



## 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*

Zionism is the  
Ultimate Human  
Rights Movement

By Douglas Altabet

Human rights have appropriately been prioritized by many NGOs, charities and movements seeking to elevate, ameliorate the condition of people under stress.

That's the good news. The bad news is that human rights, as practiced by so-called HROs – Human Rights Organizations – have become a conversation stopper. They are both a sword and a shield wielded by those whose political actions have often been rationalized or justified as being waged on behalf of certain beleaguered groups; as such, their actions are beyond reproach or analysis, not to mention criticism.

Inevitably, this has led to a prioritization of woe and distress. Who has it worse, who is more deserving of our pity and help?

When I was a kid in the US, I remember watching a show called Queen for a Day, in which a parade of housewives vied for having the most pathetic story. There was an applause meter based on the individual's plight, and of course a raft of prizes awarded to the one who tugged most at our heartstrings.

The Left's use of the cudgel of human rights is Queen for a Day writ large. It's also rather cynical, as one senses that victims are being used to further a political goal. In Israel, those goals inevitably seem to involve usurping authority of the state and the government.

Yes, they would say all lives are important, at least in theory; however, in reality, some need to be protected more than others.

In practice, this leads to the fracturing identity politics gripping the US, whereby certain groups "matter," and are thereby deserving, while certain groups are "privileged," part of the repressive majority, and therefore have no standing, no vote, no voice.

The hypocrisy of this perspective is fully visible in Israel, as infiltrators from Africa in south Tel Aviv are wrapped in the protective mantle of being refugees, seeking asylum from certain death back home. Unfortunately, while it's an effective construct to tag at the heart strings, it's not rooted in reality.

These are people seeking a better life, higher wages, more opportunity. There is nothing wrong with that per se, but the problem lies in the reality of their being here.

Leaving aside the mission of Israel to be a haven for the Jewish people (who, if they were of the mindset, could have retired the Queen for a Day title for the rest of time), there are regular people whose lives have been made a living nightmare by the influx of these interlopers.

These are not tony Rothschild Boulevard dwellers, sipping mojitos at sidewalk cafes with their Segways parked by their seats. They are poor or working class, regular people, the very people that Israel was conceived for, fought for, and built for. They are the salt of the earth and the backbone of our people.

Forget the fact that they should be our highest priority, they are the collateral damage of the required sanctimony and hand-wringing on behalf of the often violent infiltrators.

Another blatant hypocrisy, a black mark on the honor of the Jewish people, is to see families, destroyed by the wanton, indiscriminate terrorism of murderers, having to scramble to defend the memory of their killed family members, as human rights organizations, heavily funded by European governments, flood the courts with expensive petitions to protect the terrorists.

Where is our moral compass? Are we so distanced from our own selves that we have only disdain for our own?

A few days ago, at its conference celebrating its 10th anniversary, Im Tirtzu paid powerful tribute to the reality that Zionism is perhaps the ultimate root and repository of human rights. We honored and embraced the activists of south Tel Aviv for their efforts to protect their neighbors, and we reaffirmed our common cause with the residents there.

We also honored and embraced our brethren whose lives have been devastated by terrorism, but who insist on sanctifying the memory of their departed by doing all in their power to hold their murderers accountable.

For Zionism, human rights is not just about victims. It is also about respecting those non-Jews who are willing to embrace Zionism's mission, the decency of Israel, and to participate in building our society. So it was the other night, as a large group of Christian Arabs took to the stage to receive an award recognizing their efforts to encourage their fellow Christians to serve in the army and to integrate into Israeli society.

## Commentary...

### Lessons from the Syrian Strike By Eyal Zisser

This week will mark 10 years since the destruction of the nuclear reactor Syrian President Bashar Assad wanted to build in northern Syria, with help from North Korea. Although Israel refrained from claiming responsibility for the reactor strike, it was the Syrians who were quick to blame it on Jerusalem. Later, official American sources, notably then-President George. W. Bush, confirmed that Israel had been behind the strike on the Syrian reactor.

