

To question Israel's legitimacy is to question reality itself



by Conrad Black

Western society, including Canada, must very soon face up to the full gravity of the widespread antisemitic demonstrations that are occurring in major public squares and universities. No attempt to represent these demonstrations as simply manifestations of sympathy for the stateless Palestinians can be allowed to become conventional wisdom. What it is important for the entire West to realize is that those who are now demonstrating in favour of Palestine are seeking the

extermination of Israel and that in doing so they are implicitly approving the slaughter of Israeli civilians and particularly the sadistic mutilation and murder of children and women.

The Israelis are absolutely right to see this as a mortal threat and that it is the sacred duty of the people of Israel to vindicate the blood oath it swore after approximately half of the entire Jewish population of the world was massacred in the death camps of Nazi Germany. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was right to state that his people have paid a horrible price for their millennia of vulnerability and that the Jews would now show the world that they will never again be massacred as helpless victims of genocidal murderers. It was horrifyingly and unimaginably the satanic usurpers of the civilization of Goethe and Beethoven that set out to destroy the European Jews. As Mr. Churchill said: "The long night of Nazi barbarism... was made more sinister and more protracted by the lights of perverted science."

It is not just the Jews but all civilized people who must now agree: "Never again." Those who desecrate our public places and poison our universities, both by racist malice and by silent cowardice, must understand that the world knows that the Palestine they seek is one built on the funeral pyre of an Israel transformed into a death camp and the methods of Hamas that they are implicitly extolling are, if anything, even more wicked and more inexcusable than the heinous crimes of the Nazis and their collaborators. What is afoot is such a colossal evil it is a deadly challenge to the moral soul of western civilization. Fortunately, it is not being led by a great military and industrial power like Germany, and Israel possesses the ability to teach Hamas a lesson the world will not forget.

Palestine has repeatedly been offered statehood by successive Israeli governments over the last 25 years. Since the British effectively promised Palestine in 1917, when it was in the

hands of the Turks, to both the Jews and the Palestinian Arabs (Muslim and Christian), there was never going to be a solution that did not involve two states, one Jewish and one Palestinian, even though the Palestinians are, to put it charitably, a questionable nationality. They are in fact Arabs who happened to live in what is now Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. Their claim is based on British promises, not a distinct nationality with a long presence in Israel.

The Jews have been in the land of Israel for 5,700 years, though prior to about 1500 BC, the history of the Jews is highly folkloric. The Arabs did not arrive until the seventh century A.D. and various caliphates contested with each other, and with the Jews and Byzantines and West European Crusaders for control of the area until it was taken over by the Turks in the early 16th century and then by the British and French from the end of the First World War until shortly after the Second World War. Israel had been an independent kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon and some of their successors, but thereafter was generally governed by the Babylonians, Persians, Romans, though Rome allowed Herod and some others to exercise local authority. But the idea that any entity that could be described as Palestinian has ever governed anything in Israel is bunk.

The Jews have a continuous partial occupancy of Israel for all of reliably recorded history and since the Palestinian leadership has long had the ability to achieve statehood at almost any time they wished, they have made it clear that what they want, demand, and claim to be entitled to, is a Palestinian state that completely supersedes and dissolves the State of Israel and subjugates, expels, or kills all Jews in Israel. Apart from the five co-founding permanent Security Council members of the United Nations, (the United States, United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia tenuously as the principal heir to the Soviet Union), Israel is the world's most legitimate country: it was explicitly founded by the

United Nations as a Jewish state on the expiry of the former League of Nations Palestine Mandate in 1948 on the motion of the USSR and the U.S. The Arabs tried unsuccessfully to strangle Israel in its cradle in 1948 and tried again in 1967 and 1973.

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat recognized Israel in 1978 and for his trouble was assassinated by militants in his own country in 1981. King Hussein of Jordan, and more recently the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain have made their peace with Israel also. The Palestinian claim to statehood was accepted in principle by Israel from the mid-1990's on.

The Palestinian leadership seems to have lost sight of the fact that the Arab powers have no great affection for the Palestinians and really only kept this issue simmering to distract the Arab masses from the misgovernment most of them suffered from. And since the Arabs' ancient foes, Turkey, after the Europeans shortsightedly slammed the door in its face, and Iran after the Carter administration had foolishly assisted in replacing the pro-Western Shah with the deranged totalitarian theocracy that succeeded him, began encroaching on the Arab powers, they have steadily warmed to the idea of Israel as a natural ally, as it is a phenomenal national success story and has absolutely no designs on Arab territory beyond the present boundaries of Israel.

On one side of this argument is Israel which has been transformed in one lifetime from an indigent desert to a first world state of great scientific and intellectual sophistication, and on the other a tragic and poorly defined castaway group who have been manipulated by outside powers, particularly in recent years Iran, and upon whose behalf insanely impractical demands are being made for the suppression of the State of Israel on no plausible grounds of international law, historic right, or the local correlation of forces. The Palestinians have no right to claim anything more than what Israel has already offered them many times, although

a vigorous discussion could properly be conducted over the exact borders of a Palestinian state.

The Japanese did not attack civilians at Pearl Harbor and Osama bin Laden did not dispute the right of the United States to exist. The Israelis are fighting for their lives and though most of us don't yet realize it, we are fighting for our souls, and we do not now have statesmen of the stature of Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt and Charles de Gaulle to lead us.

But we must grasp the profound moral danger of this time: we cannot tolerate any hypocritical fatuities about "proportionality." (No one said anything about that to the Americans after 9/11.) Israel asks no one to fight its battles but we must leave the Israelis in no doubt that they have the blessing of the entire civilized world in destroying those who would destroy them. And we must clean up the intellectual rot and corruption in our own house; this is a Manichaeian life-and-death struggle between good and evil, and there must be no ambiguity on whose side all the West stands; we must deal, bloodlessly but severely, with our own enemy within.

First published in the [National Post](#)