



ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

international law
enforcement
establishment. Israelis,
Jews and Americans that are targeted
for death by Palestinians are justified
in wondering: where's a cop when
you need one? (Algemeiner Oct 2)

Commentary...

Interpol and the Palestinians: Where's a Cop When You Need One?

By Jonathan S. Tobin

The good news is that Interpol apparently isn't the international police agency that movies and television shows have led us to believe. The bad news is that the international community just gave another seal of approval to those who traffic in terrorism.

The Palestinian Authority (PA), just as it has done at other international organizations, recently gained admittance to Interpol by an overwhelming vote of member nations.

Though the PA does autonomously govern most of the West Bank, it doesn't exercise sovereign control over any territory. But the international community has nevertheless embraced every opportunity to grant recognition to Palestinian Arab aspirations for statehood — without first forcing them to conclude a peace with Israel that could resolve the dispute by the two peoples over one, small land.

The latest move sounds scarier than some of the others, because most of us assume that Interpol is an international police force with power to make arrests and act with impunity around the globe.

Yet it turns out that this perception of Interpol is misleading. Interpol has no law enforcement agents, and arrests no one. It is merely a coordinating group that functions as an administration liaison between police departments of different countries. It does help fight international crime by making the large database that it maintains available to law enforcement agencies — but that's about the extent of it.

One thing that members of Interpol can do is to issue so-called "red notices" about outstanding criminals; but these are not international arrest warrants. Nevertheless, this raises the possibility that the PA might copy the practice of leftist foes of Israel in various Western countries, who seek to indict Israeli officials on bogus allegations of war crimes.

The US has already said it won't recognize any red notices from the PA. And since the PA is dependent on cooperation with Israeli security agencies to defend themselves against Hamas and more radical opponents, this would be a risky strategy. If the PA does use the tactic, it would probably be directed against Palestinian political foes, rather than Israelis.

Seen in that light, the Interpol vote can be viewed as just another meaningless gesture that does nothing to advance peace — or Palestinian aspirations for actual statehood.

But the decision is not entirely harmless — because the same PA that just joined Interpol actually funds terrorism.

The PA pays salaries and pensions to Palestinians who commit terrorism against Israelis and others (including Americans). This program has an ascending scale of compensation, which gives greater rewards for more serious crimes involving bloodshed. The PA's education system and official media also incite hate, and applaud acts of terror on a regular basis.

Just last week, Abbas' Fatah party lauded a deadly attack that resulted in the killing of an Israeli Border Police officer and two security guards, one of whom was an Arab Israeli. And now, the family of the slain terrorist can expect a generous pension from the PA.

Though some excuse this practice of paying terrorists as a legitimate aspect of their political culture, it is one more indication that Palestinians are still stuck fighting the same war on Zionism and Israel that they've been fighting for a century. And it illustrates the folly of any policy towards the Palestinians that does not start with an effort to impress upon them the necessity to accept the existence of a Jewish state. Until Israel makes it clear that its existence is conclusive and final, no peace plan, including a two-state solution, will be possible.

Unlike its predecessor, the Trump administration has made it clear that it regards the PA's attitude toward terror as an impediment to peace. Congress might be on its way to passing the Taylor Force Act, which is named for an American veteran who was killed by a Palestinian terrorist; the bill would make future aid to the PA contingent on ending its incitement and terror funding.

But with the Interpol vote, the world has once again sent the opposite message to the Palestinians about terror and ending the conflict. A group that honors and pays terrorists rather than arresting them just joined the

Why Did the European Parliament Embrace a Palestinian Terrorist?

By Daniel S. Mariaschin

If there was ever a reminder that Europe is losing its way, the appearance this week at the European Parliament by convicted Palestinian terrorist Leila Khaled is surely it.

Khaled, a major operative in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), was involved in a wave of hijackings of commercial airliners in 1969 and 1970, most notably a TWA flight from Rome to Athens and Tel Aviv, and an El Al flight from Amsterdam to New York City.