Although there was concern about a Syrian reprisal, Assad avoided the risk of confronting Israel militarily and preferred to ignore the destruction of his reactor, which marked an end to his nuclear aspirations, which he had hoped would make his regime bulletproof against any domestic or foreign threat, and might even have hoped would give him full, absolute strategic balance with Israel's power.

The fact that the Syrians attributed the 2007 strike to Israel helped rebuild Israeli deterrence, which had sustained a severe blow in the 2006 Second Lebanon War. That war ended with the other side feeling that Israel had taken a bad hit and had no effective response to Hezbollah missiles. Damascus had the same kind.

After the 2006 war, Assad even toyed with the idea of following in the footsteps of Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah and green light terrorist attacks on the Golan Heights and the threat of missile volleys if Israel were to strike Syria in response. Taking out the Syrian nuclear reactor completely changed the direction in which things were headed.

One can only imagine what would have happened in Assad had managed to get a hold of nuclear weapons. After all, this is a despot who did not hesitate to use chemical weapons against his own people. Even before doing so, Assad led a war against Syrians that left nearly half a million dead and forced a third of the country's population -- some 8 million people -- to flee and seek asylum as refugees outside Syria.

We should also remember how for years world leaders explained to Israel that it mustn't get upset about the Assad regime's stocks of chemical weapons. They argued that the Syrian regime was a rational one led by pragmatic, realistic rulers who understood the great danger of using chemical weapons and were keeping them as a method of deterrence, not for use. Israel has heard similar explanations this past decade about Iran's nuclear program.

In his memoir, Bush describes how then-Prime Minister Ehud Olmert begged him to order the U.S. military to demolish the Syrian reactor, but Bush couldn't comply with his request because the American intelligence community claimed it had no information that could confirm the Israeli claim that the Syrians were working to acquire nuclear weapons and could not, therefore, give Bush the backing he needed to order the army to attack in Syria. So Bush, rightly considered one of the friendliest U.S. presidents to Israel, was forced to leave Israel to its fate.

This thrilling historical story is relevant to the challenges Israel is currently facing on its northern front. Jerusalem is once again seeking help from its allies -- the U.S. and Russia -- and once again it is warning them, this time about Iran gaining a foothold in Syria and turning the country into a base of operations for the Revolutionary Guard on the Mediterranean coast. This is a base that would be used to operate against Israel, or at least threaten it.

But Russia and the U.S. are basically brushing off Israeli fears about Iran. It seems that history is repeating itself and we cannot depend on anyone, not even Israel's friends, to do our work for us. (Israel Hayom Sep 3)

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Human rights is not the monopoly of the Left, nor of any other ideology. In a Zionist state, human rights concerns should be focused on those who have thrown in their lot with the Zionist mission: to normalize, protect and cherish the welfare of Jews, all Jews; and to be gracious, tolerant and respectful to those non-Jews who see in Zionism their own greatest opportunity for dignity and fulfillment. (Jerusalem Post Sep 7) *The writer is the chairman of the board of Im Tirtzu and a director of the Israel Independence Fund.*

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### Temple Mount: Sacred Space By Moshe Dann

“The Temple Mount is in our hands” not only announced a thrilling military victory in the Six Day War, but an inspiring spiritual and historic opportunity. Then-IDF chief rabbi Shlomo Goren understood this; Defense Minister Moshe Dayan did not, and the moment when the rights of the Jewish People to the Temple Mount and the principle of religious toleration could have been affirmed was lost.

When Dayan returned control of the Temple Mount to Jordan and its representatives, the Islamic authority (Wakf), Rabbi Goren protested but the rabbinic establishment and most religious politicians and religious leaders did not object. When Rabbi Goren built a small area for prayer on the northern side, Dayan destroyed it. His authoritative book, *Har Habayit* (1993), has not been translated.

Since then, ironically, the struggle over the most important sacred site to the Jewish People, the Temple Mount, is not only between Muslims and Jews; it is also between Jews – those who visit the site and those who don’t because they say it is against Jewish law (Halacha).

