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Facebook Faceoff

William Mehlman

“The power of the Israel Defense Forces is in the identification of its soldiers with the pain of the State of Israel,” *Jerusalem Post* Oped editor Seth Frantzman observed in a recent column. The parameters of that identification was on power-point display in the viral response, as measured in Facebook “likes,” of over 100,000 current and reserve members of the world’s most celebrated military organization to the online publication of a video showing Nahal Brigade private David Admov holding off a gang of Arab teenagers that had surrounded him in Hebron with his Tavor assault rifle cocked to his shoulder.



That Admov saved himself a good deal of pain, or worse as his would-be assailants departed the scene, is incontestable. What that did for the “power of the IDF” is quite another matter, for Admov was summarily arrested, stripped of his Nahal Brigade combat status and sentenced to 20 days in jail. A belated assertion by IDF spokesman Brigadier General Moti Amoz that the private’s punishment had nothing to do with the cocked rifle incident but rather for having allegedly physically confronted one of his commanding officers didn’t create much traction with the tens of thousands, military and civilian, who posted pictures of themselves on their Facebook pages with signs declaring “We stand with David the Nahal soldier!” Ditto, IDF Chief of General Staff Benny Ganz’s order to his commanders to “tell your subordinates in a clear manner that Facebook is not a command tool...It is not a replacement or even a parallel channel for dialogue between commanders and their troops.”

“A telling statement,” Franzman remarks, patently one still deeply informed by an “our’s not to reason why” ethos of a bygone IDF generation. “They claim Facebook is not a channel for dialogue. So what is the channel for dialogue for soldiers who feel they are being sent out to do a job that not only will their higher-ups not do but in the performance of which they are not supported?” Franzman asks.

Marc Goldberg, writing in *The Times of Israel* concurs that Ganz’s response to what has been dubbed the IDF’s first “digital storm” seriously misses the point. “For a very long time,” he avers, “we have been sending our soldiers into an environment we haven’t trained them for and expected them to cope.” It isn’t dialogue with their commanders these 18 and 19 year-olds seek, he submits. “They’re looking for help. The frustration being expressed here is tangible. What if David hadn’t cocked his rifle and those people had rushed at him?” The fact is that none of the officers commanding him or their superiors want to say it’s OK to load your weapon against “civilians” even in perceived self-defense. “The higher the rank, the less inclined officers are to say these clear words soldiers need to hear.”

While this politically conditioned anomaly has left soldiers from Hebron to the Jordan Valley “caught,” as Ynet’s Ron Ben-Yishai notes, “between the devil of the orders they receive from their commanders and the deep blue sea of provocation carried out by those whose entire goal is to get an incriminating photo of an IDF fighter and distribute it worldwide,” Facebook offensives are, obviously, not the solution to the problem. For as Ben-Yishai correctly points out, “if from now on every military or political issue provokes an online protest from soldiers, the Israeli Army’s power of deterrence will pay a heavy price.” And it is that power and implied power that has kept the Jewish State alive for 66 years.

Yet, though IDF spokesman Moti Amoz may be technically correct in declaring that “in the army there is no such thing as a ‘protest’ and the army cannot recognize this concept,” it is no less true that opportunities for protest online are open ended and not even the power of the IDF can stop them.

So what is the answer? Clearly, as Haifa University professor Steve Plaut asserts, it is not the Israeli government “playing the part of Goliath battling against a poor little David” who for all his alleged character flaws stood his ground against his menacers rather than accommodate a policy of “pick up and run” crafted to the needs of a political echelon addicted to the avoidance of diplomatic discomfort. Likud iconoclast MK Moshe Feiglin touched on one solution to the problem with a Facebook photo showing him holding a placard reading “End the Occupation! Police officers and not soldiers!” explaining that the extension of Israeli sovereignty over Judea and Samaria, or at least over Area C, where it already exercises exclusive military and civilian authority and where all of its citizens beyond the Green Line live, the thousands of soldiers wasting their combat training commanding checkpoints could be legally replaced by police. Failing that, intensive on-the-ground and psychological preparation of youngsters ticketed for duty in the highest stress environments within the borders of the Land of Israel should be a top IDF priority.

What might also be of enormous help is a dollop of “mission truth” on the part of the IDF senior command and their political mentors. For as one astute observer of the scene noted, “in a time when any child with a smart phone can become a media mogul, clouding the truth is a bankrupt policy. What the Facebook supporters of ‘David the Nahal soldier’ are saying is that they need to be spoken to as adults, clearly and directly. And if that is not the case, they will be speaking to us.

William Mehlman represents AFSI in Israel

From the Editor

Israel Advocacy, New Haven JCRC Style

The New Haven Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) sought to appoint reform Rabbi Joshua Whinston, a member of J Street’s Rabbi’s Advisory Council, to be in charge of Israel advocacy. Appointing a J Street rabbi to head Israel advocacy is like putting Dr. Jack Kevorkian (Dr. Death) in charge of intensive care education or selecting al Qaeda to head the war on terror.

