



הוועד הישראלי נגד הריסת בתים  
The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions  
الحركة الإسرائيلية ضد هدم البيوت

PO Box 2030  
Rehov King George 14  
91020 Jerusalem, Israel

Tels: +972-(0)2-624-5560  
+972-(0)505-651425  
+972-(0)548-046999

Fax: +972-(0)2-622-1530  
E-mail: [info@icahd.org](mailto:info@icahd.org)  
Website: [www.icahd.org](http://www.icahd.org)

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## **THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT: CHALLENGING SLOGANS THROUGH CRITICAL REFRAMING**

by Jeff Halper, Jimmy Johnson and Emily Schaeffer

First Printed 2007. Revised Edition 2009

Published by  
The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD)  
PO Box 2030  
Jerusalem 91020  
Israel  
+972 2 624-5560  
[info@icahd.org](mailto:info@icahd.org)

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions wishes to thank the following for their generous support: The European Union, Christian Aid, The Church of Sweden, Comité Catholique Contre la Faim et pour le Développement, NGO Development Center, Austrian Development Agency and the Government of Ireland. And thanks to Floresca Karanasou, Middle East Programme Manager of Quaker Peace and Social Witness, UK, for her valuable input.

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## CHALLENGING “CONVENTIONAL WISDOM” – REFRAMING THE CONFLICT

In this publication we seek to fill a void, that of the One Sentence Reframing. We are not comfortable about our effort. As critical thinkers who understand the complexities and nuances of any political conflict, we hate slogans. They simplify to a ridiculous degree, they distort and they confuse issues far more than they clarify them. We would go so far as to argue that, the way they are normally used, slogans actually *prevent* the resolution of conflicts by polarizing; instead of creating bridges of understanding, they raise “us” *versus* “them” barriers, in which “we” are always right and “they” are wrong, if not downright evil.

Still, to our regret, slogans dominate the public discourse, in the media and in the halls of government no less than in the marketplace. This booklet collects the major slogans ICAHD staff, interns and activists have encountered in their years of interaction with Israeli Jews and those, in Israel and abroad, who present themselves as “pro-Israeli.” Unless they are countered there is no hope of developing a political conversation which could actually clarify the issues and contribute to resolving the conflict, rather than perpetuating it. We cannot say we have succeeded altogether. As you will see, we have not managed to reframe the slogans in a sentence; instead, we have needed brief paragraphs. We simply could not capture what needs to be said in a sound-byte; the issues are far too complex for that. Even trying to compress an intellectually honest and complete reframing into brief paragraphs proved extremely difficult. Too bad there is no more public space for in-depth discussion. Nevertheless, providing a clear, concise message that keeps the dialogue within the parameters of international law, human rights and justice is vitally important, and so our effort here.

When it comes to resolving conflicts such as that pitting Israeli Jews against Palestinian Arabs, framing is as important as the facts. All Israeli governments, be they Labor, Likud or Kadima, have successfully promoted a framing based solely on security. Israel, the official framing goes, is a tiny, peace-loving country, a Western democracy besieged by a sea of Arabs intent on destroying it, embroiled in an existential fight for its survival in which it acts only out of self-defense. Missing from Israel’s security framing is the very fact of occupation, which Israel both denies exists and excises from all its utterances. Instead, it casts itself as an innocent victim of “Arab terrorism.” This framing is compelling given the preoccupation with “security” in our post-9/11 world; it makes great sense to people. Nevertheless, it conceals other crucial elements of the conflict not directly related to security, but which underlie it and which must be addressed if the conflict is to be resolved. Not stated explicitly in the Israeli framing, for example, are the following propositions which obviously bear on the conflict:

- That the entire country between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River “belongs” exclusively to the Jews, thus nullifying any Palestinian rights and claims — indeed, even their even their existence as a people;
- That “security” requires Israeli control over the entire country, thus eliminating the possibility of a truly viable and sovereign Palestinian state;
- That there is no Occupation, and that everything Israel has does in the Occupied Territories is for purely defensive reasons;
- That Israel is actually the victim, and has no responsibility under international law;
- That it is the Palestinians who reject peace; and, in the end,
- That one side must win and the other lose, rendering impossible a just peace based on human rights, international law, reconciliation and regional integration.

While security is certainly a legitimate concern for Israel, as it is for other countries, accepting its exclusively security-based framing means ruling out the possibility of a just and sustainable peace with the Palestinians. As Israelis who believe that Israel’s security, survival and moral integrity depend upon reaching an accommodation with its neighbors, we do not find this an acceptable option. In fact, we reject the official framing altogether. Our reading of the history of the region and of Zionism, our understanding of how and why Israeli policy is made in regards to the Occupation and our experiences with our Palestinian partners and friends lead us to very different conclusions, to a very different framing.

The reframing suggested here seeks to address the underlying causes of the conflict between Israel, the Palestinians and the wider Arab world while offering ways out. Compared to the Israel security framing, our peace and human rights reframing rests on the following alternative principles:

<b>The Israeli Security Framing</b>	<b>A Rights-Based Reframing</b>
<p><i>Conception: Exclusivity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Land of Israel belongs exclusively to the Jewish people; There is no other people that has legitimate rights or claims.</li> </ul> <p><i>Definition of the Problem: Security</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Israel is fighting for its existence. The Arabs don’t want peace; the Palestinians are our permanent enemies.</li> <li>• Israel’s policies are based solely on concerns for security; There is no Occupation.</li> <li>• The underlying problem is Arab terrorism.</li> </ul> <p><i>Solution: Win/Lose</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The conflict is a win-lose proposition: either we “win” or “they” do.</li> <li>• Since is the victim, it is exempt from accountability for its actions.</li> <li>• Any solution must leave Israel in control of the entire country. If Israel allows a Palestinian state to emerge, it will necessarily be truncated, non-viable and semi-sovereign.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Conception: Mutual National Rights</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two peoples reside in Israel/Palestine and each has rights of self-determination.</li> </ul> <p><i>Definition of the Problem:</i> <i>A Pro-Active, Expansionist Occupation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Palestinians recognize Israeli sovereignty over 78% of the country; the Arab world has offered Israel regional integration.</li> <li>• Israel pursues a pro-active policy of expansion into the Occupied Territories based on settlement and control.</li> <li>• The problem is Israel’s Occupation; Palestinian violence is a symptom of oppression. In human rights language, all attacks on civilians are prohibited, whether from non-state or state actors.</li> </ul> <p><i>Solution: Win/Win</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only a solution based on human rights and international law ensures a win-win solution.</li> <li>• Israel is a major regional superpower that must be held accountable for its actions.</li> <li>• Either a viable and truly sovereign Palestinian state must emerge, or another option which is mutually agreed-upon according to the principle of self-determination.</li> <li>• Anti-Semitism is a form of racism;</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The answer to anti-Semitism is a militarily strong Israel aligned with the United States.</li> </ul>	only respect for human rights will effectively address anti-Semitism and Israel's security concerns.
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Our reframing contends that only a political solution based on human rights and international law will finally meet each people's concerns for justice and security. This is not a "radical" proposition. We would argue that human rights and international law are not only a necessary basis for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but they offer the only hope for our entire world struggling for equality, inclusiveness, cultural diversity, rights, peace, justice and prosperity against the forces, prevailing today, of *realpolitik*, Big Power domination, militarism and aggressive global capitalism. In many ways the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a local one, but has global implications. If occupation actually wins, if an entire people is literally imprisoned behind high concrete walls, if exclusivity and military repress win out over fundamental human rights, then what does that mean for all of us?

In the end, the reframing offered by the critical Israeli peace camp rejects the fundamental premise of the security paradigm: that Muslims and Arabs as a whole, and Palestinians in particular, are our enemies. We reject all attempts to mystify it through claims that Jews and Arabs have been enemies "from time immemorial" or that we are involved in a "clash of civilizations." We insist that the conflict be conceived as a political one which therefore has a solution. We also reject the notion that terrorism lies at the root of the conflict. While we condemn every attack on civilians, we recognize that such violence is a symptom of intolerable oppression that will end only when the peoples' underlying claims and grievances are resolved.

We must also recognize the significant gains which have been made towards a just solution to the conflict, even though they have been obscured by the violence of recent years. Both the Palestinians and the Arab League have recognized Israel within the "Green Line" (that is, on 78% of the shared country); Israel is at peace with Egypt and Jordan, has relations with many Arab countries and expanding ties throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds; a promising diplomatic Road Map has been formulated by the US, Europe, Russia and the UN; a majority of Israeli Jews recognize the existence of the Palestinian people and have even indicated a willingness to relinquish the Occupied Territories if their security could be assured; and Israelis and Palestinians have engaged in prolonged, if on-and-off, negotiations.

A just peace in Israel/Palestine is no pipe-dream. It is achievable if we approach it in the proper manner, as a win-win equation which must acknowledge and address the rights, claims and grievances of all the parties. To that end we offer our reframing. It is a critical reframing of *Israeli Jews*; it does not pretend to represent the views of Palestinians. It is constructive. Since it approaches the conflict politically, it assumes there is a just and workable solution. And it is hopeful, offering ways out of "our" century-long conflict and, on the way, providing a model of conflict *resolution* (not mere "management") to oppressed people everywhere.