Opposition by the rabbinic establishment to Jews visiting the site because it is “too holy” coincides with those who believe that it is not holy to Jews at all and belongs to Muslims. As one prominent left-wing Orthodox rabbi opines: “I don’t go into someone else’s sacred space.”

This ambivalence toward the Temple Mount has encouraged Muslims to assert exclusive rule over the site, limiting access to non-Muslims, harassment – often violent – and preventing non-Muslims from praying at the site in any way. The chief rabbis of Israel and Jerusalem have issued public statements forbidding Jews from visiting the site lest they wander into the area in which the First and Second Temples once stood – presumably on or near where the golden-roofed “Dome of the Rock” now stands.

“The Rock” refers to the Foundation Stone (even *hashtiyya*), a large stone part of Mount Moriah, where Abraham brought Isaac to be sacrificed and replaced him with a ram – the Akeda – commemorated by blowing a shofar on Rosh Hashana, and where the inner sanctum of the Temple, the Holy of Holies, existed. Since it is a shrine, not a mosque, it is open to visitors.

Although the exact location of where the Temples stood is not known, areas which were added during the Herodian period to expand the plaza are clear. For Jews who visit the site, therefore, Orthodox rabbis included, there is no halachic problem as long as certain restrictions are observed: avoiding the area of the Dome of the Rock, immersion in a mikve beforehand, and not wearing leather shoes. Walking along the perimeters of the Temple Mount would seem to be permitted.

During the Mishnaic period prominent rabbis went to the Temple Mount. The Christian “Pilgrim of Bordeaux” who visited Jerusalem in about 333 CE wrote that Jews went to the Temple Mount on the Ninth of Av to recite lamentations and rip their clothes as a sign of mourning.

Israeli historian Ben-Zion Dinburg (Dinur) wrote that a Jewish house of prayer existed on the Temple Mount between the 7th and 11th centuries. Apparently Jews prayed there whenever possible. Benjamin of Tudela (1130- 1173) observed Jews praying on the Temple Mount.

The prohibition seems to begin with Maimonides (Rambam) (1135-1204) who held that the original holiness of the Temple which King Solomon built was never diminished and who forbade visiting the site; yet, in 1165 he may have visited the site. The Ra’avad (R’Avraham Ben-David) of Posquieres (1125-1198) differed, holding that the sanctity of the First Temple applied only during the time it existed, and not to the future, and he permitted visiting the site.

During the Ottoman occupation, Jews were forbidden to enter the Temple Mount; instead they were allowed to pray at a tiny section of the Western Wall.

Despite severe restrictions for non-Muslim visitors today – close screening and metal detectors, prohibition of religious items, including Bibles, limited hours of visiting and waiting in long lines to enter – thousands of people are attracted to the site. For many Jews, however, such visits remain controversial.

Although the Orthodox Union does not take a position, its website says that “while certain areas of Har HaBayit may be off limits, simply being on Har HaBayit is valuable in and of itself.”

In “The Political Role of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate in the Temple Question” (*Jewish Political Studies* 11:1-2) Prof. Yoel Cohen of Ariel University concludes: “The Chief Rabbinate’s dependence on the wider

world of [halachic] learning encouraged conservatism. While it reflected a desire for consensus, it also reflected a lack of self-confidence or, according to some critics, the quality of those appointed to office. A vicious circle was created in which a conservative rabbinate influenced an unenthusiastic political establishment and vice versa. In one such instance, when asked by Goren why Jews are not allowed to pray on the Temple Mount, then newly-elected Prime Minister Begin replied ‘because the rabbis forbid it.’ While the subject of celebrating Jerusalem Day was discussed at seven meetings of the Chief Rabbinate Council, building the Temple has never been discussed even in theoretical terms, and the question of access for Jews to the Temple Mount was discussed by the Council on four occasions.

