations – presidents, parliamentarians, army officers, religious figures and journalists. This modus operandi gives insight into why and how Hezbollah made gains in the recent elections.

The American demand for Lebanon's liberation from the ayatollahs' iron grip is in accord with United Nations Security Council resolutions 520 (1982), 1559 (2004), and 1701 (2006). These called for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon and for the disarming of

Hezbollah. Yet this terrorist gang and international outlaw parades the formula of “army, people and resistance” as a Lebanese consensus position. It may appear so only because the silent agony of the Lebanese is drowned in tears of subjugation, while the political class – full of traitors, opportunists, cowards and sycophants – has abandoned its responsibility as guardians of Lebanon’s sacred mission of peace, faith and tolerance.

The lack of popular protest in the streets of Lebanon does not reflect heartfelt acceptance of Hezbollah’s abduction of the country; rather the people live in fear, hostages of a hostile and vicious gun-wielding pack of ruffians. Hezbollah took to violence in fighting Sunnis and Druse in clashes in the streets of Beirut in earlier years, this in defiance of their promise that its weapons are aimed only at Israel.

President Trump offers a glimmer of hope that Lebanon will return to embrace its special national mystique when liberated – along with Iran itself – from repression by a religiously dogmatic and repressive Shi’ite regime.

When Hezbollah’s conquest of Lebanon ends, however that may occur, the SLA families in Israel will then be able to return home in safety and dignity. Israel’s flagrant injustice to its Lebanese brothers-in-arms will finally be mended. Nowhere was it written that Israel had a right to determine the fate of the SLA fighters, because in 2000 they could have stayed to fight Hezbollah to protect their families, homes, and native villages. (Jerusalem Post May 28)

Deir Yassin: There was No Massacre By Eliezer Tauber

Deir Yassin is one of the founding myths of the Palestinian narrative, according to which Israelis murdered 254 people, committed rapes, and other gender-oriented atrocities in a peaceful 1948 Palestinian village. For the past five years, I have carried out an in-depth research into the affair, learned to know the village, who lived there and where, their names, and above all, the exact circumstances of death of each of the people killed there. The results were astounding, but clear. There was no massacre in Deir Yassin. No rapes. Lots of unfounded Palestinian propaganda.

On 9 April 1948, combined forces of the Jewish Etzel and Lehi underground organizations attacked Deir Yassin, an Arab village west of Jerusalem. It was four months after the eruption of hostilities between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, and about a month before the termination of the British mandate and the establishment of the State of Israel. The nature of this attack became one of the most controversial issues in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, serving the Palestinians as a proof for Israeli inhumanity. For almost seven decades, an anti-Israeli biased literature described it as an intentional and deliberate massacre of defenseless Arab villagers, accompanied by rapes and other atrocities.

What really happened in Deir Yassin? Contrary to what one could expect, I found that the testimonies of the Jewish attackers on the one hand, and the Arab survivors on the other hand, were surprisingly similar, at times almost identical. My methodology, therefore, was to integrate the testimonies of both parties involved, Jews and Arabs, into one story. I relied on a vast number of testimonies and records from 21 archives (including Israeli, Palestinian, British, American, UN and Red Cross), many of them yet unreleased to the public, and hundreds of other sources. My findings were basically two: no massacre took place in Deir Yassin, but on the other hand, the false rumors spread by the Palestinian leadership about a massacre, rapes and other atrocities, drove the Palestinian population to leave their homes and run away, becoming a major incentive for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem.

Deir Yassin was not the peaceful village many later claimed it to be, but a fortified village with scores of armed combatants. Its relations with the adjacent Jewish neighborhoods were troubled for decades and the Jews believed it to endanger the only road from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, thus constituting part of the Arab siege of Jewish Jerusalem. Therefore, although later denying it for political reasons, the Jewish main militia in 1948, the Haganah, sanctioned the attack and later took part in it by means of its striking force, the Palmach.

A ten-hour fierce battle, in the presence of a civilian population, ended in the victory of Etzel and Lehi. No massacre took place. When the battle ended, the killing stopped. “I believe that most of those who were killed were among the fighters and the women and children who helped the fighters,” one of the Arab survivors was later to testify. Furthermore, the Arab villagers got an advance warning to evacuate the village, which 700 of them followed. The attackers took an additional 200 villagers prisoner and safely released them in Arab Jerusalem. Only 101 Arabs were killed, a quarter of them active combatants and most of the rest in combat conditions. The Jewish assailants also suffered casualties.