## ZIONISM

*“The land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people.”*

**Jews have a genuine tie to the Land, but not an exclusive one.**

It's a genuine historical tie but not exclusive. Jews (actually, Judeans) were the majority in this land for only some 1900 of the past 5,000 years of recorded history, and were the governing authority for even less. For the past 1400 years or so, the country “belonged to” the Muslims, Arabs for the most part, although many peoples came and went. The Jews have no more, and no less, a right to live in the land than any of the others who populate it. In the end no people can claim exclusively over the country. As for Zionism's claim that the Jews are the “returning natives,” the Palestinians counter that they represent the sum total of all the indigenous peoples who have lived there in an unbroken continuity. Who is right? Both claims have merit, yet both are narratives constructed to serve present national purposes. While the Jews try to assert their exclusive ownership to the Land, the Palestinians, who consider themselves the indigenous population, have found it necessary to affirm their own national rights. For any kind of accommodation to take place, both people must acknowledge the others' right to a national presence while finding a way of sharing it.

–and–

**If Israel is truly a democratic state, then it belongs equally to all its citizens, Jewish and non-Jewish alike.**

A democracy “belongs” to all its citizens; no particular group can claim an exclusive privilege over the others. At least 24% (and perhaps up to 30%) of Israelis are not Jews. Of Israel's population of million, 1.39 million are Arabs and over 300,000 are ethnic Russians, non-Jewish Ethiopians, foreign workers who have married there and other naturalized citizens. Israel's Declaration of Independence promises “complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.” If we talk of the entire “Land” of Israel, then we bring into the equation another four million Palestinians who live under Israeli control but are not citizens. Unless Israel allows for a sovereign Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories, it must become either a bi-national state or an apartheid regime.

~

*“God gave the Land of Israel to the Jews, his Chosen People?”*

**Mixing faith with politics is always a dangerous proposition.**

Everyone has a right to a religious belief, but not to force that belief on others. Jewish claims to a Divine right over the Land of Israel clashes with the equally valid claim that Palestine, the Holy

Land, is *waqf* land holy to the Muslims, as well as a Palestinian patrimony. No claim can be objectively proven, and the assertion by force of one claim over the others will result only in perpetual conflict and suffering.

–and–

**The vast majority of Jews do *not* believe that God gave us the Land.**

The vast majority, in both Israel and the Diaspora, are secular and do not believe that God takes sides in conflicts, has a chosen people or parcels out real estate to particular peoples (including Americans with their ideology of Divinely-blessed Manifest Destiny). Even those secular people who assert an exclusive Jewish claim to the country most aggressively, people like Menachem Begin, Ariel Sharon and Binyamin Netanyahu, base themselves on national and historical claims, not religious ones. To complicate matters even more, most ultra-orthodox Jews, who do believe God gave the Jews the Land of Israel, are anti-Zionis. In their view, secular Jews taking possession of the Land as a political act is a blasphemous cooptation of God's Divine right to restore the Jews of the Land in His own time and circumstance.

~

*“The Arabs only came to this country after the Zionists started to develop it.”*

**Wrong. And so what?**

No serious historian, Israeli or otherwise, supports that myth. The Arabs originally came to this land in 638 under Caliph Umar, when the Christians of Jerusalem surrendered to his Muslim army. The Arabs colonized Palestine and over a few centuries Arabic language and culture became dominant. From that time until the expulsion by Israel of more than 700,000 Palestinian refugees and the mass immigration of Jews, the Arabs were the dominant demographic majority. Even today, the Jews comprise only slightly more than half of the population of Israel/Palestine.

As can be expected, the issue of who-came-when, who is “genuinely” a native and to whom the country “belongs” is far too complicated for a sound-byte. Part of the population increase amongst the Arabs began in the 1850's as a result of improved medical care provided by the Ottomans and Christian missionaries. There was also significant emigration of Arabs during the nineteenth century because of the difficult economic situation, which did not dramatically improve until the British – not the Zionists – began “improving” the country. The British imported workers from Syria and elsewhere, and it is likely that Palestinian families who had earlier emigrated returned. The Land of Israel/Palestine was certainly not “empty” when the Zionists began arriving, as they claimed (in 1880 about 24,000 Jews lived in Palestine together with an Arab population of 400,000, or 6%). By 1922 the Jewish population had risen to 84,000 as against 590,000 Arabs, or about 12%; by 1948 the Jewish population stood at 650,000 versus 1,300,000 Arabs, some 33%. The steady but not dramatic increase in Arab population does not seem especially tied to immigration (Porat 1986; Sachar 1981).

-and-

**So what?**

No manipulation of statistics will lessen the fact that both peoples exist in the country and claim national rights. Jews cannot decide for Palestinians if they are a people or not with rights to live in Palestine/Israel, and Palestinians can't decide for Jews.

~

*"Jews have a right to self-determination."*

**Jews who define themselves nationally – that is, Israeli Jews who are not ultra-orthodox – do indeed have the right of self-determination.**

Certainly, but rights are universal, and so Palestinians have them too. The same laws and treaties that protect the Jewish peoples' right to self-determination also protect the rights of others. The claim to Jews' to self-determination in their historic homeland cannot be privileged over that of the Palestinians.

~

*"England wants to maintain its English identity, why can't Israel maintain its Jewish identity? We just want our Jewish state."*

**England is a democracy that belongs to all its citizens, native-born and immigrant alike. Israel is an *ethnocracy* which privileges Jewish rights over those of others living in Israel.**

The question is not whether Jews have a right to self-determination, but what exactly is the "nation" that claims self-determination? In Britain and other Western democracies, your nationality is determined by your passport. In Israel, Jewishness trumps Israeli nationality shared by all those who hold Israeli passports.

As an *ethnocracy* – a country that "belongs" to a particular people rather than to all its citizens – Israel could not become the plural society Britain did, since it could allow only the immigration of Jews if it was to remain a Jewish country. The Law of Return, for example, grants automatic citizenship only to Jews, while denying Palestinian refugees the Right of Return. This could not happen in Britain. We must ask ourselves: How do we balance Jewish rights of self-determination with the rights of the 24-30% of non-Jewish Israelis who share a common citizenship?

~

*"There must be a Jewish state in which Jews can find refuge in case they ever need to flee their own country."*

**Fleeing racism doesn't help.**

Anti-Semitism, racism and oppression must be confronted whenever and wherever they raise their ugly heads. It does not good to flee to some supposedly "safe" place (especially Israel, the one place in the world where Jews are the most insecure). In our global village there is no safe haven. Either the world is made safe for everyone, or we will all take turns being the victim of the hour. This is why it is so important to pursue universal human rights, to ensure that everyone lives in security, peace and dignity. Jews must continue to be – as they have been historically – advocates of justice. They cannot flee.

-and-

**Israel doesn't need fair-weather "refugees."**

Israel may be a future place of refuge (though it's pretty unlikely), but don't expect it to enter into a kind of limbo until such a time as the comfortable Jews of the West might deign to consider emigrating. Israel has to find its place in the Middle East, even if that means becoming a country quite different from what people expect. As Israelis we have a bit of advice: Stay where you are and fight anti-Semitism and injustice.

**1947-49 WARS**

*"The Palestinian refugees left voluntarily or under the direction of Arab commanders."*

**The refugees were victims of a deliberate campaign of ethnic cleansing, aided by the early exit of their elites.**

The Zionist movement came to Palestinian not only with a claim to the land as the Jews' historic patrimony in which they seek national self-determination, but with an *exclusive* claim which denied the very existence of a Palestinian people and its rights and claims to the country. This emerged publically and explicitly as early as 1937, but came operationally to the fore in 1947 when, *before* Israel was established as a state, *before* it entered into any fighting with the Palestinians or was attacked by Arab armies, a decision was taken by the Jewish leadership to take concrete military steps to ensure Jewish demographic domination in all of Palestine. As the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé details in his book *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (2006), the first *offensive* operations begin in late 1947/early 1948. "Every attack [on Arab neighborhoods, towns and villages]," according to one participant in the decision-making, "has to end with occupation, destruction and expulsion [*tihur*]" (Pappé 2006:64). In March, 1948, two months before the British departed, the Jewish leadership adopted its infamous Plan Dalet of expulsion. By the time Israel declares its independence, 250,000 Palestinians had either fled or been driven from their homes (Pappé 2006:119). It makes little sense that people leave their homes "voluntarily" for an uncertain future, and, according to the premier authority on the matter, Benny Morris (2004), there is no record of any call from the Arab leaders on the Palestinian population to leave their homes.

-and-

**Taking responsibility.**

In our reframing of the conflict, Israel is not the victim but has consistently pursued an exclusive, pro-active claim to the entire country that put it on a collision course with the native population. The point is not to *blame* Israel (as "pro-Israeli" advocates try to blame the Arabs); it is rather to hold Israel – and the Palestinians – *accountable* for their actions under international law.

~

*"There were no massacres."*

**Wrong. Let's take responsibility.**

Benny Morris (2004) states that there were 18 massacres perpetrated by Jews on Palestinian civilian communities. Ilan Pappé (2006) lists 36.

~

*“If events had been turned around, the Arabs would have massacred us.”*

**How do you know? Isn't this what every colonial people says about its “uncivilized” natives, even as it goes about massacring them?**

History was not turned around and we were the ones who massacred; it was us who expelled 60% of the Palestinians, for which some accounting must be made. What also escapes attention are Arab attempts to deal politically with the Yishuv (the pre-1948 Jewish community) and the young state of Israel. Yishuv leaders had excellent relations with Egypt before 1948 (Shlaim 2000); Israel entered the 1948 war with a pact with Jordan to divide the country between them (Shalim 1988); and the Palestinian commander Fawzi al-Qawqji sought a truce from January through March, 1948, in which he offered to bring the issue of the Jewish presence in Palestine to the Arab League for discussion (Pappé 2006:116).

But why would the Arabs have massacred us? We know the cold calculation behind our massacres, the desire to create a purely Jewish state and homeland, but the Arabs, who had lived with Jews in Palestinian and throughout the Arab world for centuries, had no such national aspiration. The conflict is, at root, a colonial one, with the indigenous population resisting with all the means at its disposal – invariably far less than those of the colonial powers – the loss of their country and their displacement. Had Zionism dealt with the Palestinians' national aspirations and fears instead of relentlessly pursuing a goal of ethnic domination, not only might have the wars been avoided but any motivation the Arabs might have had to massacre Jews as well.

