

Amnesty International – What To Tell Your Children



Galilee, Israel, courtesy of Geoffrey Clarfield

by Geoffrey Clarfield

Amnesty International has recently come out with a report that Israel is an apartheid state and does not have a right to exist. Simply put, this is the latest secular version of the libel that Jews and Judaism are immoral and bad, and therefore anything the Jews do, like reconstitute their national homeland in the state of Israel, is bad because it hurts “others,” that favorite word of left leaning social scientists.

The report is a secular version of the replacement theology of both traditional Christian and Muslim theologians who have taught that Judaism and the Jewish people are “out of date” and therefore all Jews should have by now joined these two new faiths.

Those Jews and non-Jews who have read Jewish history know this not to be true. After the Holocaust, there should be no doubt that the Jewish revelation is equal to that of its two daughter religions. But today, both the Jewish and non-Jewish high school and university students do not know Jewish history, and after reading the lies and slanders of the **Amnesty** report they may come to doubt the validity and need for the existence of a Jewish state. We cannot let this happen.

Much of the argument, but not all, that demonstrates Israel's undoubted right to exist is legal. Most people are not trained like lawyers to explain international law in a way in which young people and educated people can understand.

Goldi Steiner is one of those people, who although not a lawyer, has a clear understanding of these legal arguments and has been spending years trying to get both Jewish and non-Jewish educational institutions to teach the legal aspect of the Israel's history. It has been an uphill struggle.

I am sitting in her living room, sipping tea and eating one of those central European pastries (chocolate cake topped with whipping cream) that are part of her Hungarian background. I simply ask her, what is going on and why is this information not taught and celebrated in the Canadian Jewish community, and why they not share it with the world. Goldi tells me,

"I am a Holocaust survivor. I came to Canada after the war. I am a mother and grandmother and made my living as a business person. I took an interest in world history and Jewish history and supported the establishment of the state of Israel for what I believed to be moral and historical reasons. But I did not know that these reasons had the full support and endorsement of international law, a 20th century phenomenon, that has made the last century different from all other historical periods.

I learnt this lesson from Salomon Benzimra who was giving clear lectures on the legal basis of Israel's right to exist, for study groups within the Toronto Jewish community. He got no support from the Jewish Board of Education or the Canada Israel Committee, or, from any of our otherwise outstanding Jewish schools and Yeshivas (rabbinical colleges). No institutional support whatsoever, and as you met him you know that he was a well-educated, multilingual European of Moroccan descent. He was your classic "Jewish Prophet in the Wilderness." And he was well informed and articulate.

I first met Salomon at a pro-Israel lecture in the fall of 2007, less than fifteen years ago. I was taken with the clarity and simplicity of his argument, which was that, the international community (including by this date various Muslim countries) had recognized the Jewish people's right to an independent state in the land of Israel and that this was supported and is still supported by international law.

Together we founded *Canadians for Israel's Legal Rights – CILR*. Our main project "deliverable" (forgive me if I use the language of NGOs and fundraisers) is the dissemination and explanation of Salomon's book *The Jewish People's Rights to the Land of Israel*. I doubt that anyone at Amnesty International has read it.

Our intent in offering this book is to inform, most importantly our children and grandchildren, as well as the general public, of the Jewish people's rights to the land of Israel. It (was) our belief that thus prepared they would be able to withstand the avalanche of distortions and lies perpetrated by a hostile world, driven in some cases by ignorance but, more often than not, by animosity. So far, the book is not taught in any Jewish schools in Canada and we have received no formal support from the various branches of the Canadian Jewish establishment.

We got, and get, more interest from Israelis who are tired of

apologizing for their existence and, who are slowly coming around to the understanding that their existence is legal not just existential. Before he became Prime Minister of Israel, we met with Naftali Bennet who endorsed what we have done and we hope he will continue to do so.

When we met Bennett face to face, then Israeli Education Minister, he shared with us his own frustration, for having finished a book on civics with sections about the legal rights of Israel. He was forced to remove his own contribution by the Israeli government itself and the Israeli Ministry of Education. Such is the nature of political correctness these days!

Sadly, Salomon died suddenly in 2016 on a return flight from Israel, where he was the main spokesperson for our delegation, meeting with Israeli officials; then Education Minister Naftali Bennett, Tzipi Hotovely, deputy Foreign Minister, and other influential personalities, in an effort to convince them of the importance of educating students about Jewish rights to the land– the young generation of future leaders and the electorate.

Years ago, during the first days of our working partnership I believed and urged Salomon to bring these facts to the fore, thinking that, that was all that was needed to convince the world community about the facts of our people's indigeneity, and our rights.

At that time, there was zero awareness by the public about Israel's land rights even among Israelis which – to a degree is true even today, let alone among Canadian as well as Diaspora Jews, and the world at large. And slowly I learnt the hard way that it is not that simple.

It is hard to think back just how naïve I really was.

One of the first things we did was to write a letter addressing ALL Jewish school principals, and department heads

in the GTA as well as Israeli and American Jewish institutions with the following message:

“We, CILR are offering to educate students who seek the truth, and will defend the facts about Israel’s rights, whether others dismiss, deny or ridicule those facts. We want to task students with the role of Ambassadors, to carry forth the knowledge they will be acquiring. They will be empowered with knowledge, and power which they can carry forth and impact the world they live in. “

Some of the Jewish religious schools in the GTA responded, mostly the Orthodox. With the exception of one educator of the major Jewish High schools. We gave a few lectures but none of the teachers we met with put the book on the student’s reading list.

Then we changed tactics, thinking that if we reach out to Israelis in Israel and they slowly adopt the book and the teaching plans (the book is now available in Hebrew), one day the Diaspora Jewish schools may just adopt it.

The Israeli initiative is moving faster than the one here in Canada where we have been working the longest. Nevertheless, our principal goal, which is to incorporate the study of our legal rights to the land, into the official curriculum, is still just a dream for some future date.

I had finished my tea and pastry and asked Goldi, “Why is there such resistance to these legal and historical truths, so well researched, footnoted, and supported by international legal scholars, both Jewish and non-Jewish?”

She said, “Because double standards are part of the essence of Antisemitism/AntiZionism.”

“And so? “I asked.

“Israel’s legal right to exist (and the indigeneity of the

Jewish people in the land of Israel) is part of the same framework of law, that Canadian and American law students learn but fail to apply internationally. Our own community leaders and spokespeople must become knowledgeable, and courageous enough to recognize and **publicize** this simple truth.

Together we must strive to break through the walls of resistance by most educational institutions/campuses in and outside of our own communities, who deny those facts, and indoctrinate rather than educate students about factual truth. To persuade them to do so continues to be my life's ambition."

"So," I said, "What can I do?" Goldi looked me in the eye and said, "Buy one hundred books. Send them to one hundred **social influencers**, including to media outlets. You have to start somewhere you know! Or more realistically, send to all those you are well connected with, a link to the book on our web site, and ask them to read it.

Here it is:

<https://www.israelslegalrights.org>

I left Goldi's house humbled and reminded myself of the words of the late Oscar Schindler who said:

"If you save one life, it's as if you saved the world entire"