

Erdogan At It Again

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The President of Turkey, the well-known comedy artist and antisemite Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, [charged](#) last Tuesday that awarding the Nobel Prize to Peter Handke would only encourage “enemies of Islam and humanity.” For Erdoğan, the chief “enemies of Islam and humanity” are the Jews, specifically the Jews of Israel, as could be seen when he made an appearance at the U.N. General Assembly on September 24 and delivered himself yet again of some anti-Israel remarks.

This was nothing new for Erdoğan. Last year, bemoaning the continued existence of Israel, he published a plan that proposed the creation of a pan-Islamic military force, with contributions of men and weapons by several dozen Islamic states; that force, he was sure, would be able to “destroy” the State of Israel. No doubt he assumed that Turkey would be the natural leader of such a force. He must have been

chagrined to discover that no other Muslim state took up his offer; he apparently did not realize that the Arab states have a long historical memory, and the Ottoman Turks did not endear themselves to the Arabs when they ruled over them for so long.

His attack on Israel at the U.N. was a travesty of history. But even more offensive were the remarks he made, shortly before his speech at General Assembly, when he met with Turkish natives living in New York, in which he compared the murder of Jews during the Holocaust to the "genocide" committed by Israel in the Gaza Strip.

"When we look at the genocide Nazis committed against Jews, we should look at the massacre happening in the Gaza Strip from the same point of view," Erdogan is quoted as saying by the Turkish Anadolu news agency.

And during his rambling speech to the UN General Assembly, in which he attacked Israel several times, Erdogan claimed, "This year, 490 children were killed and 3,000 injured as a direct target of the most modern and murderous weapons in the Gaza Strip of Palestine."

"Children playing on the beaches, running around in parks, taking refuge in mosques and schools, curling up in their mothers' bosom for safety, were mercilessly killed in front of cameras and before the eyes of the world," he charged.

In 2018, there were 49 children who died as a result of the weekly confrontations at Israel's security fence with Gaza. Some of them were hit by projectiles thrown by Palestinians themselves. In 2019, while figures on casualties have not yet been available, there have been no major military operations in the Gaza Strip, which must mean there have to date likely been far fewer deaths than the 49 children who died in 2018. Erdogan simply pulled this figure of "490 children killed" out of the air. As we all know, Israel takes great pains to warn off civilians, using tear gas and rubber bullets, and only

using live fire when the security fence is being breached by those throwing Molotov cocktails, grenades, incendiary kites, and occasional gun fire.

Erdogan had his figures off by at least a factor of ten, and his description of the children being killed or injured “as a direct target” was also wrong. The IDF makes great efforts to avoid civilian casualties, and especially of children. But Hamas does the opposite: its operatives encourage children to join the Great March of Return, and herds them toward the front of the marchers; Hamas wants there to be Arab children who are killed or wounded, as part of its propaganda war against Israel; Israel in the meantime tries to minimize such casualties, but given the smokescreen Hamas deliberately creates by burning tires, cannot avoid all such casualties. But Israel has never “targeted” children, as Erdogan claims.

Also in the realm of fantasy is Erdogan’s description of the children who are killed. He sees them as “children playing on the beaches, running around in parks, taking refuge in mosques and schools, curling up in their mothers’ bosom for safety, [who] were mercilessly killed in front of cameras and before the eyes of the world.” What beaches, and what parks, were anywhere near the security fence where the Great March of Return took place? Those children who unfortunately were killed were not “playing on the beaches, running around in parks, taking refuge in mosques and schools, curling up in their mothers’ bosom for safety” – they were being pushed forward toward the head of the Great March of Return by Hamas operatives, eager to have them, in the fog of war, wounded or killed by Israeli soldiers.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the U.N. displayed his special house blend of dezinformatsiya taqiyya, and anti-Israel animus. Not everyone was pleased. He held up four maps, purporting to show how “Palestine” has over time been shrinking as Israel has been aggressively seizing Arab land. The first map showed a place labelled as “Palestine before 1947.” It is in fact a map

of the Mandate for Palestine, the territory shown having long before been assigned to the future Jewish National Home. What Erdogan labels as "Palestine" (Filistin) was supposed to be part of a future Israel; Erdogan has simply ignored what the Palestine Mandate was all about, and assumed that an Arab "Palestine," not a Jewish state, was the true intent of the League of Nations. Hence, from the river to the sea, this "Filistin." And now he will show us how that "Palestine" began to shrink under steady Israeli aggression.