## **1967/OCCUPATION**

*“There is no Occupation. It is disputed territory.”*

**Pure sophistry.**

Israel's claim that it has no Occupation and that the territories it took in 1967 are merely “disputed” or “administered” is supported neither by international law nor the international community. Israel argues that occupation only occurs when one sovereign country conquers the territory of another sovereign country, and since there was never a sovereign power over the West Bank, East Jerusalem or Gaza (Jordan and Egypt also having taken them in 1948), no one has a claim. This interpretation gives the Palestinians no status at all, and flies in the face of the internationally-accepted definition of occupation, which has to do with effective control of territories beyond one's recognized borders than with issues of sovereignty.

Here's what John Dugard, the UN's Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied Since 1967 and one of the world's leading authorities on international law, had to say in his 2007 report to the Human Rights Council:

The international community, speaking through the United Nations, has identified three regimes as inimical to human rights - colonialism, apartheid and foreign occupation. Numerous resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations testify to this. Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem contains elements of all three of these regimes, which is what makes the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) of special concern to the international community.

That the OPT is occupied by Israel and governed by the rules belonging to the special legal regime of occupation cannot be disputed. The International Court of Justice confirmed this in respect of the West Bank and East Jerusalem in its 2004 Advisory Opinion on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (p. 136, paragraph 78), and held that the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 1949, was applicable to this Territory (p. 136, paragraph 101). The Security Council, General Assembly and States Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention have declared that this Convention is applicable to the entire OPT (p. 136, paragraphs 96-99). Moreover, it is not possible to seriously argue, as Israel has attempted to do, that Israel has ceased to occupy Gaza since August 2005, when it withdrew its settlers and the Israel Defense Forces from Gaza....Israel was able to exercise effective control over the Territory by reason of its control of Gaza's external borders, air space and sea space. Since that date it has exercised its military authority within Gaza by military incursions and shelling, in circumstances which clearly establish occupation.

~

*"The settlements are for security."*

**No, they are for control, for "judaization," and to prevent the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.**

The Israeli government, from the day it began building settlements almost immediately following the 1967 war and until today, has never claimed that they contribute to security. They were established for two reasons both having to do with Israel's claim to the entire country rather than to security: for control of territory and because of the connection of the place to Jewish history. Indeed, most of the settlements, placed in the middle of densely populated Palestinian territory, actually *created* security threats to their civilian populations, and in that way justified a military presence. Ariel, for instance, is located smack in the middle of the West Bank. There is no plausible pretext for the army bases and the Wall surrounding it without those Israeli civilians.

The settlements have one role only: to grab more land from the Palestinians, on whose private lands most are built. They are illegal in international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibiting an occupying power from transferring its civilian population into an occupied territory. (See the Foundation for Middle East Peace website: [www.fmep.org](http://www.fmep.org). Also the "settlement watch" page of the Peace Now website: [www.peacenow.org](http://www.peacenow.org).)

We would go even further and argue that almost no element of the Occupation has to do with genuine security. Security does not explain the establishment of some 250 settlements, the expropriation of the majority of Palestinian land, the demolition of 18,000 Palestinian homes

since 1967, the uprooting of a million olive and fruit trees, the economic “closure” and severe limitations on freedom of movement (imposed at the start of the Oslo peace process, not in response to any security threat), the tortuous route of the Separation Barrier which intrudes deep into Palestinian territory, the construction of a massive Israeli-only highway system throughout the West Bank, the annexation of “east” Jerusalem; indeed, although “security” is the catch-all term used to frame Israel’s policies in the Occupied Territories, it actually has little to do with Israel’s matrix of control, a pro-active claim to the entire country, not a defensive policy (Halper 2005).

## **THE ARABS, TERRORISM & SECURITY: “NO SOLUTION”**

*“Jews and Arabs cannot live together peacefully and never have.”*

**First thought: If that’s true, then Zionism was a really bad idea!**

Fortunately, however, this slogan is simply not true. Over the long history of the Middle East and North Africa vibrant Jewish communities could be found in almost every country. To be sure, there were invariably tensions and occasional incidents of conflict – though remarkably few and minor for a history going back 1600 years to the origin of Islam and thousands of years of pre-Islamic co-existence. True, concepts of equality were lacking (they were lacking in Europe as well until the American and French revolutions), but to cast Muslims as the “enemy” of Jews is an egregious oversimplification. Indeed, the very concept “Judeo-Christian,” invoked in the Clash of Civilizations argument against Islam, fundamentally distorts history. If anything, there was a Judeo-Islam civilization as set apart from the Christians. Judaism resembles Islam in theology, structure and rituals far more than it does Christianity, and Jews lived infinitely better in Muslim societies than they did in Christian ones.

Jews and Christians were recognized by Islam as “Peoples of the Book.” Though much has been made of the term *dhimmi*, translated much too simply and out-of-historical-context as “second-class citizens,” Jews and Christians enjoyed internal communal autonomy according to the religious laws and traditions. They were not considered infidels by Islam and were not proselytized; nor were they considered a foreign element in Muslim countries, as they were in Europe. Nothing approaching an ideology of anti-Semitism ever appeared in the Muslim world, and if Jews and Christians had to acknowledge their subordinate status vis-à-vis Muslims, that took the form of symbolic acts only (such as paying a poll tax). Except for the partial exceptions of Yemen and Iran where Shi’ite Islam ruled, Jews never suffered from the severe restrictions imposed on them by the Christian populations of Europe (such as not being allowed to own land, engage in many professions or enter major cities). Jewish quarters were nothing like European ghettos (Halper 1991: 25-31).

The fact remains that when the Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal under the Inquisition, they found welcome refuge in the Muslim Ottoman Empire. Pogroms and ultimately the Holocaust were products of European anti-Semitism. It does great injustice to both Muslims and Mizrahi Jews (Jews from Muslim countries) to try to impose a European model of anti-Semitism on Middle Eastern/North African Jewish history. After the founding of Israel masses of Mizrahi Jews chose to come to Israel; they did so for religious and economic reasons, they were not driven out of their countries of origin. Even today Jewish communities thrive in Morocco (where there is Jewish government minister) and in Turkey. There is even a Jewish community in Iran (Stillman 1979).

-and-

**As history shows, we are embroiled in a political conflict, not an “inevitable” clash of civilizations.**

As the native Sephardi historians Eliahu Eliaschar (1997) and Meron Benveniste (2001) testify, relations between Jews and Arabs in Palestine were also traditionally harmonious. The rise of Zionism changed that – the first real fighting between Jews and Arabs took place in Sejera at the turn of the century when Jews purchased village land from absentee landlords and evicted the peasants who had farmed there for generations (R. Khalidi 1997). Our reframing requires us Israeli Jews to accept responsibility for our actions rather than always blaming others. Consider the words of Ahad Ha’am, later one of the most prominent Zionist figures, in his 1891 essay “Truth From the Land of Israel:”

From abroad we are accustomed to believe that the Land of Israel is presently almost totally desolate, an uncultivated desert, and that anyone wishing to buy land there can come and buy all he wants. But in truth it is not so. In the entire land, it is hard to find tillable land that is not already tilled....From abroad we are accustomed to believing that the Arabs are all desert savages, like donkeys, who neither see nor understand what goes on around them. But this is a big mistake....And what do our [Jewish] brethren in the Land of Israel do? They were slaves in the land of exile, and they suddenly find themselves with unlimited freedom, the kind of wild freedom to be found only in a country like Turkey [the Ottoman Empire]. This sudden change has engendered in them an impulse to despotism, as always happens when “a slave becomes a king,” and behold they walk with the Arabs in hostility and cruelty, unjustly encroaching on them, shamefully beating them for no good reason, and even bragging about what they do, and there is no one to stand in the breach and call a halt to this dangerous and despicable impulse.

Again, the conflict between us Israelis and the Palestinians – and by extension with the wider Arab and Muslims worlds – has nothing to do with some primordial enmity. We are embroiled in a *political* conflict of two national movements claiming the same land. Only by insisting on its political definition rather than some mystification can we hope to find a way out of this mess. Even now, after 40 years of Occupation, sixty years of mass displacement and a century of national conflict, Arab and Jewish Israelis live side-by-side in peace, while strong partnerships exist between Israeli Jews and Palestinians working non-violently for a just peace.

No solution? Nonsense.

~

*“There are no Palestinians.”*

**Only Palestinians have a right to say that.**

When someone says to us: “Jews have no right to self-determination or a country of their own. They are only a religious group, maybe a people with a common culture, but they are not a nation with rights of other nations,” we respond: Who are you to tell us who or what we are? This is the essence of self-determination; it is *self*-determination. I won’t let anyone define me and, by extension, I have no right to define for other who they are. Before the First Zionist Congress in

1897 Jews did not define themselves as a nation and did not aspire to a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. If the Palestinians, who have lived in Palestine/Syria for generations as a distinct cultural group, a people, decide at a particular point in history that they are a nation – just as Americans, Kenyans, Italians and many other peoples have – then that is their right. They are Palestinians with rights of self-determination because they claim to be.

~

*“There are 22 Arab states, why can't the Palestinians go there?”*

### **There is only one Palestine.**

There is no justifiable reason why the Palestinians should go to any other country. What if some said: All Anglo-Saxon Americans should go back to England because that's where English-speakers should live? This slogan assumes that all Arab countries are the same, rather than acknowledging the rich variety of histories, cultures, dialects and climates represented by them. According to the same logic, an Italian should feel right at home in Finland because the majority in both countries are white and Christian.