“The de facto control which the Wakf enjoys throughout the Temple Mount today and the Israel-Jordan peace agreement are testimony to a failure by the Chief Rabbinate to meet the challenges which existed after the 1967 war. Instead, it lost itself in a web of [halachic] strictures which, however serious, could have been eased had the will and the institutional freedom existed.”

In 2014, Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, rabbi of the Samaritan community of Har Bracha and head of its yeshiva, and author of the book series *Peninei Halacha*, wrote (on his website): “Blessed are those who ascend the Temple Mount. The continuation of the disgraceful situation on the Temple Mount brings our enemies hope, and motivates them to kill and riot throughout the country. In order to suppress the wave of terrorism and incitement from its roots, the government and the police must assert Israeli sovereignty over the Temple Mount in the most decisive manner.

“Blessed are those who go up to Har Habayit according to halacha. Thanks to them, our sovereignty over the Temple Mount and all of the Land of Israel becomes clearer, and precisely as a result of this, we will merit security and peace.”

The question is not only about halacha, but whether an halachic position taken hundreds of years ago, when Jews did not have a state, or sovereignty, or access to and knowledge of the site should be changed. In a spirit of tolerance, mutual respect and religious freedom, to ensure safe access to the Temple Mount to all, the state and the rabbinic establishment must restore, protect and preserve the sacredness of the place where Jewish history began, Mount Moriah, the Temple Mount. (Jerusalem Post Sep 6)

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### Why Israel Needs to Prepare America for the Upcoming Conflict in Syria By Eric R. Mandel

For the next 10 days Israel will be simulating war conditions with Hezbollah, in its largest military exercise in over 20 years. Although the exercise is based upon a Lebanese battlefield, the Syrian frontier is equally problematic, with Hezbollah and Iran embedded within Syrian regime positions.

After listening and speaking to some of Israel’s most trusted analysts on security and intelligence, visiting the Lebanese and Syrian borders, and speaking with active and reserve officers in the field, I am confident that Israel is deadly serious about challenging a permanent Iranian presence in Syria, Hezbollah aggression, and Iranian missile bases in Russian-protected areas.

Israel’s tacit agreement with Russia to avoid misunderstandings over Israeli military actions in Syria targeting weapons shipments bound for Hezbollah is now in jeopardy, in part because the Syrian situation has evolved in favor of Assad, Russia and most significantly Iran. Consideration for Israel’s security challenges doesn’t hold much weight anymore for the Russians.

Most significantly, the Trump administration has agreed to leave it to Russia to enforce a Syrian de-escalation agreement, which legitimizes a permanent Iranian presence in Syria.

According to the London-based Arab newspaper *Asharq Al-Awsat*, the United States acquiesced to an Iranian presence less than 10 kilometers from the Israeli border in the Golan. This is a game changer. This will allow Iran and Hezbollah to strike Israel from Syria, while avoiding Israeli retaliation in Lebanon.

Gen. (ret.) Yossi Kuperwasser, former head of research in the IDF Military Intelligence division and director general of the Strategic Affairs Ministry wrote, “Iran almost assuredly wants to turn Syria into an Iranian military base... so that instead of threatening Israel from 1,300 kilometers away, the Iranian forces could sit on Israel’s doorstep. This would bring about a dramatic change in the nature of the threat Israel is facing.”

He also believes that Iran may also be considering moving nuclear development into the unmonitored Syrian frontier to avoid IAEA detection of violations in Iran.

Ten years ago Israel successfully destroyed a Syrian nuclear facility, so it is no stretch of the imagination to believe Israel would act again if its intelligence detected Iranian nuclear development in Syria.

An Israeli tipping point may have been reached, forcing Israel to either be resigned to a permanent Iranian presence in Syria or significantly

increase its operations in Syria, potentially escalating into a wider regional war.

According to Yediot Aharonot, "Russia has reportedly stationed its advanced S-400 anti-missile defense system near an Iranian arms factory in Syria, which allegedly manufactures long-range guided missiles for Hezbollah."