The PFLP, headed by George Habash, helped to invent modern terror. Its curriculum vitae is filled with enough hijackings, bombings (suicide and otherwise), drive-by shootings and kidnappings to fill a good-sized bookshelf. It has partnered with like-minded organizations, such as the Japanese Red Army and Colombia's guerrilla army FARC, and though Marxist in orientation, the group has enjoyed a relationship with terrorism's biggest backer today — theocratic Iran. The PFLP's targets have invariably been civilians: in 2014, for example, its operatives attacked worshippers with axes and knives at a Jerusalem synagogue, killing four and wounding seven.

The PFLP has been on the European Union's terrorism list since 2012 (decades after the organization came into existence). And yet, Khaled was a featured speaker this week on a program at the European Parliament, titled, "The Role of Women in the Palestinian Popular Resistance." Khaled received a two-minute standing ovation, preceded by this introduction: "We...have a living legend here with us today, who we can call the Che Guevara of Palestine, Leila Khaled." The Venezuelan ambassador, who was also present, was introduced as an "honored guest."

Khaled's speech was not about empowerment and opportunity. Instead, it was a nonstop screed filled with time-tested Palestinian canards about Zionism — and about Jews.

"The Holocaust," she said, "is only pain to the Jews. They have monopolized the pain and have played the role of the victims. ... [D]on't you think that what happened in Auschwitz is comparable to what happens in Gaza today?"

The Zionist movement, she stated, "aligns with all the capitalists in the world," and she added that "in the next 100 years, they [the Zionists] will be able to dominate the world economy."

Khaled even reprised the time-worn line about her being a "freedom fighter," a term frequently used to excuse, explain or apologize for the violent acts of terrorists such as Khaled and her cohorts in the PFLP, and organizations like it.

At a time when European cities are under increasing assault by an assortment of suicide bombers, car and truck rammers, and knife-wielding attackers, why was Khaled — an inspiration to those who carry out such acts — given a European Union-affiliated megaphone to spout such hatred?

The meeting she addressed was organized by a far-left leaning coalition of parties inside the parliament. According to one report, Martina Anderson, who represents Ireland's Sinn Fein, gushed in a tweet about the "fantastic turnout" at the event. "Long live international solidarity," she wrote.

But "solidarity" for what? Khaled's presentation, with its rants about control of the world's economy by "racist" Zionists "who have appropriated the role of victims...entirely for themselves all around the world," was nothing more than a showcase for a rejectionist Palestinian narrative that embraces hatred and antisemitism.

The European Parliament is not the only platform where this kind of behavior has played out; it is only the latest. United Nations agencies like the Human Rights Council and UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), and even the World Health Organization seek, on a routine basis, to deny, minimize or rewrite Jewish history to fit the Khaled narrative.

The boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement, which is closely aligned with this worldview, specializes in comparing Israel with apartheid-era South Africa, and accusing Israeli authorities of ethnic cleansing.

The Khaled event at the European Parliament was not something hidden or unknown to those who peruse the international body's weekly calendar. Someone made a decision to approve its being placed on the schedule.

To be fair, some members of the parliament have spoken out against Khaled's appearance in Brussels, as has the European Commission's coordinator on combating antisemitism.

Yet with so many EU heads of government, foreign ministers and other officials proffering comments about the need to defeat the growing threat of terrorism on the continent, where are those voices expressing outrage over the invitation to a convicted terrorist — who remains a “member of the political bureau” of one of the deadliest of terror organizations — to speak at one of the EU's central institutions?

In trying to explain this, words like “hypocrisy” and “indifference” come to mind, along with simple political correctness. But it is more than that: Haven't those in leadership positions in Brussels learned anything from decades of violence espoused by Khaled, her contemporaries and now, by Hezbollah, Hamas and ISIS? If nothing else, have they no self-respect?

The recent list of terrorist attacks in Europe is long, and growing. At the EU, some may have short memories, but surely the families of victims in Paris, Nice, London, Brussels, Copenhagen and so many other places, do not.

The citizens of a united Europe deserve better. (Algemeiner Sep 29)
The writer is the CEO of B'nai B'rith International.

Hamas Masquerade By Eyal Zisser

It took Hamas 10 years to completely ruin the Gaza Strip and prove to all that it can't and is not worthy of ruling over its inhabitants. A decade after the terrorist organization forcefully seized control of the coastal enclave its government has crumbled, but more importantly, the situation for the people of Gaza has never been more desperate. Unemployment and poverty are rampant, quality of life is in sharp decline and infrastructure is collapsing. There has only been steady progress in one area — tunnel digging along the border with Israel is prospering and the group has expanded its missile arsenal.

