# OUR MYOPIC VIEW OF GAZA CONFLICT AND JEWISH DISSENTERS SPEAK OUT OVER GAZA

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**Category:** Opinions

Haroon Siddiqui, The Toronto Star, 8 January 2009

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Travelling through Europe, one could appreciate the powerful reporting and commentary, which conveyed the scale of the tragedy, without crossing the line into propaganda for either side.

It didn't take long upon landing here to be reminded how much the political and media establishment – in the U.S. and, lately, Canada as well – are divorced from reality.

The Stephen Harper Conservatives, as well as many editorialists and pundits, seem to inhabit a make-believe world into which no inconvenient facts are allowed to intrude.

Their mantra is that Israel has a right to defend itself, has to protect its citizens from Hamas rockets, and had to retaliate for the breaking of the ceasefire by Hamas Dec. 19.

True. But deprived of other truths, this performs the desired magic of absolving Israel of any culpability.

According to this view, hundreds of Palestinian civilians, including women and children and seniors, being bombed and shelled to death in schools – even clearly marked United Nations schools – mosques, refugee camps, streets and homes are acceptable collateral damage.

Few tears need be shed, especially since Hamas is to blame, anyway.

There's amnesia about the brutal 40-year-old occupation.

There's nary a mention that in Israeli military operations in 2008, 420 Palestinians had been killed prior to Dec. 28 vs. five Israelis, according to B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights body,

And Israel's crippling economic blockade had prompted the UN special rapporteur Richard Falk to say on Dec. 9 that Israel's collective punishments amounted to "a crime against humanity," and that the International Criminal Court ought to investigate whether Israeli leaders and military commanders should be indicted.

He noted that the last time there had been "such a flurry of denunciations by normally cautious UN officials" was during the reign of the apartheid government in South Africa.

On Nov. 21, the chief of UN Relief and Works Agency, Karen Abu Zayd, said supplies had run out. She reported "a chronic anemia problem" and "the stunting of children."

All this was long before the latest carnage, which foreign journalists have been prevented from witnessing. Dead, as of yesterday, were 650 Gazans, a fifth of them civilians.

What our political and media establishment are telling us is this:

Israel must not be provoked but the Palestinians can be.

The trauma suffered by Israelis in the border area along Gaza is not acceptable. But 60 per cent of 1.5 million Gazans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder is.

Israeli politicians, facing an election Feb. 10, have to be sensitive to electoral concerns, but Palestinians elected in a fair election Jan. 2006 must be isolated and jailed.

There's an equivalency between Hamas's handmade, ill-targeted rockets and the lethal hi-tech Israeli arsenal, some of it of American origin.

Palestinians must pay heed to Israeli/American/Canadian demands but Israel may ignore calls for a ceasefire by the UN, the European Union and even allies France, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, etc.

Israeli lives matter, Arab ones don't. In fact, it is worth prolonging the bloodshed in Gaza, as in Lebanon in 2006, to allow Israel time to achieve one or two more of its objectives. Arab blood is cheap.

"Unfortunately, all this plays into the hands of those Palestinians and Arabs, and more generally, Muslims, who say, `the West is against us because of who we are and is engaged in a civilizational war against us,'" says Jim Reilly, professor of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Toronto.

"If we include Iraq and Afghanistan, it reinforces the message of Al Qaeda and co-thinkers that they are waging war against a predatory and rapacious enemy.

"All this makes it that much harder for us to argue back against the militants and the zealots."

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**Jewish dissenters speak out over Gaza**
By Haroon Siddiqui, The Toronto Star, 11 January 2009

Judith Weisman, 78, is a Toronto psychotherapist. She grew up in "a very Zionist family" in Baltimore but "began to change when Israel supported the Vietnam War."

She and her husband came to Canada in 1969. She worked at the Jewish Family and Children's Services.

Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon estranged her from the Jewish state. "It took me a while to grasp what was being done to the Palestinians." She was critical of Israel through the two intifadas and the 2006 invasion of Lebanon.

She helped found Jews for a Just Peace; Jewish Women to End the Occupation (since renamed Women in Solidarity with Palestine); Not in Our Name; and an umbrella group, Independent Jewish Voices.

She helped host a stream of visiting Israeli scholars and human rights activists. She's awaiting the arrival of Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (7.30 p.m., Jan. 23, Trinity St. Paul's United Church).