Erdogan's second map shows Israel as it would have been had the U.N. Partition Plan of November 29, 1947 – U.N. Resolution 181 – been accepted. On this map, the Jewish state now contains the Negev, as well as a strip of land on the coast, and some of the Galilee. Erdogan's point is that the U.N. was willing to give Israel all of that territory, ripped out of "Palestine." But the Jews were ungrateful. They wanted more. Again, he has his history backwards. It was the Jews who were willing to accept the Partition Plan, despite its meaning they would lose land to which they were, by the Mandate, entitled. It was the Arabs who unanimously rejected the Partition Plan, and thus it was null and void from the beginning. The Arabs were unwilling to accept Israel no matter what its size; they were convinced they would be able to destroy the nascent Jewish state once hostilities began. Erdogan doesn't mention who accepted, and who rejected, the U.N. Partition Plan.

Erdogan also ignores who started the war in 1948. On May 15, 1948, one day after Israel declared its independence, the armies of five Arab states – Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq – invaded Israel in an attempt to snuff out its young life. It was the Arabs who made war on Israel; in defending itself, Israel acquired a bit more territory than the Jews possessed at the beginning of the war. And Israel continued to have a legal claim, based on the Mandate, to all of the territory from the Jordan River to the sea. The fact that when the shooting stopped in 1949, Egypt was in possession of Gaza,

and Jordan in possession of the West Bank, did not diminish Israel's legal claim to both territories. What Israel lacked was the ability to enforce that legal claim, which is different from not having such a claim. Erdogan also ignores the fact that from 1949 to 1967, Jordan claimed the West Bank as its own, while during the same period Egypt lay claim to Gaza. Neither state seemed concerned about the rights of the "Palestinian people," but of course, why should they have been? The "Palestinian people" had not yet been invented.

The third map Erdogan held up showed Israel as it existed between 1949 to 1967. The Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, are still shown in green as parts of "Palestine." There have been some slight adjustments – enlargements – to Israel's territory since 1949, nothing major. But what is surprising is that Erdogan never showed a map of Israel just after the Six-Day War, in which Israel, by force of arms, took possession of the entire Sinai, the entire West Bank, and the Golan Heights. Why didn't he? Clearly, because he would have had to explain not only why Israel had won the Sinai, but why it had returned it to Egypt as part of the Camp David Accords. That return of 95% of the territory Israel won in the Six-Day War does not fit Erdogan's narrative of an aggressive Israel, always increasing its size at the expense of the inoffensive Arabs. It would not do to dwell on Israel's return of the Sinai. Such a map of Israel after the Six-Day War might also raise another point of discussion: how did that war start? For surely that matters; the ultimate disposition of territories won in wars of self-defense is different from territories taken in wars of aggression. Many may not know that the Six-Day War was begun by Egypt's President Nasser, who in mid-May announced his intention to march into Israel. He announced to hysterical Cairene crowds that he would soon be destroying the Zionists; hundreds of thousands cheered, expressing their unbridled bloodlust. He demanded, and got from the UN's Secretary-General U Thant, the removal of U.N. peacekeeping troops in the Sinai. He moved tens of thousands of troops into the

northern Sinai. He instituted a blockade of Israeli ships at the Straits of Tiran, thus cutting off Israel's trade lifeline to Asia. He forced Israel into a war it had not wanted, but was prepared to fight. And we all know the spectacular results of that quintessential war of self-defense.

Erdogan's fourth map showed Israel in 2019, and an ever-shrinking "Palestine" (Filistin). Now most of the territory from the Jordan to the sea was shown as "Israel." The only parts that still were controlled by the Palestinians were Gaza (which Erdogan knows that Israel withdrew from completely in 2005, but again, he did not wish to draw attention to that voluntary withdrawal), and a series of discontinuous splotches of green, indicating Palestinian villages and cities in the West Bank. We thus were led by Erdogan's presentation to believe that the Arab "Palestine" of 1947 (that was, in fact, Mandatory Palestine, assigned to the Jewish National Home), shrank under Zionist blows to become a mere rump state, consisting of Gaza and a pitiful handful of Arab population centers in the West Bank.

But aside from this historical travesty, in which the history of modern Israel is presented as a series of unprovoked aggressions by Jews against innocent Arabs, and the Mandate for Palestine misrepresented as if it had been created to ensure not a Jewish, but an Arab state of Palestine from the river to the sea, the most intolerable part of Erdogan's New York visit was that pre-UN speech in which he compared the treatment of Arabs by Jews as similar to what the Nazis did to the Jews. What could be more offensive to the Jews of Israel, many of whom are descendants of those who managed to survive the Nazi murders? Or come to think of it, what could be more offensive to decent people everywhere?