For psychological warfare considerations, Etzel reported 200 Arabs killed, twice more than the actual number, enthusiastically adopted by the Palestinian leadership in Jerusalem, which increased it to 254 and added rapes and other gender-oriented atrocities. Hussein Khalidi, the senior Arab authority in 1948 Jerusalem, was of the opinion that, “We must make the most of this.” As his assistant Hazim Nusayba reported in a 1998 interview, Khalidi said “we should give this the utmost propaganda possible because the Arab countries apparently are not interested in assisting us and we are facing a catastrophe....So we are forced to give a picture – not what is

actually happening – but we had to exaggerate.” Khalidi’s distortion of the facts failed to prevent catastrophe. Instead, it helped create one.

“Dr. Khalidi was the one who caused the catastrophe,” one of the Arab survivors ruled. “Instead of working in our favor, the propaganda worked in favor of the Jews. Whole villages and towns fled because of what they heard had happened in Deir Yassin.” The Palestinian leadership intended to exploit the affair to lay pressure on the Arab states to send their armies to Palestine to fight the Jews. The plan boomeranged. Following the rule that women’s honor comes before land, the moment the Palestinians heard about rapes they started to leave.

Israelis and Palestinians believe in two myths about the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem. The Israelis claim that the Palestinians followed their leaders’ exhortations to evacuate their homes temporarily and then return with the victorious Arab armies, but that is not what spurred Palestinians to leave. The Palestinians claim that the Israelis expelled them in 1948, but this was not what drove the departure. The true story of the 1948 Palestinian exodus was a flight mainly motivated by panic over a massacre that never happened.

The horror propaganda about the affair has continued apace from 1948 to the present. The following is just a typical story, repeatedly cited, lately by the exiled Egyptian Muslim preacher, Yusuf Qaradawi: “As a climax of cruelty certain Jewish terrorists laid wagers on the sex of the unborn babies of expectant mothers. The wretched women were cruelly disemboweled alive, their wombs drawn out and searched for the evidence which would determine the winner.”

However, Palestinians and Muslim preachers are not the only ones who promote the massacre narrative, Westerners do as well. “Deir Yassin Remembered” is an organization founded in the United States, interested in building a memorial to commemorate the affair in a location overlooking the Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, apparently in order to draw an analogy between the two. The equation recurs in their writings, which argue that describing the massacre as “false, exaggerated, or in dispute” is tantamount to Holocaust revisionism. My research of the affair puts to rest any serious questioning of whether there was or was not a massacre at Deir Yassin. There was not. (Times of Israel May 28)

The writer, a former dean in Bar-Ilan University, Israel, is an expert on the emergence of Arab nationalism, the formation of the Arab states, and the early phases of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Will Iran Withdraw Its Forces From Syria? By Moshe Arens

The Iranian forces’ bases and installations in Syria have been under relentless attack these past few weeks by the Israel Air Force. That’s a clear message that Israel is adamant about preventing the Iranians from approaching Israel’s borders, even at the risk of escalation. This challenge to Iran’s plans to expand its presence and influence in Syria poses a dilemma for the rulers in Tehran.

The Iranian and Syrian air forces are no match for Israel’s. What’s more, Israel seems to possess almost real-time intelligence on Iranian activities in Syria, which exposes the Iranian forces there to almost constant and immediate attack. On that front, the Iranian military capability is inferior to Israel’s. The Iranians could respond by extending the conflict through the use of Hezbollah, its Lebanese terrorist proxy. Hezbollah has over a hundred thousand rockets and missiles deployed in Lebanon and is able to cover all of Israel. Tehran’s use of the Lebanese-based militia movement would represent a substantial escalation in the Iranian-Israeli confrontation. It also runs the risk of causing considerable damage to Israel’s home front, despite Israel’s considerable missile interception capabilities, but it might also lead to the quick elimination of Hezbollah’s capabilities in Lebanon, risking the loss of a much-needed ally in case of need.

The Iranian dilemma has been made that much greater with the recent American announcement in support of Israel’s position that Iranian forces must be withdrawn from Syria. That and President Donald Trump’s withdrawal from the deal to restrain Iran’s nuclear activities and impose heavy economic sanctions against Tehran are backing the Iranians into a corner. Even the other partners to the Iranian nuclear accord are now raising the possibility of renegotiating the agreement to include limitations on Iran’s ballistic missile activities and on its worldwide support for terrorism.

The Iranians have to take into account the possibility that an escalation in the Iranian-Israeli conflict might bring about direct U.S. involvement on Israel’s side. Iran’s problem is compounded a rapidly deteriorating Iranian economic situation. In light of all this, would it be the better part of wisdom for Iran to abandon its expansionist plans in Syria? That, no doubt, is being considered in Tehran among the available alternatives.