Hers has been a long struggle, ignored by the media and shunned by "the organized Jewish community" that is solidly pro-Israel.

But in recent years, she and other dissidents have been garnering support. In recent days, they've had much company.

On Wednesday, a dozen Jewish women "occupied" the Israeli consulate on Bloor St., demanding an end to the Israeli siege of Gaza.

The group included Judy Rebick and Judith Deutsch, president of Science for Peace (whose former presidents include George Ignatieff, the late father of Liberal leader, Michael, who has just joined the Stephen Harper Tories in giving blanket immunity to Israel).

The women expressed "outrage at Ottawa's refusal to condemn the massacres," said spokesperson Miriam Garfinkle. They urged the media to report that "many Jewish-Canadians do not support Israel's violence and apartheid policies."

On Thursday, four prominent Jewish Canadians held a news conference.

Anton Kuerti, internationally acclaimed concert pianist, said:

"I am not an expert on what is a war crime but I can recognize one when I see one ...

"What if almost a thousand Israelis had been killed by F-16s and helicopters and 1,000-pound bombs? There'd be immense outrage throughout the world ...

"Israel's behaviour makes me ashamed of being a Jew, and Canada's servile support of the United

States position – `it's all Hamas' fault' – makes me ashamed of being a Canadian."

Deutsch read from a prepared statement: "The words `never again,' so fraught with memories of the Holocaust, means `never again' for all peoples."

Others who spoke were Weisman; Michael Mandel, professor of international law at Osgoode Hall, once a visiting professor at Hebrew University of Jerusalem; and the venerable Ursula Franklin, retired U of T research physicist, Companion of the Order of Canada and a Pearson Medal of Peace recipient.

Later that evening, two dozen dissenting Jews turned up at a pro-Israel rally at Beth Tzedec Synagogue.

Smadar Carmon, a dual Israeli-Canadian citizen, said the group was harassed by another – "a mob of thugs, full of hate, shouting `IDF,' `We love Israel,' and `Terrorist supporters,' `Traitors,' `You are not real Jews.'"

On the other side of town, there was a candlelight vigil for Gaza at the Mississauga Civic Square, organized by Palestine House.

And yesterday, there was a demonstration in front of the Israeli consulate, organized by an array of groups, including the Canadian Arab Federation, Canadian Peace Alliance, Coalition to Stop the War, Canadian Union of Public Employees (Ontario), Canadian Union of Postal Workers, and all the groups that Weisman is associated with.

She had planned to be there, as she had been the Saturday before.

Others

**Political Correctness** forwarded by a reader to Keghart.com

Rule #1: In the Middle East, it is always the Palestinians that attack first, and it's always Israel who defends itself. This is called "retaliation" .

Rule #2: The Palestinians are not allowed to kill Israelis. This is called "terrorism".

Rule #3: Israel has the right to kill Palestinian civilians; this is called "self-defense" , or "collateral damage".

Rule #4: When Israel kills too many Palestinian civilians, the Western world calls for restraint. This is called the "reaction of the international community".

Rule #5: Palestinians do not have the right to capture Israeli military, not even 1 or 2.

Rule #6: Israel has the right to capture as many Palestinians as it wants (around 10,000 to date being held without trial). There is no limit; there is no need for proof of guilt or trial. All that is needed is the magic word: "terrorism".

Rule #7: When you say "Hamas", always be sure to add "supported by Hezbo-Allah , Syria and Iran ".

Rule #8: When you say " Israel ", never say "supported by the USA , the UK, European countries and even some Arab regimes", for people (God forbid) might believe this is not an equal conflict.

Rule #9: When it comes to Israel , don't mention the words "occupied territories" , "UN resolutions" , " Geneva conventions" . This could distress the audience of Fox, CNN, etc.

Rule #10: Israelis speak better English than Arabs. This is why we let them speak out as much as possible, so that they can explain rules 1 through 9. This is called "neutral journalism".

Rule #11: If you don't agree with these rules or if you favor the Palestinian side over the Israeli side, you must be a very dangerous anti-Semite. You may even have to make a public apology if you express your honest opinion

Isn't democracy wonderful?

**Why do they hate the West so much, we will ask** by Robert Fisk, The Independent, 7 January 2009

So once again, Israel has opened the gates of hell to the Palestinians. Forty civilian refugees dead in a United Nations school, three more in another.
Not bad for a night's work in Gaza by the army that believes in "purity of arms". But why should we be surprised?

