

Child Sacrifice Brings No Honor to the Palestinian Cause (www.Haaretz.com)

By: Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie

The Palestinian national movement is one of the most stupid, murderous and bloodthirsty national liberation movements in all of human history. With those harsh words to the leaders of the Reform movement, spoken in June 2001, I expressed my profound regret that Palestinian voices of reason and moderation had not appeared in response to the peacemaking efforts of Prime Minister Ehud Barak in 2000 and 2001.

Those words came back to me this week as I watched videos of Palestinians — including children in their early teens — racing through the streets of Jerusalem, looking for Jews to kill. They came back to me as I viewed the tapes of the Hamas maniacs storming the gates of Gaza. They came back to me as I read the words of Muslim religious fanatics, speaking about dastardly, non-existent Jewish plots to destroy their sacred religious sites.

My words were right in 2001, and regrettably, they are no less right day.

What kind of a national movement unleashes 13-year-olds to do its dirty work? How does a child sacrifice, or at the very least an after-the-fact justification of child sacrifice, bring honor to the Palestinian cause? Once again, the leaders of Palestinian nationalism have led their people down the long, cruel path of violence, suffering and death.

In what is, even for them, an act of truly monumental chutzpah, Palestinian diplomats and politicians have proclaimed that Israeli security forces are to blame when they shoot at Palestinian killers and would-be assassins who are engaged in murder and mayhem. They do not say that Palestinian parents should keep their children at home. They do not urge Palestinian children to fight the occupation in peaceful ways. Whenever a Palestinian child dies, of course, it is a tragedy, and God weeps. But it is immoral and cowardly for teenagers to be the shock troops for the forces of terror.

The events of recent weeks cannot be justified or explained away — not by diplomats and not by well-meaning Jews. To excuse the Palestinians from normal standards of moral judgment is to patronize them and to separate them from humanity.

None of this is to say that Israel's hands are clean. Occupation involves acts of degradation and cruelty, and Israel's occupation has been no different. Immediately after 1967, the occupation was more or less benevolent, but no occupation is benevolent long-term. Nonetheless, Palestinians marauding

through the streets of Jerusalem with knife and gun in hand is not an acceptable response, now or ever.

I am not a great fan of Israel's current government, but I believe that the prime minister has been generally responsible in dealing with the violence. And I know that more force will probably be necessary to bring quiet. That is unfortunate, but there is no alternative. My friends in Israel are afraid to let their children out of the house. As far as they are concerned, there is an intifada, whether the politicians call it that or not. And Israelis will not tolerate such a situation: the whole point of the Jewish state was to create a place on this earth where Jews do not have to fear attacks from hoodlums and killers when they walk down the street.

The bigger political question raised by the violence is what happens after it stops. There is a case to be made that Oslo is dead; it was an agreement intended to facilitate a political settlement that now seems more distant than ever. There is also a case to be made that now is the time for some kind of unilateral disengagement, along the lines of what Ariel Sharon was thinking of before he suffered a stroke. One way or another, the Jewish State must be separated from the Palestinian territories, and the Netanyahu government, unfortunately and incredibly, has no long-term plan to make that happen.

But all decisions regarding a long-term solution must wait until there is calm and quiet on the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Afula and Raanana. When terror reigns, thinking stops and fanaticism thrives. The terror must end, and Israel must do what is necessary to end it.

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