Erdogan's comparison is grotesque. The Nazis rounded up Jews in every country that the Germans conquered. They killed them with poison gas in death camps and in mobile killing vans. They shot hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children,

positioning their victims on the edges of huge pits into which they would fall. Some were buried alive. They burned people alive in crematoria. They stuffed Jews into cattle cars, on long journeys from which only a handful would survive, the rest having frozen to death, or been suffocated, or starved to death. Children were tossed into the air by bored German soldiers, looking for a little fun, who would then shoot them in front of their parents. Jewish prisoners were forced to fight each other; the loser was immediately killed; the winner then had to fight another prisoner, knowing that when he eventually lost, he, too, would be killed. Fun! Some Jews were hung, others were forced to run onto electrified fences, others torn apart by ravenous guard dogs, beaten to death, or made to undergo hideous "medical experiments" by the sadistic Dr. Mengele and his associates. That was how the Nazis treated the Jews: tormented them, tortured them, murdered them in a dozen horrible ways. Keep that history steadily in mind when someone like Erdogan has the indecency to compare Israelis to Nazis.

Does Israel do anything to its Arab citizens akin to what the Nazis did to Jews? The Arabs in Israel enjoy full civil, religious, and political rights. They serve in the Knesset, on the Israeli Supreme Court, in the diplomatic corps. They even serve, but only if they wish to, in the Israeli Defense Forces, where some have become officers. But what, you might ask, of the "Palestinians" in Gaza and the West Bank? Are they treated by Israelis as the Nazis treated Jews? The terrorist groups in Gaza, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, have hurled hundreds of rockets into Israel. Were the Israelis like the Nazis, they would have demolished Gaza and everyone in it. When Israel retaliates against such attacks, it takes great care to try to avoid civilian casualties, especially by using its "knock on the roof" technique, the IDF's practice of dropping non-explosive or low-yield devices on certain roofs to warn civilians to leave a building that will soon be hit. Inevitably, given the terrorist tactic of deliberately firing

rockets at Israel from civilian areas, there will be some unavoidable civilian victims. But while Israel does everything it can to avoid such casualties, the "Palestinians," on the other hand, fire indiscriminately into Israeli towns and cities, hoping to kill as many Jews as possible. Who in this conflict are more like the Nazis?

Does Israel teach hatred of the Arabs in its schools, or inculcate such hatred on children's television programs? No, it does not. The Israeli government goes out of its way to stress the politics of tolerance, to encourage Jewish-Arab cooperation in schools, workplaces, hospitals. It is the Palestinians alone who inculcate a murderous hatred of the Jews. It is the Palestinians who broadcast children's television shows where young children announce their determination to kill Jews and are praised by their adult supervisors. But none of that has made an impression on the determinedly antisemitic President Erdogan.

Not even when Arab terrorists, who have murdered Israelis, are caught, does Israel impose capital punishment. In the entire history of Israel, only one person has ever received capital punishment – Adolf Eichmann.

Where are those death camps, those mobile gas vans, those mass killings of Arabs, those crematoria, those railroad cars, that teaching of race hatred, that make Israel's treatment of the Arabs, as Erdogan insists, akin to the Nazis in their treatment of the Jews? Nowhere to be found. Even terrorist murderers receive more humane treatment in Israeli jails than do those who, for any reason, are imprisoned in Arab, Iranian, or Pakistani jails.

It would be salutary if an Israeli spokesman, well-versed in the art of hasbara, could appear at some public forum – even the U.N itself – to rebut Erdogan's charges. First, that spokesman should meticulously take apart those maps used as props by the Turkish president, beginning with the colossal

dishonesty of his initial misrepresentation, in depicting Mandatory Palestine as an Arab “Filistin,” when the whole point of that Mandate was to create the Jewish National Home. That deliberate error should be constantly re-emphasized, as the spokesman goes through the various wars thrust on Israel: the 1948-49 war that the Arabs started (with five Arab armies invading Israel), the 1967 war that the Arabs again started (when Nasser had the U.N. peacekeepers removed, sent tens of thousands of troops into the northern Sinai, and blockaded the Straits of Tiran), the 1973 war that the Arabs yet again started (with a surprise attack on Yom Kippur), right up to the last map, by which Erdogan meant to horrify us with the amount of territory that Israel now, in 2019, manages to possess. But the sequence of Erdogan’s maps began by depicting “Palestine” instead of, as it should have, the Jewish state that was supposed to extend from the Jordan to the sea. Nowadays, because it won three wars of self-defense, Israel has come almost full circle, and is now closer than ever before to the original territorial intentions of those who created the Mandate for Palestine. That’s a result to celebrate rather than deplore, but better not do it, I think, in the excitable presence of that malign padishah, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

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