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## Editor's Note

by David Moore . Q-Notes staff

### Still seeking global coexistence

*It's been a few years since I originally ran this editorial. Given the current world situation — I wanted to run it again. Many of us are still hoping for world peace — and it still seems as far away now as it did over two years ago when I originally penned this plea for sanity.*

The President of Iran announced in late October that he thinks Israel should be wiped off the face of the earth. A few days later Mahmoud Ahmadinejad dismissed international condemnation of his words, saying his controversial remarks were "right and just" and reflective of the Arabic world.

This is the same Ahmadinejad who recently decided to show the world that his country will not bend or knuckle under to foreign pressure on behalf of Iranian gays by stepping up its legal actions against them, including more executions.

And the same man who is determined to acquire nuclear power.

There is no doubt in my mind that Ahmadinejad is a power-hungry homophobic, religious zealot bent on complete Islamic domination of the entire region. But what is this radical reaction to a non-Islamic presence in the Middle East based on?

I often wonder how the world of today might be different if NATO had not carved Israel out of the Middle East, offering it up as a homeland to Jews that had survived the Holocaust.

Of course, the country has changed hands multiple times during its long history. Jews showed up in the region sometime around the 14th century B.C., although they were not to actually control the country until 1000 B.C. (give or take a few years). They lost control a little under four hundred years later and continued to fight unsuccessfully to regain it against Assyria, Persia, Rome and many others for the next 700 years.

For a period the region was dominated by the Romans. Then, in 638 A.D., Arab Muslims invaded and would remain in power for the next 1300 years.

In 1918 Great Britain captured Palestine and promised the Jews that the country would be their new "homeland" at the end of World War One.

After the war ended, large numbers of Jews began to immigrate to Palestine. For the next 30 years or so there was much infighting and bloodshed between the Muslim and Jewish occupants of Palestine.

On May 15, 1948, Great Britain relinquished control of Palestine and the country was once again called Israel. Of the more than 800,000 Arabs who once lived in Israeli-held territory before 1948, only about

170,000 remained. The rest became refugees in the surrounding Arab countries, ending the Arab majority in the Jewish state.

So who has the right to call the region their own? Looking back at history it's clear that Muslims retained control for a greater length of time — though that doesn't change the fact that they are no longer the dominant power today.

Was it right to take Palestine away from its existing populace in 1948? In my opinion, no. Would it be right to destroy Israel and its current population today to replace it with a Muslim-dominated society? Of course not. Almost an entire generation of people have come and gone since that time.

It's time for a new generation of Muslims and Jews to put aside their philosophical differences and learn to live side by side in peace.

So why is an agnostic American gay man talking about all of this?

Because there's a common theme of oppression in the Middle Eastern conflict and current political developments in our own country. Just how different is the struggle between right-wing conservative Christians and...well...the rest of us? Be it an American Jew or Muslim, a gay or lesbian agnostic or Christian, a Buddhist Laotian or a Mexican-immigrant Catholic?

In theory, not too different.

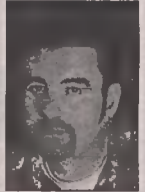
Evangelicals are certain that their belief should be interpreted literally. They also believe that their form of religion is right and everyone else is wrong and unless we're all converted, we're all going to hell.

Once a relatively apolitical group, Christian conservatives began organizing on a community precinct level some 30 years ago and today are perhaps the strongest political power in this country. They maintain influence over the president, the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Many of them are today elected officials who want to interpret the law via the Bible and recreate America as a Theocratic Union.

Under the Bush regime the lines of separation between church and state continue to blur as religious zealots fight to force their beliefs upon us.

Is it right for Evangelicals to be deprived of their desire to worship in the way they wish? No. Is it right for those who do not share their faith to be forced to live by Evangelical standards? Of course not. It's time for ultra-conservative Christians to relinquish their fear and intolerance of the rest of us and learn to live side by side in peace. ▀



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