

NEVER SURRENDER

COUNTERING DENIAL, DISTORTION, AND COMPLICITY

AVI ABRAHAM BENLOLO

NEVER SURRENDER
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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my children, Chaiel, Talia and Ariella; my family and friends who stand with me in this fight for truth and justice and my friend and mentor, Holocaust Survivor, Max Eisen (Z'l').

“In my presentations, I speak about the lessons that every individual must internalize, and the need for vigilance to prevent hate from disrupting, distorting, and endangering our societies. We must all be alert to the dangers of hatred and speak out against discrimination, and defend the fairness and openness of a free and democratic society with rules of law to sustain it” – Max Eisen, Holocaust Survivor, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Innocence ended on October 7th, 2023. Unprovoked, Hamas attacked Israel, brutally murdered 1,200 people in a matter of hours. It was the largest, most significant, murderous campaign of pure evil since the Holocaust. Up until that moment, Israelis felt safe and secure, believing they were protected. Soon after, despite these heinous crimes, the international community began turning on Israel and Antisemitism surged across the globe. Eyes were opened exposing the duplicity, denials and even complicity with Israel's enemies. The innocence was lost, but Israel and the Jewish people and their allies were emboldened. Those with open eyes recognized this was not only a fight against Israel, but against freedom and democracy itself.

The articles contained in this book are the “essentials” of my writings that aim to “wake up” the world to the dangers that can impact everyone. They encourage the reader to “never surrender” to the forces of hatred, to recognize them and most importantly, to act. To not be silent or silenced. What follows is a collection of edited articles previously published in the National Post and other papers who have generously given me a platform. I humbly thank my friends at the National Post, including my good friend, Paul Godfrey and its editors and publishers.

To my family and friends, you are my strength that carries me forward in this work every single day. Your conviction and courage to support this effort, to speak out and to stand alongside me is a beacon of hope for all humanity. As long as people like us stand, we will never surrender again to the forces of darkness. The loss of our innocence has only emboldened and strengthened our conviction. Am Israel Chai.

- Avi Abraham Benlolo, March 2024

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CHAPTER 1

JEWISH RESILIENCE

WE JEWS AREN'T GOING ANYWHERE

Synopsis: Your silence and complicity after the murder of our children and the rape of our women on Oct. 7 have given rise to a new generation. In case you haven't noticed, our youth are proudly wearing the Jewish Star of David around their necks. We are strengthening our Zionism and commitment to the State of Israel. Unlike you, we are not afraid.

Dear World, enough with your slander and defamation.

We're fed up with your ghettos, crusades, inquisitions, and genocides. You were silent then, as you are now, when we're attacked, beaten, raped, and murdered. Your denial, distortion, and collaboration with those wishing us harm have become unbearable.

Despite our substantial contributions to society, you persist in attempting to marginalize and ostracize us, solely because we are Jewish. Take Leah Goldstein, for instance — a shining star, multiple award-winner, and the first female in Race Across America history to secure first place overall in the solo division. Yet, you disinvite her from speaking at a women's event. Why? Because she defended Israel's freedom and democracy and/or because she is Jewish?

World, your boundless hatred, particularly on the international stage, was evident just two weeks ago when you falsely accused us of genocide at the International Court of Justice. This, despite our right to self-defense against Palestinian murderers. Your quick condemnation sharply contrasts with your lethargic or nonexistent response to

conflicts involving other nations. Where were you when Syria was obliterating 500,000 of its own people?

Throughout history, you have attempted everything to eradicate us. But in case you haven't noticed, we've had enough, and we are fighting back. We are doing so in dignity and with this history in mind. Are you shocked that we, the supposedly weak and destitute that you have subjugated, have taken control of our destiny?

Your silence and complicity after the murder of our children and the rape of our women on Oct. 7 have given rise to a new generation. In case you haven't noticed, our youth are proudly wearing the Jewish Star of David around their necks. We are strengthening our Zionism and commitment to the State of Israel. Unlike you, we are not afraid.

Discrimination against us is a daily occurrence — in the workplace, neighborhoods, businesses, media, university campuses, unions, and the international arena. Yet, like Leah, we persevere, our heads held high, we focus on building a future. Israel's success stands as a testament to our ability to rise above the hate you give.

We care less about what you think. We will defend ourselves at the ICJ, fight back at the United Nations, in the media, and on university campuses. We will not allow your historic hate without pushing back. Rally in support of terror against us, call for our demise — adults who should know better about protecting their children should find that embarrassing.

I walked the grounds of where the Nova Party was held where you slaughtered almost 300 of our best and brightest. Their ashes are seeped into the ground. It reminded me of the grounds of Auschwitz, Majdanek, Sobibor and dozens of death camps where we were also gassed and burned.

We've had enough of your shameful behavior, dear world. Our heads are held high despite your unfair attacks. Maybe you can learn something from Leah Goldstein's closing plea: "I hope that humans can learn to treat each other with respect and love."

ZIONISM IS A BADGE OF HONOUR

Synopsis: Regardless of political inclinations, if being a Zionist implies standing up for human rights, it should be regarded as a badge of honour. Those working to defame and delegitimize Israel, and, by extension, the Jewish people often falsely portray Zionism as a movement supporting racism and colonization.

A media firestorm erupted when actress Scarlett Johansson faced widespread criticism in Egypt for being labeled a Zionist. This controversy stemmed from Johansson's release of a YouTube video on December 1, 2020, calling for the release of four human rights activists arrested after hosting foreign diplomats to discuss the human rights situation in Egypt.

Despite Johansson's calls being supported by the United Nations, numerous foreign governments, human rights organizations, and other celebrities, her Jewish identity became a focal point for many in the Egyptian media and on social platforms, branding her as an enemy of the people.

Regardless of political inclinations, if being a Zionist implies standing up for human rights, it should be regarded as a badge of honour. Those working to defame and delegitimize Israel, and, by extension, the Jewish people often falsely portray Zionism as a movement supporting racism and colonization.

In truth, Zionism is rooted in the belief that the Jewish people have a right to return to their ancestral homeland to live in peace and harmony with their neighbors. It inspired the establishment of the only

true democracy in the Middle East, a region largely ruled by tyrannical regimes.

Today, Israel stands as a nation celebrating and promoting equal rights for all, irrespective of race, religion, or gender. It adheres to Western legal standards, upholds freedom of the press, free speech, freedom of movement and assembly, and champions gay rights.

Zionism, as an ideology, has created a Jewish state with a robust democratic debate, criticized by some for being overly democratic. Diplomatic normalization with Israel by Arab states like Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Sudan indicates acceptance and collaboration against rogue regimes, particularly in Iran.

While various ethnic and religious groups globally have struggled for their freedom, the Jewish people have uniquely faced repeated international reprimands for rebuilding their homeland. The Jewish state emerged in 1948, following the Holocaust, demonstrating resilience and a commitment to creating a modern state emphasizing tolerance, justice, and human rights.

Israel, like any nation, is a work in progress. Recent years have witnessed a remarkable development - young and energetic Israeli Arabs, Christians, Bedouins, and Druze actively participating in Israel's military and diplomatic corps, representing the country globally. Individuals like Muhamed Heib, Lorena Khateeb, and Ambassador George Deek exemplify this diversity and positive change.

These shifts within Israeli society reflect optimism, excitement, and motivation among its citizens. Initiatives like Yoseph Haddad's non-profit organization, Vouch for Each Other, demonstrate a commitment to promoting integration among all Israeli citizens, bridging various sectors.

Israel's diversity, openness, democracy, economic, scientific, and military successes, coupled with the Abraham Accords, signify a positive shift in the Middle East. The seeds of a more peaceful and prosperous future had already started to sprout before October 7th 2023. It is hoped that those spreading hate against advocates like Scarlett Johansson will be the last remnants of an outdated mindset that has perpetuated violence and hatred for too long.

HISTORY REPEATS BUT WE FIGHT FOR ISRAEL

Synopsis: If history repeats itself, it's repeating itself here and now. The Jewish people have seen this movie before. The media turns against them, propagandizing false narratives: Israel is attacking Gaza. Israel is committing genocide. Israel is occupying Palestine. Israel is blockading Gaza and committing ethnic cleansing.

In current times, we honor non-Jews who saved their Jewish neighbors during the Holocaust. In 100 years, will we honor those who stood up for the Jewish state — the embodiment of the Jewish people — during these times? We venerate and uplift those who refused to be bystanders or “useful idiots” during the slaughter of the six million; Raoul Wallenberg, Irena Sendler, Chiune Sugihara, and countless others who shall remain nameless saw behind the evil Nazi mask. They refused to go along to get along at great personal risk. They spoke up. They spoke out. They refused to be silent in action and deed.

During the Holocaust, Nazism was normalized. In the eyes of millions of Germans and other Europeans, the Jewish people were denigrated, dehumanized, and marginalized, giving way to their murder. Parades took place in Berlin and across Germany with hundreds of thousands of youths and adults alike clamoring to cheer Adolf Hitler as he drove by in his motorcade. The photos of their smiling and excited faces as they raised their arms in the Nazi salute reveal either their complicity or sheer ignorance. As we look back now,

we often ask how it was possible for millions of people to have fallen for Hitler.

The Nazi rallies in Nuremberg that brought together formations of youths and soldiers showed how easily a society can normalize evil. Photographs exist of Jews being led out of their towns to their slaughter while their neighbors cheered and spat on them. Father Patrick Desbois carefully documented hundreds of villages scattered across Eastern Europe where non-Jews turned against their Jewish neighbors and literally walked them to the ravine down the street and shot them into the pits they had dug for them hours before.

If history repeats itself, it's repeating itself here and now. The Jewish people have seen this movie before. The media turns against them, propagandizing false narratives: Israel is attacking Gaza. Israel is committing genocide. Israel is occupying Palestine. Israel is blockading Gaza and committing ethnic cleansing.

Politicians grandstand by calling on their nations to stop selling arms to Israel and increase aid to the Palestinians. Universities and their equity departments make false accusations, asserting that Israel is a colonial state.

The promotion of false narratives against the Jewish state and by extension, the Jewish people, is an effort to reduce them to a level that makes it acceptable for the public to engage in violent anti-Semitism and, more seriously, to commit genocide against the Jewish state itself. What we are witnessing in the surge of anti-Semitism on social media platforms and violent incidents across the world is a normalization effect that legitimizes attacks on Jewish people, not unlike Nazism. Incidents of anti-Semitism have skyrocketed, particularly affecting Millennials and young children.

For all those righteous groups that are siding with Hamas-led Gaza, shame on them for their ignorance and complicity in evil. The Nazis

did not hide their agenda to eradicate the Jewish people. Neither does Hamas. For anyone who professes to have expertise in equity, diversity, and anti-racism initiatives to be ignorant of the mission statement and charter of Hamas — the Islamic Resistance Movement — makes them enablers of the anti-Semitism and hatred now leveled against Jewish communities worldwide.

How could anyone who professes to promote human rights agree to the following statement in the Hamas charter: “The time will not come until Muslims will fight the Jews (and kill them); until the Jews hide behind rocks and trees, which will cry: O’Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him!”

If you believe Hamas is a peaceful movement, its charter has something to say about that as well: “Peace initiatives, the so-called peaceful solutions, and the international conferences to resolve the Palestinian problem, are all contrary to the beliefs of the Islamic Resistance Movement ... the Movement educates its members to adhere to its principles and to raise the banner of Allah over their homeland as they fight their jihad.”

If you are standing with the pro-Palestinian movement that supports Hamas, at the very least, you should declare fealty to its charter and to violent jihad. Why have this masquerade of false assertions relating to the “occupation” (which is untrue because Israel does not occupy Gaza); or historically ignorant assertions that Jews are colonizers of their own land (there is evidence of Jewish history on the land but little if any of Palestinian nationhood); or that Israel is a “racist apartheid” state (completely invalidated by the international community).

If you believe in Hamas and its stated goal in its own charter of “waging Jihad against the enemy” — why not simply declare yourself as such? Say it.

The right to self-defense is the most basic human right. Israel has every right and an obligation to defend its citizens against a terrorist organization. In my naïve worldview, I cannot see how anyone in their right mind can align themselves with a radical jihadi group that espouses violence. Neither can I understand how anyone can join anti-Semitic protests around the world — especially if they are aligned with anti-racism and anti-discrimination movements.

In almost every protest, posters are shown depicting Jews as Nazis and calling for their genocide in the state of Israel. At a car rally in London, England, one protester called for the raping of Jewish girls. Is this the movement you want to be aligned with?

If there is one thing we have learned from history, it is that it does repeat. No matter the logic provided, or the counterarguments given, those who are bent on destroying the Jewish people will try to normalize their crimes and propagate them. They will overlook anti-Semitism. They will convolute news and information and set forth new policies in their institutions that advance the anti-Jewish agenda.

History has shown that what starts with the Jews won't end with them.

HITLER IS GONE. WE ARE HERE

Synopsis: Once a year we pause to reflect on Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day). But the rest of the year, we must fight back vigorously, passionately and with conviction. Never Again is our battle cry. It's an action of defiance. We are here. Hitler is not.

With the rising tide of antisemitism, we have come to believe that the words, "Never Again" have become meaningless.

How could it possibly be that some 80 years after the Holocaust, that there is a violent resurgence of Antisemitism? We suffer from this

pernicious hatred in the Palestinian territories where authorities incite and school curriculum motivates hate. We feel it on university campuses where our children face faculty who dare call them colonizers and fellow students run boycott campaigns against the Jewish state. And we see the silence and complicity of our political leaders who look away from rallies like Al Quds Day where pro-Palestinian demonstrators call for our destruction.

The more jaded and indifferent we become about renewing our famous call of Never Again, the harder it will become to fight back. As we stand here in Poland to mark the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, our enemies are circling ever closer. They think they smell blood. This week, the greatest exporter of hate and antisemitism, the Islamic Republic of Iran, boldly declared that it would flatten Tel Aviv and Haifa. Words become deeds Holocaust survivors were taught, and those who ignore threats are at the mercy of purveyors of hate.

A confluence of events enabled Hitler, a psychopath who rose to the top of the political elite in Germany. Some blame Germany's failing economy. Others say that Hitler lifted German pride after its defeat in the First World War and the reparations it was forced to pay the allies. His hatred of the Jewish people played into centuries-old antisemitic canards that empowered him and propelled him to leadership and eventual license to the murder of Six Million Jews, while the rest of the world looked away (sound familiar?).

When we stand on the hallowed grounds of Auschwitz, where 1.2 million Jews and some non-Jews were brutally beaten, gassed and burned, we reflect on the indifference and silence that once again stands before us today. We reflect on a world on the brink of disaster as countries like Russia freely invade a democratic country (Ukraine) and brutalize its population. We think about the danger to the world with a nuclearized Iran, a destabilized Pakistan and North Korea and an expansionist China poised to attack Taiwan.

Instability, fear, poverty and despair drive mass populations into the cold embrace of psychopaths, as was the case in Germany. Add vicious and historic antisemitism to the mix and make it permissible and you end up with genocide. Sadly, our world hasn't changed much since the Holocaust and in recent years, the Jewish world, and its friends (and we have many non-Jewish allies) are coming to terms with this dire reality. But it's this reality that should and must embolden us to fight.

Once a year we pause to reflect on Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day). But the rest of the year, we must fight back vigorously, passionately and with conviction. Imagine what a Jew must have felt like during the Spanish Inquisition? When he or she were accused of causing Black Death by poisoning the wells in England? How about the Jew who had to run from angry mobs following Sunday mass, when he or she was accused of deicide? We cannot imagine how fellow Parisian Jews felt when their hero, Colonel Alfred Dreyfus was falsely accused of treason and stripped of his medals.

We can never imagine the fear and instability a Jew felt like in those dark days. The difference between now and then is that today the Jewish State has our back.

When I stand by the railway tracks at Auschwitz where Jews were offloaded from trains in the middle of the night, separated from their families and gassed and forced into slavery. I speak in the very spot my friend and Holocaust Survivor, Max Eisen stood and retell his story to my delegation of Canadians and Americans. The heavens open above. A ray of light breaks the darkness and streaks across the tracks. I smile because we won. Never Again is our battle cry. It's an action of defiance. We are here. Hitler is not.

**THE ASSASSINATION OF YITZHAK RABIN WAS THE
JEWISH WORLD'S 'JFK MOMENT'**

Synopsis: For everyone who shared this brief moment in time, who participated in a memorial rally years ago, who sang the “Song for Peace” at the rally the night Rabin was shot and who continue to impart his message of hope and peace to the next generation — you might be wondering, where do we go from here?

In 1995, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in cold blood. And so were the dreams of peace in the Middle East.

It was a beautiful sunny autumn day in Washington, D.C. The world was watching with anticipation as leaders gathered on the White House lawn. We were filled with hope and awareness about witnessing a historical moment, which was capped by a now-infamous handshake and what promised to be a new chapter that would end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

That fateful day on Sept. 13, 1993, could not have been more exciting for me, having just started my career in the Jewish community. My earliest recollection as a child was seeing my father in army fatigues coming home from the brutal Yom Kippur War. The possibility of losing my father to war left me with an indelible impression and a longing for peace.

And so, the signing of the Oslo Accords and the Declaration of Principles was cause for hope. Little did I know that just two years later, I would be thrust into organizing a 5,000-plus person memorial for Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at the Centennial Arena in Toronto. Rabin’s assassination by a fellow Jew hit the Jewish community like a bulldozer. Young students cried, sang, and lit candles outside the arena. They shared their shattered hopes and dreams for the future.

It’s incomprehensible to think that nearly 30 years later, a full generation of Palestinians and Israelis have grown up without having witnessed the pledges for peace that were made on that day in

Washington. They missed the part where PLO leader Yasser Arafat promised U.S. President Bill Clinton and the Palestinian people that he would promote the “values for freedom, justice and human rights.” His promise to “usher in an age of peace, co-existence and equal rights” meant nothing. It flew in the face of his handshake with Rabin, and Clinton’s warm embrace.

Rabin was often criticized for what many said was naivete for believing Arafat wanted to make peace with Israel. However, Rabin’s grim face during the signing and reluctant handshake revealed that the deal pained him. A former war hero, he knew his enemy well but decided to give peace a chance. In his remarks, Rabin explained that he was determined to “put an end to hostilities so that our children, our children’s children, will no longer experience the painful cost of war, violence, and terror.”

He held up his end of the bargain for two years and on Sept. 28, 1995 — just one month before his assassination — he agreed to move to the next stage of the Oslo Accords, the Interim Agreement. It marked the conclusion of the first stage of negotiations between Israel and the PLO. Its main objective was to broaden Palestinian self-government in the West Bank through an elected self-governing authority, in order to foster a new era of cooperation and peaceful co-existence.

But while Arafat called violence “morally reprehensible” at the signing ceremony, nothing was further from the truth. Like the fable about a scorpion who can’t help himself and kills the frog that is carrying him across the water, Arafat would use his foothold in Ramallah to plunge his people into a war of attrition with Israel. Through his divisive actions, he lost control of the Gaza Strip, giving rise to a mini terrorist state now run by Hamas.

Months after Rabin’s death, a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up on a bus in Jerusalem, killing 17 civilians and wounding 48.