This is the back story. Elaine Braffman, a genuine supporter of Israel, was Israel Advocacy chair of the Greater New Haven Jewish Federation and its Jewish Community Relations Council. A few weeks ago Alan Hillman, the chairman of JCRC, sent out a lengthy innocuous email to the board with a kicker in the last paragraph, in which he announced that he had asked Rabbi Whinston to co-chair the Israel advocacy committee.

Braffman was incensed at both what was done and the highhanded way in which it was done. She had been informed she had a co-chair via a public email, without being consulted or even told in advance. (When she confronted Hillman with this he replied airily that he knew she wouldn’t agree, so he didn’t tell her.) Her predictable disagreement was based on her justified view of J Street, which has rarely (if ever) found a position or action taken by Israel it can support, as a highly unsuitable voice for Israel advocacy.

Braffman called Sydney Perry, the Executive Director of the Jewish Federation, to find out what was going on and when her call went unreturned concluded Perry supported Hillman’s decision. Accordingly she wrote and circulated a letter of resignation to a limited number of people. It began “It is with great sadness that I am resigning as the Israel Advocacy chair...” and ended “I do believe that members of the Greater New Haven Jewish community have the right to know that with the appointment of Rabbi Whinston, J Street is now the primary voice for Israel Advocacy within the Federation and the JCRC.”

By refusing to depart silently, Braffman forced the JCRC to backtrack. Sydney Perry now says Rabbi Whinston will not be the chair of the Israel Advocacy committee.

But the wobble concerning J Street continues in Federations and JCRCs countrywide. Most are refusing to air the excellent documentary “The J Street Challenge” on the ground that it is “divisive.” For these supposed “community leaders” it’s not J Street that is divisive, but exposure of its activities.

There may be Jews so stupid and credulous that it is enough for them that J Street claims to be “pro-Israel;” indeed a glance at J Street’s glittery Advisory Council with its collection of Jewish Nobel prize winners, professors at major universities and captains of industry, is proof, as if more were needed, that a high IQ is perfectly compatible with political idiocy. Some on the Advisory Council, to be sure, are presumably fully aware of J Street’s agenda, folks like Ambassador George Cranwell Montgomery, former ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, Ambassador Ted Kattouf, former ambassador to Syria and the United Arab Emirates, Howard Sumka, former USAID director for the West Bank and Gaza and Robert Pelletreau, former U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, Tunisia and Bahrain. Not to mention funder-in-chief George Soros.

Destroying Israel—Twice

Shimon Peres will live in infamy for his role in laying the groundwork for the Oslo agreement with the PLO in 1993. As Oslo’s failure has become ever more obvious in the ensuing thirty years, Peres remains as obdurately blind as ever. Now that Secretary of State Kerry’s most recent grandiose effort—end the conflict once and for all in a few months--has blown up (an outcome as sure as death and taxes), Peres predictably has learned nothing. Says he: “We must find a way to restart the negotiations. My estimate is that Abu Mazen wants to achieve peace.”

Moreover it turns out—by his own account—that Peres was responsible for another decision that could prove fatal for Israel: the decision not to take out Iran’s nuclear program. In an interview with Israel Channel Two on Independence Day Peres boasted that he prevented Israel from attacking Iran. Along with elements in the military and intelligence services he had insisted the U.S. could be counted on to deal with the problem. As has become all too apparent, the Obama administration’s idea of dealing with the problem is not to prevent Iran from making nuclear bombs but to ensure that Israel does not act to prevent it.

Forever England?



In an article aptly titled “Arresting Churchill” Robert Spencer notes that Paul Weston, chairman of a new UK party called Liberty GB, was arrested by police for quoting a passage from Churchill’s 1899 book *The River War* in a speech he was making outside the Winchester Guildhall in Hampshire. The offending lines were some discerning comments about Islam, including “Thousands become the brave and loyal soldiers of the faith: all know how to die but the influence of the religion paralyses the social development of those who follow it. No stronger retrograde force exists in

the world. Far from being moribund, Mohammedanism is a militant and proselytizing faith.”

While quoting some especially prescient lines from Churchill is now a criminal offense, Islamizing English schools has become an acceptable activity. *The Daily Telegraph* reported in April that at least six schools in Birmingham ignored parts of the curriculum (although needed for exams), segregated boys and girls, forced some Christian pupils to “teach themselves,” and managed to either fire or marginalize teachers who resisted. One school invited an Al-Qaeda advocate to speak at the assembly. In May the *Telegraph* followed up with a report that the problem was not confined to those schools or to

Birmingham, but existed in 17 other schools in Birmingham, Bradford, London and Manchester. It is being dubbed “Operation Trojan Horse,” an effort to wrest control of secular schools from non-Muslim teachers and staff and replace them with individuals who will run them according to strict Islamic principles.

Belatedly, the government is taking notice. Michael Gove, the Education Secretary, appointed the former head of counter-terrorism at Scotland Yard to investigate.

State Department “Sponsors” *Mein Kampf*, *Protocols*



Michael Rubin cites Tom Gross’s website for information that the U.S. State Department has become a “cultural partner” of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair which ran from April 30 to May 5 and included such cultural treasures (in both English and Arabic) as *Mein Kampf*, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and *The International Jew*. As Rubin says “Perhaps it is long past due for those in Congress charged with oversight of Foggy Bottom...to examine such choices as the State Department’s decision to sponsor the Abu Dhabi book fair, and work backwards to see how the choice was made and what due diligence, if any, our Foreign Service conducted.”