When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu complained to Russian President Vladimir Putin, Pravda reported that Putin's response to Netanyahu's complaints was "Iran is Russia's strategic ally in the Middle East."

So will Russia use its S-400 anti-aircraft system against an IAF attack on its Shi'ite allies? A successful Israeli attack would require Israel to knock out any S-400 system defending the target.

How would the Russians respond to the deaths of Russian soldiers manning the S-400? Can anyone predict how Trump and co. would respond to an Israeli attack killing Russian soldiers? A regional conflict now becomes a possibility.

As former head of the National Security Council Yaakov Amidror said, "At the end of the day it is our responsibility, not the responsibility of the Americans, or the Russians, to guarantee ourselves, and we will take all the measures that are needed for that."

There is no doubt the Iranians will be testing Israel very soon, feeling secure that no one including the US will come to their aid. American resolve to stand by an essential ally will be severely tested, as many US allies will not choose Israel's side if Israel acts.

The West mistakenly believes the imminent defeat of Islamic State (ISIS) will stabilize Syria and the surrounding region, but nothing could be further from the truth. ISIS with its offshoots will turn back to insurgency, while the Islamist Iranian victors solidify their land corridor to the Mediterranean.

The region could be ignited with a single match. That light could be a significant Israeli attack in Syria in response to the increased military transfers facilitated by a permanent Iranian presence, starting the engine toward a wider regional conflagration.

This is why Israel must prepare its American ally sooner rather than later to know that Israel may not be able to sit idly by while Iran's uses its new base to transfer more and more powerful weaponry to Hezbollah.

Serious questions need to be asked and debated in Jerusalem and Washington.

- How will Jordan and the more moderate Sunni States be affected by the permanent Iranian presence in Syria?
- How will Israeli actions affect US-Israeli relations?
- To what extent will Russia actively participate beyond coordinating with Syria and Iran?
- Would a third recertification of the JCPOA in October increase Iranian adventurism in Lebanon and Syria?

The Iranian hegemonic expansion is not a new phenomenon, but a long and well-planned one, as it tries to reproduce the glory days of the ancient Persian empires. Today's territorial gains in Syria should be considered phase two, with phase one beginning 30 years ago when Iran sponsored Hezbollah.

Phase two began during the 2011 "Arab Winter" with US president Barack Obama's withdrawal from the region creating the opportunity for Iran to move into both Syria and Iraq.

In the past few years, Hezbollah has grown from a formidable terrorist entity to effectively controlling all of the Lebanese government with terrorist proxies throughout the Middle East and South America, all under Iranian control.

What we do know is that Iran and Hezbollah's permanent presence in Syria is dangerous for Israel, America and the West.

It is not too late for American diplomatic leadership to balance interests and turn down the heat, but that would mean America challenging Russian authority to make the rules in Syria and renegotiating the deal in Amman.

If the administration fails to act, Congress should take the lead, speaking clearly to the American people about how Iran's newfound dominance in the region undermines American national security interests.

Expect the EU to be completely unhelpful, as it is blinded by the economic benefits of the JCPOA. It will bend over backwards to be on the side of Iran.

Which brings us back to Israel. It has already sent high-level security and intelligence teams to speak to the Trump administration warning it about the evolving danger in Syria.

An American commitment to back up Israel if Iran does not decrease its presence in Syria would actually decrease the chance for conflict, as knowing the red lines might make Iran think twice before challenging Israel or expanding further into the Golan.

The Trump Middle East Israeli-Palestinian peace team should also refocus their efforts away from the improbable quest for conflict resolution and get their head into the real game in the Middle East, Iranian control of Syria, one that could set the region on fire. (Jerusalem Post Sep 5)

## **Vanquish the Enemy** By Eyal Zisser

The wide-scale military exercise the IDF launched two days ago in the country's north, the largest of its kind in two decades, is an attempt to simulate the next war, the third Lebanon war, which everyone -- in Israel but also in Lebanon -- fears but is preparing for in earnest.