A month later, another killer blew himself up outside the Dizengoff Center in Tel Aviv, killing 13 people and wounding 130. The chaos of dozens of suicide bombings continued well into the 2000s. They included the horrific attack on the dolphinarium in which 21 youths were killed and the Sbarro attack in central Jerusalem in which 15 civilians were killed, including seven children.

Perhaps Rabin foresaw what would happen should the peace process derail. In his last moments of life, on Nov. 4, 1995, he still held out hope for peace despite the public and political pressure. In his final speech at a peace rally in Tel Aviv's main square (now called Rabin Square), he said, "There are enemies of peace who are trying to hurt us in order to torpedo the peace process. I want to say bluntly that we have found a partner for peace among the Palestinians as well. The PLO, which was an enemy, has ceased to engage in terrorism."

Moments later, following the singing of the classic Hebrew melody, the "Song for Peace," Rabin was shot by a Jewish assailant who wanted to stop the peace process. He did. For Israelis and the Jewish world, this was their JFK moment. Time stood still. The pain of betrayal by one of their own still haunts the nation. But Israel's quest for peace hasn't abated.

And so, for everyone who shared this brief moment in time, who participated in a memorial rally years ago, who sang the "Song for Peace" at the rally the night Rabin was shot and who continue to impart his message of hope and peace to the next generation — you might be wondering, where do we go from here?

We go to where the wisdom of sages points us in sacred text. They instructed that even while it may not be our responsibility to finish the work of perfecting the world, even when cut short as in the case of Rabin, we are not free to desist from it either. And thus, it is up to us to

carry this work forward and to never give up on making peace. As Rabin aptly said, “The path of peace is preferable to war.”

THE BDS MOVEMENT'S FAILURES: A TRIUMPH FOR ISRAEL

Synopsis: Over the past two decades, Israel has emerged as a global economic powerhouse, ranking high in technology, venture capital, and research. Forbes notes that Israel finds itself among the top 20 economies globally, boasting a per capita GDP of \$43.7 thousand (USD), according to data from the International Monetary Fund.

In today's heightened awareness of human rights issues, it is crucial to choose just causes. Unfortunately, in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, some social activists lend support to a tyrannical Palestinian regime responsible for human rights abuses against its own people.

This misguided activism, often witnessed on university campuses, sees well-intentioned individuals aligning with Palestinian groups decrying human rights abuses while simultaneously promoting terrorism, inciting hatred, and persecuting dissidents.

Conversely, Israel stands out by celebrating the largest Pride parade in the Middle East and demonstrating commitment to women's rights, freedom, and democracy. Acknowledging Israel's imperfections, its remarkable social progress in a region marked by hostility and tyranny prompts reflection on which country deserves support from human rights defenders.

In the recent international controversy involving Ben & Jerry's, some argued that the company succumbed to pressure from the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. However, despite positioning itself as akin to the boycott campaign against

apartheid in South Africa, the BDS movement has failed miserably in its attempt to economically weaken Israel.

Over the past two decades, Israel has emerged as a global economic powerhouse, ranking high in technology, venture capital, and research. Forbes notes that Israel finds itself among the top 20 economies globally, boasting a per capita GDP of \$43.7 thousand (USD), according to data from the International Monetary Fund.

The BDS movement's frustration is palpable, as its efforts to isolate, marginalize, and criminalize Israel have not deterred international investment and partnerships. In a significant rebuke to Ben & Jerry's, Unilever publicly rejected any form of discrimination, emphasized its rejection of BDS, and expressed its ongoing commitment to investing in Israel's economy and society.

Even Israel's neighboring countries have recognized the double standards and defamatory tactics of the BDS movement. The Abraham Accords have facilitated billions of dollars in trade between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco over the last year, emphasizing that trade, not boycotts, leads to peace.

The BDS movement's alignment with the 1967 Arab League Summit's outdated stance of "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with Israel" reflects a stagnant approach that has failed to bring about positive change in the Middle East. The world has moved beyond such archaic attitudes, embracing increased dialogue and natural partnerships through trade.

The BDS movement's resemblance to historical boycotts against Jewish communities reveals a troubling pattern of singling out the Jewish state. To boycott Israel is to target the embodiment of the Jewish people, ignoring their historic connection to their homeland. Israel's existence stands as a triumph over historic adversities, rejecting hate and intolerance.

In conclusion, Israel's resilience and progress serve as a testament to overcoming challenges. Proudly supporting the State of Israel becomes a rejection of hate and intolerance, reinforcing the commitment to a hopeful and free future. Thanks to Ben & Jerry's for inadvertently inspiring continued support for the Jewish State.

THE RESILIENCE OF ISRAELI WOMEN

Synopsis: Despite the shameful silence of women's groups in the international community, Jewish women in Israel are reclaiming their voices. Recently, thousands joined together to sing "I am Titanium," defiantly standing up for each other, their daughters, and their families. They embody a beacon of hope, resilience, and strength for those who truly and honestly celebrate International Women's Day.

Human rights are women's rights. International Women's Day serves as a celebration of the rights, freedoms, and aspirations for equality held by all women. However, a disturbing exception emerged for Jewish women in the aftermath of the rapes and mutilations perpetrated by Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023.

The atrocities committed against young Jewish women, particularly at the Nova Music Festival, the adjacent highway (as they fled or hid), and at the nearby village (a Kibbutz) called Be'eri, represented the epitome of evil. The denial of these crimes provoked international campaigns, compelling Jewish women to re-enact the travesty in American cities, simply to get the attention of the world to recognize this truth.

Nearly six months after this tragic day, one of the most barbaric attacks since the Holocaust, the UN's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, having spent two weeks in Israel, finally released a scathing report on the heinous sexual crimes

committed by Hamas against Israeli women on Oct. 7 and the days following, as hostages in Gaza.

I am one of those critics who argues that the response from the UN is deemed too little too late. UN Women, a United Nations organization, failed to condemn the sexual assaults in the weeks and months following the attack. Notably, the organization has yet to incorporate Patten's report on Jewish rapes into its website, despite acknowledging the toll on women in Gaza. The unsettling exclusion of Jewish women by UN Women raises concerns about the organization's commitment to addressing all instances of sexual violence impartially.

Still, the UN's press conference on the report's findings, is crucial for highlighting the sexual violence experienced by Israeli women. However, it's release should have coincided with International Women's Day. Instead, it occurred several days earlier, with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, instrumental in condemning Israel even days after the Hamas assault, notably absent.

By withholding the report's findings on International Women's Day, the United Nations once again downplayed the atrocities against Jewish women, perpetuating a double victimization of the rapes by not adequately acknowledging their plight. It's no wonder that Patten's press conference saw sparse attendance.

Nevertheless, Patten's findings, powerful and significant, deserved attention. Her team's investigation revealed instances of rape and gang rape at the three locations, with victims subjected to sexual violence before their tragic deaths.

A concerning pattern of organized, systematic, and premeditated sexual violence across multiple locations was identified, indicative of intent and possible training by Hamas to weaponize sexual violence as part of its assault — a clear war crime. Victims were found either fully

or partially undressed, bound, and shot, with evidence of sexualized torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

Patten highlighted severe violations at the Nova Music Festival site, including brutal mass murders, with several hundred bodies recovered and numerous abductions reported. Sexual violence was also committed against Israeli women taken hostage by Hamas to Gaza, where 134 Israelis, many of them young women, remain captive. Families continue to plead for their release, fearing sexual abuse by their captors.

Due to justified distrust in Israelis towards the United Nations, Patten couldn't interview rape survivors. Jewish women and Israel, however, do not require validation from Patten or a biased UN organization to recognize the atrocities. The UN General Assembly has yet to condemn Hamas for these heinous crimes.

Despite the shameful silence of women's groups in the international community, Jewish women in Israel are reclaiming their voices. Recently, thousands joined together to sing "I am Titanium," defiantly standing up for each other, their daughters, and their families. They embody a beacon of hope, resilience, and strength for those who truly and honestly celebrate International Women's Day.

CHAPTER 2

ANTISEMITISM

ANTI-ZIONISM IS ANTISEMITISM

Synopsis: Those claiming Zionism is racism deny the historical connection of the Jewish people to their land and perpetuate a form of racism by asserting baseless accusations.

Zionism is simply the liberation movement of the Jewish people. Like any other people, they too deserve to be in their homeland, the land of Israel.

One of the darkest periods at the United Nations took place in 1975 when Zionism was declared to be racism. Although this decision was reversed in 1991, the taint of politically motivated antisemitism lingered. The Jewish community has faced near physical extinction, and few other groups endure sustained defamation of their national character and religious identity.

Anti-Zionists often deliberately overlook the intrinsic connection of the Jewish people to the land, instead attempting to link it solely to a political movement through terms like "colonialism," "occupation," and even "apartheid." The new form of antisemitism is now politicized, seeking to disrupt and destroy Jewish existence once again.

Zionism represents not only the self-determination that irks antisemites but also a physical and spiritual manifestation of the Jewish people's historical and biblical connection to the Land of Israel. Antisemites cannot accept the legitimacy of this connection, despite overwhelming evidence, viewing it as a form of colonization. Zion is not just synonymous with Jerusalem; it holds a historical and religious significance dating back over 2,000 years.

Denying or labeling Zionism as a racist endeavor reveals a failure to comprehend its historic significance in Judaism. The historic pledge to return to Zion after the destruction of Jerusalem is embedded in prayer liturgy over 2,000 years old. Zion and Jerusalem are mentioned repeatedly in central Jewish prayers like the Amidah, and the traditional act of facing East toward Zion during prayer has endured for centuries.

In condemning the 1975 UN resolution, American Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan denounced it as a political lie and affirmed the truth that Zionism is not a form of racism. Israeli Ambassador Chaim Herzog dismissed the resolution as morally and legally devoid of value and symbolically tore it in half.

Contemporary antisemitism often masks itself in criticism of Israel's statehood, nationality, and defense of its borders, rather than racial or religious reasons. Those claiming Zionism is racism deny the historical connection of the Jewish people to their land and perpetuate a form of racism by asserting baseless accusations.

The Jewish people's connection to the land of their forefathers, to Zion, has withstood the pursuit of many civilizations. Despite dispersion, they have maintained their faith and connection, always yearning for "next year in Jerusalem." Those who deny this connection engage in a form of racism, stuck in a dark period and in need of serious soul-searching.

LISTEN TO YOUR HEART

Synopsis: There are serious and severe efforts to wear down a value system primarily grounded in the Judeo-Christian beliefs ingrained in western civilization. Blurring the lines between terrorists by calling them "militants" or "combatants" is one prevalent method we can observe in the media today.

When good people refuse silence, it makes a world of difference. Our sages have taught us that our freedom can never be taken for granted, and that the scales of justice are often so evenly weighted between good and bad that even a feather on one side of the scale or another can alter our world. Today, for those of us who fight to defend democracy, we are called to action to protect our way of life against savagery.

Many of those who say they fight for human rights, who stand up for women's rights, for gay rights and for the rights offered by the constitutions of liberal democracy are undermining the fundamental values held sacred in the West.

Recently, one columnist wrote a scathing condemnation of former prime minister Stephen Harper's visit to Israel and his denunciation of Hamas: "Harper's ahistorical and disingenuous framing ... reflects the extent to which what we're witnessing from the powerful is an attempt to promote a simplistic viewpoint of 'good and bad.'"

From where I come from, there is, in fact, a simplistic view of right and wrong, sacred, and profane, as well as good and bad. Hamas murdering innocent children and shooting them in the back is bad. Hamas raping and mutilating women, that's bad. Hamas kidnapping people is bad. There are no ifs, ands or buts.

There are serious and severe efforts to wear down a value system primarily grounded in the Judeo-Christian beliefs ingrained in western civilization. Blurring the lines between terrorists by calling them "militants" or "combatants" is one prevalent method we can observe in the media today. This distortion is extraordinarily dangerous for our society because it undermines our fundamental principles of truth and justice.

When the truth is blurred, bent, and denied, the very fabric of our democracy is put in jeopardy. But there was a strong glimmer of hope

in reaction to one of my columns where I had expressed defiance to denials and distortions of the truth, and in return, I received numerous letters from readers who unabashedly supported the Jewish community and Israel.

One person wrote, "I am so disappointed in our community here in Canada that you would need to write that. My grandparents, great uncles, etc. fought in WW2 and taught me that I have a special responsibility to Jewish people. 'Never again' was something I learned as a kid. I'm ashamed of what is happening...."

A more poignant denouncement of our society today came from a military of the military.

"As a 57-year-old Roman Catholic, who is finishing a career in the (Royal Canadian Air Force), please do not lump me in with the rest of the non-Jewish, hateful, morally bankrupt mob we see in the street or corridors of power in Ottawa," he wrote.

"I will tell you that amongst my military colleagues, the opinion is clear. We understand rules and engagement, we understand the laws of conflict, and we sadly understand collateral damage. No military in the world, including our own, goes to ends that the (Israel Defense Forces do) to prevent civilian death. As I have said repeatedly over the last four months, I stand with you today and tomorrow, and the phrase NEVER AGAIN is for all humanity, not just Jews."

It's important now more than ever to recognize that there are millions of citizens amongst us who "get it." We see our left-leaning media give Palestinian terrorists a free pass and may think this sentiment represents Canadians. It does not. We see our own government waffle between support for Hamas and support for Israel and think it reflects public opinion. It does not. We see pro-Hamas mobs on our streets and university campuses waving Palestinian flags

while calling for the genocide of the Jewish people and think everyone feels this way. They do not.

In fact, a 2024 Research Co. poll in British Columbia found that over 77 per cent of residents on Vancouver Island, 74 per cent in the Fraser Valley and 71 per cent in southern B.C. are concerned about rising antisemitism in Canada. Significantly, nearly two-thirds of the province's residents (64 per cent) agree with Canada's decision to suspend funding for the United Nations Relief Works Agency after some of its staff were found to be complicit in terrorism.

A revelatory survey conducted in early 2024 by the Harvard Center for American Political Studies and Harris Poll has found that 82 per cent of Americans support Israel in the conflict against Hamas. The survey also found that an overwhelming 83 per cent of Americans say Oct. 7 was a terror attack.

But if you listened to U.S. President Joe Biden, you would have thought that the tide is shifting against Israel. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Contrary to Biden's pronouncements, the January polling results even found that 67 per cent of Americans say a ceasefire should happen only if all hostages are freed and Hamas is removed from power.

When it comes to right and wrong, or good and bad, never listen to the street, political leaders, or the media. If you want to preserve our free way of life and defend democracy, then listen to your heart.

IS ANTISEMITISM CONTEXT-DEPENDENT?

Synopsis: In this context-dependent era, those who are supposed to exemplify morality are asking the public to tolerate their intolerance. They use concepts like "freedom of expression" to deny and distort the truth and refuse to take action against those advocating for violence, death and destruction if it conflicts with their narrative.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Harvard president Claudine Gay, MIT president Sally Kornbluth and University of Pennsylvania president Elizabeth Magill for introducing a valuable assessment tool that we can now use when considering financial support for universities and other institutions.

Henceforth, when approached by a university seeking endorsement for a project or chair, my response will be that it's a "context-dependent decision." The university's stance on antisemitism and the actions it has taken will be pivotal factors in determining whether I give it my support.

If university administrators are applying such a lens to addressing antisemitism and calls for genocide against the Jewish people, it's only fair that we employ similar criteria for supporting their institutions. This standardized response will become my policy when asked to support any cause.

This stance comes out of the recent testimony given by these three presidents before a congressional hearing led by Rep. Elise Stefanik. When asked if "calling for the genocide of Jews" would violate their schools' code of conduct, Magill responded, "It is a context-dependent decision, congresswoman."

Magill resigned days later after a donor threatened to withdraw his \$100 million gift, but her arrogance remains a pinnacle moment in the fight against campus Antisemitism. Gay resigned several months later.

The dismissive and condescending "context-dependent" reply from Gay, Magill and Kornbluth demands a robust response. It's crucial to recognize that we are engaged in an ideological war against a radical left-wing movement that seeks to undermine core Judeo-Christian values.

Allowing calls for genocide against Jewish people makes it particularly challenging for universities to extract further funds from our community. Universities may now face challenges when the Jewish community and its supporters, who are known for their generosity, start withdrawing millions in support.

The tolerance for genocidal chants like "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" and calls for "intefadeh" have reached their limit. While my support for higher learning now hinges on a university's willingness to confront antisemitism, I will extend this approach to hospitals, community centres and everything in between.

According to Gay, Magill and Kornbluth, "context" alone is insufficient; action must turn into conduct in order to be dealt with. If a university denounces antisemitism but fails to take action, it will not receive my support.

The "context versus conduct" framework is applicable in our fight against all behaviours that harm the fight against antisemitism and can extend to the hypocrisy of political leaders. For example, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau lighting a menorah in honour of Hanukkah one evening with the Jewish community (context) contrasts sharply with directing officials at the United Nations to vote against Israel the next day (conduct).

The "context-dependent decision" is a form of doublespeak that has permeated progressive left-wing circles since the Oct. 7 massacre, revealing an unprecedented level of denial and distortion not seen since the Holocaust. The fact that it took UN Women eight weeks to denounce Hamas rapes and sexual assaults of Israeli women illustrates the problem.

In this context-dependent era, those who are supposed to exemplify morality are asking the public to tolerate their intolerance. They use concepts like "freedom of expression" to deny and distort the truth and

refuse to take action against those advocating for violence, death and destruction if it conflicts with their narrative.

It's time to turn the tables on them. It's time to reject the hypocrites who have eroded moral decency. When they come calling, tell them you will make a context- and conduct-based decision.

CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES AS BAD AS UNRWA – WHY ARE WE SURPRISED?

Synopsis: The surge in antisemitism right here in Canada is a direct result of two decades of imported Palestinian propaganda aimed at delegitimizing, defaming, and demonizing the State of Israel. Shortly after the 2001 Durban conference, which borrowed the fake “Zionism is racism” Soviet propaganda for the Palestinian movement, university campuses initiated “Israeli apartheid week.”

Gaza Schools spreading Hamas’ antisemitism grabbed international headlines this week, coupled with breaking news revealing that the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) had staff involved in the Oct. 7 massacre of Jews. There’s nothing groundbreaking here. We’ve been urging the Trudeau government for years to cease Canada’s complicity in terror and antisemitism.

But why focus on Gaza when we have similar issues in our own backyard? Canadian universities and now schools have long disseminated pro-Hamas antisemitism. Recently, at York University, the pro-Palestinian union released what it dubbed “a toolkit on teaching Palestine”.

A more fitting name for the 15 page pamphlet would have been “a toolkit for promoting antisemitism in the classroom.” Mislabelling the fight against the terrorist group Hamas as a “genocide” and referring to Jews indigenous to the land of Israel as “settler-colonial occupation,”

the document aims to inject hatred against Jews into the classrooms at York University.

Why look as far as Gaza when it's been imported into our universities? The pro-Hamas document even targets Hillel, an apolitical Jewish student organization, claiming that York University is complicit in Israel's occupation due to its "economic and academic relationships with various Zionist cultural institutions (e.g., Hillel)."