Graffiti Yes, Firebombs No

A firebomb attack on a bus full of Jewish schoolgirls on a Ministry of Education-approved bus trip to the Cave of Machpela in Hebron went unreported in the Israeli press except for Arutz Sheva (Israel National News). Ironically it was because of a misreported attack on a bus 25 years ago that Arutz Sheva was founded. Shulamit Melamed experienced a bus attack and was shocked to hear the radio report which made it sound as if the Jews on the bus had been the attackers and not the victims. In her indignation, she turned to her husband, a founder of the community of Beit El in Samaria, who with Yaakov Katz, co-founder of Beit El, established Arutz Sheva.

In the current attack, firebombs exploded one after the other, on the windows of the bus, as it made its way back from Hebron. The bus was engulfed in flames according to one of the girls on the bus. Amazingly, it ended without injury. The bus was fortified and bullet-proofed and the driver stepped on the gas.

But only rank bias by Israel’s left-wing media can explain why the incident was not reported. As Arutz Sheva points out, incidents involving graffiti by Jewish youths have received front page coverage and government ministers have called for their classification as acts of terror. In the meantime real acts of terror—performed by Arabs—are not considered worthy of notice.

From Amazing Israel

A few achievements this month, courtesy of Michael Ordman:

Researchers at Hebrew University have discovered that the protein Erbin is an important brake that helps prevent cardiac hypertrophy, the stage before heart failure when the heart grows in an attempt to increase its output.

Scientists at Hebrew University have demonstrated the molecular basis of Prader-Willi syndrome, perhaps the most studied among the class of diseases that involves defects in parental imprinting.

The FDA has approved the Duet scanning system, developed by Israeli biotech BioView, for the detection of mutations in lung cancer.

Israel’s Bluesphere is to construct a 5.2 megawatt power plant in Charlotte, North Carolina, with the fuel for the plant coming from organic waste from the city’s landfill site.

MK Omer Bar-Lev “Invents” Bar-Lev Line II

Mark Langfan

(Editor's note: This article offers an answer to the words of the song Marlene Dietrich made famous “When will they ever learn?” The answer is never. Despite all evidence, there are Israeli politicians—including some who may well reach a position of power—who cling to the notion of retreat to something close to the 1949 borders as a panacea rather than a death sentence.)

A rocket fired from Judean and Samarian mountains into Tel Aviv is like firing a rocket from Brooklyn into Manhattan.

The Titanic was "unsinkable" until it sank on its first voyage. France's Maginot Line was "unbreachable" until the German Panzers simply went around it. The Nazi secret-code Ultra was "unbreakable" until the Allies continuously broke it throughout World War II.

General Haim Bar-Lev, and the entire IDF, thought his eponymous "Bar-Lev" line on the Suez Canal was unbreachable until, one morning when Jews were in synagogues fasting in October 1973, the Egyptians breached it in two-hours-flat with water cannons.

So much for "genius" engineers and generals.

General Bar-Lev's son, Omer Bar-Lev, is an MK (Labor) in the present Knesset. MK Bar-Lev is a highly decorated retired IDF officer. And MK Bar-Lev is not just a highly-decorated officer--he was the commander of the elite legendary commando unit Sayerat Matkal. And MK Bar-Lev also commanded the Jordan Valley unit of the IDF and worked with Achari, which encourages Israeli army enlistment. All of these are great achievements.

MK Bar-Lev, however, seems to think he has invented a new "unbreachable" defense line--the 1967 Green Line (more or less) or The Clinton Parameters. At the recent *Jerusalem Post* conference, he stated he wants to unilaterally retreat from much of Judea and Samaria. This resembles a case of like-father-like-son. In 2014, MK Bar-Lev is invested into a chimera as was his father in 1973. And MK Bar-Lev has just as sure a sense of invincible military power as had his father.

MK Bar-Lev uses three elements of "logic" to "prove" Israel should unilaterally leave Judea and Samaria and let whoever, and whatever fill the void.

1) Israel is a "Jewish" country and by Israel's unilateral retreat from large areas of Judea and Samaria, it will return Israel to being "Jewish."

2) After the 2005 Gaza retreat, although 15,000 Gaza rockets have since been fired into pre-1967 Israel, MK Bar-Lev says, "No one wants to re-invade, and re-occupy Gaza, so how was retreating from Gaza so bad? Therefore, it was the right decision to make."

3) Since Israel is apparently content with the Gaza situation, Israel will be happy with the "West Bank" unilateral retreat situation of the future, even when that brings rockets to Tel Aviv.

MK Bar-Lev is Labor's "point-person-expert" for military and foreign affairs, but has failed to understand some simple facts.

1) Unlike the Gaza, Judea and Samaria's westward flowing underground water aquifers supply or are responsible for over 50% of Israel's water supply. This water source would be destroyed and diverted by the Palestinians for their own use.

2) MK Bar-Lev wants to put US troops into the PA “West Bank” Palestinian state to protect Israel. So MK Bar-Lev accepts the fact that US troops will get killed by al Qaeda.