-and-

### **Why should they?**

Again, why should Jewish claims be privileged over Palestinian ones? Why can't we conceive of a country inclusive of all of its citizens?

~

*“The Palestinians do not want peace. Even if Israel withdraws, all the Arabs want is to throw the Jews into the sea. You can't trust the Arabs”*

This slogan, the Doctrine of the Permanent Enemy, as it may be called, is probably the most cynical one, used effectively by Israel's political and military leaders to win support for their occupation policies. Flying in the face of history, peace agreements with Arab countries and an offer of peace by the Arab League, together with a long-standing readiness on the part of the Palestinians to reach a genuine settlement, the claim that there is no political solution to the conflict only mystifies and perpetuates it. Playing on fear and stereotyping, it disempowers the Israeli public, leaving it no choice but to hunker down and trust in the army to bring some sort of personal security. Peace depends upon a just resolution of the conflict, not maintaining an unequal *status quo* of power.

~

*Israel wants peace. The Arabs always reject it.*

### **The record shows a significant degree of Israeli responsibility for prolonging the conflict.**

This is not the place to review years of conflict. Suffice it to say that Israel carries its fair share of the responsibility. “The files of the Israeli Foreign Ministry,” writes the Israeli historian Avi Shlaim (2001:49), “burst at the seams with evidence of Arab peace feelers and Arab readiness to

negotiate with Israel from September 1948 on.” To take just a few examples of opportunities deliberately spurned:

- In the spring and summer of 1949, Israel and the Arab states met under the auspices of the UN’s Palestine Conciliation Committee (PCC) in Lausanne, Switzerland. Israel did not want to make any territorial concessions. Ben Gurion’s observed in a cabinet meeting that the Israeli public was “drunk with victory” and in no mood for concessions. Had they been sober, could sixty years of conflict have been avoided?
- In 1949, Syria’s leader Husni Zaim openly declared his readiness to be the first Arab leader to conclude a peace treaty with Israel – as well as to resettle half the Palestinian refugees in Syria. He repeatedly offered to meet with Ben Gurion, who steadfastly refused (Morris 1999:63-265).
- King Abdullah of Jordan engaged in two years of negotiations with Israel but was never able to make a meaningful breakthrough on any major matter. “I could justify a peace by pointing to concessions made by the Jews,” he said. “But without any concessions from them, I am defeated before I even start” (Morris 1999: 262).
- In 1952-53 extensive negotiations were held with the Syrian government of Adib Shishakli, a pro-American leader who was eager for accommodation with Israel. Those talks failed because Israel insisted on exclusive control of the Sea of Galilee, Lake Huleh and the Jordan River.
- Nasser made repeated offers to Ben Gurion beginning soon after the Revolution in 1952 to talk peace, with no success (Morris 1999:2656-268).
- Israel’s post-1948 war inflexibility was stated flatly by Ben Gurion: “Israel will not discuss a peace involving the concession of any piece of territory. The neighboring states do not deserve an inch of Israel’s land....We are ready for peace in exchange for peace” (Morris 1999:265).
- In late 1965 the head of the Mossad, Meir Amit, was invited by Abdel Hakim Amer, the vice-president and deputy commander of the Egyptian armed forces, to come to Cairo. The visit was vetoed by the government (Morris 1999:305). Could the 1967 war have been avoided? We’ll never know.
- Immediately after the 1967 war Israel sent out feelers for an accommodation with both the Palestinians of the West Bank and with Jordan. The Palestinians were willing to enter into discussions over peace, but only if that meant an independent Palestinian state, an option Israel never even entertained. The Jordanians were also ready, but only if they received full control again of the West Bank and, in particular, East Jerusalem and its holy places. King Hussein even held meetings with Israeli officials, but Israel’s refusal to contemplate a full return of the territories scuttled the process. Israel’s annexation of a “greater” Jerusalem area and an almost immediate program of settlement construction foreclosed any option for a full peace, then and until today (Gorenberg 2006:175-176; Shlaim 2000:264).
- In 1971 Sadat sent a letter to the UN Jarring Commission expressing Egypt’s willingness to enter into a peace agreement with Israel (Morris 1999:388-389). Israeli acceptance could have prevented the 1973 war, but Golda Meir summary dismissed the idea.

- Feelers put out by Arafat and other Palestinian leaders in the early 1970s expressed a readiness to discuss peace with Israel (Aburish 1998:134).
- In 1978 Sadat attempted to expand the Israel-Egypt peace process to resolve the Palestine issue; he was rebuffed by Begin who refused to consider anything beyond Palestinian “autonomy” (Morris 1999:469).
- In 1988, five years before the Oslo peace process began, the PLO publicly recognized Israel within the Green Line in 1988 and expressed a willingness to enter into discussions (Morris 1999:605-610). Until today this is excluded from the Israeli framing.
- In 1993, as the very start of the Oslo peace process, Arafat and the PLO reiterated in writing their recognition of Israel within the 1967 borders (that is, on 78% of historic Palestine). Neither in Oslo nor subsequently has Israel ever agreed to relinquish the territory it conquered in 1967 in favor of a Palestinian state (Savir 1998). On the contrary, during the seven years of the Oslo “peace process,” successive Labor and Likud governments eliminated the two-state solution and any possibility of peace by doubling the settler population (from 200,000 in 1993 to 400,000 in 2000).
- Sharon completely disregarded the Arab League’s 2002 offer of recognition, peace and regional integration in return for relinquishing the Occupation, an offer still on the table.
- Arafat, the most congenial and cooperative partner Israel ever had and the last Palestinian leader who could “deliver,” was excluded from the political process by Sharon, who subsequently boycotted his successor, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), as well.
- In mid-2006 Sharon’s successor, Ehud Olmert, declared “irrelevant” the Prisoners’ Document in which all Palestinian factions, including Hamas, agreed on a political program of seeking a two-state solution.
- Beginning in the fall of 2006 and continuing to this day, Bashar Assad of Syria again made repeated overtures for peace with Israel. To this Prime Minister Olmert responded: “We will never leave the Golan Heights” (*Ha’aretz* August 22, 2006).
- As the Palestinians push for peace within the framework of the Road Map and the Arab League initiative, the Olmert government continued to pursue the “Convergence Plan” for an expanded Israel and a non-viable, semi-sovereign Palestinian prison-state. Settlement construction, economic “closure” and impoverishment of the Palestinian people and their imprisonment within “Separation Barrier” continued apace.

In June, 1990, frustrated by Israel’s unwillingness to engage in a meaningful peace process, US Secretary of State James A. Baker said bluntly: “Everybody over there should know that the telephone number of the White House is 1-202-456-1414. When you are serious about peace, call us” (Jewish Agency for Israel, retrieved 16 October 2006 from <http://www.jafi.org.il>).

-and-

**It’s in Israel’s interests to go beyond slogans and settlements to pro-actively seek peace.**

All this is not to say that the Palestinians and the wider Arab world do not carry responsibility as well, but as the Occupying Power and the strong party in the conflict, we would argue that Israel nevertheless bears the lion's share of the responsibility for ending the conflict – which is endable, as the Arab peace initiatives listed above show. Our position is that if Israel will not take the lead in forging a peace to the best of its interests and those of its antagonists, then the international community, guided by human rights, international law, UN resolutions and a universal need for peace and justice, must do so. Our warning to Israel is that this conflict is, including the settlement project and any hint of a non-viable Palestinian mini-state, is ultimately unsustainable. Today Israel can dictate its own terms, but that won't last forever. Unless Israel takes the initiative, it will be forced to accept a political solution far less in its interests, particularly because its own policies are leading inexorably to a one-state solution.

~

*“If the Arabs get the West Bank and Gaza, they’ll want Jaffa and Haifa next.”*

### **Political settlements between states resolve outstanding disputes.**

The Palestinians will never cease viewing Jaffa and Haifa as part of Palestine, just as we will never cease viewing the Old City of Jerusalem and Hebron as part of the Land of Israel. For both Arabs and Jews, Palestine/Israel is one indivisible country. Still, the vast majority of both peoples have agreed that the land be divided between them into two states. This is a political solution, and like all political solutions between states it has the authority of the states and of the international community behind it, even if not every person or faction supports it. Israel is a strong and internationally recognized state. If a solution to the conflict is reached within agreed-upon borders, there is no reason why both peoples cannot get on with their lives in the normal way other peoples and countries do.

~

*“The Palestinians do not recognize Israel as a Jewish state.”*

### **No, but they will recognize the State of Israel.**

What do we demand, that the Palestinians must become Zionists before we make peace with them? The Palestinian national leadership as represented by the PLO has recognized the state of Israel within the 1949 armistice lines – over and over and over for the past 20 years. They have even given up political claim to half the territory appropriated to them by the UN in 1947. They recognize the *state* of Israel, just as every country recognizes the existence of other states though not necessarily agreeing to their ideologies, self-definitions or policies. Since 20% of Israelis are Palestinians, there is no reason why the Palestinians should be expected to accepted the Jewish character of the state. That would compromise the right of their own people, Palestinian citizens of Israel, to struggle for a democratic Israel offering equality to all its citizens, a struggle many non-Palestinian Israelis also support. Guaranteeing Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel the fundamental right to full equality is a key element in the broader Palestinian program. It cannot be reconciled with recognition of Israel as a Jewish state.

~

*Hamas does not recognize the State of Israel.*

Again, a simplistic, self-serving slogan. On the surface its true: Hamas, which sees all of historic Palestine as Palestine, will never recognize either the political legitimacy of Israel or the fact that 78% or more of Palestine belongs to another people. This is a reasonable and understandable position from an anti-colonial perspective. But Hamas is also pragmatic. So it has agreed – in the Prisoners’ Document of 2005 as well as in subsequent policy statements – that if the Fatah party enters into negotiations with Israel and the outcome approximates a genuine two-state solution, it will respect that if approved by a Palestinian national referendum. This, like the other slogans, are not only misleading, they are counter-productive if we seek a true peace for Israel.