While Zionism merely describes the Jewish liberation movement, here it is used pejoratively with contempt and clear antisemitic overtones. In response, the university's president, Rhonda Lenton, penned a superficial non-letter, not even addressing the obvious false propaganda and antisemitism in the document.

The surge in antisemitism right here in Canada is a direct result of two decades of imported Palestinian propaganda aimed at delegitimizing, defaming, and demonizing the State of Israel. Shortly after the 2001 Durban conference, which borrowed the fake "Zionism is racism" Soviet propaganda for the Palestinian movement, university campuses initiated "Israeli apartheid week."

For two decades or about four generations of Canadian and American students, lies about Israel and, by extension, the Jewish people have been propagated. UNRWA and the Palestinian education system in Gaza and the West Bank incite students to believe Jews are evil and that they are white (even though at least half are not) "colonizers" and "occupiers" of their own land.

We've now graduated millions of students who have been fed these atrocious lies. So why are Canadians surprised by the escalating incidents of antisemitism right here at home? The violence-promoting street demonstrations we've witnessed since Oct. 7 involve our university students who have been given permission by our universities and schools to believe these falsehoods.

Recently, it even came to light that in Toronto, the arrest of the so-called “Indigo 11” on hate-motivated mischief charges — turned out to be mostly of academics, many with PhDs and employed by universities, schools and cultural institutions. So while the world has rightly turned attention to the 12 UNRWA staff who participated in the Oct. 7 massacre, let's not turn a blind eye to the staff of our own academic and cultural institutions. We should all be asking ourselves if given the chance, they too would have lent Hamas a hand.

The Nazis perfected modern antisemitic propaganda, telling so many lies about the Jewish people that the majority of Germans and their allies came to believe them. They marginalized and ostracized the Jewish population by producing their own “toolkits” of lies and distortions, first in schools and universities and then in the general community.

The war against hate isn't just in the Middle East; it's right here in our backyard — in our universities, schools, unions, and community centers. The distortion about Israel and the Jewish people is so profound and ingrained in the psyche of the average Canadian that chants calling for the death of Jews hardly raise an eyebrow.

Nobody wants to hear the truth. University feminists eagerly march with Palestinians despite the repression of women in Gaza and the rapes against Israeli women. People who identify as part of the LGBTQ community give little thought to how quickly they would be attacked for their sexual orientation under Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. None of these realisms matter because this is Gaza.

I trust Israel's enemies reading this column are reveling, just as the Nazis must have when Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary, and many others fell under their web of lies. History will judge those who have been taken for a ride by the forces of darkness. In the end, however, history has repeatedly shown that those who stand with the Jewish

people are on the right side of history. We are the litmus test for what's coming next. Think about it.

END CAMPUS WAR ON JEWS

Synopsis: In the face of discrimination, Zweig's observations from the Holocaust era resonate today, emphasizing the fragility of cultural and civilized veneers. Human morality has historically struggled against hate and discrimination, with Jews often serving as the litmus test.

In 1940, Viennese Jewish author Stefan Zweig remarked on the obliviousness of those caught up in significant historical movements. Today, the war on Jews on university campuses is one such unrecognized movement, gaining attention even from Hollywood celebrities.

A recent article in the Jewish Journal accused the University of California at Berkeley's School of Law of developing "Jewish-free zones." Barbra Streisand questioned on Twitter whether anti-Zionism crosses into broader anti-Semitism. The reality is that anti-Zionism has become a new form of anti-Semitism, despite Zionism being the Jewish people's peaceful liberation movement to return to their indigenous homeland, Israel.

Non-violent liberation movements are usually supported globally, but Jewish progress in returning to their homeland has faced disproportionate criticism. Progressives resent the success of Zionism, which established the only democratic state in the Middle East. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks aptly notes that the desire for self-defense is treated as unacceptable by those seeking to marginalize Jews.

Despite historical oppression, Jews have risen above attempts to annihilate them, drawing ire from those who expected perpetual vulnerability. Campus progressives are attempting to delegitimize

Jewish desires for freedom and security, treating them as less than human.

Having failed in physical wars, progressives now turn to old-age anti-Semitic tactics. Accusations of being capitalists, socialists, or subhuman have given way to attacking Zionism itself. At the University of California at Berkeley's School of Law, student groups have amended bylaws to exclude speakers supporting Israel or Zionism, highlighting a discriminatory atmosphere.

While the law school's dean condemns discrimination, prominent Harvard Law Professor Alan Dershowitz argues that it's a matter of discrimination, not free speech. The excuse that only a few student groups adopted discriminatory bylaws raises questions about acceptability when it comes to the Jewish community.

In the face of discrimination, Zweig's observations from the Holocaust era resonate today, emphasizing the fragility of cultural and civilized veneers. Human morality has historically struggled against hate and discrimination, with Jews often serving as the litmus test. However, unlike the past 2,000 years, the Jewish State of Israel stands strong to protect and defend. Regardless of protests, the Jewish community remains resilient and unyielding in the face of prejudice.

FAILURE TO CONDEMN HAMAS ATROCITIES ROOTED IN ANTISEMITISM

Synopsis: The decades-long push to delegitimize Israel has led to a reprehensible willingness to excuse the largest mass slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust

In an encounter at the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., a Fox News reporter approached U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib, pressing her to condemn the tragic events involving the loss of innocent lives in Israel

at the hands of Hamas. Tlaib chose not to respond and continued walking.

In two moving speeches at the White House this week, President Joe Biden passionately condemned silence and complicity. Not since the Holocaust, he said, had so many Jews been murdered. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that, “There is only one place for Germany — the place at Israel’s side.”

But the past week has been marked by an overwhelming sense of moral dilemma, stemming from the heart-wrenching loss of over 1,300 lives along the Gaza border. Some victims were still asleep in the early hours of Saturday when Hamas terrorists invaded their homes, committing unspeakable acts of violence.

Reports of around infants being decapitated and burned alive in Kfar Aza — a village that fell victim to acts of brutality that can only be likened to a bygone era of feudal barbarism — defy adequate description. Even seasoned reporters, who were present to document these horrors, were profoundly shaken by what they witnessed.

Elsewhere along the Gaza border, thousands of young adults gathered at a music festival to celebrate “friends, love and peace.” But their joy was short-lived. Palestinian terrorists indiscriminately opened fire on them, surpassing even the ruthlessness of groups like ISIL.

Over 260 young people, most in their 20s, were murdered in cold blood. Many were shot as they desperately tried to flee. They were unarmed and bewildered, yet the Hamas terrorists showed no mercy, killing innocent civilians and raping young women next to the dead bodies of their friends.

In addition to these massacres, there were numerous kidnappings. Hamas terrorists abducted an estimated 100-150 individuals, including children, women, teenagers and even a Holocaust survivor. Those they

killed suffered a gruesome fate, their bodies dragged naked through the streets of Gaza, desecrated and humiliated. For those held captive, it's feared that torture and ransom may await them.

Representative Tlaib's refusal to condemn these horrors raises questions about the moral underpinnings of the international Palestinian solidarity movement. The chant, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free," takes on a haunting dimension considering these events. There's little doubt about what would happen to the State of Israel and its citizens if they were to lay down their weapons even for a day.

Tlaib is part of a generation of advocates who have long called for Israel's eradication, a sentiment that can be traced back to the Durban Conference on racism and xenophobia in South Africa in 2001. This event laid the foundation for the delegitimization and defamation of Israel, including the unfounded claim that it is an "apartheid state," mirroring tactics legitimately used against apartheid South Africa.

Radical leftists, unionists and academics joined the Palestinian cause in South Africa, often masking their deep-seated antisemitism. Upon their return home, they launched and supported campaigns such as "Israeli apartheid week" and the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement against the Jewish state.

For nearly two decades, university students have been exposed to falsehoods about Israel and, by extension, the Jewish people. These beliefs became normalized in global organizations like the United Nations Human Rights Council, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, all of which echoed and reinforced these baseless allegations.

In Toronto, the annual Al-Quds Day event has long been permitted to take place at the footsteps of the provincial legislature. Originating in Iran, the event draws leftist and Islamist groups, forming an unlikely

coalition united by their hostility toward Jews and their call for Israel's destruction. Last weekend's events are exactly what they were calling for.

Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East, has persistently fought against these campaigns to delegitimize it. The country has proudly championed human rights, advanced LGBTQ and women's rights, celebrated coexistence and played a leading role in promoting these values in the region.

Despite these efforts, the Palestinian campaign of defamation, coupled with deeply rooted antisemitism, has continued to legitimize and embolden hatred against Israel, specifically among progressive leftists and far-right white supremacists.

Recently, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said that Adolf Hitler "fought the Jews because they were dealing with usury and money." For centuries, these words have been spoken by rabid antisemites to mobilize violence against Jewish communities.

While governments, like Canada's, have condemned antisemitism, they have simultaneously continued to fund the Palestinian narrative by channeling money to organizations like UNRWA. This funding has sustained schools in Gaza and the West Bank that promote violence and hatred against Jews.

Let me be clear: any country that condemns Hamas but is still sending money to the Palestinians — including Canada's Liberal government, which pledged this week to continue funneling around \$55 million annually in development assistance and aid to Gaza and the West Bank, thus allowing their governments to divert resources to terrorism — is complicit in the crimes that are being committed against Jews in Israel.

The shocking loss of Israeli lives represents the culmination of years of emboldening Hamas and other terrorist organizations by delegitimizing Israel and allowing antisemitism to flourish. Even in the face of war crimes and heinous acts, the Palestinian movement refuses to unequivocally denounce such actions. Some media outlets, including the CBC, which are heavily influenced by the Palestinian narrative of “resistance,” have adopted policies that inaccurately label terrorists as militants.

Social media is rife not just with antisemitic Palestinians, but with people who hold influential positions, including doctors, union leaders and academics, posting messages denying the barbarism that took place. If they cannot deny it, they blame Israel and the Jews for inviting the murders, decapitations and rapes. This should be condemned vigorously by all.

Reflecting on our historical experiences, particularly the Holocaust, we understand the dangers of complicity. The brutal murder of six-million Jews and millions of others occurred because hundreds of thousands of people played a role, be it as journalists, train operators, contractors, doctors, lawyers, mothers or fathers. They perpetuated the propaganda and antisemitism they were exposed to, which ultimately led to the genocide. The same is applicable today.

For those of you who identify as pro-Palestinian and remain silent in the face of Hamas’ heinous acts, it’s crucial to examine your moral compass. Such silence has far-reaching consequences — not only for the present, but for the future of humanity.

HATE SPEECH LAWS VS FREE SPEECH: A MORAL DILEMMA?

Synopsis: Many argue that restricting speech and online behavior infringes on our fundamental rights and freedoms as citizens. For

some, it signals a state control reminiscent of tyrannical regimes and even communism. China's recent crackdown on media and individual expression in Hong Kong highlights the dangers of state power over rights and freedoms. Antisemitism, if left unchecked in the social marketplace, can rise to the top of hate and discriminatory practices in any society. Sunlight does not disinfect anti-Semitism; instead, it allows it to replicate when exposed.

The public's concern regarding proposed legal changes to tackle online hate speech is valid, given the potential for abuse. If approved, amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act, along with changes to the Criminal Code and the Youth Criminal Justice Act, will significantly alter how Canadians behave online. In a free and democratic society, preserving freedom of expression is crucial to the foundation of our national enterprise.

Many argue that restricting speech and online behavior infringes on our fundamental rights and freedoms as citizens. For some, it signals a state control reminiscent of tyrannical regimes and even communism. China's recent crackdown on media and individual expression in Hong Kong highlights the dangers of state power over rights and freedoms.

The Canadian government's new initiative, "action to protect Canadians against hate speech and hate crimes," aims to crack down on individuals expressing "detestation or vilification of an individual or group of individuals on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination." This applies to public communications by individual users on the internet, including social media, personal websites, and mass emails.

This means that journalists, writers, and social media influencers could face increased scrutiny.

While I, as a proponent of free speech exposed to diverse opinions daily, agree with the idea that "sunlight is said to be the best of

disinfectants," there are problems with this perspective. Drawing from my understanding of the Holocaust, I've observed that Antisemitism, if left unchecked in the social marketplace, can rise to the top of hate and discriminatory practices in any society. Sunlight does not disinfect anti-Semitism; instead, it allows it to replicate when exposed.

Statistics Canada reports that the Jewish community is the most targeted religious group for hate crime and hate speech in the country. In 2017, incidents of anti-Semitism and hate crime increased by 47 percent. In 2019, police recorded 1,946 criminal incidents motivated by hate, a seven percent increase from the previous year. These figures likely rose during the coronavirus pandemic as people spent more time online. The online surge of anti-Semitism during the Hamas-Israel conflict in May underscores this trend.

Considering this reality, I advocated for the reinstatement of Section 13 to the Canadian Human Rights Act when testifying before a parliamentary task force in May 2019. Strengthening hate speech and hate crime laws, in my view, is crucial to preventing the accelerated spread of hate and intolerance in the online marketplace. For victims of online hate speech, internet regulation provides a mechanism to challenge abusive behavior, but social media platforms and internet service providers must also be held accountable.

While the argument for freedom of speech is an honest and rational reaction to the dangers of state expansionism, there must be stiff penalties for the inevitable abuse of the law by individuals. Without hate speech laws, publications like the infamous "Your Ward News" in Toronto might still be publishing misogynistic and anti-Semitic material. Involvement in that case has made me proud that Holocaust survivors and their children no longer have to find such material on their doorsteps.

NO MONOPOLY ON HATE

There is no place for hate speech—ever. Building a more compassionate society requires cultural proficiency while upholding core values of freedom, democracy, and human rights. Despite being unpopular in many spheres, regulating hate speech is more necessary than ever today. The recent silence over Antisemitism has underscored the need for legal remedies.

There is no monopoly on discrimination. In the Jewish world, we have stood up throughout history for freedom and civil rights. Our people have proudly walked with every modern-day liberation movement, including participating in and supporting Martin Luther King Jr. in the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, and most recently the LGBTQ2 movement.

We are proud leaders in the promotion of social welfare policies and legal and ethical rights. Upholding Jewish values, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, for instance, is fondly remembered for fighting against gender discrimination and became the first tenured female at Columbia Law School.

Despite our concern for others over the centuries, however, it has not been matched for the Jewish community in the past couple of weeks. Shockingly, despite the overt antisemitism on the streets of North America and Europe, there has been a deafening silence. Jewish people have been assaulted in New York, Los Angeles, and Toronto. In Toronto, Palestinian protesters carried Hamas flags at their rally, while many held anti-Semitic signs and slogans. One read, “Good Job Israel, Hitler Would be Proud.”

A brick shattered the window of a Kosher pizza parlour in Manhattan. Video captured a swarm of men attacking diners at a Sushi restaurant in Los Angeles, and synagogues are reporting vandalism in

places like Arizona, Illinois, and New York. As in Toronto, a brawl broke out in Times Square while the Diamond District was also attacked by a gang of pro-Palestinians. Drive-byes consisting of Pro-Palestinian groups have become commonplace in Jewish areas — racially tinged epithets being shouted at young Jewish children and adults alike.

Messages have been pouring in from staff at corporations and school boards who have a growing sense of fear and discomfort in their institutions. They are shocked by the silence of their peers and colleagues whom they have worked with for years to promote equity for other groups within their institutions.

But now, when antisemitism is at an all-time high, when they are being personally targeted on the street and their freedoms seem constrained, they wonder why there is silence. Why have their institutions not unequivocally condemned antisemitism, period?

Condemnation of antisemitism is not a political matter. It is an anti-discrimination matter. One local school board completely convoluted the matter in a memo that tried to reassure its staff about the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Instead, it ostracized its Jewish staff and probably inflamed passions further by saying about the conflict that it is “committed to working from anti-racist, anti-oppressive and anti-colonial frameworks.”

Effectively, it politicized the institution and possibly legitimized antisemitism by falsely accusing Israel of being a racist, oppressive, colonial state. Naturally, this has put its employees and students on edge and pitted them against each other.

This is the time for leaders to step up and publicly defend their Jewish friends and neighbors. First and foremost, all public and private institutions must issue statements condemning antisemitism while providing guidelines for appropriate conduct and communication.

Second, authorities, including law enforcement and the attorney general, must thoroughly investigate and, if necessary, charge people who promote hate speech and are found to have committed hate crimes.

The fact that some Jewish neighborhoods are setting up their own security systems above and beyond our public law enforcement services may be indicative that public needs are not being entirely met. Finally, faith-based organizations and friends of the Jewish community must speak out against antisemitism and visibly extend a hand.

Article I of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” We are all equal and must strive to advance human rights for all people.

There is no shortage of pain and suffering on our small planet, and unfortunately, we are seeing an upward global trend of inequality, racism, and discrimination. Together, we must stand to uplift all who are suffering, including the Black and Asian communities and persecuted peoples like the Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Rohingya.

And yes, in the coming days and weeks, we need to see some outrage against antisemitism. I am calling on my friends outside of the Jewish community to stand up and speak out.

CORONASEMITISM

Synopsis: COVID-19 and antisemitism were intertwined. We saw an example of this when a Vancouver woman designed a controversial T-shirt with the words "COVID CAUST" printed on a yellow star. Although she claims it pertains to masks and vaccines, the imagery and language were hurtful to the Jewish community.

The coronavirus stands as the most horrific human catastrophe in modern times, claiming millions of lives and causing immeasurable pain and suffering. However, the threat extends beyond the virus itself. For nearly two years, we witnessed its devastating impact on communities, families, mental health, and a concerning rise in anti-Semitism.

In 2020, I identified a new variant of antisemitism, which I termed "coronasemitism." During that period, we observed an increase in antisemitic incidents on social media, with Jewish individuals wrongly accused of carrying and spreading the disease. This trend echoed historic conspiracy theories where, in feudal times, Jewish people were falsely accused of spreading plagues and ailments to marginalize and defame them.

The evolution of the coronavirus, described by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as constantly changing through mutation, parallels the historical evolution of anti-Semitism. Centuries ago, it was rooted in religious beliefs, accusing Jews of betraying Jesus. Later, the Nazis introduced a racial variant, dehumanizing and murdering Jews based on falsified science. In the last two decades, a new form emerged from the radical left, seeking the destruction of both the Jewish people and the state of Israel.

The CDC notes that sometimes new variants emerge and disappear, while others persist. In the case of antisemitism, these variants endure, reinforcing previous strains. Ancient religious beliefs maligning Judaism persist, Nazi ideologies persist, and new forms of antisemitism directed at the State of Israel continue to emerge.

COVID-19 and antisemitism were intertwined. We saw an example of this when a Vancouver woman designed a controversial T-shirt with the words "COVID-CAUST" printed on a yellow star. Although she

claims it pertains to masks and vaccines, the imagery and language were hurtful to the Jewish community.

Like the coronavirus, antisemitism is a social illness responsible for the deaths of over six million Jewish individuals during the Holocaust and countless more over 2,000 years. Despite efforts by Jewish leaders to inoculate against this hatred, persecution persisted, irrespective of political beliefs, assimilation, or the existence of a Jewish state.