Similar to the wars that preceded it, the working assumption in the Lebanese arena is that the next round, too, will begin with an isolated incident that spirals out of control, one response followed by a counter-response, sending both sides careening toward a skirmish, perhaps even war. This time, however, Hezbollah's menu of surprises will not only include massive missile barrages at Israeli cities and vital infrastructure, such as ports, airports and power grids, but an attempt to invade Israel and seize control of an IDF outpost; perhaps even a civilian community along the border with Lebanon.

Ever since the summer of 2006, Hezbollah has shied from clashing with the IDF. The blow the organization and its Shiite supporters suffered in the Second Lebanon War almost completely reduced their appetite for provoking Israel. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, scarred by the pummeling he received, effectively became an Israeli asset, because no one was better suited to maintain quiet and stability along the border.

With that, Hezbollah was also able to neutralize Israel's ability to act against it, certainly on Lebanese soil. The terrorist organization successfully sold the equation whereby its missile arsenal could cause significant damage to Israel, damage that potentially outweighs the threat Israel poses to Hezbollah and its supporters. All the more so if Israel's goal remains similar to its previous wars with Hezbollah or even Hamas, when it merely sought to buy itself a few more years of peace and quiet rather than fundamentally altering the reality in Lebanon.

Hence the conclusion reached by many pundits, but also numerous statesmen in Israel, that if Israel's objective in a future conflict with Hezbollah amounts to preserving the status quo and restoring a tense and illusory quiet along the border, while also coming to terms with Hezbollah's expanding influence inside Lebanon, then it would be best to invest its efforts in preventing the next war rather than fighting it.

This appears to be the challenge Israel faces and it should also be the focus of the next IDF exercise. These days, where reality is not only virtual but spurious as well, defeat and victory are elusive concepts. But in contrast to the prevailing assumption in Israel, Hezbollah is no longer -- and probably never was -- an amorphous guerilla organization, devoid a physical presence in the fighting arena, backed by nothing -- neither a supportive public nor a state.

Hezbollah, therefore, can not only be hit, but also brought to its knees and vanquished. And if the organization cannot be convinced that Israel has the capability, and most importantly the public and political desire and will to defeat it, then any round of fighting will end like those before it, in a complex balancing act where reciprocal damage is hard to calculate; and which will always allow Nasrallah to sell the idea that Israel's war was a failure.

The challenge at the center of the IDF's current drill, therefore, is not just to train the combat soldiers and junior officers on the ground; it is not even to help senior IDF commanders be more cognizant of the possible scenarios, which they were not prepared for in the summer of 2006. The main challenge was and still belongs to the political echelon -- to specify the desired objective in a new round of fighting with Hezbollah. In this regard, it would be wise for cabinet ministers, not just military commanders, to partake in such an exercise. (Israel Hayom Sep 6)

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## **When Great Institutions Lie** By Caroline B. Glick

Over the past week, two major US institutions have produced studies that discredit their names and reputations as credible organizations. Their actions are important in and of themselves. But they also point to a disturbing trend in the US in which the credibility of important American institutions is being undermined from within by their members who pursue narrow partisan or ideological agendas in the name of their institutions.

The political implications of this larger trend were clearly in evidence in the 2016 presidential election. From a larger, long-term sociological perspective, if the current trend is not reversed the implications for American society will likely be long lasting and deeply destructive.

The first study was produced by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. It dealt with the Obama administration's policies regarding the war in Syria and specifically the acts of mass murder undertaken by the Assad regime. Authored by Cameron Hudson, a former Obama administration national security official who now serves as the director of the museum's Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, the report absolved the Obama administration of all responsibility of the bloodbath in Syria.

As reported by Tablet magazine, the paper argued that "a variety of factors, which were more or less fixed, made it very difficult from the beginning for the US government to take effective action to prevent

atrocities in Syria.”

The paper’s claim was based on “computational modeling and game theory methods, as well as interviews with experts and policy-makers.” It argued that had then-president Barack Obama not ignored his own redline and actually responded with force to the regime’s 2013 chemical weapons attack at Ghouta, it wouldn’t have made a difference.