The first place Hamas has looked for a solution is Tehran, which is looking to bring the group back into its fold after several years of severed ties. The Arab spring revolution in Egypt and Syria distanced Hamas from Iran, bringing it closer to Turkey and even Qatar. These Sunni countries have been a disappointment and their ability to help the organization has been and remains limited. Hamas can only receive unlimited weapons and money from the Iranians, even if doing so means it must sharply alter its positions. This pertains, for example, to the Sunni rebel groups in Syria, which Hamas has supported over the years but now must abandon.

At the same time Hamas is also working to improve its relations with the Palestinian Authority; more precisely it is trying to turn the PA into a human shield to perpetuate its rule over Gaza. In this context, Hamas' leaders declared an end to the “Hamas government” in Gaza, and their willingness to give the keys to Gaza to the Palestinian national unity government sitting in Ramallah. This is merely a charade, however, as Hamas is unwilling to truly relinquish its power and will not allow, for instance, the PA's security apparatus to deploy in Gaza. In this vein, it will permit the PA and its president, Mahmoud Abbas, to resolve the electricity crisis in Gaza and to try improving the economic situation there. Meanwhile, Hamas will still reserve ultimate say in Gaza and will be the only entity with weapons.

Hamas, therefore, is trying to mimic the Lebanese model. In Lebanon, the government maintains diplomatic relations with the international community and is responsible for the welfare of the population and bettering the economy; Hezbollah, meanwhile, is the driving military force without bearing governmental responsibility for the fate of Lebanon. This is a comfortable arrangement, as the Lebanese government provides protection for Hezbollah and mainly absolves it of any responsibility for the Lebanese population.

Abbas does have reasons to be happy with this arrangement, as it means the economic pressure and sanctions he has imposed on Hamas has borne fruit. Egypt, too, is satisfied and continues to advance Palestinian reconciliation, in the hopes that such a development will empower its protégé, Mohammed Dahlan, in Gaza and perhaps the West Bank as well.

Without a doubt, however, the main winner is Hamas, which will cede governmental responsibility for the economy and welfare, which it never cared for regardless, in exchange for a security blanket from the PA and perhaps Egypt. All the while it will continue ruling the Strip with an iron fist.

Hamas' game is obvious, but its decision to pursue a two-pronged course of reconciliation with the PA and Iran poses a challenge to Israel. During Operation Protective Edge, Israel allowed Hamas to remain in power in Gaza because it believed that doing so would render it deterred and restricted. Now, however, Hamas is trying to shed these restrictions and essentially erase Israel's leverage against it. Israel cannot allow this to happen. (Israel Hayom Oct 1)

Reversing Iran's Progress By Efraim Inbar

Hopes in the West that Iran would become more moderate after the 2015 nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) between it and world powers in 2015 have gradually been replaced with fears about Iran's worrying behavior. While Tehran is trying to be seen sticking to the nuclear deal, it limits the activities of the inspectors, continues nuclear research and development and devotes efforts to its long-range missile program.

As such, Iranian involvement in the region proves its hegemonic aspirations, based on Persian imperialistic interests, not to mention jihadist impulses. It already controls four Arab capitals: Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus and Sanaa. The Shiite militias and its envoys fight in Iraq, Syria and Yemen through ethnic cleansing. Iran is on the brink of securing a Shiite corridor from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea.

Israel is trying to take advantage of both global fears and U.S. President Donald Trump's lack of commitment to the nuclear deal, which he displays to bring about either its cancellation or the start of new negotiations to obtain a better deal by re-implementing economic sanctions. But these goals are very hard to reach and will do nothing to help prevent Iran's going nuclear.

The international community, including the U.S., has no desire to clash with Iran. Most of the world prefers to wait until the deal expires in another decade, without considering what will happen the day after. Despite this, Iran, with a history that goes back thousands of years, sees the deal as only a short delay before reaching its aspirations. By understanding that the West not willing to take military options, Iran is imitating what happened with North Korea.