To combat this pandemic, our hope lies in vaccines. Likewise, to confront new variants of antisemitism, we need innovative global approaches. The old methods are no longer effective. It's crucial to redouble our efforts, mobilize international partners, foster relationships across faiths, and educate the world. We must recognize our shared fears, hopes, and dreams, uniting against these common enemies, to create a world where humanity stands together.

IS THIS WHAT 1933 FELT LIKE?

Synopsis: This rising tide of antisemitism is becoming more malicious by the week, but surprisingly, it may be having some positive effects: it is galvanizing Jewish communities across the globe, strengthening their identity and provoking them to action over complacency.

“Let’s kill some Jews,” tweeted an Egyptian actor and writer with over 800,000 followers. Even though Twitter suspended his account soon after he sparked outrage, it appears the actor had been tweeting various antisemitic conspiracy theories, claiming that Jews are rapists and have a “deal with the devil.”

In London, reportedly, an Orthodox man was forced to flee from a knife-wielding attacker who threatened to “behead” him just this past Monday. The man was walking to work in the Whitechapel district in east London when he was accosted by someone who called him a “f**** Jew” before pulling out a knife, said the report.

Is it any wonder that antisemitism is a growing concern for most Europe's young Jewish people? According to a new report released this week by the European Union's Agency for Fundamental Human Rights, 90% of young Jews surveyed think that anti-Jewish sentiment has risen on social media and the internet in general. The study revealed that 44% "experienced at least one incident of harassment in the 12 months before the survey," and worse, "45% are scared to appear Jewish in public"!

Is it any wonder then that 41% of the survey respondents are considering leaving Europe, as they do not feel safe living a Jewish life? Unlike 1933 or 1939 for that matter, thankfully we have Israel – our intended haven – our place of refuge. When Theodore Herzl dreamed of the Jewish State, and in Basel in 1897 during the first Zionist Congress as he gathered Jewish leaders from the four corners of the world, he understood that because of and in spite of antisemitism, the Jewish State must be reborn.

This rising tide of antisemitism is becoming more malicious by the week, but surprisingly, it may be having some positive effects: it is galvanizing Jewish communities across the globe, strengthening their identity and provoking them to action over complacency – including strengthening the Jewish State through immigration. It is converging people of influence and of multiple faiths and backgrounds to speak out and act. Ordinary people and leaders with influence are stepping up, leaning in and raising their voice in opposition to antisemitism.

As reports about antisemitism from around the world pour in, and communities like California report a 21% increase in hate crime while the Czech Republic reports 347 antisemitic incidents in 2018 compared to 221 in 2015 – the public is also demanding that public leaders take a more responsible approach to rhetoric. Last week, a Holocaust survivor invited Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez to visit Nazi concentration camps to understand what transpired during the Holocaust.

It's time to ramp up our efforts and fight back. "Wonder Woman" actress Gal Gadot said that part of the reason she flaunts her Israeliness is because of antisemitism. She said "she receives many hateful messages online and therefore finds no reason to hide her pride in being Israeli."

It's not 1933. The antisemites can keep coming, but the world is different. Herzl's dream has been fulfilled and this time around, we will defend ourselves – alongside all who stand for peace, freedom and human rights.

CHAPTER 3

THE HOLOCAUST

WHO WILL REMEMBER US?

Synopsis: 56% of US Millennials and Gen Z respondents were unable to identify Auschwitz-Birkenau and “there was virtually no awareness of concentration camps and ghettos overall,” according to the survey. In some states like Arkansas, Delaware, and Arizona, the ignorance level hovered over 67%.

As the memory of the Holocaust fades — and after the world recently commemorated the 79th anniversary of the end of World War II — there is growing concern among Holocaust survivors about who will remember them. One survivor recently asked: “Who will remember us when we are gone?”

Now, a national survey on the Holocaust knowledge of American Millennials and Gen Z reveals shocking results. The survey, conducted for the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference), says it is the first ever 50-state survey of its kind. In all, it found that 63% of all national respondents do not know that six million Jews were murdered.

Just as surprising, 36% thought that “two million or fewer Jews” were killed during the Holocaust. Even though there were 40,000 camps and ghettos in Europe, it is astounding to learn that 48% of national survey respondents could not name one.

Millennials are generally considered those born between 1980 and 2000 — and have born witness to many social events, including having prolific access to Holocaust survivors and more opportunities to learn about this unparalleled genocide. For Generation Z — generally born

after 1996 — this group is supposedly the most educated and knowledgeable in history, given their superb access to digital information.

Most concerning, given the iconic standing of the most notorious death camp in human history, 56% of US Millennials and Gen Z respondents were unable to identify Auschwitz-Birkenau and “there was virtually no awareness of concentration camps and ghettos overall,” according to the survey. In some states like Arkansas, Delaware, and Arizona, the ignorance level hovered over 67%.

Sadly, the survey advises that some 11% of US Millennials and Gen Z respondents believe Jews caused the Holocaust. In New York, a state that contains a city with the greatest number of Jews who reside there, the survey reveals that 19% of respondents believe Jews caused the Holocaust.

Even while some 59% of respondents indicate they believe something like the Holocaust could happen, perhaps the way we are teaching the Holocaust needs to be re-evaluated. In my experience, we need studies conducted on effective methodologies that teach about the Holocaust — especially as Holocaust survivors are unfortunately passing away.

The rise of digital media has also planted conspiracy theories and false information about the Holocaust. The fomentation of antisemitism and Holocaust denial on social media has created false narratives and ideologies concerning the Holocaust. In fact, many Holocaust deniers plant information that is misleading — and this impacts the knowledge level of new generations.

It is no coincidence that the survey found that 49% of US Millennials and Gen Z have seen Holocaust denial or distortion posts on social media or elsewhere. Similarly, 50% indicated that they had seen Nazi symbols on their social media platforms. For this reason, as

I have written elsewhere, social networking platforms like TikTok and Facebook are ramping up their hate speech policies.

Still, there is little comfort in this survey's results. Some would argue more education is needed. The question is — how can we make Holocaust education more effective for millions of students to digest and understand? Our traditional means may no longer be relevant, and new concepts and platforms need to be developed.

**MAX EISEN: THE HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR WHO MADE
NEVER AGAIN HIS LIFE'S MISSION**

Synopsis: He was a man on a mission, and was relentless in his quest to save humanity. His contribution to this nation will yet be written in its history books. One day soon, schools will be named after him as a show of defiance against hate and intolerance. Max chose life. He showed us that even after tragedy, there is a life worth living through meaning.

Max Eisen was keenly aware that his fight was against time, and this drove him on a singular and relentless mission to heal the world and make it a better place for the entire human race. He was a man on a mission and was relentless in his quest to save humanity. At an early age, Max witnessed the cruelty that human beings could inflict upon each other. As a child, his antisemitic teacher made him sit at the back of the classroom with his Jewish classmates. He felt the pain of isolation, marginalization and dehumanization as his non-Jewish friends and neighbours turned against him, and as his family was eventually driven from their home and packed onto a train to Auschwitz.

It was 1944 and the war was nearly over. The Nazis were losing, but their hatred of the Jewish people was so complete and persistent

that even Max and his family could not escape the horrible nightmare unfolding before their eyes.

He was torn from his mother's warm embrace on the train tracks at Auschwitz. He never saw her or his siblings ever again. He naively asked a fellow prisoner where they were taken a while later, only to find out that they were gassed and went up the chimney like so many other poor souls.

Fortunately, Max was selected for slave labour alongside his father and uncle. They protected him as best they could for a while longer, while Max adapted to this hell on earth. Yet soon enough, they too fell ill and seconds before he was taken to the gas chamber, Max's father made him swear a promise that would echo throughout time and place: "Tell our story. Tell the world what happened here at Auschwitz. Never forget us."

In time, Max regained his freedom and built a new life and a new family in Canada. In the 78 years that followed the Holocaust, Max dedicated himself to the relentless pursuit of justice.

But eventually, Max began to see the creep of antisemitism once again, years before it would become obvious. Over the past decade, he became alarmed by what he was seeing on university campuses. He was shocked by the boycott movements against Israel, which reminded him of the very antisemitism his family experienced when their own businesses were boycotted or confiscated by the Nazis. This drove Max to press harder to educate more and more people about the consequence of hate and intolerance.

Throughout most of his life, his energy was completely focused on keeping the promise he made to his father. During our 10 educational trips to Auschwitz, Max never showed anger or despair. He dedicated himself completely to education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, and despite his failing health (which he kept quiet), Max would speak on

Zoom two or three times a day to thousands of students from around the world. He not only taught them about the Holocaust, he made them promise to be kind, compassionate and caring people.

In his final years, Max became a moral compass to millions of Canadians. His best-selling memoir, “By Chance Alone,” would impact hundreds of thousands of students, teachers and the public alike. His exposure on television programs like “60 Minutes” and other newscasts increased his ability to affect millions of people.

Among his numerous well-deserved awards were four honorary doctorates and the Order of Canada. Like the closing of a loop or the transfer of a baton, the last recognition award he received happened to be from the Abraham Global Peace Initiative, the foundation he helped me launch just one year ago, and which also named a Holocaust education fund in his honour.

Max gave us everything he had and asked for nothing in return. Once, as he was giving an eye-witness account at Auschwitz in front of Block 21, a ray of light pierced the clouds and beamed upon him like a spotlight. He was there to pass on a message — a warning — to humanity, to never be silent in the face of injustice.

His contribution to this nation will yet be written in its history books. One day soon, schools will be named after him as a show of defiance against hate and intolerance. Max chose life. He showed us that even after tragedy, there is a life worth living through meaning. I will miss my teacher, my mentor and my friend. Shalom Chaver.

A LETTER TO GERMANY

"What took so long? So sorry but you had 76+ years to prosecute Nazi war criminals. This week you announced you would be charging a 100-year old Nazi in addition to a 95-year old secretary"

Dear Germany:

What took so long? So sorry, but you had 76+ years to prosecute Nazi war criminals. This week you announced you would be charging a 100-year old Nazi in addition to a 95-year old secretary.

Your prosecutors charged the 100-year-old man with 3,518 counts of being an accessory to murder at Sachsenhausen concentration camp from 1942 to 1945. In the other case, a 95-year old woman was also charged with accessory to murder for serving as the secretary of the SS commandant of the Stutthof concentration camp.

Yes. We all agree and expect they should be charged. That there is no statute of limitation to charging war criminals. And no one should ever get away with murder no matter their age - even at 100.

But dear Germany, it was not until 2011 that a new legal precedent was set in connection with Ohio autoworker John Demjanjuk's conviction as accessory to some 28,000 murders at Sobibor. He died shortly after receiving sentence. Then, in 2015, you convicted 94-year-old Auschwitz guard Oskar Groening ('The Accountant of Auschwitz'). He also died before his sentence could be carried out because of a series of appeals.

It's now common knowledge and widely reported that fewer than 50 of the estimated 6,500 Auschwitz guards who served there over the years were ever convicted. And those are just the guards. What about the commanders, soldiers, cooks, railway engineers, crematoria construction workers, architects, logistics officials, administrative staff, maintenance personnel and daytime workers from surrounding villages? Who ordered the Zyklon-B canisters?

Multiply this idea by over 40,000 concentration and labour camps plus ghettos spread across Europe and you start getting the picture of just how many people got away with murder. The number of

"participants" could be well into the hundreds of thousands and possibly, 500,000 or more.

We know that people had a choice. They did not have to participate in the killing machine. Irena Sendler, a Polish social worker who worked in the Warsaw Ghetto and saved 2,500 children recognized this basic fact herself. She said: "Heroes do extraordinary things. What I did was not an extraordinary thing. It was normal".

I have visited the camps probably more than anyone should. I have walked nearly every inch of Auschwitz, Majdanek, Sachsenhausen, Stutthof, and Ravensbruck. I have seen the pain and torment in the eyes of survivors. To understand the magnitude of what took place in those camps between 1939 and 1945, we must peel back the layers to understand why mostly ordinary people directly or as accessories participated in murder.

So, pardon me Germany, but why had possibly hundreds of thousands of people who were accessory to murder not been brought to stand trial? Why did you wait this long for a what appears to be a final attempt at reckoning of justice? Unlike these perpetrators, the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust and millions of others did not have a chance to marry, raise families, and live to old age - like these Nazi war criminals whom you are now charging.

Should we be satisfied? We must ask these critical questions - not to relive this tragic past, but to ensure that it never ever happens again. And how can we be sure, dear Germany? After all, just yesterday you reported that antisemitism is becoming more socially acceptable again. You said that 2,275 antisemitic crimes have been registered up to January 2021. Some 55 of those acts were violent.

One wonders, therefore, if your population has really reconciled with its Nazi past? Had more Germans taken an interest in prosecuting

more war criminals, could that have provided greater education and alleviated the growing antisemitic incidents? We do not know.

Had Germany moved faster and with greater conviction to prosecute Nazi war criminals, it might have had an impact on our own prosecutions in Canada. We began mobilizing in the 1980s to investigate war criminals. The Deschene Commission found 774 possible war criminals in the country. The list was whittled down to 20 strong possibilities. But legal stalemate after stalemate --including this week against a 96-year-old accused war criminal - has seen very little justice served.

Everything that happens in one place has impact on another. This week's ruling in Poland against two academics who dared assert that there were some Polish citizens who may have been complicit in the Holocaust sent shockwaves around the world. It presents a chill to academic freedom and free speech itself. Holocaust research and action against its perpetrators must be central to ensuring nothing like the Holocaust ever happens again.

Prosecuting war criminals is essential, especially in this climate of rising antisemitism. This week was especially horrible as we bore witness to synagogues being vandalized and desecrated, a Jewish frat house spray-painted with swastikas and even eggs thrown at an Israeli flag hung from the balcony of a student dormitory. Worse, a TikTok video was circulating of an Orthodox man being chased by the very perpetrators who video-taped the incident.

Germany, you have made some efforts to combat antisemitism by appointing Felix Klein as a special commissioner in this regard. Also, you have been positive with respect to Israel. In particular, you correctly stood up for Israel's sovereignty against the International Criminal Court ruling this week. We keep this mind and acknowledge all positive steps you have undertaken.

At the same time, speaking on behalf of all the Holocaust victims and its survivors, I need to ask you why have so many Nazis gotten away with murder?

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE: A CALL TO ACTION

Synopsis: If you once pledged to adhere to the precept of 'Never Again,' you must speak out against Antisemitism. The lessons the Holocaust provided humanity are vital for anyone who struggles to promote a society based on integrity and morality. If you truly want to observe International Holocaust Remembrance Day, honour its victims and survivors by standing up to antisemitism today.

When we commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day on Jan. 27, we ponder whether the world has gleaned any lessons from the largest hate crime in history, which ended just 79 years ago.

The reprehensible surge in antisemitism on our city streets since Hamas's Oct. 7 assault on Israel leaves us questioning why, despite increased investment in Holocaust education over the last two decades, antisemitic incidents have been on the rise in North America and Europe.

The issue primarily lies with young adults who seem to be influenced by social media and Holocaust denial. In a poll released, for instance, the Campaign Against Antisemitism found "worrying levels of anti-Jewish prejudice among the British public, with particularly frightening rates among young people."

It should have been the opposite. There should have been more sympathy and understanding for Jews and for Israel. However, social media has been inundated with antisemitic tropes since Hamas's barbaric assault. An Angus Reid survey released revealed that young

Canadians between the ages of 18 to 34 falsely believe that Islamophobia is a bigger problem than antisemitism.

This is despite police statistics across the country repeatedly reporting that the Jewish community is most affected by discrimination. The implications are disturbing. It suggests that antisemitism has become normalized; that the hate sown on university campuses and now in high schools is seeping into the mindset of our youth, outpacing our own ability to educate about the Holocaust.

Had he been alive, my friend and mentor, Holocaust survivor Max Eisen, would have been disappointed, not only by the 1933-like levels of antisemitism but also by the silence of those he imparted his wisdom upon. Like numerous other survivors, Max had invested decades in Holocaust education, specifically to prevent antisemitism.

Part of our work together was in Vancouver, where we advocated against antisemitism. Despite these efforts, and the unparalleled work of Vancouver's police service, reports of antisemitism increased there by 62 per cent last year. In Toronto, police said in December that antisemitic incidents had increased 211 per cent since the Oct. 7 massacre.

The central question is whether the lessons about how antisemitism motivated the Nazis to commit genocide have been internalized by young adults. It may be true that previous Holocaust pedagogy needs an update, as young people consume more information from social media than from books and museums.

Holocaust education must also place more emphasis on complicity. The most critical lesson about the Holocaust is the complicity of the masses. Had the German population risen up against Hitler and his henchmen, they would have halted his momentum and prevented him from reaching a genocidal stage. Those who actively helped Hitler were accomplices; those who stood by and said nothing were complicit.

This complicity extends to the antisemitism we witness today on university campuses, in unions and corporate boardrooms. For those of you who stay silent while your Jewish neighbours are revisiting the trauma of the Holocaust (and of Oct. 7) through daily antisemitic attacks, you are complicit.

We often see organizations like the United Nations marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day while simultaneously defaming and attempting to delegitimize the Jewish state. This is hypocrisy. Commemorating the Holocaust (or dead Jews) does not give cover for disproportionate attacks against Israel.

The lessons the Holocaust provided humanity are vital for anyone who struggles to promote a society based on integrity and morality. If you truly want to observe International Holocaust Remembrance Day, honour its victims and survivors by standing up to antisemitism today.

If you once pledged to adhere to the precept of “Never Again,” speak out against modern hatred and misinformation, particularly as it relates to the rape of Israeli women and the heinous acts of murder that took place on Oct. 7.

And if you believe yourself to be an advocate of human rights, follow the basic golden rule of loving your neighbour and doing unto others as you expect them to do unto you. Don’t stare silently out of your window as the world around you darkens. Before it’s too late, speak out against the hatred being paraded through the streets.

Observing and memorializing the Holocaust is more than standing at a memorial or drawing a picture at school. It’s a call to action to recognize that the liberation of Auschwitz on Jan. 27, 1945, was not the end of antisemitism. It was the beginning of a new human era that was supposed to change the world for the better — to eradicate the evil scourge of racism from the face of the earth. Today you can start fulfilling that dream.

NAZI WAR CRIMES PROSECUTION IS OUR NATIONAL SHAME

Synopsis: Our handling of the Nazi war crimes files is a national shame. But it's not ours alone. Many other countries, including America, will one day reconcile themselves to how we allowed so many to get away with heinous crimes.

Several years ago, people talked about the American Nazi war criminal, Jakiw Palij, who was stripped of his citizenship and deported to Germany for his alleged crimes as a former labour camp guard during the Second World War.

Canadian media widely reported on this “last” Nazi war criminal in America. But how has Canada dealt with “our” Nazi war criminals who snuck into this country under false pretense to escape justice for their horrific crimes? Many came here and lived mundane and ordinary lives — raising families and going to work daily. Their past remained hidden for decades.

In fact, no one really knows how many Nazi war criminals entered this country. We do know that a special commission enacted by then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in 1985 to investigate claims about Nazi war criminals residing in this country found around 774 possible war criminals in this country. An addendum listed 38 names and provided an additional list of 71 German scientists and technicians.