In the last months of the Obama administration, Obama appointed several of his loyalists, including his deputy national security adviser Ben Rhodes, to positions on the board of the Holocaust Memorial Museum. Rhodes was one of the architects of Obama’s Syria policy.

After sections of the report were released to Tablet and the report was posted on the museum’s website, its findings were angrily rejected by prominent Jewish communal leaders and human rights activists.

For instance, literary critic Leon Wieseltier told Tablet, “The first thing I have to say is: Shame on the Holocaust Museum.”

He added, “If I had the time I would gin up a parody version of this that will give us the computational- modeling algorithmic counterfactual analysis of [then-US assistant secretary of war] John J. McCloy’s decision not to bomb the Auschwitz ovens in 1944. I’m sure we could concoct the #@%& algorithm for that, too.”

Wieseltier was exactly right. A mathematical model is based on inputs and outputs. If you input specific data, you will get specific consequences. From an academic perspective, the study’s findings are worthless.

In the wake of the firestorm the report provoked, the museum pulled the study from its website and canceled its scheduled formal presentation on September 11.

But the damage that the Holocaust Memorial Museum did to its reputation by producing and publishing a transparently false, politically motivated report is not something that can be mitigated by pulling it from its website.

As some of the Jewish communal leaders who spoke to Tablet suggested, the Holocaust Memorial Museum diminished its moral authority as an institution by publishing a report clearly produced to rewrite recent history in a manner that absolved the Obama administration of all responsibility for the mass murder in Syria.

While distressing, the impact of the Holocaust Memorial Museum’s action is limited to a historical falsehood. The goal of the second study published this week by an esteemed institution is to distort and indeed block discussion about a problem that is ongoing.

This week, Stanford University’s Research Group in Education and Jewish Studies published a report which purports to show that there is no significant anti-Semitism on US college campuses and that Jewish students do not feel threatened by anti-Semitism.

The Stanford’s conclusions fly in the face of a massive body of data, collected by researchers over the past decade, which all show the opposite to be the case. If the Stanford study is believed, it will discredit the work of hundreds of professional researchers and academics, journalists and Jewish and academic leaders throughout the US.

But that’s the thing of it. The Stanford study is utter nonsense.

As the researchers, led by Associate Professor of Education of Jewish Studies Ari Kelman, made clear in their report, their study is the product of interviews with a deliberately chosen, non-representative group of 66 Jewish students from five California campuses who are not involved in Jewish life.

The researchers said that they deliberately chose only Jews who aren’t involved in Jewish life on campus, since they make up the majority of Jewish students on campuses. The researchers claimed that reports on campus anti-Semitism are generally distorted, because they generally highlight the views of the minority of students who deeply involved in Jewish life at their universities. Their views, the researchers said, are different from the views of Jews who aren’t involved.

There is certainly a valid argument to be made for researching the views of uninvolved Jewish students about anti-Semitism on campus. But the researchers didn’t do that. They didn’t survey a random, and therefore statistically meaningful sample of uninvolved Jews.

They went to great length to ensure that the “uninvolved” Jewish students were their sort of “uninvolved” Jewish students. As they wrote, “We screened students with respect to their activities in order to determine whether or not they fit our general criteria so as to minimize those with vastly different definitions of ‘involvement’ than ours.”

Armed with their painstakingly selected, non-representative 66 Jewish students, Kelman and his team concluded that all the researchers who have conducted statistically relevant studies of Jewish students on US university campuses are wrong. There isn’t a problem with anti-Semitism on campus. All the Jewish students the researchers spoke with felt perfectly safe on their campuses as Jews.

This academically worthless finding, published under the Stanford University letterhead, would be bad enough. But the fact is that this finding is the least sinister aspect of the study.

The real purpose of the “study” was to use this deliberately selected group of students to shut down debate on the most prevalent and fastest growing form of anti-Semitism on campuses: anti-Zionism.