~

*“Most Palestinians are terrorists or support terrorists.”*

**By the same token, one may add that “most Israelis are terrorists or support terrorists.”**

Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (1995) defines terrorism as, “the deliberate and systematic assault on civilians to inspire fear for political ends.” By this definition both Israel and the Palestinians are guilty of terrorism. During the second Intifada, for instance, more than 1000 Israeli civilians were killed, including 113 children and youths, and around 6000 injured. At the same time some 3500 Palestinians died in Israeli attacks, 85% of them civilians including 650 children or youth. More than 29,000 Palestinians were injured (Palestinian Red Crescent Society). More recently, Israel killed about 1300 people in its assault on Gaza, more than half of them civilians (including 400 children); Hamas fire had killed 20 Israeli civilians over the preceding two years. *All* are victims of terrorism, and to the degree that their regimes’ terroristic policies are supported by their populations, both peoples support terrorism.

-and-

**Why aren’t states called “terrorists”?**

Our reframing adopts a human rights approach to the issue of terrorism, one that asserts an absolute prohibition of killing, harming or intimidating non-combatant civilians. The human rights approach is especially useful because it condemns *all* forms of terror, whether coming from non-state actors (the ones usually accused of terrorism) or from states (who are generally let off the hook). Since governments are responsible for the overwhelming majority of violence and deaths, it is far more important to hold them accountable to international law than groups we vilify as “terrorists.”

In his book *Death By Government*, R. J. Rummel (1994:13) claims about 170,000 innocent civilians were killed by non-state terrorists over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – a pretty significant figure. But, he adds,

during the first eighty-eight years of this [20<sup>th</sup>] century, almost 170 million men, women and children have been shot, beaten, tortured, knifed, burned, starved, frozen, crushed or worked to death; buried alive, drowned, hung, bombed or killed in any other of the myriad ways governments have inflicted death on unarmed, helpless citizens and foreigners. The dead could conceivably be nearly 360 million people.

And that doesn’t include Zaire, Bosnia, Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, Saddam Hussein’s reign, the impact of UN sanctions on the Iraqi civilian population and other state-sponsored murder that

occurred after Rummel compiled his figures. It also does not account for all the forms of State Terrorism that do not result in death: torture, imprisonment, repression, house demolitions, induced starvation, intimidation and all the rest. “Terrorism from below,” while illegal, immoral and horrible, pales in comparison to the “terrorism from above” of states – Israel included. That is why we must aim not to blame the parties but to hold them accountable under human rights and international law.

–and–

**Many (if not most) Palestinians do *not* support terrorism.**

The Oslo peace process began with the support of 85% of the Palestinians. More recently, the main reason behind Hamas’ period of “calm” in 2005-2006 was the need to take into consideration the desires of the general Palestinian populace, which largely supported the lull and the disarming of the militant groups (Center for Special Studies 2006). If they have a “political horizon,” Palestinians overwhelmingly support negotiations. In periods of desperation and Israeli settlement expansion (as well as house demolitions, economic sanctions and other acts of Israeli violence towards the Palestinian civilian population), they tend to support – though always with a clear preference for negotiations – violent resistance, which they feel is the only language Israel understands.

~

*“The Palestinians chose armed struggle rather than non-violence.”*

**As did the Jews, the Americans, most colonized peoples, etc. etc....**

There is a huge amount of hypocrisy and self-righteousness in this slogan. Why single out the Palestinians? Did the Jews adopt a non-violent strategy to their struggle for independence? Regardless of our preferences, international law recognizes the right of people to resist oppression, occupation and colonialism through armed struggle, as long as innocent civilians are not targeted.

And in fact the masses of Palestinians struggle non-violently every day, whether passing through checkpoints or avoiding them, whether rebuilding their “illegal” demolished homes or demonstrating against Israeli policies. The nonviolent struggle is not reported and it is not well known. The media tends to report only violent clashes and not the work of peace activists. Not all Palestinians believe that armed struggle is the right strategy – the International Solidarity Movement, among other Palestinian movements, follows a strictly non-violent policy – even if they believe that it is legitimate. Some see the armed struggle as counterproductive because the Palestinians cannot defeat the Israeli military might militarily. Others are fearful that the world outside sees them only as terrorists and overlook the justice of their cause.

-and-

**The Palestinians tried unsuccessfully non-violent negotiations.**

The PLO agreed to abandon the armed struggle when it declared Palestinian independence on November 15, 1988, on condition that the Occupation end and a viable Palestinian state emerge. Unfortunately, the Occupation, violently imposed and maintained, prevailed.

~

*“There is no partner for peace.”*

If the definition of “peace” is merely a lack of conflict with Israel maintaining military control of the entire country and permanent political control over East Jerusalem, the settlement blocs, borders, water resources and even the Palestinian’s airspace state, then, no, there is no partner for that kind of peace. But if the Palestinians receive sovereignty within a viable state of their own and Israel acknowledges the refugees right to return (even if the actualization of that right is negotiated), then, yes, peace is eminently do-able.

~

*“The real problem is the anti-Semitic propaganda that Palestinians receive since childhood.”*

**Not true.**

Ruth Firer of the Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Sami Adwan, a professor of education at Bethlehem University in Bethlehem compared Palestinian and Israeli textbooks (Firer and Adwan 2004). In their 2004 study of 13 Israeli textbooks and 9 Palestinian textbooks they found that

The books portray Jews throughout history in a positive manner and avoid negative stereotypes. However, according to the everyday experience of Palestinians, modern-day Israelis are presented as occupiers. The texts include examples of Israelis killing and imprisoning Palestinians, demolishing their homes, uprooting fruit trees, and confiscating their lands and building settlements on them. The texts also talk about the right of return for the 1948 Palestinian refugees when describing how those refugees live in camps. The Israeli textbooks, on the other hand, don't even mention Palestinians. The Palestinians, as such, are not found in any of the three types of primary-level textbooks. Disputed territory is presented as being part of Israel: Many of the chapters describe “the good land,” sometimes called “our birthplace” or “homeland,” and include photos of places that are in the PNA or are in dispute between the two nations (i.e., East Jerusalem). Either side's books tell the story of the conflict from the other's viewpoint, both ignore the other side's suffering and each counts only its only victims. While there is clearly a nationalist sentiment in Palestinian textbooks (as there is in Israeli textbooks as well), there is no call for incitement or violence against Jews or Israelis in the Palestinian Authority’s curriculum.

~

*“The Palestinians rejected Barak’s ‘generous offer’ and then responded with violence.”*

**The second Intifada broke out *because* there was no generous offer (or any other).**

The “generous offer” is an urban myth. It stems from the “Clinton Parameters” under which Israel would withdraw from 96% of the Occupied Territories, but came much too late in the process to be implemented. The very idea, however, rests on the mistaken assumption that the more territory the Palestinians get the more sovereignty and economic viability they get. This is not the case. The Palestinians could receive that much land yet still not have a *viable* state. Keeping only a

strategic 5% (in reality more like 10-15% when “east” Jerusalem, settlement blocs, “no-man’s land” and other areas are factored in), Israel could control borders, movement of people and goods in and out and within the Palestinian territories, water, the airspace and the communications sphere, not to mention its main settlement blocs. (Barak’s “generous offer” included 80% of the settlers within an expanded Israel.) It could also control the Palestinian economy, the most important religious and cultural sites of the Palestinians (like the Haram/Temple Mount and other holy places in and around Jerusalem). And it would still leave the refugee issue unresolved.

Arafat had solid reasons for rejecting Barak’s “offer” at Camp David – which, by the way, violated the very process of the Oslo agreements by halting Israeli withdrawals, thus ensuring that the Palestinians enter into negotiations from an extremely weak position on the ground.

–and–

### **Arafat did not ignite the Intifada.**

Although Arafat was blamed for the outbreak of the second Intifada (rather than Sharon for his provocative excursion to the Kharam/Temple Mount), both Israel military intelligence and political analysts admit today that it was a spontaneous uprising against what the Palestinian perceived as the institutionalization of the Occupation (Peri 2006:242). Indeed, indications are that the Intifada was aimed at Arafat, as a warning that he not surrender to the massive pressures placed on him to submit to Barak’s dictates. Says Menachem Klein, an advisor to the Israeli Delegation to the 2000 Camp David Summit:

The claim that Arafat after dismissing a generous Israeli offer launched a violent intifada is a myth. There is no evidence whatsoever that there was any such pre-planned decision by the Palestinian Authority. There were preparations by several groups of the new opposition to confront Israel. They came to Arafat asking him to give a green light to confront Israel with violence and a popular uprising to force Barak to make concessions and to take the Palestinians seriously. But Arafat rejected this request. Arafat did not say yes, but his responses were ambiguous in response to pressures coming from different sides....Arafat tried to maneuver but he lacked machinery and institutions to control the situation. His system, like the old PLO system, was weak. So he tried to ride the tiger. Sometimes he succeeded, other times he failed.

The Israelis from the very beginning did not help him. Rather than seeking to support Arafat and the Palestinian establishment, the Israelis blamed and demonized them. This strengthened the radical forces and led to escalation of the intifada. The Israeli leadership and its negotiating team also failed to evaluate the real goals of the intifada. From my perspective, they defined the intifada as a low-intensity conflict, rather than a struggle for liberation and independence....What was needed, instead, was a leadership that was willing to make the real concessions, like those tentatively made at Taba, especially concerning territory and settlement. A decision to evacuate several settlements, for example, might have stopped the intifada and helped the Palestinian leadership restore calm. It was not done. ([http://www.fmep.org/analysis/articles/origins\\_of\\_intifada.html](http://www.fmep.org/analysis/articles/origins_of_intifada.html)).