The Deschenes Commission headed by Judge Jules Deschenes subsequently whittled down the list to 20 strong possibilities and referred them to government with detailed recommendations on how to proceed.

Of the 20 possibilities, Canada obtained around 10 denaturalisations — a strategy taken from the Americans to deport war criminals who

falsified their involvement in war crimes to get into the country. According to reports, Canada failed to deport any. Two left on their own and seven of the remaining eight had natural deaths while remaining in this country.

The last Nazi case in Canada was Helmut Oberlander, who passed away in 2021. He was accused of serving in a Nazi death squad that murdered Jewish and non-Jewish civilians.

Oberlander said he was a low-level interpreter, but the government had tried to revoke his citizenship four times. He denied lying to unlawfully enter Canada or killing anyone, and reportedly no evidence had been presented to a court that he personally participated in war crimes.

It was a missed opportunity at justice given a recent application of prosecution policy in Germany to try Nazi war criminals as “accessory to murder”. Alleged war criminals who claim they were just following orders or were not part of the killing would likely face conviction if deported to Germany.

It is all too little too late. But there should never be age limitation for murderers and their accomplices. The last published report from Canada’s Program on Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes ended in 2015. The report further states that “the majority of cases related to the Second World War have been concluded.”

Our handling of the Nazi war crimes files is a national shame. But it’s not ours alone. Many other countries, including America, will one day reconcile themselves to how we allowed so many to get away with heinous crimes.

HOLOCAUST DENIAL GAINING TRACTION

Synopsis: Holocaust denial may be on the fringes of society now, but Facebook has identified it as a serious problem. In fact, 11% of US Millennials and Gen Zs believe that Jews are responsible for the Holocaust according to a survey.

Holocaust denial is growing at an accelerated rate. For anyone who hasn't read through the outrageous beliefs of deniers, it is an eye-opening experience. Whereas once deniers kept their beliefs to themselves, today there is little shame in posting antisemitic views online. In fact, it is now almost commonplace for Jewish leaders to receive absurd antisemitic messages asking if we are still promoting the "Holahoax" or gaining "sympathy for Jews" by teaching about the Holocaust.

A big milestone in the fight against Holocaust denial was finally reached in 2020 when Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg decided to ban it. He explained, "With rising antisemitism, we're expanding our policy to prohibit any content that denies or distorts the Holocaust." He added, "I've struggled with the tension between standing for free expression and the harm caused by minimizing or denying the horror of the Holocaust."

We are glad to see Zuckerberg has finally listened to what has been said for many years, which is that there is a direct link between antisemitism and violence. How could there not be given the spate of violent antisemitic attacks around the world? The Holocaust itself first began with a process of dehumanization of the Jewish population and was easily followed up with mass murder.

Holocaust denial is essentially based on four absurd principles: First, conspiracy theorist antisemites argue that the Holocaust was faked by the victors of World War II to weave their own story for their

own agenda. Second, Holocaust deniers argue simply that the Holocaust did not happen; it was not a genocide. At worst, they say, it was a series of labor camps. Third, deniers argue that the Holocaust was exaggerated, and the evidence proves a much smaller number of people were murdered. Finally, and most disturbingly, Holocaust deniers say that Jews brought the genocide upon themselves and therefore deserved it.

It is one thing to receive antisemitic messages if you are operating in the Jewish world. It's another if you are a young Instagram influencer with some 50,000 followers and trying to genuinely educate them. Recently, one influencer who posts under the name, "the savvy truth" was forced to shut down her comments section because of an onslaught of Holocaust denying antisemitism posted by some followers.

She posted Holocaust-related pictures as evidence of the genocide, alongside the following text: "Jews, Gypsies, [LGBTQ], political enemies, mentally ill ... and anyone deemed inferior to the Aryan race were rounded up, stuffed into trains, and were sent to concentration camps. When arriving at these death camps, you were either gassed right away and killed, sent to work hard labor for the rest of your life, forced to walk death marches, or sent to be used as test subjects for eugenics."

In reply, she received many sympathetic comments, including ones from grandchildren of survivors. But the disparaging comments ultimately led her to disable the comments section "to respect the victims from being disrespected by you idiots." She asked, "How can you say that the #holocaust was fake? How can you tell Holocaust victims that their horrendous torture didn't happen?"

Holocaust denial may be on the fringes of society now, but Facebook has identified it as a serious problem. In fact, 11% of US

Millennials and Gen Zs believe that Jews are responsible for the Holocaust according to a survey conducted by the Claims Conference. The problem is that while the survey found that Holocaust ignorance is quite high — with some 63% not knowing that six million Jews were murdered — the more troubling part is that some 49% have seen what is now called Holocaust distortion.

That “distortion” is being disseminated online in chat rooms and in response to Holocaust postings like the one mentioned above. Whereas in the past, fringe neo-Nazis reached only a handful of people through face-to-face recruitment and flyers, the Internet can reach billions of people, picking up those who are susceptible to conspiracy theories and hatred for Jews and minority groups.

These outrageous sentiments are becoming more perceptible online and on the street. Holocaust deniers contradict themselves by promoting Nazi ideology. After all, if there was no Holocaust, could there have been a Nazi ideology in the first place? We can visibly see this contradiction daily when swastikas are graffitied on synagogues, Jewish businesses, and on streets, as they were in Paris this past weekend. We also see it through state-sponsored antisemitism, as in the case of Iran — a hostile nation that is coincidentally launching its fifth annual Holocaust cartoon contest.

Jewish people face denial of their history and existence every day. There are those who attempt to deny the historical fact that Israel is not their homeland. They try and explain away archeology that shows we are indigenous to that land. And for more than 2,000 years, many have attempted to deny their faith by trying to convert them through religious inquisitions. And now, once again, deniers are trying to rewrite history by erasing the memory of the six million.

We cannot let them continue spreading their falsehoods. Now more than ever, we must double our energy to educate and advocate about

the Holocaust — particularly in Europe and America. If not now, when?

COMING TO TERMS WITH HOLOCAUST COMPLICITY

Synopsis: For decades Austrians avoided facing the historical truth of their own complicity in the Holocaust. Austria's history stopped in 1918. But today, Austrians are not only being taught about the Holocaust, but they have also now inaugurated a monument for the nation to recognize and name the 64,400 Austrian Jews who were murdered as a result of the nation's warm embrace of Nazi Germany — referred to as the Anschluss.

Hundreds of thousands of Austrian Nazis went on with their lives following the Second World War and the Holocaust. Some estimates range between 800,000 and 950,000 Austrians actively engaged in Hitler's war against the Jews of Europe and were part of the National Socialist Party. Many resumed ordinary lives and careers, melting back into society after the genocide. They raised families, enjoyed life and died in dignity. Unlike Jewish victims of the Holocaust, their families have a graveside to visit and pay their "respects."

But what of the children and grandchildren of the six million Jewish children, women and men murdered in the Shoah? Where do they say Kaddish (Jewish prayer for the dead). Do they not deserve the same rights, at the very least as the descendants of Nazis? These were the sentiments spoken by Mr. Kurt Yakov Tutter at a reception in his honour at the Austrian Chancellory this week. In a moving tribute for his campaign to erect the Shoah Wall of Names in Vienna, he was awarded the Ehrenzeichen für Verdienste um die Republik, similar to the Légion d'Honneur in France.

Times are changing in Austria as the nation's leaders are forcing the country into a moment of truth and reconciliation. Eighty-three years

ago, during what is referred to as the November pogroms (also known as Kristallnacht), 112 synagogues and prayer houses were destroyed, while 8,000 people were arrested and 5,000 deported to Dachau concentration camp. Before the Holocaust, 191,481 Jews lived in Austria while no more than 5,000 were left in the country at its conclusion. One eye-witness account from November 10th, 1938, summarized the basic Austrian indifference to Kristallnacht: “In general, there is otherwise the usual Viennese calm.”

For decades Austrians avoided facing the historical truth of their own complicity in the Holocaust. Martin Engelberg, the only Austrian Jewish parliamentarian, told me that in his childhood, Austria’s history stopped in 1918. But today, Austrians are not only being taught about the Holocaust, but they have also now inaugurated a monument for the nation to recognize and name the 64,400 Austrian Jews who were murdered as a result of the nation’s warm embrace of Nazi Germany — referred to as the Anschluss.

At the Inauguration of the Wall of Names held on November 9 — the eve of Kristallnacht, Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg said, “we have to protect Jewish life. Our responsibility does not end at Austria’s border. We Austrians have a special responsibility to Israel. When Jews all over the world can live in freedom, only then does the meaning of never again become realized.” Indeed, under the previous leadership of Chancellor Sebastian Kurtz, Austria began a U-turn toward Israel — even raising the Israeli flag over the Chancellery during the Hamas aggression against Israel this past May. Austria has been leading the way at the European Union and mostly voting favourably for Israel at the United Nations.

Canada’s Honourary Consul General of Austria, Marc Bissell expressed that “Austria has taken many steps forward in recent years. The Shoah Wall of Names is a massive step forward. I feel it’s a recognition for both of my great-grandmothers whose names will be on

it, that they are not forgotten and through this process, we have remembered them and that's very special to me and my family.”

In my meeting with Karoline Edtstadler, the Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution at the Federal Chancellery and one of the architects of Austria's fight against anti-Semitism, she expressed that the former generation of Austrians acted out of bad conscience. “Now we have the feeling that we want to have a flourishing Jewish life for the future of Austria. Monuments like this give meaning to history and how many people were actually murdered. We cannot have a future without reflecting on the past”. Indeed, Edtstadler has been at the forefront of liaising with the Jewish community here in Vienna and implementing a national strategy against anti-Semitism — one of three European nations to do so.

President of the Jewish Community of Vienna Oskar Deutsch lamented that while he is proud to see progress in Austria and a vibrant community life that is flourishing, anti-Semitism has increased markedly. Over the last six months, the community has registered nearly six hundred incidents of anti-Semitism. More significantly, the central community organization which he leads is posting security guards at all schools, synagogues and community institutions to ensure community members feel safe and secure living a Jewish life. Recently, the government allocated some four million Euros to assist the community with security and programs to preserve Jewish life in Austria. It's a start.

On the heels of the unveiling of the Shoah Wall of Names, I was pleased to also attend and participate in the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism by Austria's National Football Association, its National Football League and by FK Austria Wien, Vienna's soccer team. Given the incidences of anti-Semitism at soccer games

throughout Europe, the adoption and integration of the fight against anti-Semitism is critical and necessary now more than ever.

For far too long European Jewish community presidents were afraid. They wondered if there was a future for Jewish people in Europe. While the question is still on the table, European nations are starting to aggressively confront their past. However, they must do more in terms of integrating the combating of anti-Semitism into their national laws and frameworks, including prosecuting hate crimes and penalizing social media companies when anti-Semitism is disseminated on their platforms.

In Vienna, Mr. Tutter now has a place to say Kaddish and light a memorial candle for his parents as do many Austrian Jewish descendants who lost family and relatives in the Shoah. Austria may have turned a corner as it faces down its own complicity in the crimes committed against its own citizens. A new generation of Austrian leaders are willing and able to confront their nation's past. They realize that, as the saying goes, those who do not remember the past are destined to repeat it. A monument is never enough. Continued education, advocacy and social action is necessary now more than ever to defend the past and protect the future.

EMBOLDENED NAZI MOVEMENT A THREAT TO CIVILIZATION

Synopsis: As the world continues to teeter on the brink of ethnic conflict, as race riots and demonstrations persist in America and Europe, and as class warfare is heightened by loss of employment, white supremacists will attempt to seize on this instability and grow their base. We need to be far more concerned about this threat, and far bolder in addressing it. The time is now.

It may have taken place 14,000 kilometres away, but the trial of a killer in New Zealand highlights the threat that white supremacist neo-Nazi groups pose to open societies. The killer entered a mosque and shot 51 people in cold blood and injured 40 others — all because of a racist ideology.

Rooted in Nazism, that ideology is based on Hitler's false notion of racial superiority. At the top were the Germans, or "Aryans" — people with white skin, fair hair and light eyes who were supposedly physically stronger than all others. Based on theories of genetics, evolution and the notion of racial impurity, the Nazis classified races, placing Jews at the bottom of their made-up hierarchy.

It was a calculated strategy designed to delegitimize, marginalize, and dehumanize Jews, along with groups like the Roma and even people with disabilities. Jews, for instance, were described and portrayed in Nazi imagery as rats and vermin. Physical measurements such as the size of their skulls, their noses and their height were used in propaganda materials to show that they had evolutionary deficiencies, to ready the German population for the eventual annihilation of the Jews.

Hitler and the Nazis may be gone, but their ideology survives and, in some cases, thrives. The New Zealand shooter produced a manifesto alluding to "white genocide" conspiracy theories. His manifesto allegedly contained anti-immigrant sentiments and concern over non-European immigrants invading the country — a common perception among white supremacists and nationalists.

With all this in mind, we all have much to be concerned about. In fact, a report from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a think tank based in the United Kingdom, identified significant white supremacist activity in Canada. Its report "identified 6,660 right-wing extremist channels, pages, groups and accounts across seven media platforms ...

the reach of these channels, pages, groups and accounts was significant, and collectively they reached over 11 million users across these platforms.”

This is hardly surprising. Part of the problem is our lax laws pertaining to online hate, and a lack of any sort of regulatory body to address the issue. It’s no wonder that hateful videos have recently shown up online calling Jews parasites and arguing for them to be removed from the country. And it took several years for the courts to take down an anti-Semitic and misogynistic newspaper that was circulated both online and in print.

The North American white supremacist movement became even more emboldened after the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Va. Those who took part in it were mainly members of the so-called alt-right movement and comprised many streams, including white nationalists, Klansmen and neo-Nazis. Marchers chanted racist and anti-Semitic rhetoric, including the now infamous slogan, “The Jews will not replace us” — a conspiracy theory, which suggests that Jews want to take over the world.

We have all been affected by mass shootings connected to racism and intolerance. In Quebec City, six people were brutally murdered and another 19 injured in an attack on a Muslim cultural centre in 2017. The following year, a white supremacist attacked the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, killing 11 worshippers and wounding six others.

The New Zealand Mosque shooter may have been sentenced to life without parole, but the ideology that drove him to this rampage, like all hateful ideologies, survives and continues to infect generation after generation of disenfranchised people.

As the world continues to teeter on the brink of ethnic conflict, as race riots and demonstrations persist in America and Europe, and as

class warfare is heightened by loss of employment, white supremacists will attempt to seize on this instability and grow their base. We need to be far more concerned about this threat, and far bolder in addressing it. The time is now.

COMPLICITY AND COOPERATION IN THE FACE OF EVIL

Synopsis: In his new book titled “In Broad Daylight,” Desbois documented how gentiles turned on their Jewish neighbors. He carefully documented the process in which Nazis gave the order to the local police chief who then recruited dozens of men to assist.

Insufficient research has been conducted about the mass crimes committed in small and large towns throughout Eastern Europe by the Germans and their accomplices. Untold numbers of towns and villages recruited civilians to facilitate the murder of Jewish neighbors in forests and fields nearby.

In fact, Father Patrick Desbois has documented well over 2,000 instances through many years of investigative work, including interviews of elderly townspeople who witnessed and sometimes participated in the atrocities.

In his new book titled “In Broad Daylight,” Desbois documented how gentiles turned on their Jewish neighbors. He carefully documented the process in which Nazis gave the order to the local police chief who then recruited dozens of men to assist. The process was exact and similar in all cases whereby Jews were isolated into raw ghettos usually fenced into an area for a period while their gentile neighbors dug carefully selected pits and helped in their transport for the final killing. It’s hard to imagine that little children, the elderly and frail, women and men were brought together as families, made to strip of their clothes (so the Nazis could recycle them) and lined up in pits and shot point-blank.

Witnesses routinely recount the screaming and the fear once the people realized they were about to be murdered. The killers spent full days shooting and shooting and shooting – while many of the townspeople looked on.

Entire villages and towns were therefore complicit in the murders. In fact, Desbois' book captures the capitalist-like spirit – the systematic process in which thousands of ordinary people volunteered to participate in the murder. He writes about the “architect” – the people who drew up the plans for the murder, including the size and measurement of the pits.

He describes “The Requisitions” in which the Nazis demanded or requisitioned people's trucks, horses, shovels and labor itself to facilitate the murders. He talks about the “diggers” and the “transporters” whose jobs it was to dig the pits and to transport the Jews to them – and of the catering and cooks who prepared the meals for the murderers so that there wouldn't be delay.

When Desbois asked one of the “diggers” about who gave the orders and the dimensions, one said: “The Germans. It was the German from the Gestapo. He stood off to the side while we dug the grave...He had paced it out. The grave was deep...he simply measured four meters for the length and four meters for the width, and he drew them with his shovel.” So, while the Germans directed the killing, ordinary people – recruited mainly by local police – were active agents throughout the process. It could not have happened this way had gentile neighbors not turned against their Jewish neighbors – had they resisted the Nazis.

Thus, what we know about the murders in concentration camps is only half the knowledge of what truly took place in the Holocaust. Aside from concentration camps, Jewish people were murdered openly on streets; in ghettos; by herding into barns and setting them on fire;

and of course, through the SS mobile killing squads like the Einsatzgruppen.

In fact, it is believed that 2 million Jews were murdered in this way or 40% of all Jews. Let us not forget Babi Yar in Kiev where about 100,000 people (mostly Jews) were murdered by Germans in 1941 by shooting.

Let us not forget this account about the Krepiecki Forest, just outside of Lublin and Majdanek. “The Jews were driven down from the trucks, and they were led to the same place where the children were murdered. Some of the Jews held their children in their arms. I observed the massacre from about 150 meters but from a different direction than before. Germans drove the Jews down to the pits. There were horrible screams.

A group of six SS officers and Lithuanians shot into the Jews who were already in the pits. I’m sure that they were SS men because on their caps they had death’s head insignia and on their sleeves the signs of SS.”

Researchers have only scratched the surface of our understanding of the perhaps millions of people who lie beneath fields and ravines – whom we will never know about. They are undocumented and erased from history. There are no gravestones to mark their existence. Their property had been immediately stolen by their neighbors and all personal belongings recycled or burned.

We cannot possibly account for this incredible crime against humanity which was committed by the Germans – but also by those who collaborated and conspired with them. Those who stood by and said and did nothing.

More research is necessary to uncover and document as many mass graves as possible. Unfortunately, too many neighbors and Nazis have

gotten away with murder. But the least we can do is to identify the mass graves and mark them with a headstone for eternity.

RENEWING HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

As an academic and educator in Holocaust studies, I dedicated significant thought to the escalating wave of antisemitism, particularly within the so-called progressive left, over the past couple of years. Despite the surge in violent antisemitic incidents globally, the left seemed incapable of recognizing the parallels between the hatred that fueled the Holocaust and its own contemporary actions, which contributed to present-day forms of Jew-hate.

For instance, consider the NDP's recent call for the federal government to initiate anti-Israel boycotts and adopt a more severe stance against the Jewish state. In a press release, Heather McPherson, the NDP's foreign affairs critic, advocated for a boycott of goods and services produced in Judea and Samaria, demanding that "Canada should ban the import of all goods produced specifically in illegal settlements" (the term "illegal" is disputed as these are Jewish neighborhoods).