3) The pre-1967 Israeli land around Gaza is almost all empty farm land, while the land that abuts Judea and Samaria holds 70% of Israel's population, 80% of her industrial base and Israel's only international airport.

Firing a short-to-medium range rocket from Gaza into Israel is like firing a rocket from North Dakota into North Dakota--it's likely not to hit anything. But any Fatah or Hamas rocket fired from Judean and Samarian mountains into Tel Aviv is like firing a rocket from Brooklyn into Manhattan; it's bound to kill many people.

4) The Jews who live in Sderot and Ashkelon aren't the established, politically-connected Jews of Tel Aviv, but are generally newer immigrants. The millions of politically connected Tel Aviv Jews will demand the re-invasion of the "West Bank" at all costs. Israel's failure to re-invade the Gaza Strip, and to allow Israel's citizens and children in Ashkelon and Sderot to live in abject fear certainly does not show that retreating from Gaza was a good military-political strategy.

5) Now that Iran and Hamas have armed Gaza to the hilt, re-invading Gaza would be a blood-bath for Israeli soldiers.

6) MK Bar-Lev should come to the United States Congress and tell US senators that his "plan" is that after rockets fall into Tel Aviv, the IDF is going to re-invade the "West Bank" with US troops smack dab in the middle. MK Bar-Lev will be laughed out of the building.

7) Even though General Bar-Lev's Suez Canal defense-line failed, Israel could tactically fall back to the Mitla and Gidi passes in Sinai outside of the Egyptians SAM air-defense umbrella. When MK Bar-Lev's Green Line defense fails, there is nowhere else to fall back. It will be game-over for Israel.

8) Worst of all, MK Bar-Lev's unilateral retreat creates a Palestinian Arab "demographic" problem because hundreds of thousands if not millions of Palestinian Arabs can then enter the evacuated areas without a resolution of the "right of return."

MK Bar-Lev isn't joking about his idea for a unilateral retreat from Judea and Samaria. He's deadly serious. And that is cause for worry.

Mark Langfan is chairman of AFSI. This appeared in Israel National News on April 26.

Zionism 101: Far Better Than the Courses at Vassar or Stanford, and about \$60,000 Cheaper

Edward Alexander

(Editor's note: Zionism 101 was Herbert Zweibon's last project. Herb had become increasingly concerned with the need for basic Zionist education and had come up with this innovative way to use short films on the Internet to build a comprehensive course on Zionist history. He pegged David Isaac to carry out the project and David enlisted his brother Rafi. The Isaac brothers are implementing the idea both because of its importance and in honor of Herbert Zweibon, whom they had known since childhood. Herb Zweibon's son Mark continues to fund the project as a tribute to his father's legacy.)



To those of us old enough to remember the first Israel Independence Day, in 1948, it stands as one of the few redeeming events in a century of blood and shame, one of the greatest affirmations of the will to live that a martyred people has ever made. It has turned out to be much more than the thinly veiled form of assimilation that many of the orthodox at first mistook it for, or a solution to a personal identity crisis for people who felt no longer able to be "Jewish." It has emerged, through much struggle, as integral to Judaism and not just to that mélange of habits, tendencies, and cultural styles called "Jewishness."

Cynthia Ozick has rightly described Zionism as the modern flowering of a great series of diverse intellectual and pietistic movements, all of them rooted in the yearning for human dignity symbolized by the Exodus from slavery that has characterized Jewish civilization for thousands of years. The creation of Israel just a few years after the Holocaust was, in the words of Ruth Wisse, the most hopeful sign for humanity since the dove returning to Noah from the primeval flood holding an olive branch.

Of course, you would never learn this from the typical college course on the subject of Zionism or Israel or the (misnamed) “Arab-Israeli Conflict.” At Vassar, for example, the chairman of Jewish Studies gives a course that openly boasts of its lack of objectivity and its full allegiance to the Arab “narrative”; at Indiana University a “chaired” professor in Jewish Studies offers a course on the subject in which the writings of Judith Butler and Jacqueline Rose are included among “Zionist” writings. (This is analogous to a school of medicine offering “Euthanasia 101” in its curriculum of “Life-preserving strategies.”) At Stanford you will be told by a political science professor (and former head of MESA—the Middle East Studies Association) that he makes no pretense at impartiality, and that “the state of Israel has already lost any moral justification for its existence.” For such instruction (frequently delivered by unkempt professors dressed in sweatshirts and blue jeans) about Israel and Zionism (to say nothing of what remains of world literature, history, and philosophy in the present curriculum of elite colleges and universities) you may well be paying up to \$65,000 a year.

As an alternative I would like to recommend a new website offering elegant narration, scrupulous history, scholarly conscience, and an abundance of film material selected from archives around the world. It is entitled “Zionism 101” and is the work of two brothers, David and Raphael Isaac. The Isaacs have rich blood, being sons of Rael Jean Isaac, author of *Israel Divided* (Johns Hopkins University Press) and *Party and Politics in Israel* (Longman), and Erich Isaac, the eminent geographer, former member of the editorial board of *Judaism* and frequent contributor to *Commentary* Magazine. David Isaac writes, produces, and directs the site’s films, and Raphael Isaac is their diligent and shrewd editor. Their goal is to create a place where anyone can go to learn about Zionism. They refer, jocularly but accurately, to Zionism 101 as the “anti-propaganda site,” and strive for disinterestedness, not polemic. The site is organized chronologically, starting with material that pre-dates Herzl.