-and-

### **Israel ended the Oslo peace process.**

It was the Israelis, we should recall, and not the Palestinians who walked away from the Taba negotiations in January, 2001, the last significant meeting of the Oslo peace process.

~

*“The other Arabs don’t help the Palestinians.”*

### **Unfortunately true.**

But for the occasional peace initiative – the 2002 Saudi Initiative of the Arab League being perhaps the most significant, the Arab states have not given the Palestinians meaningful support – although we should not confuse that with the support the Palestinians receive from the Arab peoples. This should prompt us, people who believe that a just peace is necessary for all the parties, to support the Palestinians all the more.

~

*“The Palestinian Authority can’t control its people. Until the PA controls terrorism we cannot end the Occupation.”*

### **The PA does not even have security access to 95% of the Occupied Territories.**

In principle, the Palestinian Authority has jurisdiction and security control only of Area A (18% of the West Bank truncated into dozens of tiny enclaves) and Gaza, not of Areas B or C where Israel holds sway. In fact, as of this writing (June 2008), Israel controls *all* Palestinian cities and territory in the West Bank with the partial exception of Jericho, while Hamas controls Gaza. Without sovereignty over a coherent territory and the ability, denied by Israel, to deploy security forces, it is unreasonable to expect the PA to exert any control or responsibility over its people.

-and-

### **We cannot expect the PA to be Israel’s policeman.**

Unless there’s a political plan for their freedom to accompany the Israeli demand to end the violence, it will simply never happen. Remember, international law recognizes the right of oppressed peoples to resist, even in armed struggle – as long as their resistance does not involve attacking civilians. To lump all resistance under the label of “terrorism” and then to expect an occupied people to passively accept that situation is neither realistic nor fair.

~

*“The Palestinians fare better under Israel’s Occupation than they would under their own PA.”*

### **How well do they fare under Occupation?**

Given the constant demolition of homes, policies of closure and impoverishment, little freedom of movement and a chronic humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and even East Jerusalem, this is highly unlikely.

-and-

### **Back to 19<sup>th</sup> century colonialism**

Self-determination does not guarantee a good life, as the experience of many (if not most) of the countries of the world amply shows. Whether or not the Palestinians succeed, they have a right to try like everyone else. This slogan smacks of paternalistic colonialism: “Let us accept our White Man’s Burden and take care of our brown brothers, sparing them the humiliation of failing to run their own affairs.”

~

*“If the Palestinians were given the right of return, there would be no room for them/If there is the Right of Return, the Jewish state will no longer be Jewish.”*

### **Do Jewish rights trump Palestinian rights?**

The Right of Return is a human right embodied in the fundamental principles of human rights and international law. The Palestinians do not have to claim it; it is there’s by right. And their right to return to their homes is not dependent on whether Israel “recognizes” that right or not. A right is a right. It is inalienable and cannot be given up even under pressure.

-and-

### **In practical terms...**

A study by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research indicates that only 10% of all refugees would return to Palestine/Israel, mainly the aged. The rest prefer to become citizens of the Palestinians state, to be resettled in third countries or to be rehabilitated in their current host countries. So the problem is largely moot.

-and-

Although they have no “right” to do so, both the Palestinian Authority and the Arab League have agreed that any actual solution to the refugee issue will be by mutual agreement with Israel.

-but-

### **Return is a right.**

The refugee issue will never be resolved until Israel formally accept the *right* of return and acknowledges its role in driving the refugees out of Palestine. Just as acknowledging the suffering of the Holocaust is deeply significant to Jews, just as truth and acknowledgment on the part of the white community is key to reconciliation in South Africa, just as the Armenians demand acknowledgement of their genocide, African-American of their experience of slavery, so, too, will the refugee issue defy healing until the suffering of the refugees is acknowledged – regardless of the technical “solution” to their individual problems.

## **THE WALL/FENCE/BARRIER**

*“The Wall is not a wall, but a fence. The Wall is 95% a fence.”*

**It’s a “barrier,” OK?**

The official name is a “separation barrier” (*mikhshol hafrada*). Does it really matter what material the Wall/Fence/Barrier is made of, or whether or not you can see through it? The point is, it effectively prevents the Palestinians from accessing roads, schools, hospitals, places of employment, government services, family members, holy sites and their capital, Jerusalem. Moreover, this same barrier has been built so as to confiscate large sections of land from the Palestinian Territories, in contravention of international law.

-and-

**The term “fence” is deliberately misleading.**

Although it has the appearance of a “fence” in the rural areas, the Barrier is a formidable obstacle to movement as any wall. The electronic fence is accompanied by patrol roads, trenches, surveillance cameras and sensors, mine fields, guard towers, electric gates open only sporadically, terminals, checkpoints, trenches and secondary fences. It carves a sterile swath 680 kms/450 miles long and 75-100 meters wide through Palestinian farmlands and open space. “Only” 5% or so is an actual wall – in many places an 8 meter/26 foot concrete wall twice as high as the Berlin Wall – but it is not linear as was the Berlin Wall. It encloses entire cities, urban neighborhoods, towns and villages. Some 50,000 Palestinians are trapped between the border and the wall, facing impoverishment, alienation from their land and water, and eventual transfer (UN 2005). When it is completed, about 260,000 Palestinians will be permanently confined to small encircled enclaves, including 55,000 residents of East Jerusalem. On the other side of the barrier more than two million Palestinians have been enclosed within the West Bank “cantons.”

~

*“The Barrier is for security.”*

**The Wall began as a threat.**

The Barrier was conceived by Barak’s government as a warning to Arafat that if he were not more “forthcoming” in his negotiating positions, Israel would unilaterally create its own facts on the ground – in this case a demographic border. Thus, in October, 2000, Barak’s government published a "Security Separation Plan" in which the proposed “barrier” would provide physical security to Israeli citizens (its main selling point to the Israeli public) while pressuring the Palestinians by imposing economic and workforce closures, trade restrictions, sanctions and other means of pressuring them to submit, just as it has in Gaza.

-and-

**It is a “separation” and *not* a “security” barrier.**

The falsity of presenting the Wall as a security barrier is demonstrated graphically in the Israeli government decision in 2007/08 not to complete it at all. Enough has been built on the western side (about 60%) to effectively demarcate the future expanded Israeli border. The eastern side of the Barrier was never even started. Besides, over 200,000 West Bank Palestinians remain on the

“Israeli” side of the Wall. If the danger truly comes from them, how can it possibly serve Israel’s security?

Conceived as a “separation barrier,” not a security barrier (and hence its name), the Wall was conceived as a way of achieving the physical separation from Palestinians that Israel has always desired (*hafrada*). Israeli government officials have spoken often and publicly of how the circuitous path of the Wall will incorporate the major settlement blocs, including a “Greater” Jerusalem, into the fabric of Israel. In December 2005, then Minister of Justice Tzipi Livni said, “One does not have to be a genius to see that the fence will have implications for the future border.”

–and–

**It is an illegal structure, causing great and disproportional suffering.**

Had the Wall been built on the Green Line, as a true security barrier would have been, it wouldn’t even have been controversial. Israel would not have been hauled before the International Criminal Court (ICJ) in The Hague. As it was, the ICJ ruled the Wall (as the Court called it) illegal, both because it violated Palestinian territory and because it violated the principle of proportionality: the degree of suffering it inflicts on the Palestinian population is grossly disproportional to the security concerns of Israel – especially since security was not the main motivation behind construction of the Wall in the first place. The ICJ ordered the Wall dismantled, a ruling was upheld by the General Assembly of the UN by a vote of every country in the world (including all of Europe) versus, as usual, the US, Israel, Australia and a couple Pacific atolls.

~

*“If we take down the Wall, there will be more attacks. Gaza is a testament to the effectiveness of a wall.”*

**Walls cannot bring peace or security, especially if they themselves are part of the oppression.**

It is impossible to ascribe the reduction in attacks on Israel to one variable. Since it is highly porous and will remain so, can this relative quiet be credited to the Wall, or perhaps Israeli military activity going on for years is a better explanation? What about other, *political* explanations such as the periodic but lengthy cease fires declared by the Palestinians (including Hamas, whose *hudna* lasted a year and a half until Israel resumed its assassination campaign)? Or does the reduction in violence signal only a temporary lull in the conflict whose root causes are not being addressed? In fact, an argument can be made that the Wall, instead of bringing security to Israel, actually enflames the conflict by making Palestinians so desperate that they have no choice but continue to resist with violence. In the end, the Wall/Barrier/fence may only serve to perpetuate the conflict.

~

*“A country has the right to defend itself.”*

**Defense must be balanced by responsibility.**

Israel certainly has a right to defend itself, but the Palestinians, who recognized the existence of the state of Israel more than twenty years ago, also have a right to live in freedom. Our argument is that these rights must complement each other; no one can enjoy security if others do not enjoy their rights and security as well. International law therefore insists on a balance between legitimate self defense and policies, often couched in terms of self-defense and security, which harm other civilian populations. The disproportionality between the Wall's security function and the damage and suffering it has inflicted upon the Palestinian is precisely what led the International Court of Justice to rule it illegal, despite their recognition of Israel's right of self-defense.

By the same token, Israel's unrestrained assault on Gaza in December 2008/January 2009, was a war crime by virtue of its disproportionality, in particular the fact that half the victims killed were civilians. Had Israel responded to the repeated pleas of the Palestinians of all factions to lift the ongoing siege of Gaza, to cease its repeated violations of the cease-fire with Hamas and to take meaningful steps to end its 41 year Occupation, the rocket fire from Gaza and all other threats to Israeli civilian lives could have been avoided altogether.