What consistently astonished me was the profound disconnect between the Nazi boycotts of Jews — a precursor to the murder of six million Jewish individuals — and the contemporary push for boycotts against Israel, the modern embodiment of the Jewish people. Throughout history, when Jews were targeted, boycotts were often among the initial strategies, aimed at undermining, defaming, marginalizing, and ultimately expelling, converting, or murdering a particular Jewish community.

This form of antisemitism also infiltrated various religious groups, such as the United Church of Canada. The church's Unsettling Goods boycott campaign urged people to avoid products produced in Israeli

settlements while simultaneously preaching against antisemitism. It was incredible that on one hand, the church advocated boycotting Jews in their own homeland, and on the other hand, it claimed to repent for historical Christian anti-Judaism.

The same disconnect existed in some labor unions. In 2017, the Canadian Union of Public Employees signed a statement endorsing tactics like boycotts, divestment, and sanctions, stating that they "can be effective for raising awareness." While this may have been true in some contexts, it was not applicable when it came to boycotting Jews.

Adolf Hitler's first decree on April 1, 1933, was to boycott Jewish businesses and professionals, eventually extending to Jewish book-burning, leading to more heinous atrocities. To combat modern antisemitism effectively and help people comprehend its consequences through the lens of the Holocaust, Holocaust educators needed to enhance their delivery and draw more immediate parallels between antisemitic behavior then and now.

The increasing disdain for Jewish people, especially within academia, by the progressive left and the concurrent rise of extreme-right neo-Nazi movements posed complex challenges. While there was no single answer to this fundamental question, educators, advocates, and activists had to work coherently to underscore the immediate parallels between past and present antisemitic behavior. It was crucial for readers, regardless of political affiliations, to carefully consider these thoughts without defensiveness. There was an urgent need for a shift in the traditional framework of Holocaust education.

CHAPTER 4

THE UNITED NATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL

THE UN IS DESIGNED TO DISMANTLE ISRAEL

Synopsis: the UN's relentless obsession with dismantling the Jewish State is designed intentionally to divert attention from legitimate human rights catastrophes on our planet.

Uyghur women in Chinese labour camps recall the horror of rape and forced sterilization. Imprisoned in “re-education” camps, their hair is shorn (likely sold as a wig) and earrings are ripped out. One woman recalled, “they pulled it so hard that my ears were bleeding...I was being treated like an animal”. Still, the world plans on participating in the Winter Olympics in Beijing.

Meanwhile in Afghanistan, the Taliban banned long-distance road trips for women travelling alone. This latest decree was announced by the Taliban’s feudal-era “Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice”. The world abandoned Afghanistan’s women and girls as secondary schools are shut down and most have been banned from working. Where is the international outrage from progressives and feminists?

In Nigeria, dozens of people were murdered and abducted on Christmas Day after Jihadists demanded the closure of churches. Some 15 Christian communities were said to be attacked by Jihadists who have been driving out the minority community from the region. Why is the world silent when it comes to the persecution of Christian communities in the Middle East and Africa?

Sadly none of these human rights issues and countless others will be condemned or assigned perpetual commissions of investigation by the United Nations (UN). The plight of the Uyghurs, Afghanistan's women and Christians in Nigeria will be relegated to the margin of international attention. After you read this article, the stain of the former atrocities mentioned above and many like them will be forgotten. Why? Because the UN's relentless obsession with dismantling the Jewish State is designed intentionally to divert attention from legitimate human rights catastrophes on our planet.

Just before Christmas, it became painfully clear that the UN's General Assembly will continue to expend an outrageous amount of money (\$5 million) and human resources (24 staff) to investigate the only Jewish and democratic nation on earth – the State of Israel for alleged war crimes.

Even while the country makes up just .11% of the global population and despite its insignificant land mass (Canada is 455 times bigger), it continues to be subjected to disproportional pile-on by a majority of nations in the 193 member General Assembly. Thankfully the United States is Israel's guardian angel at the UN, as eloquently pointed out by Mark Regev, a former senior advisor to Israel's Prime Minister.

In the last two weeks, dozens of articles blasted the latest UN attack. Headlines blared, "Once Again, the UN Treats Israel Like the Most Evil Country on Earth"; "The UN's Israel Libel Machine Expands"; "Jewish Leaders Condemn UN's Open-ended Investigation into War Crimes"; and "UN Inquiry Comes with New Independent Façade, Same Israel Bias".

The latest salvo launched by the UN against tiny Israel is an open-ended investigation into alleged war-crimes in last May's war with Hamas. The so-called investigation was instigated by the UN's infamous Human Rights Council who'se antisemitic bias against Israel

is so pervasive, it is the only country included on its permanent agenda in every session. Despite the fact the UNHRC is effectively run by dictatorships whose human rights records are despicable, the Geneva based organization pressed the UN to approve a hefty budget to investigate Israel for defending itself against 4,600 missiles that rained on its civilian population.

Israel was defending itself against rockets launched by Hamas at its cities. Hamas is designated as a terrorist organization by most western nations. Professor Anne Bayefsky of The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs recently wrote, 'The Human Rights Council resolution failed to refer to Hamas at all. It did not mention-let alone condemn-the launch of thousands of rockets by Hamas into Israel. Indeed, the civilian population was omitted from the resolution'. In an editorial, The Wall Street Journal said, "Israel's defense of its civilians was lawful, targeted and restrained, but the UN wants to use the war as a pretext to indict Israel for crimes, real or imagined".

Caroline Glick called the UN investigation an "inquisition" and said it was "run by outspoken haters of Israel with long records of demonizing the State of Israel and its people". Time erases memory but Glick eloquently reminds us that in 2005, under pressure from the Bush administration, then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan disbanded the UN Human Rights Commission exactly because it "was endemically antisemitic". Just one year later, the UN Human Rights Council was formed and "its members and UN staff" says Glick "wasted no time making clear that they intended for the new council to be even more antisemitic than its predecessor was".

No such open-ended investigation is believed to have been instigated against any other UN member. The double-antisemitic-standards are simply too abhorrent to contemplate alongside this incredible New Years gift handed down not only to Israel – but to the human rights community. In other words, here you have a situation

where say, Syria's Basha Al Assad has literally gotten away with the gassing and murder of 350,000 plus of his own citizens with some eyebrows raised, but Israel is being hung on an edge of a cliff for defending itself against a deadly terrorist group? If rockets rained down on your home, would you not expect your government to protect and defend you and your family?

As a Canadian, more than anything in the world, I want the promise of the United Nations to work. I want the Universal Declaration for Human Rights to be fairly and equally applied by all nations, especially by the block of fifty Arab nations that tend to vote against little Israel. I fear the UN will continue diminishing its *raison detre* and ultimately its universality of human rights if Israel continues to be held to a higher standard than any other nation on earth. At its peril, the UN body will continue ignoring the atrocious state-sponsored killings in Myanmar and the unlawful incarceration of dissidents in Iran's Evin Prison, including the clampdown on freedom recently by China and Russia.

The 17 UN resolutions targeting Israel in 2020 shows an unhealthy fixation on the Jewish State. It is a form of abuse, harassment and frankly, Antisemitism. A restructure of the UN needs to happen now alongside the Abraham Accords which have offered the Middle East a new path toward peace. Its success is an incredible juxtaposition against the dis-reality presented in the halls of the United Nations. As in all things in life, for every success there are those who will strive to tear you down. Israel has matured, blossomed and become a global economic and scientific force. The UN ought to get with the program.

WHEN ANTONIO GUTERRES BLAMED THE VICTIMS OF THE HAMAS MASSACRE

Synopsis: Guterres is not antisemitic. He has denounced antisemitism vigorously in the past. Yet somehow, perhaps because of the prevailing bias against Israel at the UN, he adopted the rhetoric espoused by

Hamas apologists, blaming Israel for the massacre inflicted on its citizens.

In 1996, Daniel Goldhagen published a seminal book that changed the Holocaust narrative. In “Hitler’s Willing Executioners,” Goldhagen showed that most of the German public supported Hitler’s determined effort to commit genocide against the Jewish people because they were motivated by a unique and virulent form of “eliminationist antisemitism” that had been ingrained in German identity for centuries.

Antisemitism, in other words, empowered ordinary people to believe that Jews deserved to be eliminated from the face of the earth.

The view that 1,400 Israelis deserved to be murdered by Hamas is not dissimilar. Having been indoctrinated with large doses of antisemitism since childhood, Hamas terrorists brutally murdered Jewish men and women, babies and children, the infirm and the elderly. Their barbarism mirrored the heinous genocidal crimes committed by the Nazis.

Despite these crimes, the Jewish people have been re-victimized by those who have attempted to justify this mass murder. In ancient times, pogroms and crusades against Jews blamed the Jews themselves. After all, we were supposedly responsible for things like deicide, the black plague and a global conspiracy to control the world. We deserved all the pain and suffering that befell us. That’s antisemitism.

In light of this history, it was disturbing to hear United Nations Secretary General António Guterres tell the world in front of the Security Council this week that Jews were essentially responsible for Hamas’s Oct. 7 massacre. “It is important to also recognize the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum,” he declared.

Caught red-handed, the following day, Guterres refused to apologize, instead saying, “I am shocked by misrepresentations by

some of my statement yesterday in the Security Council — as if I was justifying acts of terror by Hamas.” Yet that is exactly what he appeared to be doing, given that, in the same breath, he said that, “The Palestinian people have been subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation.”

This is equivalent to telling the Rwandan Tutsis that they were responsible for their own murders. It’s like telling the girls that Boko Haram kidnapped and raped that it was their fault. It’s akin to telling Ukrainians that they invited the Russian slaughter.

Guterres is not antisemitic. He has denounced antisemitism vigorously in the past. Yet somehow, perhaps because of the prevailing bias against Israel at the UN, he adopted the rhetoric espoused by Hamas apologists, blaming Israel for the massacre inflicted on its citizens.

His comments seemed out of character to me, given his past support for the Jewish people, but it demonstrates how easy it is to succumb to the concerted PR campaign Hamas supporters launched even before the bodies of the dead Israelis had grown cold.

Guterres would have appeared like a statesman had he used the opportunity to scold the Palestinians for not accepting the UN’s 1947 partition plan and for consistently scuttling opportunities for peace. He could have held the Palestinians accountable for creating and supporting Hamas. He could have castigated them for decades of incessant terrorist attacks against Israelis and relentless incitement against Jews.

Guterres could have used the moment to critique the UN for maintaining the status quo by ensuring Palestinians remain as perpetual refugees. He could have criticized the antisemitic indoctrination of Palestinian students in UN-run schools.

After being blamed by the United Nations for the murder of innocents, Israel has rightly stopped issuing visas to UN officials and called for Guterres's resignation. Like the instantaneous false blame Israel received over the bombing of the hospital in Gaza, it's too late to walk this back. This kind of sentiment seeps into the public consciousness immediately and invites antisemitism and more incitement against Israel.

Words are weapons and they are used today, as they were used by the Nazis and those who came before them, to invite hate against the Jewish people. This must stop.

THE UN HAS KEPT PALESTINIANS TRAPPED AGAINST ISRAEL

Synopsis: The UN appears to insist on keeping Israel's very existence in question and disrupting peace-building efforts by ensuring Palestinians remain as refugees.

The United Nations "special rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories," Francesca Albanese, told an English-language Middle East news site that the European Union erred by adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition of antisemitism.

Apparently, she wants UN leaders to be able to scrutinize Israel without any guidance about when such criticism veers into hate. "No one should be above scrutiny," she said. Good, because the UN should not be above scrutiny, either.

Despite the work being done to promote peaceful solutions in the Middle East through the Abraham Accords, the UN appears to insist on keeping Israel's very existence in question and disrupting peace-building efforts by ensuring Palestinians remain as permanent refugees.

The UN's planners must have been absent from school the day the teacher repeated the old adage that if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; but if you teach him to fish, you feed him for a lifetime. Instead, the UN established the only permanent refugee organization in the world, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Millions of refugees poured out of Syria following President Bashar Assad's gassing and murder of nearly 500,000 civilians, but no dedicated UN agency was founded for them. Instead, they were quickly assimilated into countries like Germany and Canada. There are no international campaigns or significant Syrian refugee movements on university campuses calling for their return, because most have acclimatized to their new homes — as refugees generally do.

A number of permanent exhibits line the wall near the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. Of all the refugees past and present, the Palestinians are the only ones who have their own permanent exhibit, under the heading, "The Question of Palestine and the United Nations."

The exhibit states, "The question of Palestine has been on the United Nations agenda since the organization's earliest days." The Arabs rejected the establishment of the Jewish state following the UN's positive vote on the "partition plan," which called for two states living side-by-side in peace.

In 1948, the Arab world went to war against the newly founded State of Israel. Many Arab-Palestinians either fought Israel or fled to neighbouring countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Syria), hoping to return when the Jews were pushed into the sea. That did not happen.

Instead of absorbing the refugees into their host countries, UNRWA deliberately kept them in so-called refugee camps. They were (and still

are) used as pawns by both their host countries and the UN itself to leverage a “final status agreement” with Israel.

From a human rights point of view, that is completely unfair to the millions of children who have had their futures stolen from them by the UN. Their host countries continue to refuse to allow them citizenship or to integrate them into civil society.

For its part, instead of down-scaling operations, UNRWA has grown into a bureaucratic behemoth that employs 30,000 people and has an annual budget of around US\$1.5 billion (C\$2 billion). By keeping Palestinians trapped and needy as refugees, the agency reinforces their false hope that they may one day return to a country that never existed in the first place.

Everyone deserves to be free in their own land. But the truth should always be the truth. Before 1948, the area was ruled by the British for a short time and by the Ottomans for 400 years before that. There was never a state of Palestine. This generation of Palestinians wants to lay claim to Jerusalem, but the holy city was never Palestinian. Still, Israel has recognized the right to Palestinian self-determination since its inception — but despite the fact that Jews are indigenous to the land, Palestinians refuse to share, even at their own peril.

Since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, countless peace overtures have been made. The Palestinian leadership rejected them all — carrying forward the false narrative that one day, “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.”

Now, it appears as though peace and a two-state solution are more elusive than ever. Both sides have entrenched their positions. More violence is inevitable. The way back to peace is for the UN and its agencies like UNRWA to stop deceiving the Palestinian people by suggesting that Israel is a temporary political entity. It’s not going anywhere.

LIKE HAMAS, UNRWA MUST BE REMOVED

Synopsis: UNRWA's level of denial and distortion needs to be called out. Given these blatant facts, UNRWA must be removed from Gaza alongside Hamas. A new non-permanent humanitarian relief program must be created to build a new society that can co-exist peacefully with Israel. Anything else will be detrimental to both Palestinians and Israelis living in the region.

The lies, denials and innuendos about Israel distributed by United Nations and its affiliated agencies have long been outrageous. But this week, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) reached a new low that illustrates its veracious appetite to take advantage of the war by spreading lies to raise money.

Recently, I received an email from Marta Malaspina, a member of UNRWA's so-called Digital Fundraising Team. I could not believe that she wrote that the "ongoing war in Gaza comes after 75 years of continuous displacement and dispossession." Nice wordsmithing, if only it were honest.

In reaction, I sent her the following note: "Hi Marta, I am baffled how someone seemingly educated like you can spread lies to raise a few dollars. I just received your email saying that 'the ongoing war in Gaza comes after 75 years of continuous displacement and dispossession.' No, Ms. Malaspina, it comes after the Hamas attack of October 7th in which Palestinians murdered 1,200 Jews in cold blood. Why can't you be honest?"

Obviously, I continued, "We will expose these lies and encourage our own government in Canada to stop funding UNRWA because it's not truthful. Your note again proves it in writing. So, your fundraising email, because it shows the true colours of UNRWA, will bring about the defunding of UNRWA."

This is already happening. This week, after spending nearly \$1 billion on UNRWA over the last five years, Germany announced it is freezing all funding.

“UNRWA is not making a contribution to a peaceful solution,” Max Lucks of Germany's Greens said. “Not a single cent from Germany should reach teachers who glorify the terror of Hamas.”

Similarly, the European Union has moved to withhold 39 million euros (C\$58 million) from Palestinian groups, including from UNRWA. These NGOs are often accused of inciting hatred against Israel. The EU and other funders have demanded UNRWA and other agencies enforce contracts that require their schools and programs to be monitored. However, none of this has proven effective.

“The problem is that Israel actually needs UNRWA,” one highly-placed official in the organization told me in confidence WHEN WAS THIS?. UNRWA seems to believe serving Israel and the Palestinians themselves. They have our government convinced to the tune of \$100 million in funding plus some additional emergency money.

I told the official that several years ago that my organization, the Abraham Global Peace Initiative, did try to reach out to UNRWA in the hope of finding a way to work together. But since that time, I expressed, “I can see now that UNRWA unfortunately, is holding the Palestinians themselves hostage.”

I explained to the UNRWA official that the organization itself, and its staff, unfortunately is spreading lies, and that this week's fundraising letter is yet another example. UNRWA “is the only refugee organization in the world for one specific group (the Palestinians). Unlike other societies that promote co-existence and assimilation of refugees, UNRWA has not promoted integration into the societies in which Palestinians have moved.” For some examples, see Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.

That means, I explained to the official, that UNRWA is the problem to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Therefore, there needs to be a completely new system that is organized to aid the Palestinians and provide humanitarian relief, but with an objective of developing a sustainable society.

A new internationally funded entity needs to push for growing cooperation instead of isolation and absorption of refugees into their current places of residence. Holding Palestinians prisoners in this false narrative that one day they might “return” is counterproductive. It builds anger and frustration and limits the vision for a bright future.

Additionally, UNRWA schools have been teaching anti-Israel and antisemitic materials while turning a blind eye when their schools become rocket bunkers for Hamas. The result is a vicious society that committed heinous crimes against innocent Israelis on Oct. 7. We need to hold UNRWA and its funders accountable for the crimes committed against the innocent Jews and foreigners who were murdered and kidnapped on that day.

Malaspina and her fundraising team at UNRWA had the audacity of disregarding the barbarism that took place on that black day. She called for “solidarity” with the Palestinians but not with the Jewish women who were raped and the Jewish children who were mutilated by the very people her agency supports.

This level of denial and distortion needs to be called out. Given these blatant facts, UNRWA must be removed from Gaza alongside Hamas. A new non-permanent humanitarian relief program must be created to build a new society that can co-exist peacefully with Israel. Anything else will be detrimental to both Palestinians and Israelis living in the region.

CHAPTER 5

STANDING WITH ISRAEL

THE MIRACLE OF ISRAEL

Synopsis: Those of us who grew up in the shadow of the Holocaust and Israel's existential battles for survival celebrate this reunification of the Jewish nation. It's a triumph against evil. It's a win against the Hitlers of the world and a fulfillment of our destiny as a people.

