

# Opinions and Commentaries

## American Jews and Israel

Jewish people expect Christians to acknowledge that Christians sometimes wrong Jews. We hope the best Arabs will acknowledge that Arabs sometimes wrong Jewish people. Jews must be willing to admit that Jews sometimes wrong non-Jews. Perhaps there was a time when the Jewish people did not have the power seriously to harm non-Jews, but this time is gone. We must admit that Israel is now mistreating Arabs rioting in the occupied territories as it kills, beats and deports.

Few people think it's just for one country to occupy the territory of another, and when the occupied people rebel, their cause seems just. Universalizable principles must apply to recent Israeli actions as they do on other moral issues. Do all countries have the moral right, after being attacked by neighboring countries, to occupy their neighbor's land and then, years later, employ a heavy-handed policy of force against the occupied people when they rebel? Is not the more promising principle that peoples occupied by foreign governments have the right to rebel? Should we not at least feel apologetic about occupying the West Bank and Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem? Do current Arab inhabitants have no grounds for claiming that land as theirs? Like other powers, Israel must avoid misusing its power while advancing what it sees as its own interests. It is painful to see Jewish people, who have reason to be extra-sensitive to the wrongness in stronger people abusing their power, now appear as the clear-cut, near-brutal oppressor.

Is this the first time Arabs have not been well treated by Israel? Do we not at least owe Palestinians outside Israel special patience and consideration now that we have returned to land their families recently inhabited and have set up a Jewish state? Do Jewish people even care about Arabs? Do we care about them

as much as we expect non-Jews to care about us? When discussing the Arab-Israeli conflict, Jews invariably dwell on what is best for Israeli Jews. We give almost no thought to what is good, fair, best for Arabs inside and outside Israel. And we call ourselves virtuous? Have centuries of persecution made us less sensitive, rather than more sensitive, to mistreating others? I believe that we must grow more sensitive, from day to day, to the Arab perspective. We must learn to care about them.

The Jewish people must avoid seeing themselves as cowboys and Arabs as wild, barbaric Indians. Even American Indians had much justice on their side, and Arabs have some grounds for feeling cheated and mistreated. Let us not assume that because most Arabs are poor and their birth rates high that their lives are less precious than Jewish lives. We think of Israel as vulnerable, but Arab nations also see themselves as vulnerable (after all, Israel usually wins the wars.) As Holocaust victims, Jews deserve the world's sympathy and consideration, but our victim status must not dull our sense of being morally accountable to others. Perhaps, as every Christian should have some Jewish friends, every Jew should have some Arab friends. American Jews should seek contact with Arabs living in America.

This is 1988 and Israel is the strongest power in the Middle East. It is firmly supported by what is widely seen as the most powerful nation on earth. American Jews are thriving as never before. We are not so desperate and scared that we can not be compassionate.

Israel has proven that Jews can fight. Can it prove that Jews can be conciliatory, creative, resolute peacemakers?

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## ADL Speaks Out About Rioting in Israel

It is easy to say that Israel ought to be behaving differently in the face of civil riots in the West Bank and Gaza. Maybe so, though dealing with mobs throwing rocks and molotov cocktails, burning tires and wielding knives is no easy matter. More importantly, let's not lose sight of what this business is all about.

There has been a long history in the Middle East — since the Arabs rejected the UN Partition in 1947 and invaded the new Jewish State — of Arab efforts to make gains at Israel's expense without doing the one thing Israel wants more than anything, negotiations leading to recognition, peace and security.

In 1947-48 it was invasion. After Israel's establishment and victory in the war, the Arabs turned to the economic boycott of Israel. Then in the '50s there were the fedayeen attacks along the Sinai Peninsula. In 1967, Egypt attempted to strangle Israel by closing the Straits of Tiran and preparing for war. Following Israel's spectacular victory in the Six-Day War, a fourfold effort evolved: PLO terrorism; demands for a PLO state; the pressures of oil; and UN efforts to portray Israel and Zionism as racist.

The list is seemingly endless. And now with the riots comes one more phase.

There is an air of desperation about the whole thing, but not the desperation so often talked about — of 20 years of occupation. Rather it is the desperation of those who oppose real peace with Israel — the PLO terrorists, besieged by no longer having a military base in Lebanon, by constant hostility from Syria, by Arab attention to Iran—who recognize and fear that there is real movement toward peace. Facing the great nightmare—the end of the battle against Israel—a major provocative effort in the territories is being waged. The goals are clear: weaken Israel's image, hurt Israel's relationship with the U.S., play on the natural ambivalence that the Israeli public has over its 20-year occupation, and in the end create an environment that will cause Israel to consider withdrawal without any real peace, negotiations, or legitimacy for the Jewish State.

Yasser Arafat, the chief rejectionist, said it all on December 10 in Baghdad



when he stated: "The fires of revolution against these Zionist invaders will not fade out in the face of their injustice, terrorism, occupation, until our land — all of our land — has been liberated from these usurping invaders." Three days later, he said that the Palestinians "are unanimously determined to continue the uprising under the PLO." And, revealing the calculated character of the demonstrations, he said that Christian sects in the territories will cancel all Christmas and New Year's celebrations.

We as Americans should not lose sight of the fact that the rioters are trying to undermine, rather than help, U.S. efforts to move the region toward peace. While it is difficult to imagine the U.S. keeping quiet in response to the deaths, it is important that the Administration recognize that the radicals should not sense encouragement from Israel's closest friend.

Any misreading of U.S. reactions could set back the peace process in a dramatic way. A key to movement has been the weakening of the longstanding Arab illusion that the U.S.-Israel relationship can be reduced and severed. Recognition that this relationship is here to stay has come slowly over the years. There are tendencies in the Arab world, however, to look for evidence that the relationship is not so secure after all. And the more these tendencies are fed, the more the Arabs will conclude that there's no reason to accept an Israel whose superpower ally may not stay the course.

In its relations with the Soviets, the Reagan Admin-

istration has successfully demonstrated the need to stand firm when radicals used pressure tactics to force a democracy into a bad deal out of weakness. The result: a good INF treaty. The same can be said for the current tensions in the Middle East. The worst possible message that we could send would be to confirm the radicals in their belief that they can accomplish their unholy ends through violence and pressure. As Henry Kissinger wrote years ago, the U.S. can be responsive to facilitate progress through negotiations but can never give sanction to radical-inspired provocation which seeks to obviate a real peace.

We must return to the slow and arduous process of finding a way to get Arabs and Palestinians to seek a negotiated solution with Israel. It may not be helpful that Israel leadership is today divided between two differing philosophies; maybe the Israel elections of 1988 will help sort things out. But let us remember that the fundamental tragedy in the region is the irresponsibility of those who have the title as Palestinian leaders who have never been able to break the self-defeating role of rejectionists. Many Zionists leaders in 1947-48 were not very pleased with the U.N. Partition, but understanding their responsibilities to the Jewish people following the Holocaust, they accepted far less than they believed they deserved. Palestinian leadership have missed opportunity after opportunity to help their constituency; the current riots are one more effort to distract people from that sad reality and one more effort to avoid facing the need for responsible decision-making.



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