There is also another player in this precarious game: Russia. It is the Russians who have saved Syrian President Bashar Assad from defeat by the coalition of rebel forces in his country. But just as his position seemed to have been stabilized by Russian military intervention, as Russian air and naval bases in Syria have been secured under his rule, the Russians see the possibility that his continued rule might be endangered by the Israeli attacks on the Iranian deployment in Syria. They have evidently

become convinced that Israel will not be dissuaded from its plans to force the Iranians to leave Syria.

The ad hoc alliance between Russia and Iran that has propped up Assad seems to be unraveling. Now President Vladimir Putin's advice to the Syrian president is to order the Iranians to leave Syria. Assad's response is far from enthusiastic. Does he have a choice? Alliances in the Syrian theater of operations are shifting. This shift is the direct result of Israel's determination to prevent Iranian military forces from approaching Israel's borders. The danger as perceived in Israel leaves little room for Israeli compromise. That seems to be well-understood in Washington and Moscow. Let's also hope it also understood in Tehran. Assad may end up being the loser in this development, and perhaps the long-suffering Syrian people will benefit from this change. (Haaretz May 29)

Reviewing a Month of Hypocrisy and Moral Decadence By Isi Leibler

Never have we witnessed such morally decadent political behavior as what has transpired these past weeks.

Paradoxically, this occurred in the wake of a series of incredible Israeli achievements.

It was Israel's founding leader David Ben-Gurion, an avowed secularist, who stated, "In Israel, in order to be a realist, you must believe in miracles."

Kibbutz galuyot – the ingathering of the exiles – has become a reality. Israel has emerged as a military and economic superpower, is water-independent and is a major high-tech powerhouse. Its standing on a global level is unsurpassed.

The Donald Trump administration, in contrast to its predecessor, treats Israel as a genuine ally. It abrogated the bogus 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, imposing tough sanctions on them despite the bleating of the Europeans who are desperate to continue appeasing the Iranians.

In addition, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo demanded that the Iranians pull out of Syria and desist from engaging in international terror and explicitly warned them to cease calling for Israel's destruction. No longer is Israel facing Iran alone.

At the same time, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been able to maintain a friendly relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who also called on Iran to withdraw from Syria. Today, Israel is in great demand and sought out by many countries in Africa, Asia and South America.

Last month, Israel scored a remarkable military victory against the Iranians and virtually destroyed their infrastructure in Syria in overnight raids, suffering no casualties. This was followed by the dramatic disclosure of the Mossad, which, having incredibly purloined literally half a ton of Iranian classified documents, demonstrated to the world with conclusive evidence that the Iranians were lying when they claimed that they had no intention of creating a nuclear bomb.

The peak of Israel's jubilation came with the American administration's opening of its embassy in Jerusalem in a gala ceremony that thrilled the nation.

Despite repeated criticisms and condemnations of this by European and other countries, Israelis were in an exuberant mood that climaxed with Netta Barzilai's spectacular win for Israel at the Eurovision song contest.

Now we turn to Gaza. There have been continuous complaints about the appalling living standards and high level of unemployment in Gaza. The bulk of funds from Israel and other countries flowing into Gaza are siphoned off by Hamas to produce rockets, dig tunnels and prepare for a military confrontation with Israel. The most obvious example is the concrete – allowed to enter Gaza by Israel – being diverted to terror tunnels in lieu of building homes. As recently as last month, Hamas rejected vital medication from Israel to avoid showing Israel in a positive light. If Hamas would cease its obsession to destroy the Jewish state, Israeli aid would pour into the country and could transform it into a Middle Eastern Singapore.

But the abject living conditions of those under its rule do not concern Hamas, whose primary aim remains "armed conflict" and the destruction of Israel.

After its efforts to undermine Israel with rockets and tunnels had been thwarted, it used the opening of the U.S. Embassy and 70 years of the Nakba as the pretext to launch a new campaign against Israel, enlisting thousands of Gazans to storm the borders and actualize their claimed "right of return" to Israel.

Hailed to the outside world as "peaceful, nonviolent demonstrations," the participants were provided with maps of nearby Jewish towns and encouraged to bring weapons in order to kill as many Jews as possible and take Israelis as hostages. Peaceful farming communities only a kilometer beyond the border were intended as their initial targets. They descended en masse to the borders hurling rocks and Molotov cocktails, and bringing pipe bombs, grenades, machetes and guns as well as sending burning kites, some emblazoned with swastikas, to destroy Israeli fields.

Hamas proclaimed that the purpose of this campaign was to bring an end to the Jewish state and that the casualties would be celebrated as martyrs, their families compensated.