Have we forgotten the 17,500 dead – almost all civilians, most of them children and women – in Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon; the 1,700 Palestinian
civilian dead in the Sabra-Chatila massacre; the 1996 Qana massacre of 106 Lebanese civilian refugees, more than half of them children, at a UN base;
the massacre of the Marwahin refugees who were ordered from their homes by the Israelis in 2006 then slaughtered by an Israeli helicopter crew; the 1,000
dead of that same 2006 bombardment and Lebanese invasion, almost all of them civilians?

What is amazing is that so many Western leaders, so many presidents and prime ministers and, I fear, so many editors and journalists, bought the old lie; that Israelis take such great care to avoid civilian casualties. "Israel makes every possible effort to avoid civilian casualties," yet another Israeli ambassador said only hours before the Gaza massacre. And every president and prime minister who repeated this mendacity as an excuse to avoid a ceasefire has the blood of last night's butchery on their hands. Had George Bush had the courage to demand an immediate ceasefire 48 hours earlier, those 40 civilians, the old and the women and children, would be alive.

What happened was not just shameful. It was a disgrace. Would war crime be too strong a description? For that is what we would call this atrocity if it had been committed by Hamas. So a war crime, I'm afraid, it was. After covering so many mass murders by the armies of the Middle East – by Syrian troops, by Iraqi troops, by Iranian troops, by Israeli troops – I suppose cynicism should be my

reaction. But Israel claims it is fighting our war against "international terror". The Israelis claim they are fighting in Gaza for us, for our Western ideals, for our security, for our safety, by our standards. And so we are also complicit in the savagery now being visited upon Gaza.

I've reported the excuses the Israeli army has served up in the past for these outrages. Since they may well be reheated in the coming hours, here are some of them: that the Palestinians killed their own refugees, that the Palestinians dug up bodies from cemeteries and planted them in the ruins, that ultimately the Palestinians are to blame because they supported an armed faction, or because armed Palestinians deliberately used the innocent refugees as cover.

The Sabra and Chatila massacre was committed by Israel's right-wing Lebanese Phalangist allies while Israeli troops, as Israel's own commission of inquiry revealed, watched for 48 hours and did nothing. When Israel was blamed, Menachem Begin's government accused the world of a blood libel. After Israeli artillery had fired shells into the UN base at Qana in 1996, the Israelis claimed that Hizbollah gunmen were also sheltering in the base. It was a lie. The more than 1,000 dead of 2006 – a war started when Hizbollah captured two Israeli soldiers on the border – were simply dismissed as the responsibility of the Hizbollah. Israel claimed the bodies of children killed in a second Qana massacre may have been taken from a graveyard. It was another lie. The Marwahin massacre was never excused. The people of the village were ordered to flee, obeyed Israeli orders and were then attacked by an Israeli gunship. The refugees took their children and stood them around the truck in which they were travelling so that Israeli pilots would see they were innocents. Then the Israeli helicopter mowed them down at close range. Only two survived, by playing dead. Israel didn't even apologise.

Twelve years earlier, another Israeli helicopter attacked an ambulance carrying civilians from a neighbouring village – again after they were ordered to leave by Israel – and killed three children and two women. The Israelis claimed that a Hizbollah fighter was in the ambulance. It was untrue. I covered all these atrocities, I investigated them all, talked to the survivors. So did a number of my colleagues. Our fate, of course, was that most slanderous of libels: we were accused of being anti-Semitic.

And I write the following without the slightest doubt: we'll hear all these scandalous fabrications again. We'll have the Hamas-to-blame lie – heaven knows, there is enough to blame them for without adding this crime – and we may well have the bodies-from-the-cemetery lie and we'll almost certainly have the Hamas-was-in-the-UN-school lie and we will very definitely have the anti-Semitism lie. And our leaders will huff and puff and remind the world that Hamas originally broke the ceasefire. It didn't. Israel broke it, first on 4 November when its bombardment killed six Palestinians in Gaza and again on 17 November when another bombardment killed four more Palestinians.