## **THE ILLEGITIMACY OF CRITICIZING ISRAEL**

*"Jews opposed to the Occupation are anti-Israel and self-hating. Criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic."*

### **Most Jews in Israel and abroad are critical of Israel's Occupation.**

Since most Jews, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, support a two-state solution, anti-Israeliness and self-hatred must be endemic.

-and-

### **World Jewry is characterized by a commitment to social justice which transcends blind support for Israel**

Social justice and a deep concern for human and civil rights define modern Jewry, at least in the Diaspora where most Jews live. Rene Cassin, a French Jew closely identified with the Jewish community, authored the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for which he was awarded the 1968 Nobel Peace prize. Jews have been disproportionately active in the Civil Rights Movement in the US, in the anti-apartheid movement (all the white ministers in Nelson Mandela's first government were Jews, and a Jewish judge drafted the new South African constitution). Jews have been prominent in revolutionary activity in Europe, the US and Latin America. Regardless of a Jew's political position on Israel and the conflict, most Jews understand that human rights are universal and that any concern for Israel's well-being must be linked to the well-being of the Palestinians.

~

*"If you weren't born here, aren't Jewish, didn't lose a relative in an attack or didn't serve in the army, you can't understand...."*

### **Being Israeli and an army veteran does not immunize you to peace.**

Victims of attacks or veterans of the Israeli army have no monopoly over the truth. Almost every Israeli peace activist had been in the army (although we are also blessed with conscientious objectors). Peace Now, the mainstream Zionist peace movement, was founded by army officers. Yesh Gvul (meaning “there is a limit/border”) is an organization of army reservists who for many years have refused to serve in the Occupied Territories. Breaking the Silence is a new organization of soldiers who served in Hebron and felt they had to speak out. They take Israelis on tours of Hebron to see the suffering our government, army and settlers have brought upon the local population. More than 635 reservist soldiers have signed the “Courage to Refuse” letter, which reads in part:

We, reserve combat officers and soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces, who were raised upon the principles of Zionism, sacrifice and giving to the people of Israel and to the State of Israel, who have always served in the front lines, and who were the first to carry out any mission, light or heavy, in order to protect the State of Israel and strengthen it.

We, combat officers and soldiers who have served the State of Israel for long weeks every year, in spite of the dear cost to our personal lives, have been on reserve duty all over the Occupied Territories, and were issued commands and directives that had nothing to do with the security of our country, and that had the sole purpose of perpetuating our control over the Palestinian people.... The missions of occupation and oppression do not serve this purpose [of Israel’s defense] – and we shall take no part in them.

In September 2003, twenty-seven pilots in the Israeli Air Force issued a statement saying that “aerial activity over the [Palestinian] territories is illegal and immoral.” In December 2003, members of the IDF’s elite Special Operations Unit *Sayeret Matkal* issued a letter to the Prime Minister saying: “We say to you today, we will no longer give our hands to the oppressive reign in the territories and the denial of human rights to millions of Palestinians, and we will no longer serve as a defensive shield for the settlement enterprise.”

Many of us have also had experiences with terrorism. Nurit Peled, one of the most outspoken of Israeli peace advocates, lost her young daughter Smadar to a terrorist attack in Jerusalem. The Parents Circle is an organization of Israeli *and* Palestinian families who have lost loved ones to terror attacks (Palestinians are victims of Israeli terror as well; you don’t have to be Jewish to have that experience). They offer mutual support to one another and together actively oppose the conflict.

~

*“Double standard: The world judges Israel more harshly than it does other countries/ The UN is anti-Semitic – which you can see by the disproportionate number of UN resolutions dealing with Israel.”*

### **Global conflicts receive more attention.**

The Israeli/Palestine conflict gets disproportionate attention because it is a global rather than merely local conflict. Its destabilizing effect over the entire global system is significant. The US announced in mid-2007 that it was pouring \$63 billion of military hardware into Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, in addition to the billions spent each day in Iraq. The Israel-Palestine conflict is emblematic to the Muslim world and must be resolved, as James Baker has

stated, before the international community can prevail in its struggle with terrorism and get on with business-as-usual. Still, other conflicts – Darfur, for example, Tibet, Chinese violations of human rights, Burma, Guantanamo, Columbia, the civil wars in Central and West Africa, human rights issues in Russia and Eastern Europe, plus many more – vie for attention. We are especially sensitive to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict because it concerns us especially. If we were the Sudanese or Chinese or Burmese or Cuban or American governments, we would complain that undue attention is being paid to our violations of human rights instead of to others’.

-and-

**There is a need for *more* concentrated attention and action.**

It seems true that more attention is paid to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than many other serious and pressing issues in the international community, but the fact that criticism of Israeli policies has not led to Palestinian self-determination means that insufficient pressure is being applied. Raising the profile of other international issues is important, but it has no bearing on campaigns to pressure Israel over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## THE NATURE OF ISRAEL

*“Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East.”*

**Can a democracy have an occupation?**

Though many important criticisms can be made about Israel’s form of democracy, how does being a democracy justify the Occupation?

-and-

**Palestinian democracy**

Hey, what about the Palestinian elections, certified as fair and open by an army of international observers? In fact, the Palestinians have a *more* democratic system than Israel. In Palestine you vote for both candidates from your district and candidates from the different parties. In Israel you don’t have a representative in the government (or on the municipal level as well); you can only vote for country-wide lists presented as a *fait accompli* by the parties. Palestine also has a minimum quota of women parliamentarians (13%). Israel has no quota and the number of its women parliamentarians falls below this figure. And what about Lebanon? And recently Iraq (admittedly flawed, but impressive nonetheless)? Maybe there would be more democracies in the Middle East if the US supported progressive elements in the Arab world instead of autocratic but “friendly” regimes.

~

*“There is no contradiction between being a Jewish state and a democracy.”*

**Democracy versus ethnocracy.**

Isn’t there? Is Israel really a democracy or is it an *ethnocracy*, a country “belonging” to one particular ethnic, religious or national group? What do the terms “Jewish state” or “Jewish

democracy” really mean? Arab citizens of Israel may have the vote, but can institutionalized discrimination – 93% of the lands of Israel are reserved for Jews only, for example – be reconciled with democracy? And what about the almost four million Palestinians living under Israeli rule who have no say on how Israel governs them? Can they be simply ignored?

There *is* a contradiction if the state does not extend full rights, and protect those rights, to all of its inhabitants.

~

*“Israel has the most humane and moral army in the world.”*

Given the multitudes of human rights violations perpetrated by Israel’s armed forces this cannot possibly be true. And after Gaza....

~

*“Israel treats its Arab citizens better than Jews were treated in Arab countries.”*

**Not true.**

Jews may have suffered certain symbolic restrictions in Muslim countries (though not many, and often none, except in Shi’ite Yemen and Iran), but they were not barred from living wherever they liked, as are the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Unlike Jews in Muslim countries, Arabs in Israel are considered a foreign element and are subject to many restrictions and to discriminatory policies, in education, in housing, in employment and in the political sphere. According to a 2006 poll conducted by the Center Against Racism in Israel, half of Israel's Jews feel uncomfortable and fearful when they hear people speaking Arabic, and 18% feel hate. 68% of the Jewish public would not agree to live in the same apartment building with Arabs; 46% of Jews said they would refuse to allow an Arab to visit their home; 41% of Jews support the segregation of Jews and Arabs in places of recreation; 63% agreed with the statement that "Arabs are a security and demographic threat to the state;" 34% agreed that "Arab culture is inferior to Israeli culture;" and 40% agreed that "the state should encourage Arab citizens to emigrate" (*Haaretz*, March 23, 2006; see also the reports of Sikkuy <[www.sikkuy.org.il](http://www.sikkuy.org.il)>). Not to mention Avigdor Lieberman’s party which became Israel’s third largest on a program of transferring *all* Palestinians out of the country – including (especially!) Israeli citizens.

-and-

**What is the connection?**

Even if it were true, how is second-class citizenship in Israel justifiable solely because Jews might be third-class citizens in present-day Syria?

~

*“Your presentation of the conflict is not balanced.”*

**There is no such animal.**

There is no such thing as a “balanced” presentation of anything. Even mathematicians belong to certain schools and have widely divergent approaches to what may seem like the most precise and objective subject. Indeed, the very demand for “balance” is disempowering. It assumes that you as an individual have no ability to critically evaluate a presentation, a book or a lecture. Who would be the “balance” of our critical presentation? An Arab perspective? Peace Now? The settlers? Mainstream peace organizations like Peace Now? Maybe the Likud, or the IDF? Or would it be working-class *Mizrahi* Jews of Middle East origin, who see our concern with peace as a middle-class Ashkenazi preoccupation disconnected from social injustice inside Israel? Or women, who often criticize presentations of peace disconnected from issues of gender, or even Diaspora Jews who insist on having a voice in presenting Israel’s “case?” They all represent another “side” of the positions we are espousing here. There are no “balanced” presentations, only intellectually honest ones that set out a logical case. Certainly so-called “pro-Israel” speakers, who we believe seriously misrepresent Israel’s genuine interests, are not “balanced.” They only demand balance so as to be able to silence other views.

-and-

**The conflict itself is not “balanced.”**

For all the criticism of the Palestinians and for all their share of the responsibility, Israel is the strong party, Israel is the Occupying Power and Israel is the only party that can actually end the Occupation and pave the way for a just peace.