Israel cannot trust the international community to prevent Iran from going nuclear. A unilateral breaking of the deal will only speed up the Iranian nuclear program. Even if the attempts to convince Iran to open new negotiations on this deal succeed, its bargaining skills would stretch negotiations for years, giving it more time to implement its nuclear program. Bringing back economic sanctions also involves years of diplomatic struggle. Moreover, the effect of sanctions is limited. Previous sanctions brought Iran back to the negotiation table but did not change its policy.

We cannot depend on the claim that because a better deal could have been struck in 2015, reopening negotiations would still bring the West a better deal. The deal, because of all the holes in it, was the only one the Iranians were willing to sign on once it became clear that the U.S. under former President Barack Obama was unwilling to implement force.

Despite the anti-Iranian rhetoric, it seems that the U.S. under Trump lacks what is necessary to prevent Iran from regional hegemony. The truth of the matter is U.S. policy in the Middle East suits Iran. Trump continues his obsession with fighting Islamic State (an anti-Iranian force) and he is a partner to Russian and Iranian schemes in Syria. The U.S. prefers an undivided Iraq, which is an Iranian satellite state, over supporting a Kurdish state, which Iran opposes. The U.S. also did not stand firmly on Saudi Arabia's side in attempts to isolate Qatar, which is trying to woo Iran.

Nothing can convince Iran to give up its dreams of becoming a nuclear power, and only the use of force can prevent it from realizing them. Israel stands alone on this matter. No one is willing to deal with an Iran that is going nuclear, and accordingly, Israel must be ready to act against critical points in Iran's nuclear infrastructure. This goal will not be easily obtained, but it can be done with determination and creativity.

A successful offensive against Iran's nuclear infrastructure will change the balance of regional power and reverse Iran's progress. Most countries will be happy that Israel is doing the dirty work for them, and if the Israeli strikes on the Syrian and Iraqi nuclear reactors are any indication, they will not make problems for Israel. That being said, Iran has options to exact a toll on Israel, but this cost will not be heavier than bearing the brunt of an Iranian nuclear bomb. (Israel Hayom Oct 2)

My First Encounter with the Kotel By Yuli Edelstein

I am sure many will consider my choice of a special place in Jerusalem — the Kotel, the Western Wall — banal. But to me, someone who spent many years dreaming of visiting the Kotel and touching its stones, this selection is not banal in the least.

My dream came true the very day I made aliyah, some thirty years ago. It is difficult to convey the intensity of the first time I beheld the remnants of our Temple, but the experience and sensations of that day are etched indelibly in my own memory. And an amusing incident that occurred on our way to the Wall made the experience even more memorable.

After a reception at Ben-Gurion Airport and while still in a state of euphoria, I requested that we proceed directly to the Wall. The driver provided by the Ministry of Absorption was himself a relatively new immigrant. He drove to Jerusalem with confidence, but it then became abundantly clear that he didn't know how to get to the Wall. “What ‘Kotel’?” he asked, when he heard the destination. Apparently and incredibly, he had no idea where it was that we were headed. He must have thought I was talking about a “cottage” somewhere.

I suggested that he employ the system in use before Waze: asking for directions. But this, too, proved problematic, as his level of Hebrew was not up to the task. I, therefore, opened the window and started asking around. As darkness fell, we reached an area that I recognized from photographs as the Old City. We drove around in circles for some time in a fruitless search for access to the Wall.

Finally, I told the driver, "Let me off here, and I'll continue on foot." At this, the embarrassed driver got up the courage to ask several young passersby for help, and they offered to direct us in exchange for a ride. As we drove, one of them asked me, "Do you happen to know whether Yuli Edelstein has already made it to the Wall?" I replied, "There's no way that Yuli Edelstein will get there before you..." Finally, I was standing before this ultimate symbol of Jewish Jerusalem after so many years behind a physical and ideological Iron Curtain when the Wall was the symbol and object of our longing, our prayers, and our hopes. I can hardly describe the sense of ecstasy I felt, but I think my emotions that day were best expressed in the famous and stirring report filed by radio correspondent Raphael Amir when the city was liberated twenty years prior to my own aliyah. Accompanying the first IDF units into the Old City, Amir can be heard speaking into his recording device in a voice choked with emotion, "At this very moment I am descending the steps to the Wall. I'm not a religious person, I've never been, but this is the Wall! I am touching the stones of the Western Wall!"