Yes, Israelis deserve security. Twenty Israelis dead in 10 years around Gaza is a grim figure indeed. But 600 Palestinians dead in just over a week, thousands over the years since 1948 – when the

Israeli massacre at Deir Yassin helped to kick-start the flight of Palestinians from that part of Palestine that was to become Israel – is on a quite different scale. This recalls not a normal Middle East bloodletting but an atrocity on the level of the Balkan wars of the 1990s. And of course, when an Arab bestirs himself with unrestrained fury and takes out his incendiary, blind anger on the West, we will say it has nothing to do with us. Why do they hate us, we will ask? But let us not say we do not know the answer.

**How Israel brought Gaza to the brink of humanitarian catastrophe** By Prof. Avi Shlaim in Guardian.com.uk 7 January 2009

*Oxford professor of international relations Avi Shlaim served in the Israeli army and has never questioned the state's legitimacy. But its merciless assault on Gaza has led him to devastating conclusions*

The only way to make sense of Israel's senseless war in Gaza is through understanding the historical context. Establishing the state of Israel in May 1948 involved a monumental injustice to the Palestinians. British officials bitterly resented American partisanship on behalf of the infant state. On 2 June 1948, Sir John Troutbeck wrote to the foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin, that the Americans were responsible for the creation of a gangster state headed by "an utterly unscrupulous set of leaders". I used to think that this judgment was too harsh but Israel's vicious assault on the people of Gaza, and the Bush administration's complicity in this assault, have reopened the question.

I write as someone who served loyally in the Israeli army in the mid-1960s and who has never questioned the legitimacy of the state of Israel within its pre-1967 borders. What I utterly reject is the Zionist colonial project beyond the Green Line. The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the aftermath of the June 1967 war had very little to do with security and everything to do with territorial expansionism. The aim was to establish Greater Israel through permanent political, economic and military control over the Palestinian territories. And the result has been one of the most prolonged and brutal military occupations of modern times.

Four decades of Israeli control did incalculable damage to the economy of the Gaza Strip. With a large population of 1948 refugees crammed into a tiny strip of land, with no infrastructure or natural resources, Gaza's prospects were never bright. Gaza, however, is not simply a case of economic under-development but a uniquely cruel case of deliberate de-development. To use the Biblical phrase, Israel turned the people of Gaza into the hewers of wood and the drawers of water, into a source of cheap labour and a captive market for Israeli goods. The development of local industry was actively impeded so as to make it impossible for the Palestinians to end their subordination to Israel and to establish the economic underpinnings essential for real political independence.

Gaza is a classic case of colonial exploitation in the post-colonial era. Jewish settlements in occupied territories are immoral, illegal and an insurmountable obstacle to peace. They are at once

the instrument of exploitation and the symbol of the hated occupation. In Gaza, the Jewish settlers numbered only 8,000 in 2005 compared with 1.4 million local residents. Yet the settlers controlled 25% of the territory, 40% of the arable land and the lion's share of the scarce water resources. Cheek by jowl with these foreign intruders, the majority of the local population lived in abject poverty and unimaginable misery. Eighty per cent of them still subsist on less than $2 a day. The living conditions in the strip remain an affront to civilised values, a powerful precipitant to resistance and a fertile breeding ground for political extremism.

In August 2005 a Likud government headed by Ariel Sharon staged a unilateral Israeli pullout from Gaza, withdrawing all 8,000 settlers and destroying the houses and farms they had left behind. Hamas, the Islamic resistance movement, conducted an effective campaign to drive the Israelis out of Gaza. The withdrawal was a humiliation for the Israeli Defence Forces. To the world, Sharon presented the withdrawal from Gaza as a contribution to peace based on a two-state solution. But in the year after, another 12,000 Israelis settled on the West Bank, further reducing the scope for an independent Palestinian state. Land-grabbing and peace-making are simply incompatible. Israel had a choice and it chose land over peace.

The real purpose behind the move was to redraw unilaterally the borders of Greater Israel by incorporating the main settlement blocs on the West Bank to the state of Israel. Withdrawal from Gaza was thus not a prelude to a peace deal with the Palestinian Authority but a prelude to further Zionist expansion on the West Bank. It was a unilateral Israeli move undertaken in what was seen, mistakenly in my view, as an Israeli national interest. Anchored in a fundamental rejection of the Palestinian national identity, the withdrawal from Gaza was part of a long-term effort to deny the Palestinian people any independent political existence on their land.

