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FLAME HOTLINE

Facts & Logic About the Middle East

June 20, 2017

Why do the mainstream media consistently lie about Israel—and what can we do about it?

Dear Friend of FLAME:

Did you see the May 27 op-ed in the *New York Times*—"The Deplorable State of Palestine"—by Diana Butto, Palestinian-Canadian former negotiator (2000-2005) on an Israel-Palestinian peace? If you're a supporter of Israel and of FLAME, I'm confident the article would have ruined your breakfast.

Just as the *Time*'s op-ed by imprisoned Palestinian murderer-terrorist Marwan Barghouti a few weeks earlier contained a slew of unsubstantiated accusations and outright lies about Israel, so does Butto's assert a string of falsehoods and innuendos.

Opinion is one thing, but for the *Times* to allow outright and consistent prevarication by Palestinian "thought leaders" makes the newspaper and the Arabs look equally bad.

Butto, for example says that when, as a negotiator, "we spoke of international law and the illegality of the settlements, Israeli negotiators laughed in our faces. Power is everything, they would say, and you have none."

Well, I have no doubt that Israel did not take seriously the Palestinians' false assertion that Israel's settlements are illegal under international law. (However I can find no substantiation for Israelis laughing in Butto's face and making a statement about power being everything.)

But Israel has no need to play the power card—because its settlements in Jerusalem and small parts of the West Bank are simply and demonstrably not illegal under international law. Butto's lie to this effect doesn't make it so.

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YOU DESERVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH...

Israel's Settlements: Obstacle to Peace?

Arabs opposed the State of Israel before there were settlements—and they oppose it still today. It's time to clear up 5 false myths about settlements.

The U.S., as well as some American media and politicians, claim Israel doesn't want peace, since Jews build houses in disputed territories of Judea and Samaria (i.e., the West Bank). But the facts reveal settlements to be a misdirection. Other, much greater obstacles are preventing peace.

What are the facts?

Palestinian Arabs have violently fought Israel's existence since the Jewish state's founding and only much later cited Israel's settlements as an obstacle to peace. When Israel relinquished its settlements in Gaza in 2005, it was rewarded with a murderous war by the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas. Five major misconceptions underlie criticism of Israeli settlements.

Myth #1: Palestinians "own" these lands. In fact, Jews are indigenous to the land of Israel (including Judea and Samaria), who have lived in this region for millennia and ruled it as a state, predating Arab settlement by 1,600 years. Palestinians have never had a state nor possessed public land in this region. Thus, the idea of "Palestinian lands" is false. In fact, both peoples can live safely in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). It is a disputed territory.

Myth #2: Jews have no right to live in the disputed territories. Jews and Arabs have lived together for hundreds of years in Palestine. The only exception is during 19 years of British rule, when Jews were expelled from the West Bank. Today, some two million Arabs live on full citizenship of Israel, and some 400,000 Jews live in Judea and Samaria. Yet Palestinians insist that no peace with Israel is possible so long as Jews live among them. In 2013, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas stated that "in the final resolution, we would not see the presence of a single Jewish—civilian or soldier—on our lands." Why should Arabs, who accuse Israel of "apartheid," issue a racist ban of Jews? Why should Arabs be welcome in Israeli society—as they are—when Jews would be forbidden from living with Palestinians in the West Bank?

Myth #3: Israel is increasing new settlements in Judea and Samaria. In December 2014, President Obama's alleged national security adviser Ben Rhodes complained to CNN's Kelly Rowland of "tens of thousands of settlements being constructed" by Israel. In fact no new settlements are under construction in Israel, and Israel has created no new settlements in over 20 years. The number of settlements, plus illegal outposts, now stands just 220. While the number of settlers living in established settlements has increased by 355,000 since 1997, the number of settlers living east of Israel's anti-terrorism separation barrier has since 2009 increased by only 20,000—less than 1% of the population in the disputed territories. Indeed, Israeli communities take up only 2% of the land of the West Bank. Almost all the settlements are located on land not previously occupied, used or privately owned by individual Palestinians.

Myth #4: Israel's settlements are illegal under international law. Most who assert Israeli settlements are illegal cite the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." However, Britain has settled its people into the Middle East, Turkey has settled Turks into Turkish-occupied Cyprus, and China has settled Chinese into occupied Tibet. But Israel has never transferred any of its people into the West Bank. All settlement in Judea and Samaria has been voluntary, undertaken by private Israeli citizens. Why does the world focus on Israel—which has not broken this law—while allowing other nations to violate it blatantly?

Myth #5: The Palestinians would make peace if settlement building stopped. In 2009, Israel froze new settlement activity for 10 months to allow the Palestinians to negotiate sponsored by the U.S. The Palestinians refused. Indeed, Israel has made numerous land-for-peace offers to the Palestinians, most recently in 2009 and in 2016, in which the Palestinians would have received more than 90 percent of the disputed territories, plus land swaps—plus a capital in Jerusalem—but the Arabs refused these offers. They refuse to accept Israel as a Jewish state and insist on "rights" of five million descendants of Arab refugees from 1948 to "resettle" in Israel, which would swamp Israel demographically.