That, I believe, is how I felt on my first visit to the Kotel. On the note I wedged into the cracks between its stones, I wrote my prayer that every Jew should be able to visit this site.

Our history and religion have accorded a special primacy and sanctity to the Temple Mount; nonetheless, there is something special about the Kotel. In the words of the Midrash (Exodus Rabbah 2:2), "The Divine Presence has never departed from the Western Wall." Throughout the generations and everywhere in the Diaspora, the Kotel has occupied a special place in the Jewish national and religious consciousness as the ultimate symbol of the return to Zion and of our aspirations for renewed sovereignty in the land of Israel.

Today, few sites and symbols have retained their status as pilgrimage destinations, formative elements of our identity, and a matter of broad national consensus. The Wall always has been and still remains such a site. God willing, it will continue to be for all eternity.

(Jerusalem Post Oct 2)

The writer, a Likud MK, is a former Prisoner of Zion; he previously held several ministerial posts and currently serves as Speaker of the Knesset.

Understanding the Unlikely Radical Alliances Spreading Anti-Semitism Today

By Adam Milstein

Vicious antisemitism has long been present on the radical Right. It has been growing also on the radical Left. And it's a cornerstone of radical Muslim movements. Although these three sources of antisemitism in our world today come from very different traditions, they are increasingly sharing ideas and tactics, reinforcing a wave of hate, bigotry and racism.

In recent years, North America has joined Europe to witness a growing alliance between radical Muslims and radical leftists. Radical Muslims stone women, execute gays, trample on minority and human rights and abhor feminism. On paper, the far Left should be appalled by this ideology, but these unlikely allies happily cast aside their differences because they share common hatred for Western influence in the world, pluralistic nationalism, freedom of speech, tolerance, and vile antisemitism.

How does the radical Left turn a blind eye to radical Islam's very bigoted ideas, such as its treatment of women and minorities? How can it ignore radical Muslims' conviction as to the superiority of Islamic morals and culture? It infantilizes Muslims and portrays Islam as a monolithic block. In doing so, it fails to distinguish between mainstream Muslims and radicals, and tokenizes them as a "people oppressed by the West."

In the radical Left's warped and ahistorical worldview, Israel is a colonialist oppressor targeting Muslims and – straight from the Elders of Zion itself – Jews are an all-powerful group who are at fault for every problem in the Middle East and in the world.

This alliance is typified by political activist Linda Sarsour, one of the organizers of the Women's March on Washington, who is now hailed on the Left as a feminist leader, despite her admiration for the vile misogyny of Sharia law. She called a Jewish journalist a member of the anti-Semitic alt-right. She opened her "jihad against Trump" speech by thanking Siraj Wajjah, an unindicted co-conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. She has praised Saudi Arabia's treatment of women. Yet, she is held up as a role model for women on the Left.

And this alliance is growing. Last month, leftist students at Tufts University published a "Disorientation Guide," which attacked the university's Hillel and called Israel a "white supremacist" state. It exposed the depth of antisemitism among leftists on college campuses, and demonstrated how these groups use the same rhetoric as radical Muslim groups that call Israel a colonial occupier. One of the guide's writers claimed this was not anti-Semitic because she was Jewish.

A similar guide at New York University myopically condemns Israel, referencing the country 55 times – more than the number of references to

"Trump," "alt-right," "racism," "fascism," "white supremacy" and "socialism" combined.

Two recent rally events in Chicago further illustrate this trend: one, the Chicago Dyke March earlier this year – an event created to celebrate the LGBT community – expelled three people for having Stars of David on their pride flags, combining two symbols central to their identity. A few months later, at the Chicago SlutWalk – an event intended to oppose sexual assault – Zionists who marched were derided for trying to participate and condemned by organizers. The organizers then encouraged the walkers to attend a speech by Rasmea Odeh – a Palestinian terrorist convicted of killing two Jewish students, still believes her actions were justified and who was recently deported from the US.

This strange allegiance between Islamic radicals and radical leftists was famously on display during the Iranian revolution of the late Seventies – where the Grand Ayatollah Khomeini overthrew the moderate shah with the support of leftists and Islamists, and in turn was quick to empower the radical Muslims and decimate the radical Left.