In June 2022, about 400 new Ethiopian immigrants touched down to much fanfare at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv. Their arrival is emblematic of the miracle that is the modern State of Israel. The in-gathering of the Jewish people from the four corners of the world is one of the greatest and most admirable stories of our time. A people who had been taken into slavery, dispersed, and forcibly converted to other religions following the destruction of the Jewish temples somehow kept their faith for 2,000 years and managed to return home to Jerusalem.

Some may see the return of the Jewish people as a prophecy. Others see it as a fulfillment of destiny. While others simply understand that the State of Israel offers safety and security to a persecuted people. The Jewish people, after all, are indigenous to the land of Israel and have lived in the region since time immemorial.

Following the destruction of King Solomon's Temple in 586 BCE, and again after the destruction of the Second Temple around 70 CE, the Jewish people were forced into exile. Generation after generation called out the four most important words in our existential liturgy: "next year in Jerusalem."

Our world was incomplete without the beating heart of Jerusalem, the most sacred of all that is sacred in the Jewish religion. The return home of millions of Jewish people who were scattered around the globe is a fulfillment of justice and freedom. Zionism reignited our passion to free ourselves from oppression and antisemitism.

This narrative contradicts the prevailing pro-Palestinian campaigns that seek to delegitimize the Jewish people's historical attachment to the land of Israel. Despite the fact our history is written in stone throughout the land — from ancient synagogues to the Dead Sea Scrolls and what remains of our Temple in Jerusalem — there are those who continue to falsely label Jewish people living in Israel as “colonizers” and “settlers.”

The fact is, however, that there has never been a Palestinian state on this land. Preceding Israel's independence in 1948, the land of Israel was occupied by the British, the Ottomans and many others. And consecutive waves of immigration into Israel of people from various ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds disproves the shameful “apartheid” accusation that's frequently lobbed against Israel.

While the independence and freedom of other historically repressed and indigenous peoples is supported by international human rights organizations that have gone after Israel, the same sentiment is not shared when it comes to the Jewish state. In fact, even before it was a state, Jewish immigration into Israel was frequently curtailed, particularly by the British, who blocked many Jews attempting to flee Nazi persecution. Israel is the fulfillment of a 2,000-year-old dream to return home.

No other nation on earth has expended so much kindness, acceptance, and effort to reunify its lost tribes as has the State of Israel. Ethiopians started immigrating to Israel in the 1980s, but it wasn't until Operation Solomon in 1991, when 14,325 Beta Israel were brought to

Israel in 36 hours on 35 planes, that the significance of this moment in Jewish history was fully realized.

The Ethiopian immigration is part of a long chain of incredible rescue efforts of a people who are fulfilling a dream to come home. Many Ethiopians, who often had to trek through the dessert to reach the Israeli planes, recount that they were motivated by the idea of seeing the city of Jerusalem with their own eyes. It was the promised land they had been told about for generations.

Once they arrived in Israel, integration was not simple. But they were welcomed home. Those of us who grew up in the shadow of the Holocaust and Israel's existential battles for survival celebrate this reunification of the Jewish nation. It's a triumph against evil. It's a win against the Hitlers of the world and a fulfillment of our destiny as a people.

DEBUNKING FALSE NARRATIVES AND EMBRACING POSITIVE CHANGE

Synopsis: The wasted energy and resources on negative ad campaigns that achieve nothing except hate and discord sadly misrepresents the seismic shift that's now underway in the entire region. we cannot turn a blind eye to those who are intent on spreading libels and falsehoods about the Jewish state. A lie told enough times can become a truth if unopposed. We have a responsibility to stand up for Israel.

The misallocation of energy and resources towards negative ad campaigns, fostering only hatred and discord, unfortunately distorts the significant transformation currently unfolding in the entire region. It is imperative not to ignore those actively spreading libels and falsehoods about the Jewish state. A lie, when repeated unchecked, can morph into a perceived truth. We have a responsibility to stand up for Israel.

The United Nations' Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel recently faced accusations of anti-Semitism when a member reportedly claimed that social media is largely controlled by the "Jewish lobby."

Attributing global media control to Jewish people is an anti-Semitic falsehood. Despite Israel being the only democracy in the region, the UN's commissioner audaciously questioned why Israel is even a member of the UN.

Responding to these prejudiced comments, Canada's permanent ambassador to the United Nations, Bob Rae, denounced the biased remarks, emphasizing that a Commission of Inquiry should not resemble a never-ending Inquisition.

The United Nations Human Rights Council's politicized and ultra-biased behavior has legitimized Israel-bashing on university campuses and city streets. Reports of city buses in St. John's, N.L., labeling Israel as an "apartheid" state exemplify this trend.

Surprisingly, in Israel, such ads drew laughter from most people during the filming of the documentary, "The Future of Israel and its Defenders." In Karmiel, an Arab-Israeli leader laughed off the claim of Israel being an apartheid state, highlighting his personal success and the opportunities available to Israeli citizens.

Contrary to the external perception, most Israelis don't believe in the apartheid characterization. Co-existence and peace dominate the discourse among political and community leaders. The Abraham Accords have shattered Israel's isolation, fostering a paradigm shift and a sense of normalcy for both Jewish and Arab citizens.

While anti-Israel campaigns persist in the West, Israel remains unaffected, as evidenced by the words of Emilie Moatti, a member of

the Knesset. The impact of the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement is minimal in present-day Israel.

Although challenges persist, the Abraham Accords signal a positive change in the region. During a meeting with Morocco's ambassador to Israel, optimism was evident, emphasizing the warm reception and large attendance at events.

Despite these positive developments, there is a need to counter delegitimization campaigns against Israel, especially for those who believe in freedom and democracy. Israeli celebrity Noa Tishby, the country's special envoy for combating antisemitism and delegitimization, underscores the importance of defending democracies.

Critics of Israel often overlook the harmonious coexistence of Arab and Israeli families in cafes or the collaboration of Jewish and Arab youth at local stores. The efforts spent on negative ad campaigns misrepresent the ongoing seismic shift in the region. Those genuinely seeking peace should focus on promoting tangible solutions rather than sowing discord among different groups.

In conclusion, even when faced with laughable false accusations, it is crucial to vehemently defend Israel, its values, and the democracy it represents. As Tishby aptly puts it, Israel is a "miracle that we need to defend whether we live there or not."

ISRAEL IS THE ANSWER TO ANTISEMITISM

Synopsis: The miracle of Israel today was borne of necessity. Herzl was right. Israel is the only answer to antisemitism. But as it happens, when Jewish people are given the freedom of self-expression, the rest of the world benefits. Can you imagine what gifts Israel will offer humanity in the next 75 years?

An increasing tide of antisemitism around the world is proving that Israel is needed now more than ever. Theodor Herzl, the founding visionary of the modern Jewish state, was right about re-establishing the Jewish homeland as the answer to antisemitism. The only way for Jewish people to truly escape this infectious disease of hatred is by seeking refuge in Israel.

Israel might not be able to eradicate antisemitism, but after 2,000 years of persecution, finally there is shelter. The recent surge in violent antisemitism in France for instance and even in Russia and Ukraine has brought a torrent of Jewish immigration to the Holy Land. Instability in Chile, Venezuela and Argentina is also leading more Jews to the safety and security of Israel. Even in Canada and America, the continued rise of antisemitism is making many Jews contemplate their future.

Israel's existence is no longer in peril. Antisemitism and internal satisfaction is pushing its population closer to 10 million. Its GDP per capita stands as among the highest in the world, matching most western nations, and just last week, it was ranked among the 10 most influential and powerful nations on Earth by U.S. News & World Report.

The same report ranked its military among the top five. Exports have increased dramatically in the past few years, with exports to Canada rising by 95 per cent in 2022. The Abraham Accords have opened new markets for the Jewish state with massive trade deals signed daily with the United Arab Emirates, Morocco and Bahrain.

Consequently, even when living in the shadow of pernicious antisemitism, members of the Jewish diaspora find strength and confidence knowing that Israel has their back. What other nation would conduct a stealth raid on a Ugandan airport to rescue citizens held by Palestinian terrorists? None. Israel is our insurance policy — and this is why every single Jewish person and every friend of Israel, no matter

of what political or religious persuasion (and there are many), must relentlessly defend it.

This old-new-land is turning 75 years old but it has really been a part of the Jewish nation for more than 3,500 years. In one of the first recorded accounts in the Bible, Abraham purchased a burial place in Hebron for our patriarchs and matriarchs, laying a Jewish stake in the Holy Land. Centuries later and following our enslavement in Egypt, we returned to our homeland and twice built (and rebuilt) our temple in Jerusalem to worship in freedom.

Over the centuries, our freedom was taken away by the Assyrians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Crusaders, the Ottomans and the British — as our people were repeatedly expelled or taken as slaves and our land became desolate.

But we never gave up on our dream to return home, suffering discrimination in Europe and in Arab lands where we were forced to live in ghettos. The past 1,000 years were especially brutal, particularly during the Spanish Inquisition of 1492 when thousands of Jewish people were forced to convert or were slaughtered or expelled from Spain and Portugal.

In the Eastern part of Russia and in Poland as elsewhere we were subjected to pogroms. These were episodes in which our neighbours turned against us by virtue of whatever conspiracy rumour was circulating in our village. Sometimes it was an unfounded assertion that we had murdered a Christian child to make matzo for Passover. Other times, we were accused of spreading the Black Death (not dissimilar to modern antisemitic tropes about COVID).

In all this, it's clear that our loyalty and dedication to the countries in which we resided proved pointless against antisemitism. The story of Col. Alfred Dreyfus moved Herzl to act against the assimilationist model. Dreyfus was a dedicated Jewish soldier falsely accused of

treason and humiliated, stripped of his medals in public and sent to prison following his trial in 1894.

During the enlightenment period in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Budapest and throughout Europe, Jewish people assimilated and contributed to their nation states — in the military, sciences, academia, law, government and the arts. There were thousands of such Dreyfuses, Freuds and Einsteins producing and contributing to the social good, with complete fealty.

This did not matter. The Holocaust still happened. Herzl was one of the first Jews to realize that antisemitism cannot be overcome by assimilation. The Jewish State of Israel was the answer. Sadly, many Jewish people today, particularly in academia, have forgotten the lessons of the past. Every generation hopes their time is different and that humanity has somehow advanced — the Holocaust, they say, cannot happen again. But with antisemitism rising by 34 per cent to more than 70 per cent annually in western nations, how can we be sure?

In my recent documentary, *The Future of Israel and its Defenders*, I pointed out that Israel at 75 is an incredible achievement not only for the Jewish people, but for humanity. The land that used to export Jaffa oranges is now the solution-making factory of the globe. Israelis are working on some of the most important medical initiatives in the world and may yet find cures to many of the ailments (including cancer) that plague mankind.

The miracle of Israel today was borne of necessity. Herzl was right. Israel is the only answer to antisemitism. But as it happens, when Jewish people are given the freedom of self-expression, the rest of the world benefits. Can you imagine what gifts Israel will offer humanity in the next 75 years?

BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE

Synopsis: We need to envelop the world in a culture of peace. “A culture of peace is inseparable from human rights, respect for diversity, and fairer societies,” said United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Even though human history is fraught with conflict and war, we must learn to overcome our own tendencies.

Despite political and social turmoil, war, and the decline of democracies worldwide, we must strive for a world of peaceful coexistence. In a world of instability and despair, the international community has a strategic interest in strengthening ties and increasing cooperation.

In today’s world, we could all use a little hope. Despite political and social turmoil, war, and the decline of democracies worldwide, we must strive for a world of peaceful coexistence. That requires us to focus on the good, celebrate humanity’s wins, and continue striving for the betterment of humanity.

Perhaps it’s a rosy and optimistic view, that despite the odds, humans can rise above their primal need for conflict. And even with all that’s wrong with the world, there are some encouraging signs of hope.

Sudan’s seemingly hesitant acquiescence to peace with Israel is significant. After all, it is the country that hosted the infamous Arab League conference in Khartoum in 1967 that unabashedly declared: no peace with Israel; no recognition of Israel; no negotiation with Israel! But realpolitik finally became a factor for Sudan — a country that’s desperate for cash, food, and removal from the United States’ terror list.

They say that necessity is the mother of invention. In the Middle East, however, necessity is the mother of peace. And when peace happens in that region, it happens expediently. At the same time Israeli

negotiators were in Khartoum in the fall of 2020 hammering out a peace deal, an Etihad Airways plane landed in Tel Aviv carrying a United Arab Emirates delegation to sign a \$3-billion deal for regional development. Meanwhile, El Al planes touched down in Bahrain to finalize various trade agreements with that country.

On the sidelines of these achievements is a partnership that is maturing. India and Israel's blossoming friendship stands as a model of success for what the Abraham Accords will look like two years from now. Diplomatic entreaties between the two countries began on the sidelines of the United Nations in 2014 when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This was followed by Modi's historic state visit to Israel in 2017 and Netanyahu's visit to India the following year.

Israel's business-savvy ambassador to India told us that the relationship between the two countries has accelerated at warp speed recently. Ron Malka, who was the acting chairman of the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange among other highly coveted positions in Israel, is all about developing a strategic relationship with India on issues like food, water, science, and agriculture. Both being democracies, the two countries have many shared values, along with strategic and military interests.

India overcame the psychological barrier with Israel over the Palestinian issue. Ambassador Malka said, "It has now 'de-hyphenized' the matter to normalize relations with Israel. We may not agree on everything ... but we can work together on many projects and respectfully discuss issues that have strained us previously." Today, for example, Malka proudly said that Israel operates some 29 agricultural centers that teach around 147,000 Indian farmers about the latest farming and water irrigation technologies.

That diplomacy has translated into results. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, with India's help, Israel was immediately able to airlift thousands of young Israelis home from remote areas of the country. For its part, India also supplied Israel with much-needed raw materials to produce pharmaceuticals and is currently conducting joint research on rapid COVID-19 tests. Concurrently, Malka said that as a goodwill gesture, he personally flew to Israel and brought back lifesaving medical equipment for a local hospital.

We need to envelop the world in a culture of peace. "A culture of peace is inseparable from human rights, respect for diversity, and fairer societies," said United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Even though human history is fraught with conflict and war, we must learn to overcome our own tendencies. That comes about through peacemaking, cooperation, and an intense desire for mutual engagement.

The world needs this now more than ever.

WHEN SAUDIS PLAYED TOUGH ON THE PALESTINIANS

Perhaps it's the audacity of our times—the abnormality of these days brings some pleasant surprises. In the fall of 2020, the Saudis took a firm stance against the Palestinian leadership. It's unclear whether they were paving the way for peace with Israel or extending support to then-U.S. President Donald Trump before the election. Nevertheless, they deviated from their standard operating procedure in this era of instability, akin to others leveraging the COVID situation for various reasons.

Given their historical harsh rhetoric toward Israel, a peace agreement seemed improbable. However, within a few months, the unimaginable occurred—the signing of the Abraham Accords involving Israel, the U.A.E., Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan. Behind the

scenes, the Saudis played a significant role, giving their blessing and permitting Israeli commercial flights over their territory.

Amidst these developments, the real earthquake unfolded when the Saudis silently acquiesced to the peace agreement. This shattered the foundational Palestinian belief in the moral and just nature of their cause. Predictably, Palestinian leaders, known for missing opportunities, went on the offensive, prompting the Saudis to respond with what they termed a "low level of discourse," denouncing the peace agreement.

In an uncharacteristic move, the Saudis released a glossy pseudo-video interview on Al Arabiya featuring Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz, the esteemed former director general of Saudi intelligence and ambassador to the United States from 1983 to 2005. Prince Bandar's family's proximity to the monarchy, especially his daughter serving as Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Washington, suggests that the prince's public allegations against the Palestinians were likely endorsed by the Kingdom.

Prince Bandar accused the Palestinians of a history of failure, bad decisions, not heeding the Kingdom's advice, and consistently siding with the "losing side." He questioned their current allies, pointing out Iran's exploitation of the Palestinian cause and Turkey's support for Hamas. He reminded them of historical mistakes, such as aligning with Hitler, instead of joining the British during World War II.

The acrimony stemmed not only from frustration with the Palestinian leadership but also a strong desire by Saudi Arabia to normalize relations with Israel. Riyadh publicly put the Palestinian leadership on notice, signaling a readiness to transition toward peace and change its operating procedure. Tough brotherly love may bring them back to the negotiating table with Israel, showcasing the Kingdom's readiness to give peace a chance.

AMNESTY'S SHAMEFUL ASSAULT ON ISRAEL

Synopsis: Israel's detractors never seemed to worry about the safety and security of Jewish lives in Israel. They never ran to Israel's defense when Israel was attacked. They never issued scathing reports, initiated global campaigns, or called on the International Criminal Court to act against the incitement of hate and war crimes targeting Israeli civilians.

On June 1, 2001, a Palestinian terrorist blew himself up outside a Tel Aviv nightclub, killing 21 Israelis, 16 of whom were teenagers. Two months later, another Palestinian suicide terrorist entered the Sbarro restaurant in Jerusalem and killed 15 Israelis, including seven children and a pregnant woman, and wounded 130 others. In March of 2002, during a Passover Seder in a hotel in Netanya, a Palestinian suicide bomber murdered 30 civilians and injured 140 others in one of the deadliest massacres.

In response to the more than 1,378 civilians murdered by Palestinian terrorists from Gaza and the West Bank since September 2000, Israel had little choice but to build a security barrier to protect its citizens from continued mass murder.

As a result, suicide-terrorism stopped almost immediately, and while terror incidents still occurred, they were now less coordinated by the Islamist groups that tried to infiltrate the Jewish nation daily. The security barrier was not an "apartheid wall." It was there to save lives and bring about peace. Good fences sometimes did make good neighbors.

It's shameful release of the report by Amnesty International accusing Israel of "apartheid" in its treatment of Palestinians was devoid of this context. Unlike any other nation on Earth, Israel faced unrelenting violent threats from various terror organizations that were relentlessly engaged in undermining the Jewish state.

Around the time of the release in February of 2022, for instance, Hamas started an unprovoked war with Israel and launched 4,600 rockets at its civilian population. When Israel's next-door neighbor, Bashar al-Assad in Syria, was threatened by a civil uprising, he brutally murdered hundreds of thousands of his own citizens—and continues to do so. Where was Amnesty International?

Israel's detractors never seemed to worry about the safety and security of Jewish lives in Israel. They never ran to Israel's defense when Israel was attacked. They never issued scathing reports, initiated global campaigns, or called on the International Criminal Court to act against the incitement of hate and war crimes targeting Israeli civilians.

Instead, they were quick to come down on the "Jews," especially if they were trying to protect themselves. But we said, "Never again." When the Jewish people were herded from their homes, into ghettos, and then to concentration camps where they were gassed, the world stood by and did nothing against this vile antisemitic act. So, Amnesty, your report meant nothing to us.

As Jewish people, we fought back to protect our families this time. At the same time, we always and relentlessly stood at the forefront of human rights advocacy, promoting freedom and peaceful co-existence. Clearly, it made little difference to so-called human rights advocates that Israel was a free and democratic country. It was incomprehensible to understand that a report was issued calling Israel an apartheid state while for the first time in history, an Arab political party was part of the governing coalition of the country.