The Isaac brothers believe that the level of Zionist education is so low, even among those who support Israel, that it is pointless to argue the merits of one position versus another when most people are unfamiliar with the most elementary facts. Their hope is to provide a foundational knowledge of Zionist history, not to impose a political position.

The site currently offers thirty-nine original short films. The Isaacs estimate that this number will double before the site is completed—an ambitious goal, and a worthy one. The films, which are of a high technical as well as scholarly quality, are six to eight minutes long. The Isaac brothers have been very resourceful in obtaining footage. They’ve visited numerous archives around the globe, and have done an admirable job keeping the footage and photographs accurately fixed to time and place. (The films occasionally include re-creations as well.)

Films are subdivided into topics like “Founding Fathers,” “Early Zionist Settlement,” “The Revival of Hebrew” and “Christian Zionism.” (If Jews themselves know little about Zionism, they know even less about this important precursor of Herzlian Zionism). One can jump from topic to topic, even (should you prefer) watching films in no particular order because each film can stand alone. This should prove useful to educators who wish to mix and match films to suit a particular curriculum.

The films are well-researched. This writer picked a relatively obscure topic on the site under the subdivision “Christian Zionism,” about which he happens to know something. I was surprised, and impressed, to find there Michael Solomon Alexander, central figure in the Victorian dispute over the appointment in 1841 of a Bishop of Jerusalem to serve both British Anglicans and German Lutherans in the holy city. It is remarkably well done, scrupulous in its scholarship and profusely illustrated. How many histories of Zionism would tell us that this dispute became so intense, especially after the

appointee (Alexander) turned out to be a Jewish convert (and former schochet in England), that it brought John Henry Newman to his “death-bed” with respect to membership in the Church of England?)

A nearly completed topic in Zionism 101 is a trilogy entitled “Military Stirrings.” This includes three films: 1) “Hashomer,” an early self-defense group in the Land of Israel; 2) “NILI,” the spy outfit that helped Field Marshal Allenby in his conquest of Palestine; 3) “The Jewish Legion,” which fought under the British in World War I. In connection with the Jewish Legion, the Brothers Isaac came up with a hidden gem: “The Marching Song of the Judeans.” This song was the Legion’s anthem, but, despite its historical significance, has been forgotten. The Isaac brothers, working from the words and melody they found in an archive, have brought the music back to life. Incorporated into the Jewish Legion unit, it appears to be the only existing rendering of the song.

Zionism 101 performs a valuable function. The Web has become a front in the never-ending battle over Israel’s legitimacy. Evidence of this battle is apparent with a simple Google search of “Zionism.” Anti-Zionist sites appear in abundance. Combined, they form a net to catch the unwary.

Zionism 101, with its attractive graphics and excellent videos, offers a safe harbor, a coming into port after a very rough sea, for those seeking something better than noisy half-truths and anti-Israel cant.

Zionism 101 offers its films for free. All that’s required is a log-in. The site can be visited by going to www.zionism101.org.

Edward Alexander’s most recent book is The State of the Jews: A Critical Appraisal (Transaction Publishers). This article appeared in the Algemeiner of May 19.

A Secret Memo

On May 8, 2014, two days after the White House released its fourth National Climate Assessment Report, this secret exchange occurred between two top White House staffers. (They used phony initials worrying—rightly as it turned out--the email might be leaked):

PJ: Al Gore, move over! With this Report, it’s tornadoes in your living room, right this minute. Hurricane Sandy is coming to take out your neighborhood any day now. Forget rising seas taking out New York a hundred years from now. End fossil fuels now, today, before they end you tomorrow morning.

AD: Still, the polls show climate change at the bottom of issues the public wants the government to address.

PJ: Bad marketing. All that babble about global warming. If you’re old and cold that sounds good. Climate change is worse. It sounds as scary as Donald Duck. Climate disruption hits home. What disrupts your life? Divorce. Disease. Losing your job.

AD: We scored with pollution. Thanks to us the words go together like cream and sugar—carbon dioxide pollution. Good going when you think that without carbon dioxide there are no plants and without plants there is no “us.”

PJ: Wasn’t it Prince Phillip who said he wanted to be reincarnated “as a killer virus to lower human population levels”?

AD: Let’s not go down that road. I still see a problem with credibility. The Heartland Institute said the report “reads like a press release from the Nature Conservancy and the Union of Concerned Scientists—probably because it essentially is a press release from the Nature Conservancy and the Union of Concerned Scientists.”

AD: You must be joking. The Heartland Institute is a bunch of deniers no one ever heard of. We've had a great press, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*. *U.S. News and World Report* is my favorite: "The National Climate Assessment dramatically changes the economics of climate change." Whatever it costs, it's better than food you can't afford, water you can't drink, your home that's swallowed up by the sea.

PJ: Maybe this report will galvanize the public. But if not, what about a backup?

