No moral equivalence

written by David M. Weinberg | 23.06.2023

As is his usual rotten wont, UN Middle East envoy Tor Wennesland this week condemned the "continuing cycle of violence" in Judea and Samaria, as if Israel and the Palestinians each were cavalierly engaging in murder just for fun or out of comparable burning hatred.

Even US Ambassador Tom Nides seemed to draw a parallel between the gruesome Palestinian attack near Eli (where two Palestinian terrorists gunned down four Israeli civilians in a restaurant), and the Palestinian bystanders killed in a shootout between IDF soldiers and the terrorists they were seeking during an arrest raid in Jenin.

Nides insensitively lumped together the two critically different events in one tweet, as if "both sides," alas, were "suffering casualties," and "both sides" were equally responsible for this "cycle of violence." (Nides later "clarified" his comment, meaning he backtracked, after being slammed by every reasonable observer.)

What is missing from the above comments and from the glib reporting of international media from the West Bank is any reference to the political and moral implications of Palestinian terrorism. Nobody has the guts to remark upon the death-glorifying political culture of Palestinians that repeatedly chooses violence over negotiations.

Few are prepared to recognize the distinction between kid-killing Palestinian terrorists and Israeli soldiers conducting anti-terrorist operations who must arrest or eliminate Palestinian combatants and occasionally they hit a bystander too.

Few have the rectitude to acknowledge that Palestinian society celebrates the kidnapping and mass murder of Israeli men, women, and children, while the IDF does its utmost to avoid civilian casualties and Israeli society recoils with horror at the notion of revenge raids.

Instead, too many Western diplomats who should know better, and Western journalists who pretend not to know better, outrageously plug symmetry, and in doing so, present the public with a horrifyingly distorted snapshot of Palestinian-

Israeli conflict.

At best, they seem hell-bent on presenting Israel as an unforgiving and violent society not particularly different from its Palestinian neighbor. This keeps the storyline in a neat and supposedly “non-judgmental” comfort zone; a zone where Jewish “radicals” (i.e., settlers) and the Jewish “occupation” of Judea are a root cause, or at least an equal cause, of conflict in the region.

I have experienced this moral myopia myself – should I say this immoral bias – multiple times. For example, when Naftali Fraenkel from my hometown of Nof Ayalon was murdered (one of the three teenage boys kidnaped and killed by Hamas terrorists in Gush Etzion in the summer of 2014) I gave a dozen interviews to foreign networks.

But the network correspondents showed zero interest in the soft messages I offered of solidarity, faith, and perseverance. What they wanted to hear was calls for revenge. Over and over again, I was prodded to demand fierce Israeli military action against the Palestinians. That would have fit the pat prism on the conflict these journalists purvey.

APPARENTLY, IT IS NECESSARY to re-state the obvious: There is no moral equivalence between Israelis and Palestinians in the current struggle over the promised land.

For Israeli society, moral standards are clear. Israelis value life, not death, and seek conflict resolution, not annihilation of the enemy. By my count, Israel has put eight far-reaching compromise proposals on the diplomatic table over the past 20 years. Moreover, Israelis generally acknowledge and seek to correct their imperfections.

Support for vigilante violence against Palestinians is limited to the tiniest of tiny segment of Israeli opinion; and those who engage in it are subject to denunciation and prosecution.

The contrasting viciousness of much of Palestinian society and the ongoing rejectionism of Palestinian leadership is also clear; repeatedly laid bare by atrocious terrorism, the glorification of terrorists by Palestinian leadership and the financial support of Palestinian governments for such terrorism, and by repeated rejection of any and all peace compromise proposals.

Palestinian Authority dictator Mahmoud Abbas mendaciously threatens that Israel's "daily killings and incitement will lead to a big explosion" – when it is his vulgar incitement that continues to stoke terrorism and his "martyrs" that are doing the killing.

Abbas falsely accuses Israel of committing "violations" against Islamic and Christian holy sites, including the Al-Aqsa mosque on the Temple Mount – when it is his Wakf that has turned Al-Aqsa into an armed fortress and turned every Jewish visit to Judaism's holiest site into a skirmish, and his people that repeatedly have destroyed Joseph's Tomb, sought to destroy Rachel's Tomb, and run Christians out of Bethlehem.

Abbas has the chutzpah to call for "international protection for the Palestinians against assaults by the occupation army" and accuses Israel of "executing" teenage Palestinian terrorists – when it is Israelis who have to be afraid of Palestinian stoning, knifings and shootings in every corner of this country and who are (uncomfortably and heroically) restraining themselves from unleashing the full force of Israel's army; and when Abbas' terrorists are being treated in the best Israeli hospitals.

Palestinians may not be enamored of the fact that Israel is building homes in and around Israel's historic capital city, Jerusalem, or that Prime Minister Netanyahu's government is expanding Israeli settlements over the Green Line; allowing more Jews to live in Judea. Reasonable people can disagree about that.

But Israel is not planting bombs in Palestinian markets or kidnapping Palestinian children. The Palestinian bricklayers, plumbers, and electricians working on the house next door to mine will still come to work – I am not going to slaughter them — while I would not dare step foot in a Gaza or Nablus neighborhood.

So what do you do when the UN Secretary General swallows every bit of Abbas' bile, and then immorally denounces "hateful discourse on both sides" and contemptibly says that Israel's response to the recent terror attacks has "added to the already difficult challenges of restoring clam" – when there is no factual or moral equivalence between Israeli and Palestinian actions?

What do you do when fair-weather friends abroad cast aspersions on the defensive measures taken by the Israel Police and IDF in retort to Palestinian terrorism?

You guffaw at the UN leader and remind yourself that the dissolute UN once declared Zionism is racism and the earth flat. You do not go running scared and draw-back on needed anti-terrorist operations or mistakenly curb Jewish access to the Temple Mount to appease Palestinian or global opinion.

You insist that your friends reject the fallacious throwaway line that "both sides should show restraint," and do not allow them to slyly hit you over the head by averring that "the status quo is unsustainable" and by failing to hold the Palestinian Authority accountable for its corruption and extremism.

You remind friends that in 2022 there were more than 5,000 Palestinian terror attacks against Israeli Jews, including car-rammings, shootings, stabbings, and bombings of innocent men, women, and children. These attacks included over 500 Molotov cocktail attacks (firebombs), leading to the injury of more than 150 Israelis. There was a 210% rise in rock throwing incidents in 2021 over 2020, and a 156% rise in bomb throwing incidents in 2021 over 2020. The comparative statistics for 2022 and 2023 (not yet fully tabulated) are even worse.

Over the past few months, Palestinian terrorists have slaughtered close to 40 Israelis in and beyond the Green Line. These murderous attacks constitute a continuing Palestinian mega-pogrom against Israel. And yet too many international observers prattle-on about the "cycle of violence" – as if there was some "cycle" demanded by nature, and they are seized by settlement building – as if settlements were the cause of Palestinian terrorism.

So what do you do? You remind friends that there is no moral equivalence whatsoever between Palestinian terrorists and Israeli troops, period. You remind them that settlements are a red-herring issue; not necessarily an obstacle to peace if only Israel had a peace partner. You remind them to stand by principle and eschew falsely "balanced" diplomatic formulations that only retard the cause of peace.

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