Israel's settlers were withdrawn but Israeli soldiers continued to control all access to the Gaza Strip by land, sea and air. Gaza was converted overnight into an open-air prison. From this point on, the Israeli air force enjoyed unrestricted freedom to drop bombs, to make sonic booms by flying low and breaking the sound barrier, and to terrorise the hapless inhabitants of this prison.

Israel likes to portray itself as an island of democracy in a sea of authoritarianism. Yet Israel has never in its entire history done anything to promote democracy on the Arab side and has done a great deal to undermine it. Israel has a long history of secret collaboration with reactionary Arab regimes to suppress Palestinian nationalism. Despite all the handicaps, the Palestinian people succeeded in building the only genuine democracy in the Arab world with the possible exception of Lebanon. In January 2006, free and fair elections for the Legislative Council of the Palestinian Authority brought to power a Hamas-led government. Israel, however, refused to recognise the democratically elected government, claiming that Hamas is purely and simply a terrorist organisation.

America and the EU shamelessly joined Israel in ostracising and demonising the Hamas government

and in trying to bring it down by withholding tax revenues and foreign aid. A surreal situation thus developed with a significant part of the international community imposing economic sanctions not against the occupier but against the occupied, not against the oppressor but against the oppressed.

As so often in the tragic history of Palestine, the victims were blamed for their own misfortunes. Israel's propaganda machine persistently purveyed the notion that the Palestinians are terrorists, that they reject coexistence with the Jewish state, that their nationalism is little more than antisemitism, that Hamas is just a bunch of religious fanatics and that Islam is incompatible with democracy. But the simple truth is that the Palestinian people are a normal people with normal aspirations. They are no better but they are no worse than any other national group. What they aspire to, above all, is a piece of land to call their own on which to live in freedom and dignity.

Like other radical movements, Hamas began to moderate its political programme following its rise to power. From the ideological rejectionism of its charter, it began to move towards pragmatic accommodation of a two-state solution. In March 2007, Hamas and Fatah formed a national unity government that was ready to negotiate a long-term ceasefire with Israel. Israel, however, refused to negotiate with a government that included Hamas.

It continued to play the old game of divide and rule between rival Palestinian factions. In the late 1980s, Israel had supported the nascent Hamas in order to weaken Fatah, the secular nationalist movement led by Yasser Arafat. Now Israel began to encourage the corrupt and pliant Fatah leaders to overthrow their religious political rivals and recapture power. Aggressive American neoconservatives participated in the sinister plot to instigate a Palestinian civil war. Their meddling was a major factor in the collapse of the national unity government and in driving Hamas to seize power in Gaza in June 2007 to pre-empt a Fatah coup.

The war unleashed by Israel on Gaza on 27 December was the culmination of a series of clashes and confrontations with the Hamas government. In a broader sense, however, it is a war between Israel and the Palestinian people, because the people had elected the party to power. The declared aim of the war is to weaken Hamas and to intensify the pressure until its leaders agree to a new ceasefire on Israel's terms. The undeclared aim is to ensure that the Palestinians in Gaza are seen by the world simply as a humanitarian problem and thus to derail their struggle for independence and statehood.

The timing of the war was determined by political expediency. A general election is scheduled for 10 February and, in the lead-up to the election, all the main contenders are looking for an opportunity to prove their toughness. The army top brass had been champing at the bit to deliver a crushing blow to Hamas in order to remove the stain left on their reputation by the failure of the war against Hezbollah in Lebanon in July 2006. Israel's cynical leaders could also count on apathy and impotence of the pro-western Arab regimes and on blind support from President Bush in the twilight of his term in the White House. Bush readily obliged by putting all the blame for the crisis on Hamas, vetoing proposals at the UN Security Council for an immediate ceasefire and issuing Israel with a

free pass to mount a ground invasion of Gaza.

As always, mighty Israel claims to be the victim of Palestinian aggression but the sheer asymmetry of power between the two sides leaves little room for doubt as to who is the real victim. This is indeed a conflict between David and Goliath but the Biblical image has been inverted - a small and defenceless Palestinian David faces a heavily armed, merciless and overbearing Israeli Goliath. The resort to brute military force is accompanied, as always, by the shrill rhetoric of victimhood and a farrago of self-pity overlaid with self-righteousness. In Hebrew this is known as the syndrome of bokhim ve-yorim, "crying and shooting".