AD: There's something in the works. On disease. Al Gore talked of galloping malaria. But in America, who worries about malaria? Heart disease, cancer, diabetes, now you're talking. And we'll have a report showing how they can only be explained by climate disruption. We're lining up doctors to sign it now. We aim for 97% of them. If you are a denier--expect no reimbursements under Obamacare.

PJ: You don't think this is a stretch?

AD: Nonsense. Did you see the article in Britain's *The Guardian*? It blames the kidnapping of those hundreds of schoolgirls by Boko Haram on climate change. Noam Chomsky—you can't get more credible than him—blames the Syrian war on global warming.

PJ: You've given me a great idea. How about combining climate disruption and the Arab-Israel conflict, the two issues closest to the President's heart?

AD: Fantastic. The official Palestinian Authority paper just published an article describing Israel's creation as "the greatest *crime* known to humanity." Combine that with fossil fuels, which the President considers the greatest *threat* to humanity. (I hasten to say, in case this email should reach other eyes, that Israel has no greater supporter and advocate than this President: he loves it to death.) Message: there's no rolling back climate disruption unless Israel solves the Arab-Israel conflict.

PJ: Right. And I'll bet you that gets Netanyahu's attention. If he doesn't stop settlements this minute he'll be accountable for incinerating the planet.

AD: We'll send up a trial balloon through Tom Friedman at the *Times*. Bet you he loves it.

PJ: So will the President.

AD: If this doesn't get me David Axelrod's job, there's no reward for original thinking in this White House.

The above exchange was leaked to Rael Jean Isaac.

The Real Palestinian Refugee Crisis

Asaf Romirowsky

Perhaps the most insurmountable and explosive issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the so-called "right of return"—the demand that millions of Palestinians must be allowed to "return" to the State of Israel under any peace agreement. While Israel has made clear that it cannot agree to this, since it would effectively destroy Israel as a Jewish state, the Palestinians have steadfastly refused to compromise on the issue.

But how many actual refugees are there? Surely over the years, many of those displaced have passed away, and such status does not normally transfer from generation to generation.

The issue is so emotive because, in many ways, Palestinian identity itself is embodied in the collective belief in a "right of return" to "Palestine." Along with the belief that resistance to Israel is permanent and holy, Palestinian identity is largely based on the idea that the Palestinians are,

individually and communally, refugees; that they have been made so by Israel; and that the United Nations should support these refugees until they can return to what is now Israel.

This belief is passionately safeguarded by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The organization was established in 1949 following the failure of the Arab war against Israel's independence, and its original mandate was to provide services to the approximately 650,000 Arabs displaced by the conflict. Today, it is essentially a massive social welfare system serving millions of Palestinians, primarily in the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. At the same time, its activities go well beyond simple humanitarianism. It plays a distinctly political role in Palestinian society, working to further the cause of Palestinian nationalism through politicized education, activism, anti-Israel propaganda, and other activities.

In effect, UNRWA has come to depend on the refugee problem itself. While the refugees benefit from its services, the organization benefits even more from the refugees. UNRWA has no incentive whatsoever to resolve the Palestinian refugee problem, since doing so would render it obsolete. As a result, the agency not only perpetuates the refugee problem, but has, in many ways, exacerbated it.



UNRWA's role in perpetuating and even expanding the refugee problem is a complex one; but, more than anything else, it is the result of the agency's own definition of a Palestinian refugee—which is unique in world history. The standard definition of a refugee, which applies in every case except that of the Palestinians, includes only those actually displaced in any given conflict. UNRWA has defined a Palestinian refugee as anyone whose "normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict." But it has also continually expanded this definition, now stating "the children or grandchildren of such refugees are eligible for agency assistance if they are (a) registered with UNRWA, (b) living in the area of UNRWA's operations, and (c) in need."

As a result, the number of official Palestinian refugees—according to UNRWA—has expanded almost to the point of absurdity. The best estimates are that perhaps 650,000 Palestinians became refugees in 1948-1949; but UNRWA now defines virtually every Palestinian born since that time as a refugee. That number now reaches well into the millions. This is quite simply unprecedented. In no other case has refugee status been expanded to include subsequent generations over a period of decades.

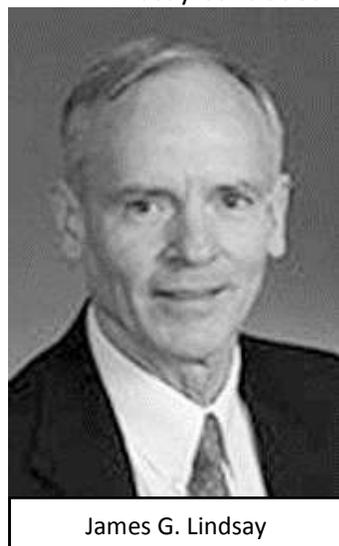
UNRWA's involvement in Palestinian society is equally unique. Its role there has expanded from simple refugee relief to one of the most important and influential Palestinian institutions. In particular, the agency now employs nearly 30,000 people, most of whom are Palestinian. This makes UNRWA the single largest employer in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and indispensable to the Palestinian economy. As such, there is a strong economic incentive to keep the prosperous organization afloat.