~

*“The State of Israel defines me as a Jew; it is the center of my personal, ethnic and religious identity.”*

**Respect Israel as a sovereign country with a right to develop and find its own destiny.**

Israel is a real country. It is changing, evolving, developing in directions no one could have predicted in 1897 or 1948. And that’s all for the good. Israelis must find their place in their native Middle East, hopefully as a strong and constructive force for peace and development. As Diaspora Jews or others seeking the best for Israel – you have to let us go. Come visit, invest in our country, support those forces working for peace in Israel/Palestine, but let us go. Don’t try to contain us within ideologies and political models that no longer work. Help us reframe, help us surmount the mutually destructive conflict that embroils us.

-and-

**You cannot use Israel to define your identity unless you’re Israeli.**

You cannot define your Jewish identity and culture by vicariously identifying with one country while living in another. Israel should be important to you and it should offer you sustenance as a Jew – through its literature, for example, or by developing a Hebrew culture in the Land of Israel that expresses aspects of Judaism not available in the Diaspora, or merely by offering you an exciting place to visit. But Israel cannot completely supplant the rich Jewish culture of the Diaspora, both historical and contemporary, nor the culture of your own country. You don’t have to “support” Israel; it’s a strong country that can fend for itself, although you can help it extract itself from the conflict that is undermining it. You also shouldn’t manipulate Israel for your own personal identity needs, like trying to keep some idealized image of it which does not allow the

real Israel to show through. Unless you become an Israeli, you can't expect Israel to conform to what you need and want. Remember again: Israel is a real country; it is not some projection of Jewish Brooklyn or Golders Green. Accept that and respect that.

### **SO HOW DO WE GET OUT OF THIS MESS?**

The reframing we've done here is not merely an academic exercise. It is not meant to "prove" one side right and the other wrong. It is meant to open the political discussion to viewpoints and possibilities that have been closed by "pro"-anybody framings, like the Israeli security paradigm. In the end, reframing is a necessary step in finding a way out of this mess that respects the rights, claims and narratives of all the parties involved – who do not have to be "enemies."

~

*"There is no solution to the conflict. The Arabs will never accept Israel in the region."*

#### **The conflict is political and should not be mystified.**

We in the Israeli peace movement believe that Israel's survival – both as a society and as a society with values which can be defined as "Jewish" rather than "Spartan" – is dependent upon making peace with its neighbors. Israel, like every other country, does not exist in isolation; it must reach an accommodation with the countries surrounding it.

We at ICAHD do not support any particular solution to the conflict, partly because that solution must emerge from political negotiations, and partly because it is the Palestinians' prerogative to specify what they want and what they can accept, since they are the only party to the conflict with no state, no rights and no freedom. What we do offer, however, are elements we believe are essential to *any* political solution. Without *all* of them being present, *no* solution will work. These essential elements are:

- (1) *National expression for the two peoples.* The Israel-Palestine conflict concerns two peoples, two nations, each of which claims the collective right of self-determination. This is what gives such compelling logic to the two-state solution, but if that solution is no longer possible because of Israel's settlements, then it must somehow be incorporated into a solution involving one democratic state in which both the collective and individual rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine/Israel must be guaranteed.
- (2) *Viability.* Whatever form a Palestinian state takes, it must be viable as well as sovereign. It must control its borders and its basic resources (such as water). It must possess territorial contiguity and, above all, the ability to develop a viable economy. The latter is crucial. The small Palestinian state will have to integrate its refugees, perhaps in the hundreds of thousands, mainly unskilled, impoverished and completely unfamiliar with democratic institutions. Added to this, more than 60% of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Territories and in the refugee camps is under the age of 25, a young generation that has been brutalized, traumatized, impoverished, left with little education and few skills. The Palestinians' demand for a *viable* state stems not from intractability but from a sober evaluation of the enormity of the national challenge facing them.
- (3) *The refugee issue.* Around 80% of the Palestinians today are refugees. Resolution of this issue, including a healing process which could lead to reconciliation between Palestinians and

Israeli Jews, involves a “package” of three elements: Israeli acknowledgement of the refugees’ *right* of return; Israeli acknowledgement of its responsibility in creating the refugee issue; and only then, technical solutions involving a mutually agreed-upon combination of repatriation, resettlement elsewhere and compensation.

- (4) *Security*. Israel, of course, has fundamental and legitimate security needs, as do the Palestinians and all the countries of the region. We of the Israeli peace reject the notion that security can be achieved through military means. We know, and our government knows, that war and terrorism are *symptoms* which can be addressed only if the underlying causes of the conflict are addressed. Israel’s assertion that the security issue be resolved before any political progress can be made is as illogical as it is self-serving.
- (5) *A regional dimension*. The almost exclusive focus on Israel/Palestine has obfuscated another crucial dimension of the conflict: its regional context. Refugees, security, water, economic development, democratization – none of these key issues can be effectively addressed within the narrow confines of Israel/Palestine. Adopting a regional approach, as we shall see, also opens new possibilities of resolving the conflict lacking in the more narrow two-state (or even one-state) approach.

~

*“Anyone who does not support a two-state solution is calling for the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state.”*

#### **Then why did Israel eliminate it?**

Peace is possible; the continued existence of Israel as a Jewish state may not be. Attempts to create ethnically pure states are hopelessly out of date in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, especially when one people tries to foist itself upon and entirely displace another. If Israel’s only hope of surviving as a Jewish state was dependent upon the creation of an adjacent Palestinian state – the alternative being either apartheid or one democratic state in all of Israel/Palestine which would not be Jewish – then why did successive Israeli governments, Likud and Labor as one, pursue so relentlessly a settlement enterprise that would only make the two-state solution impossible? The greatest irony in all of this may be that Israel, by its own hand, eliminated itself as a Jewish state.

In the end – and this is a key point of our reframing – Israel must take responsibility for its own policies and actions and cannot object if others hold it accountable as well. But honey may yet emerge from the rottenness of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As Israelis, we are not daunted by the prospect, created by Israel itself, that we might have to live together with the Palestinians and forge a new bi-national society. It’s happened before. When South Africa moved to Black majority rule, the Afrikaners did not disappear; they continue speaking Afrikaner, attending their Afrikaner schools and universities, reading their Afrikaner press, going to their Afrikaner churches. If Israeli governments create a bi-national reality, the Hebrew language, Israeli culture and its institutions and an Israeli economy will continue to thrive, if within a wider Israeli-Palestinian polity and society. Finally the great wish of Zionism will be realized: the Jewish people will have returned culturally and not only politically to the hearth of their civilization, the Land of Israel and the larger Middle East.

-and-

**Solutions change over the years....**

This is an interesting turn-about, since until the Oslo peace process of the early 1990s it was considered *anti-Israeli* to support a two-state solution. Until today major sectors of Israeli society, including supporters of the Likud Party like Binyamin Netanyahu, modern orthodox Jews represented by the National Religious Party and the National Union of Avigdor Leiberman, many in the ultra-orthodox community (especially the Habad Lubavitch Hasidim) and others, reject the two-state solution.

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## FURTHER RESOURCES

Al-Haq: <[alhaq.org](http://alhaq.org)>  
Alternative Information Center: <[www.alternativenews.org](http://www.alternativenews.org)>  
Arab Association for Human Rights: <[www.hra.com](http://www.hra.com)>  
Ariga: <[www.ariga.com](http://www.ariga.com)>  
Badil: <[www.badil.org](http://www.badil.org)>  
Bat Shalom: <[www.batshalom.org](http://www.batshalom.org)>  
B'tselem: <[www.btselem.org](http://www.btselem.org)>  
Christian Peacemaker Team: <[www.prairienet.org](http://www.prairienet.org)>  
Coalition of Women for Peace: <[www.coalitionofwomen4peace.org](http://www.coalitionofwomen4peace.org)>  
The Electronic Intifada: <[electronicintifada.net](http://electronicintifada.net)>  
Foundation for Middle East Peace: <[www.fmep.org](http://www.fmep.org)>  
Gush Shalom: <[www.gush-shalom.org](http://www.gush-shalom.org)>  
*Ha'aretz* newspaper: <[www.haaretzdaily.com](http://www.haaretzdaily.com)>  
Hebrew website: <[mahsom.org](http://mahsom.org)>  
Indymedia: <[www.indymedia.org.il](http://www.indymedia.org.il)>  
The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD): <[www.icahd.org](http://www.icahd.org)>  
Jerusalem Center for Economic and Social Rights: <[www.jcser.org/english](http://www.jcser.org/english)>  
Jerusalem Center for Women: <[www.j-c-w.org](http://www.j-c-w.org)>  
Jerusalem Media and Communication Center: <[www.jmcc.org](http://www.jmcc.org)>  
Jerusalem Report: <[www.jrep.com](http://www.jrep.com)>  
Jewish Voice For Peace: <[www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org](http://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org)>  
LAW: <[www.law@lawsociety.org](http://www.law@lawsociety.org)>  
New Profile: <[www.newprofile.org](http://www.newprofile.org)>  
Palestine Monitor: <[www.palestinemonitor.org](http://www.palestinemonitor.org)>  
Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR): <[www.pchrgaza.org](http://www.pchrgaza.org)>  
Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG): <[www.phg.org](http://www.phg.org)>  
The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy:  
<[www.miftah.org](http://www.miftah.org)>  
PalMap: Palestine Mapping Center <[www.palmap.org](http://www.palmap.org)>  
PENGON: <[www.pengon.org](http://www.pengon.org)>, <[www.stopthewall.org](http://www.stopthewall.org)>  
PASSIA: <[www.passia.org](http://www.passia.org)>

Rabbis for Human Rights: <[www.rhr.israel.net](http://www.rhr.israel.net)>

Sabeel: <[www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org)>

Ta'ayush: <[taayush.tripod.com](http://taayush.tripod.com)>

US Campaign Against the Occupation <[www.endtheoccupation.org](http://www.endtheoccupation.org)>

Yesh Gvul: <[yeshgvul.org](http://yeshgvul.org)>