

Ben Gerstein's Craven Apology – When He Had It Right the First Time (Part 1)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



In the intellectual degrading that characterizes campuses today, a particularly disturbing example comes from the University of Michigan. The story is [here](#).

The student government at the University of Michigan has passed a resolution condemning its president for remarks critical of the Palestinians he made as a high school senior.

The final vote of the Feb. 25 resolution rebuking Central Student Government president Ben Gerstein was 25 in favor, zero against and four abstentions.

There should be a test for what type of people deserve a

state and what type of people don't. I think the Palestinian people, with rejecting constant peace deals, with their financing of terror, with their raising kids to hate people purely because of their religion," said Gerstein on the TV show "North Town News Magazine" in 2017. "I don't think that people deserve a state at this point in time. Until we see a significant change in the Palestinian mentality and a significant change in the Palestinian leadership, I don't think they deserve a state at this point."

On Feb. 19, Gerstein apologized in a public Facebook post.

Was anything Ben Gerstein said as a high school senior in 2017 untrue? Haven't the Palestinians rejected many peace deals, including one offered by Ehud Barak that would have given them 95% of the West Bank and another, by Ehud Olmert, that would have given them 93%? Aren't they right now refusing even to consider a deal that would give them a state of their own, with a capital on the edge of East Jerusalem, as well as \$50 billion dollars in aid, the largest aid package for a single state in history? Don't the Palestinians finance terror, paying for the rockets Hamas lobbs into Israel's southern cities, such as Sderot, from Gaza? Don't Palestinians pay Hezbollah to dig its terror tunnels from Lebanon into Israel? Doesn't the supposedly "moderate" Palestinian Authority have a Pay-For-Slay program, that provides hundreds of millions of dollars annually to terrorists, if they are imprisoned, and given to their families, if they are dead? Does Ben Gerstein really wish to claim that the Palestinians do not finance or take part in terrorism, do not support, and do not honor, terrorists intent on murdering Israeli civilians? Or does he now think that all of that is justified because of Israeli "oppression"?

And wasn't Gerstein right in his earlier claim that the Palestinians raise "kids to hate people purely because of their religion"? Aren't the Palestinian schoolbooks full of

antisemitic teachings that encourage murderous acts against Jews? Haven't we seen those Palestinian children's shows where young children simulate – with real knives – their stabbing of Israelis, as they chant about killing Jews, to the beaming approval of their adult supervisors? Nothing he claimed in 2017 was wrong. It is precisely now, when he pleads to be forgiven for his previous views – before he saw the pro-Palestinian anti-Israel light – that he is uttering grotesque untruths.

What is wrong with suggesting, as he did then, that it is legitimate to ask the question of who deserves a state? Does everyone who wants a state and claims to be a "people" deserve one? Are we not allowed to examine the evidence? Should there be a test for "what type [sic] of people deserve a state" and which type do not? Gerstein said on that 2017 television show that the Palestinian people, "with rejecting constant peace deals, with their financing of terror, with their raising kids to hate people purely because of their religion," do not yet deserve a state. "I don't think that [such] people deserve a state at this point in time. Until we see a significant change in the Palestinian mentality and a significant change in the Palestinian leadership, I don't think they deserve a state at this point." Is that an outrageous remark, or isn't it just common sense not to reward race hatred and terror? In 2017, Gerstein was stating the obvious: if you behave unacceptably, by teaching murderous hatred to your children and encouraging them to want to kill others, if you refuse all compromises ("peace deals"), if you finance terror and celebrate terrorists as heroes – naming streets and squares after them, if terror is your main weapon of war, then your claim to statehood is less deserving than those made by others who do not exhibit such attitudes or engage in such behavior.

Are we not allowed to discuss the depth and legitimacy of different claims to statehood? Wouldn't we all agree that the 35-40 million Kurds, for example, spread out over Syria, Iraq,

Iran, and Turkey, have a powerful claim to an independent state? And isn't their claim all the stronger because the Treaty of Sèvres stipulated the creation of an autonomous Kurdish state in 1920, but the subsequent Treaty of Lausanne (1923) failed to mention Kurds? That betrayal of a promise by Europeans of an independent Kurdistan was brought about by Turkish pressure.

And the Berbers, the indigenous people of North Africa conquered by Arabs and, in many cases, forced to abandon the Berber language and culture by their Arab masters – especially in Algeria – in attempts to “arabize” them, have a similar claim on our sympathies. Neither the Kurds nor the Berbers have engaged in terrorism. The Arabs, of course, deny that either the Kurds or the Berbers have a right to autonomy, much less a right to statehood. But they are outraged that anyone would deny any significant group of Arabs, anywhere, *their* right to a state. The Palestinian Arabs, who want a 23rd Arab state – 22 apparently are not enough for the Arab people – should be far down on the list of those deserving a state.

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