It cannot be said that the agency is ungenerous to its subjects. When the world hears words like "refugees" and "refugee camps," it instinctively pictures desperate people living in tents or shantytowns. This generates automatic sympathy and financial support for organizations like UNRWA, which regularly receives monetary contributions amounting to millions of dollars. All this is due to the belief that these funds provide humanitarian aid and help with the assimilation of Palestinian refugees.

In many cases, the reality is entirely different. UNRWA-administered refugee camps are often fully-functioning suburbs of Palestinian cities, with water, electricity, and even satellite television.

UNRWA's role as a jobs machine and a pillar of the Palestinian economy has led to institutional bloat on a huge scale. Its 30,000 employees, for example, dwarf the approximately 5,000 who work for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), whose remit is the rest of the entire world. The UNHCR mandate, moreover, is clearly focused on the resettlement and rehabilitation of refugees, not on providing services that maintain the status quo. The role played by economic incentives in these organizations is very telling. While UNHCR—bidden by its mandate to work with Palestinians—has worked to decrease the number of refugees in the world, UNRWA has worked to increase the number of Palestinian refugees, prolonging and exacerbating the problem rather than solving it.

UNRWA's flaws have not gone unnoticed, even by members of the organization itself. Indeed, the most important critique to appear in recent years was that of James Lindsay, a former legal advisor and general counsel to the organization. Lindsay worked for UNRWA from 2000-2007 and, after leaving, produced a 2009 monograph for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy that caused a firestorm.



James G. Lindsay

Lindsay concluded that “the vast majority of UNRWA's registered refugees have already been ‘resettled’ (or, to use the UN euphemism, ‘reintegrated’),” and that the “only thing preventing citizens from ceasing to be ‘refugees’ is UNRWA's singular definition of what constitutes a refugee.” Accordingly, Lindsay recommended that UNRWA responsibilities be handed over to Jordan. He acknowledged that legal restrictions on Palestinians being resettled in Syria and Lebanon were difficult, but not impossible to overcome given time and effort.

He also recommended that UNRWA move to a need-based model: Some might question whether scarce international aid should be used to fund relatively sophisticated programs for Palestinians—not just education and health care, but also microfinance, urban planning, and so forth—rather than, say, food for starving Africans in places like Darfur. Even putting that question aside, why should such services be provided for free to those who can afford to contribute at least a portion of the cost?

Finally, Lindsay suggested that the United States “urge UNRWA to limit its public pronouncements to humanitarian issues and leave political speeches to the political echelons of the United Nations.”

Critiques like Lindsay's have had some political effect, but attempts at forcing institutional reform have tended to be undertaken piecemeal, rather than tackling the overall problem. Since the 1960s, for example, American lawmakers have tended to focus specifically on one of UNRWA's darkest legacies: Its relationship with terrorism.

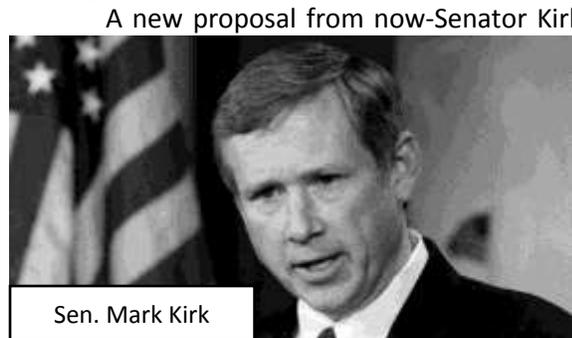
Since the 1970s, a number of Congressional resolutions have sought to limit or cut off funding to UNRWA; and Congress regularly introduces language into appropriations bills requiring UNRWA to promote transparency, self-policing, and accountability with regard to vetting employees for terrorist connections, as well as eliminating the promotion of terrorism in educational materials. Similar provisions are regularly written into United States Agency for International Development budgets—administered by the State Department—in regard to the Palestinian Authority.

Perversely, UNRWA now claims to have solved the problem by checking its employees against watch lists of al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects; yet it remains unwilling to use lists of Hamas, Hezbollah, or other Palestinian terrorist groups provided by Israel.

A serious obstacle to effective action on the issue is that Congressional stipulations are regularly circumvented by presidential waiver, in which the president decrees that continuing aid to UNRWA and other Palestinian entities is in the national security interest of the United States, regardless of terrorist connections or structural concerns.

But this may no longer be enough. As pointed out in Congressional Research Service Report RS40101, concerns about UNRWA-connected terrorism have increased dramatically since the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007. It seems likely that, with the recent unity agreement between Hamas and Fatah, these concerns will only increase. Indeed, as U.S. funding of Palestinian institutions has escalated in recent decades, American lawmakers have repeatedly questioned members of the executive branch about possible diversion of U.S. funds to terrorism and the presence of terrorists in U.S.-funded entities.

As a result, Congress has taken several initiatives to hold UNRWA accountable. In 2009, Congressmen Mark Kirk and Steve Rothman introduced provisions for UNRWA accountability into relevant appropriations bills. They called for transparency and responsibility, and sought to ensure that the monies UNRWA receives do not fund terrorism in any way. This would finally have brought UNRWA funding into compliance with the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act. The bill also underscored the need to evaluate textbooks used in UNRWA schools in order to ascertain that they do not contain “inflammatory and inaccurate information about the United States and the State of Israel, anti-Semitic teaching, as well as the glorification of terrorists.” The amendment died in committee. In the five years since, direct U.S. funding of UNRWA has only increased.