To be sure, Hamas is not an entirely innocent party in this conflict. Denied the fruit of its electoral victory and confronted with an unscrupulous adversary, it has resorted to the weapon of the weak - terror. Militants from Hamas and Islamic Jihad kept launching Qassam rocket attacks against Israeli settlements near the border with Gaza until Egypt brokered a six-month ceasefire last June. The damage caused by these primitive rockets is minimal but the psychological impact is immense, prompting the public to demand protection from its government. Under the circumstances, Israel had the right to act in self-defence but its response to the pinpricks of rocket attacks was totally disproportionate. The figures speak for themselves. In the three years after the withdrawal from Gaza, 11 Israelis were killed by rocket fire. On the other hand, in 2005-7 alone, the IDF killed 1,290 Palestinians in Gaza, including 222 children.

Whatever the numbers, killing civilians is wrong. This rule applies to Israel as much as it does to Hamas, but Israel's entire record is one of unbridled and unremitting brutality towards the inhabitants of Gaza. Israel also maintained the blockade of Gaza after the ceasefire came into force which, in the view of the Hamas leaders, amounted to a violation of the agreement. During the ceasefire, Israel prevented any exports from leaving the strip in clear violation of a 2005 accord, leading to a sharp drop in employment opportunities. Officially, 49.1% of the population is unemployed. At the same time, Israel restricted drastically the number of trucks carrying food, fuel, cooking-gas canisters, spare parts for water and sanitation plants, and medical supplies to Gaza. It is difficult to see how starving and freezing the civilians of Gaza could protect the people on the Israeli side of the border. But even if it did, it would still be immoral, a form of collective punishment that is strictly forbidden by international humanitarian law.

The brutality of Israel's soldiers is fully matched by the mendacity of its spokesmen. Eight months before launching the current war on Gaza, Israel established a National Information Directorate. The core messages of this directorate to the media are that Hamas broke the ceasefire agreements; that Israel's objective is the defence of its population; and that Israel's forces are taking the utmost care not to hurt innocent civilians. Israel's spin doctors have been remarkably successful in getting this message across. But, in essence, their propaganda is a pack of lies.

A wide gap separates the reality of Israel's actions from the rhetoric of its spokesmen. It was not

Hamas but the IDF that broke the ceasefire. It di d so by a raid into Gaza on 4 November that killed six Hamas men. Israel's objective is not just the defence of its population but the eventual overthrow of the Hamas government in Gaza by turning the people against their rulers. And far from taking care to spare civilians, Israel is guilty of indiscriminate bombing and of a three-year-old blockade that has brought the inhabitants of Gaza, now 1.5 million, to the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe.

The Biblical injunction of an eye for an eye is savage enough. But Israel's insane offensive against Gaza seems to follow the logic of an eye for an eyelash. After eight days of bombing, with a death toll of more than 400 Palestinians and four Israelis, the gung-ho cabinet ordered a land invasion of Gaza the consequences of which are incalculable.

No amount of military escalation can buy Israel immunity from rocket attacks from the military wing of Hamas. Despite all the death and destruction that Israel has inflicted on them, they kept up their resistance and they kept firing their rockets. This is a movement that glorifies victimhood and martyrdom. There is simply no military solution to the conflict between the two communities. The problem with Israel's concept of security is that it denies even the most elementary security to the other community. The only way for Israel to achieve security is not through shooting but through talks with Hamas, which has repeatedly declared its readiness to negotiate a long-term ceasefire with the Jewish state within its pre-1967 borders for 20, 30, or even 50 years. Israel has rejected this offer for the same reason it spurned the Arab League peace plan of 2002, which is still on the table: it involves concessions and compromises.

This brief review of Israel's record over the past four decades makes it difficult to resist the conclusion that it has become a rogue state with "an utterly unscrupulous set of leaders". A rogue state habitually violates international law, possesses weapons of mass destruction and practises terrorism - the use of violence against civilians for political purposes. Israel fulfils all of these three criteria; the cap fits and it must wear it. Israel's real aim is not peaceful coexistence with its Palestinian neighbours but military domination. It keeps compounding the mistakes of the past with new and more disastrous ones. Politicians, like everyone else, are of course free to repeat the lies and mistakes of the past. But it is not mandatory to do so.

• *Avi Shlaim is a professor of international relations at the University of Oxford and the author of The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World and of Lion of Jordan: King Hussein's Life in War and Peace.*