The Israeli government responded in the same manner as any nation whose borders were attacked by swarms of terrorists seeking to murder

their civilians. The IDF was instructed to ensure that no terrorist cross the border. While doing their utmost to avoid needless casualties, soldiers had no choice but to resort to live fire when terrorists tore down the barriers and penetrated Israel.

Hamas operatives were instructed to dress in civilian attire. Extras and their families were also bused in and promised payment for their services and larger sums if they became injured. Maps were posted on Facebook displaying locations of Israeli homes, schools and daycare centers adjacent to the border.

Many youngsters and even infants were pushed to the forefront, forced to assume the role of human shields. During almost two months of rioting and attacks on the border, over 100 people were killed and thousands allegedly wounded. Although Hamas itself proudly proclaimed to its followers that the majority killed were Hamas activists, it announced to the world that this was a massacre of innocent people peacefully demonstrating. The higher the number of casualties, the more Hamas rejoiced.

Despite clear visual evidence of the violent Hamas attacks to break through the borders, the liberal media – which had been frustrated with Israel's recent run of successes – totally adopted the Hamas lies and carried screaming headlines describing callous, bloodthirsty Israelis killing peaceful protestors, including women and children.

Political leaders joined in the hysteria, accusing Israel of responding disproportionately, implying that if 500 Israelis had been killed, the death of the Hamas thugs would have been more justified. Some, like Turkey's anti-Semitic President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, accused Israel of war crimes and even of treating the Palestinians worse than the Nazis treated the Jews.

It was only the U.S. that stood by Israel's right to defend itself, vetoing a call for a commission of inquiry by the U.N. Security Council. It was joined by Australia in the U.N. Human Rights Council, where the hypocrites passed a resolution calling for a commission of inquiry into Israel's actions without even referring to the Hamas provocation.

This has been one of the worst examples of double standards and the pogrom atmosphere generated against Israel. Fourteen countries, including five EU member states, to their eternal disgrace, stooped to the depths of depravity when they stood aside and abstained. Included among these were purported friends of Israel like Germany, the United Kingdom and Hungary. Their complete passivity when Israel is condemned for defending itself against terrorists committed to its annihilation is nothing short of moral turpitude. Shame on them!

Despite the monstrous ongoing massacres in the region, purported human rights NGOs, the U.N., the leftist media, and most government leaders used this episode as a pretext to demonize and condemn Israel.

Setting aside this despicable behavior and the echoing of the incendiary murderous script crafted for them by Hamas, what is truly macabre is the behavior of sections of Diaspora Jewish communities. Fringe groups in both the U.S. and U.K. have been publicly demonstrating in favor of the Hamas killers and even holding surreal recitations of the mourner's kaddish, naming the individuals killed. This is the equivalent of reciting kaddish for dead SS soldiers who shared the same genocidal objectives against the Jews as Hamas – truly a chilul Hashem, a desecration of God's name.

Even beyond this demented fringe, many Jews are publicly expressing grief at the death of the terrorists. Yet they do not express any sadness that our adversaries are obscenely providing human sacrifices by positioning women and children in the line of fire to capitalize on casualties so as to demonize Israel for public relations purposes.

Rabbinical sermons have referred to the bulk of those killed as innocents, even though Hamas leaders themselves claim that 85% of them were their operatives. On May 14 at its graduation and ordination ceremony, the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College shamelessly chose as its guest speaker the fiercely anti-Zionist author Michael Chabon.

Anti-Defamation League head Jonathan Greenblatt wrote that "it is a horrific tragedy that so many people have been killed and wounded at the Gaza border." Would Greenblatt have said this about the masses of Nazis and German civilians killed in the course of World War II?

There is a serious sickness among Jews when so many feel more concern about the death of those seeking to kill us than anxiety for their own kinsmen.

No country facing such attacks on its borders would act with greater restraint than the IDF. No country would fail to take such steps to protect its territorial integrity and the life and limb of its citizens.

Nevertheless, the world is clinging maliciously to the lies promoted by Hamas, a terrorist organization that does not even try to hide its goal of murdering Israelis. Hamas claims its supporters are engaging in peaceful demonstrations and being butchered by Israelis with a lust to massacre Palestinian children.

Yet, Hamas co-founder Mahmoud al-Zahar explicitly told Al Jazeera TV, "When we talk about 'peaceful resistance' we are deceiving the public." And in the midst of the campaign, Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar told his people, "We will tear down the border and we will tear out their hearts from their bodies ... and eat the livers of Israelis."

Peaceful demonstrations?! (Jerusalem Post May 29)