Sen. Mark Kirk

A new proposal from now-Senator Kirk, however, might go a long way toward bringing about real reform; in particular, because it goes well beyond the specific issue of terrorism. It proposes a more precise definition of refugee status, to be specified in a Memorandum of Understanding with UNRWA. Under the proposal, if UNRWA wishes to continue receiving American aid, it would have to agree that “a Palestinian refugee is defined as a person whose place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who was personally displaced as a result of

the 1948 or 1967 Arab-Israeli conflicts, who currently does not reside in the West Bank or Gaza, and who is not a citizen of any other state.”



Steve Rothman

This would mean that only those displaced by war could be considered refugees, and the status would no longer be heritable, bringing UNRWA into compliance with the international definition of refugee status. The amendment would also require the Secretary of State to report to Congress about the notoriously slippery number of refugees and the measures being taken to enforce the new definition. There is no doubt that, while it would not solve all of UNRWA’s problems, it would be an excellent start.

For over six decades, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has been a unique and uniquely troubled institution. It has unilaterally redefined the international definition of a refugee, expanded its mandate to include the construction of a massive social welfare and employment system, made itself the basis of at least one economy and an essential part of another, and allowed itself to become part of several terrorist movements, some dedicated to the destruction of a UN member state. Rather than being part of any conceivable solution, in other words, UNRWA sustains the problem it was supposed to help solve.

This is an edited version of an article that appeared in the Tower Magazine of May 2014. To see the much longer unedited version, go to www.thetower.org. Asaf Romirowsky is the executive director of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East.

The Jews of San Nicandro – A Tale of Faith, Conversion, and Zionism

Ruth King

On January 28, 1935, a Polish Jew from Palestine, Jacques Faitlovich, a scholar famous for his untiring efforts on behalf of Ethiopian Jews, known as Falashas, and his efforts to bring them to Palestine, knocked on the door of an Italian man named Donato Manduzio who lived in San Nicandro, a small and fairly isolated town in southern Italy.

When Manduzio, who now met a real Jew for the first time in his life, greeted him warmly, Faitlovich announced “I have come from Jerusalem to bring you greetings from all our brothers in the Holy Land.”

What propelled the peripatetic Faitlovich to visit San Nicandro and the home of Donato Manduzio? He had heard of the conversion of eighty Italian Catholics to Judaism and their efforts to connect and bond with Jews whom they now considered coreligionists and brothers. And Faitlovich’s goal was to bring as many Jews as possible to restore the Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Who was Donato Manduzio? He was a charismatic Catholic veteran of the First World War whose injuries left him virtually paralyzed and totally housebound. He was deeply inspired by the evangelical communities--Seventh Day Adventists,, Pentecontalists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Baptists whose sermons and rituals were steeped in the Bible and Jewish history.

He began practicing the Jewish faith and ritual and many of his neighbors joined him. He proscribed the eating of pork and insisted on observance of the Sabbath. He urged his followers to give biblical names to their offspring, but also included Christian readings in his sermons.

The story of his followers and fellow converts whose faith endured in spite of the hardships of Catholic opprobrium, internal divisions and quarrels, Papal ostracism and criticism, the increasing anti-Semitism of Italy’s fascists who adopted harsh Nazi anti-Jewish laws, and the pursuit and murder of Jews during the Holocaust in Italy, as well as the initial resistance and distrust from Jewish Italian religious and fraternal organizations is told in John A. Davis’s marvelous book *The Jews Of San Nicandro*.

Their saga is breathtaking and almost incredible. Their faith and resolve strengthened when they met Jewish soldiers from Palestine, serving in the British Army unit Company 178 that invaded southern Italy during World War II. When the Jews of San Nicandro saw the Stars of David painted on the company’s ordnance, they rushed to greet them with their own Star of David flags. The company’s commander Major Wellesley Aron, spiffy in uniform that bore the Star of David, ignited their passion for Zionism.

How is it that after almost two decades of events that conspired against them, they undertook what Davis calls their second conversion, namely, their conversion to staunch Zionism? Their path to Israel was paved with obstructions, red tape, British duplicity in post war Palestine, and disagreements within the group on virtually every aspect of their undertaking except their determination to live in Israel.

In 1949 they undertook ritual conversion, including circumcision and made their voyage to the Promised Land which, sadly, Manduzio did not live to see. This is where Davis ends the story, but the Italian Jews of San Nicandro assimilated and ultimately thrived in Israel.

Davis’s remarkable book inspired an Italian film-maker, Vanessa Dilyn to make a documentary, *The Mystery of San Nicandro*, in 2011. Her words: “In my mind *The Mystery of San Nicandro* is ultimately a testament to the inexorable force of the past, how it shapes our identity and sense of belonging, and



how the echo of our DNA reaches across centuries to claim us. That echo is universal — no matter what our differences, we all have an ancestral journey and a past.”

You can see a trailer for the documentary on: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOz8IDLv96E>
But first read this marvelous book.

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