Israel has a standing offer to resume negotiations with the Palestinians with no preconditions. Yet the Arabs refuse, citing Israeli settlements as an obstacle. One thing is certain: Settlements were not the obstacle to peace in 1948—when Israel was born and there were none—and they're not the obstacle today.

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FLAME

Facts and Logic About the Middle East

PO Box 100, Jerusalem, 91000
James Weinstein, President
Shoshie Ziff, Executive and President Emerita

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In her op-ed Butto also maintains—also unchallenged by the Times’ editors—that the Palestinian Authority is complicit in holding its people down, while “Israel steals land, demolishes Palestinian homes and expands settlements.”

The fact that Israel’s Supreme Court prevents any stealing of Palestinian land, as well as unlawfully demolishing Palestinian homes and expanding settlements, doesn’t warrant mention in Butto’s screed.

My point is one you’ve read often in the FLAME Hotline: Most mainstream media have little dedication to facts and logic when it comes to Israel. The reasons for this range from unbridled leftist sympathy for the Palestinian cause to a sloppy disregard for fact-checking and the truth in general.

This week’s featured FLAME Hotline article, below, provides a more nuanced and disturbing explanation for the tendency of the media—and the last U.S. administration’s State Department—to lie about the ongoing Palestinian war on Israel.

Author Liel Leibowitz, one of the most cleareyed and outspoken commentators on Jewish life, explains the frustrating dynamic Israel faces in trying to counter “insane” Palestinian lies, especially when journalists are not permitted to tell the truth by both Mahmoud Abbas’ Palestinian Authority and its more evil brother, the terrorist group Hamas.

Perhaps most important, Leibowitz raises a clarion call to all Jews (and non-Jews) who support Israel: This “idiocy” is not just about Israel, it’s about each of us and all of us. When someone lies about Jews, we should see it as a vile, hostile attack—it’s our duty to rise up and oppose it vigorously.

I hope this week’s *Hotline* gives you a new way of thinking about how we should respond to the media’s calumnies about Israel. In the meantime, as you know, FLAME will continue to fight back—in these weekly reports and in the media nationally and on college campuses.

For this reason, I hope you’ll also quickly review the P.S. immediately below, which describes FLAME’s recent *hasbarah* campaign to expose the Palestinians’ funding of Islamic terrorists using U.S. taxpayer dollars.

Best regards,

PLEASE HELP US!!

FLAME is the only organization that defends Israel with paid editorial *hasbarah* messages placed in media nationwide every month: The dire threats from Iran, Hamas and Hizbollah, the injustice of BDS, Palestinian anti-Semitism and more. If you support a bold voice that tells the truth about Israel in American media, please donate now.

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Jim Sinkinson

President, Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. Did you know: By subsidizing the corrupt Palestinian Authority (P.A.) with aid of some \$400 million taxpayer dollars a year, the U.S. is also funding the P.A.'s program of paying salaries to Palestinian terrorists who have killed innocent Americans and Israelis? In order to make Americans—especially college and university students—aware of this Palestinian practice of rewarding jihadi assailants and murderers with U.S. funds, FLAME has recently been publishing a new position paper: "[U.S. Funds Palestinian Terrorism](#)" This paid editorial has appeared in magazines and newspapers, including college newspapers, with a combined readership of some 10 million people. In addition, it is being sent to every member of the U.S. Congress and President Trump. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion—and U.S. support of Israel—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider giving a donation now, as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation to FLAME is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to [donate now](#). Now more than ever we need your support to ensure that the American people and the U.S. Congress end our support of blatantly anti-Semitic, global jihadist organizations.

As of today, more than 15,000 Israel supporters receive the FLAME *Hotline* [at no charge](#) every week. If you're not yet a subscriber, won't you join us in receiving these timely updates, so you can more effectively [tell the truth about Israel](#)? Just go to [free subscription](#).

Why Believing Atrocity Stories About Israel Is Stupid, Even When They're on CNN.

A recent statement by the head of the Red Crescent Society illustrates why Israel's enemies lie—and why governments and news organizations are so quick to believe them.

By Liel Leibowitz, *Tablet*, June 14, 2017

When Israel waged a defensive military operation against Hamas in Gaza in the summer of 2014, the international

community and the Obama administration alike were quick to offer condemnations, with then-State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki calling Israeli attacks on civilian facilities “appalling.” But if you’re still wondering what really went down during Operation Protective Edge, you might want to listen to Ateeq al-Falahi, the secretary general of the United Arab Emirates-based Red Crescent.

Hamas, al-Falahi said in a recent interview, deliberately launched rockets from a UAE-run field hospital in Gaza in the hope of provoking Israel to respond by shelling the facility. “This shows (Hamas’s) wicked intentions and how they scarified us,” Al-Falahi said. “They always claim the enemy targets humanitarian envoys, but the betrayal came from them.”