The survey found that their interlocutors “reject the conflation of Jewish and Israel.”

“They chafe at [the] assumption that they, as Jews, necessarily support Israeli policies. They object to the accusation that American Jews are responsible for the actions of the Israeli government, and they express similar discomforts with the expectation that all Jews should be Zionists.”

At the same time, they really don’t like Israel much at all. The survey’s Jewish students “struggle with Israel,” whose actions “generally often contradict their own political values.”

Here we begin to see the ideological purpose of the pseudo-academic Stanford study.

First things first. The uninvolved students who think that Israel’s actions “generally often contradict their own political values” told Kelman and his colleagues that they are offended by “the accusation that American Jews are responsible for the actions of the Israeli government.”

And this makes sense because that accusation is self-evidently a form of anti-Semitism. Like anti-Semites who accuse Jews of killing Jesus, anti-Semites on campuses is ascribe responsibility for the alleged “crimes” of the Jewish state to American Jewish students in California.

So by “chafing” at the allegation, the students his researchers deliberately selected acknowledged that they are offended by anti-Semitism.

But then, helpfully, they agreed with the researchers that anti-Semitism isn’t anti-Semitism.

The study went on to explain that its student correspondents have been intimidated into silence by the “tone of campus political activism in general, and around Israel and Palestine specifically.”

That tone, they said, is “severe, divisive and alienating,” and the students wish to avoid paying “the social costs” of involvement.

So a study involving a deliberately selected, non-representative sample of Jewish students who acknowledge that they don’t think much of Israel still found that the atmosphere of the debate about Israel is so wretched that Jews who might otherwise have wished to participate are too scared to speak their minds.

Somehow, the researchers managed to ignore this obvious finding. Instead of paying attention to the elephant in the room, Kelman and his team pretended the elephant was a dishwasher.

They concluded the problem isn’t the anti-Semites.

Kelman told Tablet that in addition to being “turned off” by people who blame them for Israel – that is, anti-Semites, “they’re similarly turned off by the assumptions of people in the Jewish community that all Jews will get behind the actions of the State of Israel.”

In other words, the anti-Semitism of the students who accuse them of responsibility for Israel’s policies because they are Jews is just as bad as the attempts by pro-Israel students to get them involved in defending Israel – a place Kelman’s deliberately unrepresentative sample doesn’t care for very much.

By conflating pro-Israel Jews and anti-Semitic Israel-bashers, the Stanford researchers give cover for continued anti-Semitism on campus.

As they explain things in the name of their unrepresentative Jewish students, attacking Jews as Jews is just part of a legitimate, if alienating, debate about Israel where Israel’s defenders are as bad as its opponents.

Students who call for Israel’s annihilation and demand that Jews not defend Israel’s right to exist, are not anti-Semites for wanting to kill more than 6 million Israeli Jews and attacking anyone who doesn’t share their genocidal view. They are just partisans in a legitimate debate.

BDS supporters who wish to wage economic and cultural war on Israel and Israeli Jews just because Israel exists aren’t anti-Semites. They are just advocates of a legitimate policy preference.

Anti-Israel activists who attack any American Jews who profess support for Zionism aren’t anti-Semites. They, like pro-Israel students, are just engaging in an unpleasant but entirely legitimate debate.

By publishing their findings under Stanford’s name, Kelman and his associates are using Stanford’s brand to give credence to their pseudo-academic research whose transparent and pernicious goal is to end public debate about anti-Semitism on college campuses while keeping Jewish students intimidated into silence.

Whereas the Holocaust Memorial Museum was rightly excoriated for its willingness to have its institution hijacked for narrow partisan ends that distort the historical record, media reports of the Stanford pseudo-study have been respectful. This is deeply troubling. So long as institutions pay no price for the exploitation of their name by agenda- driven members, they will not rein in their members. And over time, the American public’s faith in its national institutions will continue to diminish, to the detriment of the US as a whole. (Jerusalem Post Sep 7)