The 3,000-old Jewish population of Iran, some 100,000 Jews, could sense the inherent antisemitism of the radical leftists and their hatred of the West, before and during the Iranian revolution and emigrated in large numbers as fast as they could – mostly to the US and Israel.

Just as the far Left has a history of vilifying the nation-state of the Jewish People (and the Jews who support it), the Right has colluded with radical Muslims to spread its pure hatred of Jews and the desire to brutally subjugate – or murder – the Jewish People.

Radical Islamic nationalists also have a history of collaborating with the Right when they can – the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem told Adolf Hitler that Germans and Arabs have the same enemies – "the English, the Jews, and the Communists" – and the prime minister of Iraq initiated the Farhud, a horrific pogrom, under Nazi influence and allegiance. Today, the rhetoric of neo-Nazis is rife with conspiracy theories and centuries-old stereotypes about blood libel, and echoes the rhetoric of radical Islamist terrorists – and even radical Muslims.

What's most concerning about the rise of antisemitism is how the ideology has entered the mainstream.

For instance, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders recently campaigned for UK Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn, who has worked closely with anti-Semitic conspiracy theorist Paul Eissen, author of a blog titled "My Life as a Holocaust Denier." Sanders wouldn't campaign for a socialist who was a sexist, a racist, a homophobe, or Islamophobe, but he was willing to campaign for an anti-Semite, because leftist organizations encourage antisemitism.

Radical Muslims are focused on destroying and delegitimizing Israel – the historic homeland of the Jewish People – and they fan the flames of antisemitism wherever they can to reach that goal – whether among those working to stop racism in present-day America or working to grab power in 1940s Iraq, or boycotting Israel through the BDS movement. By allying with the radical Left, they are building a coalition that seeks to destroy Western values of freedom, democracy and tolerance – the foundational principles of America and of Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East.

The growth of this alliance and the mainstreaming of anti-Semitic leftism – especially on college campuses – threatens not only our way of life in America, but the future of the Jewish People around the world. (Jerusalem Post Oct 2)

Oslo at Twenty-Four - Failing the "Crystal Ball" Test

By Martin Sherman

We have come to try and put an end to the hostilities, so that our children, our children's children, will no longer experience the painful cost of war, violence and terror. We have come to secure their lives and to ease the sorrow and the painful memories of the past to hope and pray for peace. - Yitzhak Rabin at the signing ceremony of the Oslo I Accords, Washington, D.C. September 13, 1993.

This September marked the passing of 24 years since the signing of the Oslo Accords. Although little is left of the heady—the less charitable might say, "irresponsible"—optimism that accompanied the signing ceremony on the White House lawns on that fateful day in September 1993, the "two-states-for-two-peoples" format it forged, still – inexplicably—dominates the discourse as the sole principle upon which a resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict can be based.

Future historians will doubtless find this both puzzling and perturbing—for although the two-state formula has been regularly disproven, for some unfathomable reason, it has never been discredited—and certainly never discarded.

In many ways, the continued "durability" of the Oslovian "recipe" is astonishing.

Indeed, it is difficult to imagine what else should happen, what further disaster should befall both Jew and Arab, for it to be abandoned as the abject failure it has incontrovertibly proved to be.

After all, when the Oslo process was first instituted there were proponents and opponents—with the former promising sweeping benefits (such as peace, prosperity and a thriving harmonious Mid-East stretching

from Casablanca to Kuwait), while the latter warned of dire dangers (such as spiraling terror and pervasive turmoil).

Now, almost a quarter-century later, one might have been forgiven for thinking that “the jury was no longer out”. For one thing is indisputable. None of the benefits promised by proponents have materialized, while virtually all the dangers warned of by the opponents have befallen the strife-torn region and its unfortunate inhabitants.

Yet stubbornly—indeed, obsessively—two-staters cling to the tenets of their political dogma—no matter what the human cost; no matter how much evidence of their tragic error continues to inexorably accumulate...

Sadly, this is hardly a revolutionary revelation. To the contrary, it has long been starkly apparent to anyone with a smidgeon of intellectual integrity.

Indeed, seventeen years ago, just weeks after the Palestinian-Arabs launched their gory wave of violence (a.k.a. the Second Intifada), an article of mine appeared on Israel’s most trafficked Hebrew-language site, YNet. It was entitled “The Crystal Ball”. The sub-headline read: “The Oslo process and its basic assumptions have failed the test of reality”.