Betrayal may be too soft a term: as if Hamas’s double war crime wasn’t bad enough—firing from a humanitarian facility, and then murderously using wounded innocents as human shields for propaganda purposes—the terrorist organization controlling Gaza had a final surprise up its sleeve as the conflict drew to a close and al-Falahi and his men prepared to leave. When he and his team were making their way out of Gaza, al-Falahi recounted, Hamas had contacted “extremist militias in Sinai” and ordered them to prepare for jihad. “As we stopped at a grocery store to buy something to eat,” al-Falahi recalled, “they started shooting at us.” The Red Crescent volunteers fled, only to discover that Hamas’s associates in Sinai had planted landmines down the road, hoping to inflict the greatest damage possible.

“What hurts,” al-Falahi restated his theme, “is that the betrayal came from our own people. Muslims fighting Muslims, who were giving humanitarian aid to Muslims.”

You can stop paying attention to the story right here, and argue triumphantly, as so many of us pro-Israel loudmouths so often do, that once again Israel’s “hasbara” talking point turned out to be completely true while its enemies’ accusations were lies. You’re free to chant “I told you so” all you want, and proclaim that al-Falahi’s account should hardly surprise anyone who was paying attention at the time, considering that we had independent footage of Hamas doing much the same thing, even though most news organizations refused to report the truth for fear of losing their precious “access” to terrorists and the terrified civilians they held hostage. You’re also free to argue that the timing of these accusations is suspicious, given the recent diplomatic flare-up between the UAE and Hamas’s sponsor Qatar. But all that is largely beside the point; there are deeper insights to be gleaned here, and they have much to teach us about just how morally

bankrupt the global conversation about Israel has become.

When a conflict breaks out, decent people feel sick. Their first impulse is to stop the violence, and protect innocent lives. So it is perfectly understandable that, watching shellings on CNN and debates at the UN and John Kerry and his spokespeople being solemnly “appalled,” even proudly Jewish viewers may conclude that all of this criticism of Israel can’t mean nothing. As the saying goes, where there’s smoke, there must also be fire.

But here’s why it’s highly unlikely that there is ever any fire under the smoke: Israel, for all of its flaws and its faults, is an open and democratic society. Its armed forces obey rules of engagement that are more restrictive than those under which American or European forces operate. Israel also grants the local and the international media largely unfettered access to its cities and to battlefields. Israel, therefore, has virtually no incentive to lie about easily verifiable matters of fact that occur in public while operating under a global microscope. You may have little respect for the current government in Jerusalem, and you may have your qualms about some or all of its policies, but, honestly, no one is that stupid.

Which leaves us with Hamas. Why is the group blatantly falsifying facts? The answer here is simple, too: Because they can get away with it, year after year after year. And they can get away with it because their arguments about Jewish perfidy and bloodlust were never based on facts to begin with.

What the terrorist organization offered the world in Gaza in 2014 was a version of the story contained in its founding charter, which is only the latest chapter in a very old story: The Jews are sucking our blood. Deliver some version of this libelous tale, and no one rushes to examine the evidence. After all, anti-Semitic atrocity stories don’t need evidence to back them up; they’re part of a larger conspiracy theory, in which “the Jews” are responsible for the world’s misfortunes.

Why do Western governments and news organizations endorse this insane medieval garbage? Well, that’s also easy to explain: If the people you are trying to strike deals with believe that a malignant sea-serpent is their main foe in life, who are you to disabuse them of that idea, however idiotic? Western governments and news organizations are happy to at least pay lip service to vile and nonsensical anti-Semitic canards to ease their commercial relationships with unfree societies whose leaders repeatedly blame the Jews for their perpetual failures. The price of not doing so might be high. The price of doing so is

guaranteed to be low, especially when you dress up the old anti-Semitism in fancier garb and call it anti-Zionism.

After all, what are the Israelis going to do about the fact that a State Department spokesperson blames Israel for “appalling” attacks on civilians—when there is no shortage of video (and spy satellite) footage showing that the actual war crimes were committed by Hamas, which is an actual terrorist organization? Sever ties with Washington, D.C.? Ban Reuters or the AP for collaborating with a gang of Islamist terrorists who hold two million people hostage to their insanity? Of course not.

But that doesn’t mean that there’s nothing we Jews can do. We can—and must—resist this idiocy whenever it pops up, which is depressingly often. It doesn’t matter if you think Bibi Netanyahu is a villain or a saint. It doesn’t even matter if you define yourself as a Zionist. As a Jew, whenever demonic lies are told about other Jews, lies that are blatantly false and poisonous and malicious, you have a personal responsibility to fight these lies. Because, ultimately, these lies are not just about Israel—they’re about you.

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About the Middle East
PO Box 3460
Berkeley, CA 94703

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