In it, I wrote: “Up until a few weeks ago, there might have been room for a debate on whether the Oslo process was a success or a failure. Up until a few weeks ago it might have been possible—albeit with great difficulty—to understand those whose faith in the “process” had not yet faded. But now [i.e. November, 2000], the debate is over! Now it is quite clear that the “political process: has totally failed.

“When,” I asked “should one conclude that one’s chosen path is mistaken?”; and in response, suggested that: “As a general rule, one should admit that one’s chosen policy has failed if one would not have chosen it, had the consequences of that choice been known beforehand”.

I then proposed: “... let us imagine that on that fateful day in September 1993, on which the Oslo agreements were signed, the people of Israel and their leaders had at their disposal a crystal ball by means of which they could foresee the future consequences of those agreements. Let us imagine that the architects of those accords, who...promised the nation the dawn of a new era...of ‘days without worry and nights without fear’, could foretell the fate of the country almost eight years after the pomp and ceremony of the occasion of their signature”.

I continued: “Let’s suppose that they would have known that almost a decade after the sweeping concessions that Israel was called on to make...the country would be plagued by fire, hatred and death, and that the guns, handed to the Palestinians, despite repeated warnings not to do so, would be turned against our soldiers, our women and our children. Let’s suppose that they would have known that despite our far-reaching willingness to accommodate our adversaries, our political situation in the world would be at its lowest ebb...”

I therefore, ventured to postulate: “I have no doubt that had the architects of these accords known that events would turn out as they have, they would not have signed them. I have no doubt that had the public foreseen what has come about it would not have given its support to the process or to its initiators. Accordingly, we can categorically declare that the Oslo process, and the world view on which it was based, have utterly failed the ‘crystal ball test’ i.e. failed the test of reality.”

In light of all this, I expressed what appeared to be a reasonable expectation: “...that, given the appalling consequences the political processes had precipitated, there would have been a wholesale abandonment of it by its [hitherto] supporters.

“However,” I lamented, “this was not the case. Despite the fact that not even a minuscule trace of any residual success could be found, a significant number of people...still refuse to acknowledge failure or error. ‘There is still no other alternative’ they recite with dogmatic obstinacy.”

Of course, as I pointed out “, there is in fact no claim more baseless than the claim that there is ‘No alternative’” Indeed, as I underscored--“the burden of proof is now on the proponents of the Oslo process rather than on its opponents to prove that they have a viable alternative...”

Moreover, had the imaginary 1993 crystal ball been able to look further into the future, what it would have revealed to the prospective signatories of the ill-fated accords would have hardly been more encouraging. Indeed, if anything quite the opposite is true!

Thus, for the five years after the publication of the “Crystal Ball” article, the carnage of the “Second Intifada” raged across the country, with thousands of Israeli civilians being murdered and maimed—in shopping malls, on buses, in street cafes and crowded restaurants.

Indeed, it was the bloody Passover massacre in March 2002 at the Park Hotel in the seaside resort of Netanya that led to Operation “Defensive Shield”, the first of a series of punitive military campaigns launched by the IDF when Palestinian-Arab terror reached unacceptably murderous levels, which the Israeli military was compelled to quell.

The ensuing decade was replete with recurring bloodshed. Thus, as the savage violence of the Second Intifada petered out in 2005, the very next year, 2006, heralded the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War.

Admittedly, the Second Lebanon War was not directly connected to the conflict with the Palestinian-Arabs. However, its roots can definitely be traced to the Osloian land-for-peace mindset, when in June 2000, Ehud Barak, capitulated to pressures from left-wing activists and surrendered South Lebanon to the Hezbollah by ordering an ignominious unilateral

evacuation of the IDF.

Indeed, this unbecoming retreat has been widely identified as one of the major causes for the Second Intifada three months later (see for example here and here). Thus, in the words of one pundit “the message of weakness transmitted by the retreat from Lebanon encouraged the Palestinians to return to using violent methods.”

Barak’s abandonment of South Lebanon led to Hezbollah’s massive military buildup in the vacated territory, eventually culminating in the costly 2006 Second Lebanon War, whose mismanagement by the Olmert government allowed South Lebanon to become a fearsome arsenal—with over a 100,000 rockets and missiles, trained on Israel’s major civilian population centers and vital infrastructure installations, as well as the additional threat of trans-border attack tunnels.

It is of course an open question whether the Second Lebanon War in 2006 was due, at least in part, to another unilateral withdrawal—the so-called “Disengagement” from Gaza in 2005. There can however be little doubt that the Disengagement did lead to the Islamist takeover of Gaza in 2007, when in the wake of the power vacuum created by the IDF’s departure, the fundamentalist Hamas seized control of the coastal enclave, violently ejecting Mahmoud Abbas’s ruling Fatah faction.

In the wake of Hamas’s ascendance, there was a massive increase in attacks against Israel, with thousands of rockets, missiles and mortar shells being fired at civilian targets. As a result, Israel was compelled to take action to restore stability and security for its citizens—which resulted in the first of three (and counting) post-Oslo IDF campaigns against Gaza, Operation Cast Lead in December 2008. As a result of its military response to the ongoing terror attacks Israel was vilified in the international arena, particularly by the notorious Goldstone report , manufactured by a UN “fact finding” mission, which accused Israel of deliberately targeting Palestinian-Arab civilians, used by Hamas as human shields.

Continual escalation of terror attacks drew Israel in to two further military campaigns.

Less than four years after the end of Operation “Cast Lead”, Israel was forced undertake Operation “Pillar of Defense” in November 2012, following an intensification of rocket fire aimed at Israeli population centers. Then, barely eighteen months later, with the brutal kidnapping and murder of three Israeli youths, and indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza on Israeli civilian targets, Israel was again obliged to use the military to restore calm – this time in Operation “Protective Edge” during which the alarming extent of the terror attack tunnels, excavated by Hamas, was exposed...

On the Palestinian side, our crystal ball would have swiftly dispelled the rosy predictions of a peaceful, prosperous EU-like Middle East stretching from the Sahara Desert to the Persian Gulf, that the Oslo Accords were supposed usher in.

Setting aside the rape, arson, slaughter and misery that raged across the post-Oslo Middle East as the chill winds of the Arab Spring swept through country after country, the Oslo accords brought scant benefits to the Palestinian-Arabs.

Indeed for the average man in the Palestinian street, Oslo wrought penury, not prosperity; despotism not democracy. After almost a quarter century since the ceremony and fanfare on the White House lawns, all the Palestinian-Arabs have to show is an untenable and strife-riven entity, with a dysfunctional polity and a collapsing economy – with a minuscule private sector and a bloated public one, wracked by corruption, and crippled by cronyism, manifestly unsustainable without massive infusions of foreign funds and the largesse of its alleged “oppressor”, Israel.

In Gaza, where the experiment of Palestinian self-government was first instituted, the situation is particularly dire, with the specter of “humanitarian disaster” hovering over the general population. Awash in untreated sewage flows, with well over 90% of the water supply unfit for drinking, electrical power available for only a few hours a day and unemployment rates soaring to anything between 40-60%, Gazans, too, have good reason to rue the day the Oslo agreements were signed.

So if Yitzhak Rabin had had a crystal ball in September 1993, the depressing chain of events that would have unfolded before his eyes as he peered into the milky surface of the glass orb would be this:

A quarter century of spiraling terror in city streets, buses, and cafes; thousands of his countrymen maimed or murdered, four (arguably, five) military campaigns with hundreds of casualties, the dramatic enhancement of the quality and quantity of the weaponry of the terror organizations ranged against Israel; the huge cost of the barrier being constructed, high above and deep below, ground, to secure Israeli civilians from terrorist infiltration and tunnels...

So if indeed, Rabin could have foreseen that all this would be Israel’s lot in exchange for the gut-wrenching and perilous concessions the agreements called on it to make, who could doubt that he would never have affixed his signature to them...

Surely then, this—the Crystal Ball Test—is the ultimate indictment of the Oslo Agreements. Surely, it is time, after a quarter-century, for them—and all that they stand for—to be branded what they indisputably turned out to be –a colossal and tragic blunder of historic proportions—and to be treated as such. (IsraelNationalNews.com Oct 1)