Israel's citizens also represent every ethnic and religious group under the sun. It is also irrational to believe that Israel intentionally ethnically cleansed the Palestinian population given the fact this community increased from approximately 500,000 in 1948 to nearly six million in 2021 in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip. The

numbers speak for themselves and completely disqualified Amnesty's underlying premise.

Israel's tormentors had been planning this assault since the United Nations' infamous Durban conference in 2001. The stage was set to falsely equate Israel with the former South African apartheid regime, to delegitimize, demonize, and disrupt the very existence of the Jewish State.

The Amnesty report regurgitated this established campaign and called for "Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to their homes where they or their families once lived," which was known would spell a demographic end to the Jewish State. Israel could not possibly absorb millions of Palestinian refugees who had been purposely held up in refugee camps without losing its Jewish character. Everyone knew this.

Most of Israel's allies, including the Americans and Germans, denounced the Amnesty report. Because Israel is the very embodiment of the Jewish people, the biased double standard practiced through these unrelenting attacks could only be understood as antisemitism. In fact, given the growth of violent antisemitism around the world, the Amnesty report is blatantly irresponsible and would trigger ever-increasing antisemitic attacks, which are already at an all-time high around the world.

ISRAEL'S SECURITY: WHY WE GOT HERE

Synopsis: Israelis feel unfairly targeted, and they are, considering they are vigorously working to defend the only democracy in the Middle East. They wonder why they are being vilified when Israel has the largest and only gay-rights parade in the region; women and minority rights are protected; and freedom of speech and religion is sacred.

There is no longer a right or a left in Israel. There are only parties that captured and represented the public sentiment of the day. Voter support for the right show Israelis were feeling insecure. Consequently, the demise of Israel's so-called left-wing parties or "peaceniks" is indicative of a public sentiment that was more interested in bolstering the homeland than compromising with Palestinian neighbors who had proven untrustworthy.

First and foremost, the Biden administration was unable to solve the Iranian nuclear problem. America's blind insistence on renegotiating the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was against the wishes of Israeli military leaders and public sentiment. Now it's clear that negotiations with Iran failed, and the ayatollahs were biding their time to continue developing nuclear weapons. In their eyes, President Joe Biden was willing to throw Israel under the bus — again. A Netanyahu-led government might be prepared to strike Iran if Israel's security is at stake.

When it comes to Israel's security, Iran is not the only threat concerning the Israeli public. Even while Tel Aviv's cafés were jammed with people, they were aware of the more than 200,000 rockets pointed at them by their enemies. Living under the gun was untenable. Even while Netanyahu was unlikely to solve this deadlock, the public generally believed Israel was safer under a Netanyahu-led government.

Second, the Israeli public understood current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had unfettered access to world leaders. He might be the only Israeli leader with a direct line to Vladimir Putin, and he would be in a unique position to address the rising tension between Israel and Russia over Ukraine. Even while Israel had joined Western allies in aligning with Ukraine, it needed Russia to allow its planes to strike Iranian and Hezbollah installations. Netanyahu was uniquely capable of neutralizing Russian angst and reining in Ukrainian demands for Israeli weapons systems.

Third, Israel's war with Hamas in 2021 heightened public awareness of Arab discontent in central Israeli cities like Lod and Ramla. Israeli-Arab citizens sided with Hamas by marching through neighborhoods, burning cars, and worse, torching synagogues. For the first time, Jewish Israelis felt threatened in their neighborhoods and were reminded of the European and Middle East pogroms of days-thought-long-gone. On one hand, the public demanded that politicians address the disenfranchisement of Arab youth. On the other hand, with increasing Arab violence in Israeli cities and following the uprisings, Israelis demanded greater focus on homeland security.

Fourth, the Palestinians killed the peace camp and gave rise to more vocal right-wing politicians. This September, at the United Nations General Assembly, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called Israeli settlers "terrorists" while making ludicrous accusations against them and the Israeli military. Instead of extending a hand in peace, his language was sharp, aggressive, and non-collaborative. At the same time, and following his remarks, Palestinian terrorism against Israelis increased, becoming more violent and deadly with each passing day. This is causing fear and anger in Israeli society.

Finally, and just as disconcerting, Israelis are responding to the incessant biased attacks by such human-rights organizations as the UN Human Rights Council, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch. Israelis feel unfairly targeted, and they are, considering they are vigorously working to defend the only democracy in the Middle East. They wonder why they are being vilified when Israel has the largest and only gay-rights parade in the region; women and minority rights are protected; and freedom of speech and religion is sacred. They look to such human rights abusers as Syria, Iran, and North Korea and can only surmise that Israel is targeted while the real offenders are not because Israel is the only Jewish State.

The more critical of Israel that leftist so-called human-rights organizations become, the more Israel will lurch rightward in defiance. A global player, Netanyahu generally takes a pragmatic approach. He will continue expanding diplomacy and engagement and will likely press forward on the Abraham Accords, expanding them to more Arab friendlies. He will rein in some of the more extreme voices in his coalition while projecting strength and resolve to Israel's enemies. Israel is more than one person. As a democracy, its strength comes in the many and in the many we trust.

“PATH OF PEACE IS PREFERABLE TO WAR”

Synopsis: But while Arafat called violence “morally reprehensible” at the signing ceremony, nothing was further from the truth. Like the fable about a scorpion who can’t help himself and kills the frog that is carrying him across the water, Arafat would use his foothold in Ramallah to plunge his people into a war of attrition with Israel.

It was a beautiful sunny autumn day in Washington, D.C. The world was watching with anticipation as leaders gathered on the White House lawn. We were filled with hope and awareness about witnessing a historical moment, which was capped by a now-infamous handshake and what promised to be a new chapter that would end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

That fateful day on Sept. 13, 1993, could not have been more exciting for me, having just started my career in the Jewish community. My earliest recollection as a child was seeing my father in army fatigues coming home from the brutal Yom Kippur War. The possibility of losing my father to war left me with an indelible impression and a longing for peace.

And so, the signing of the Oslo Accords and the Declaration of Principles was cause for hope. Little did I know that just two years

later, I would be thrust into organizing a 5,000-plus person memorial for Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at the Centennial Arena in Toronto. Rabin's assassination by a fellow Jew hit the Jewish community like a bulldozer. Young students cried, sang, and lit candles outside the arena. They shared their shattered hopes and dreams for the future.

It's incomprehensible to think that 27 years later, a full generation of Palestinians and Israelis have grown up without having witnessed the pledges for peace that were made on that day in Washington. They missed the part where PLO leader Yasser Arafat promised U.S. President Bill Clinton and the Palestinian people that he would promote the "values for freedom, justice and human rights." His promise to "usher in an age of peace, co-existence and equal rights" meant nothing. It flew in the face of his handshake with Rabin, and Clinton's warm embrace.

Rabin was often criticized for what many said was naivete for believing Arafat wanted to make peace with Israel. However, Rabin's grim face during the signing and reluctant handshake revealed that the deal pained him. A former war hero, he knew his enemy well but decided to give peace a chance. In his remarks, Rabin explained that he was determined to "put an end to hostilities so that our children, our children's children, will no longer experience the painful cost of war, violence, and terror."

He held up his end of the bargain for two years, and on Sept. 28, 1995 — just one month before his assassination — he agreed to move to the next stage of the Oslo Accords, the Interim Agreement. It marked the conclusion of the first stage of negotiations between Israel and the PLO. Its main objective was to broaden Palestinian self-government in the West Bank through an elected self-governing authority, to foster a new era of cooperation and peaceful co-existence.

But while Arafat called violence “morally reprehensible” at the signing ceremony, nothing was further from the truth. Like the fable about a scorpion who can’t help himself and kills the frog that is carrying him across the water, Arafat would use his foothold in Ramallah to plunge his people into a war of attrition with Israel. Through his divisive actions, he lost control of the Gaza Strip, giving rise to a mini terrorist state now run by Hamas.

Months after Rabin’s death, a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up on a bus in Jerusalem, killing 17 civilians and wounding 48. A month later, another killer blew himself up outside the Dizengoff Center in Tel Aviv, killing 13 people and wounding 130. The chaos of dozens of suicide bombings continued well into the 2000s. They included the horrific attack on the dolphinarium in which 21 youths were killed and the Sbarro attack in central Jerusalem in which 15 civilians were killed, including seven children.

Perhaps Rabin foresaw what would happen should the peace process derail. In his last moments of life, on Nov. 4, 1995, he still held out hope for peace despite the public and political pressure. In his final speech at a peace rally in Tel Aviv’s main square (now called Rabin Square), he said, “There are enemies of peace who are trying to hurt us to torpedo the peace process. I want to say bluntly that we have found a partner for peace among the Palestinians as well. The PLO, which was an enemy, has ceased to engage in terrorism.”

Moments later, following the singing of the classic Hebrew melody, the “Song for Peace,” Rabin was shot by a Jewish assailant who wanted to stop the peace process. He did. For Israelis and the Jewish world, this was their JFK moment. Time stood still. The pain of betrayal by one of their own still haunts the nation. But Israel’s quest for peace hasn’t abated.

And so, for everyone who shared this moment in time, who participated in the memorial rally 25 years ago, who sang the “Song for Peace” at the rally the night Rabin was shot, and who continue to impart his message of hope and peace to the next generation — you might be wondering, where do we go from here?

We go to where the wisdom of sages points us in sacred text. They instructed that even while it may not be our responsibility to finish the work of perfecting the world, even when cut short as in the case of Rabin, we are not free to desist from it either. And thus, it is up to us to carry this work forward and to never give up on making peace. As Rabin aptly said, “The path of peace is preferable to war.”

CHAPTER 6

COUNTERING TERRORISM

POSSIBILITY OF PEACE DESTROYED BY PALESTINIANS

Synopsis: The so-called “occupation” of the Palestinian territories remains because the PA and Hamas utilize it as an opportunity to undermine Israel at home and on the world stage. The October 7th Hamas assault on Israel and the current disaster it ensued is a testament to the Palestinian strategy. The Abraham Peace Accords are perhaps the world’s most significant peace-making milestone in recent decades, yet the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Hamas have worked diligently to undermine them.

Rather than come to terms with the fact that Israel’s right to exist has been accepted by several Arab states, the Palestinians have continued to promote anti-normalization initiatives, which must be firmly rejected by countries like Canada and the United States.

Celebrations of the one-year anniversary of the signing of the accords on the White House lawn could have included overtures to the Palestinians, had they not flatly rejected American offers for normalization. Instead, the massive trade agreements and economic benefits that accrue from them have left the Palestinians behind.

It’s the same old story. In recent decades, Palestinian leaders have done everything to keep their people desperate and underdeveloped by turning down numerous peace agreements. But their biggest mistake in recent years was the vicious rejection of the Abraham Peace Accords and the vigorous anti-normalization campaign against the Jewish state.

The PA continues to press on with false allegations of war crimes against Israel at the International Criminal Court and has been using

the United Nations' natural bias against Israel and the massive Arab voting block to undermine the Jewish state.

While a handful of mainly democratic countries (including Canada, the U.S., France, Germany, and the United Kingdom) have rejected next week's Durban IV conference at the UN because of its vehement anti-Semitism, the PA is rallying for it.

In a statement released by its foreign ministry this week, the Palestinian Authority said that it "strongly objects to inimical statements and tendentious attacks against the upcoming Durban Conference ... such iniquitous calls to boycott the conference display an alarming level of deficit in morality."

It is the PA and Hamas that suffer from a morality deficit. For nearly two decades, the Durban conferences have been used as forums to demonize and delegitimize Israel — setting off a tsunami of anti-Semitism that reverberates to this very day.

And the Palestinians continue to take a series of actions against Israel intended to undermine the peace accords and block any advancement of a two-state solution, including: launching rockets into Israel from Gaza (including this week), threatening children at school and farmers tending their crops; enthusiastically embracing the escape of six prisoners who broke out of an Israeli jail (four have since been caught); and regularly perpetrating terrorist stabbing attacks against Israelis, as happened this week just outside of Jerusalem's bus terminal.

It's time for the international community, including Canada, to hold the Palestinian Authority to account. The Abraham Peace Accords provide the international community with a comprehensive peace plan for the Middle East, but any such plan must include the Palestinians.

In my conversation with Rabbi Ellie Abadie, senior rabbi of the Jewish Council of Emirates and president of the Gulf Jewish

Communities, his optimism about the future of Jewish-Arab relations in the region was infectious. With a front-row seat to the success of the Abraham Accords, he believes Saudi Arabia, Oman and perhaps even Qatar may soon embrace peace with Israel. “It’s not a matter of if, but a matter of when,” he said.

The so-called “occupation” of the Palestinian territories remains because the PA and Hamas utilize it as an opportunity to undermine Israel at home and on the world stage. The October 7th Hamas assault on Israel and the current disaster it ensued is a testament to the Palestinian strategy.

The Palestinian question was solvable, and the Abraham Accords opened the possibility to bring a coalition of Arab states together to find an equitable solution for Israelis and Palestinians alike. It's time for allied Western nations to rethink this position and embed it into their own foreign policy. The sooner this happens, the sooner peace will come to the Middle East.

IS CANADA COMPLICIT IN PALESTINIAN TERRORISM?

Synopsis: The PA spends around \$300 million annually on its pay-for-slay program, or 10 per cent of its entire budget. It is only able to afford this due to international assistance coming through UNRWA, which subsidizes the cost of basic government services like health care, education and other social services. Canada is thus helping finance terrorism against Israelis.

Canada has reaffirmed its complicity in the murder of Israelis by renewing its aid to the Palestinians through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to the tune of \$100 million over the next four years, in addition to an immediate \$3 million in so-called emergency aid**.

This, despite the fact that in May, Barbara Leaf, United States assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, confirmed that the Palestinian Authority continues to make so-called pay-for-slay payments to terrorists who have killed Israelis.

Payments are made to Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails, the families of “martyrs” killed in attacks against Israelis and to injured Palestinian terrorists. They are higher than average Palestinian wages, which further drives terrorism given that the unemployment rate hovers around 25 per cent in the West Bank.

In May 2023, two Palestinian terrorists drove to a gas station and murdered Elisha Anteman, 17, Ofer Fayerman, 64, Harel Masood, 21, and Nachman Mordoff, 17. But our government, sadly, had turned a blind eye to ongoing Palestinian terrorism. Instead of punishing the Palestinian Authority and Hamas for their continued incitement and terror-incentive programs, we continue to reward this behavior by funneling them money.

According to the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, the PA spends around \$300 million annually on its pay-for-slay program, or 10 per cent of its entire budget. It is only able to afford this due to international assistance coming through UNRWA, which subsidizes the cost of basic government services like health care, education and other social services.

Canada is thus helping finance terrorism against Israelis. Just because donor countries are going through a third party under the United Nations mandate does not mean their hands are clean — they are not.

Canada continues to use the now stale disclaimer that it "will remain closely engaged with UNRWA and continue to exercise enhanced due diligence for all humanitarian and development assistance funding for Palestinians. This work includes ongoing oversight, regular site visits,

a systematic screening process and strong anti-terrorism provisions in funding agreements.”

But UNRWA's history shows that international oversight has never been enough. In 2014, a stockpile of Hamas rockets were found in one of its schools in Gaza. In 2021, UN Watch accused the agency's staff of promoting antisemitism on social media.

To make matters worse, multiple reports have been published by various groups indicating that UNRWA-funded school textbooks contain antisemitic content that incites students to hate Israel. When I met with UNRWA officials, who are based in east Jerusalem, they admitted this was an ongoing problem but suggested nothing could be done about it.

By supporting UNRWA, Canada is financing the perpetual Palestinian refugee claims against Israel. In its own press release, the Canadian government noted that UNRWA also operates in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. With the assistance of UNRWA and its backers, these host countries have kept their minority Palestinian populations in a holding pattern, incentivizing them to dream about dislodging the Jews from the Jewish homeland

Global Affairs' press release states that, “In Syria, 91 per cent of Palestinian refugee households live in absolute poverty. In Lebanon, more than 89 per cent of Palestinian refugees displaced from Syria are in critical need of sustained humanitarian assistance.” But what our government fails to explain is why this is the case.

Palestinians have been relegated to third-class status in Lebanon, Syria and even Jordan. They are restricted from advancement and not granted the same rights as ordinary citizens. By not advocating for their integration into these societies and instead funding an organization that ensures they remain perpetual refugees, we are complicit in this humanitarian crisis.

I know this article will fall on deaf ears in Ottawa. But it is important that Canadian taxpayers know how their money is being spent overseas. As a country, we need to ask ourselves if it is worth having blood on our hands.

THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT MUST PROSECUTE HAMAS'S WAR CRIMES

Two haunting dates that have been forever etched into Jewish history converged this week. On Nov. 7, Israelis observed a day of mourning marking the one-month anniversary of the massacre of 1,400 people by Hamas terrorists. A sombre silence fell at precisely 11:00 a.m.

Two days later, on Nov. 9, Jewish communities commemorated the 85th anniversary of Kristallnacht, also known as the Night of Broken Glass. During that ominous night, Nazis, particularly the Hitler Youth, attacked Jewish communities in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia.

It's worth noting that many of today's pro-Palestinian antisemitic protesters in western cities are also organized by "Palestinian youth" movements.

Kristallnacht witnessed the horrifying incarceration of 30,000 Jewish men in concentration camps, the destruction of over 260 synagogues, the burning of 7,500 Jewish businesses and the brutal beating and cold-blooded murder of scores of Jews.

That night opened a dark gateway, granting Germans permission to transition from mere words to violent actions. With Hitler's rise to power, Jewish life was severely constrained by a series of antisemitic laws that foreshadowed the violence on Nov. 9, 1938, and eventually led to the Holocaust.

The Holocaust unfolded because a pervasive antisemitic sentiment gripped the world. No international military or legal intervention thwarted Germany's march towards the genocide of the Jews. It wasn't until the end of the Second World War in 1945 that the world decided to prosecute the orchestrators of the Holocaust in Nuremberg, Germany.

Today, the world faces another test. Hamas's genocidal intentions against Israel are glaringly evident. A Hamas leader in Lebanon openly declared on television the group's desire to destroy the Jewish state and annihilate its people.

To prevent a repetition of history, the global community must promptly activate international legal systems to arrest Hamas's leadership and halt their quest for genocide. This week, my foundation, the Abraham Global Peace Initiative, sent a letter to International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor Karim Khan, urging him to issue arrest warrants for key Hamas leaders.

Citing the Geneva Convention and the internationally accepted laws of armed conflict, our letter outlines key Hamas violations of international law.

Among them, three egregious transgressions demand immediate action from the ICC: the taking of hostages (Hamas captured an estimated 242 Israeli and foreign nationals); torture and rape (video footage exists of Hamas torturing and raping Israeli civilians on Oct. 7); and directly targeting civilians (evidence from training manuals discovered after the massacre indicates that Hamas intentionally targeted civilians).

Hamas has continued to target Israeli civilians through indiscriminate rockets fired at populated centres. Moreover, Hamas uses its own civilian population as "human shields," which is strictly prohibited by international law. The organization conducts military

operations in civilian areas, pilfers food, fuel and medicine from civilian stockpiles and aid agencies, and launches attacks against Israel and Israeli forces from playgrounds and hospitals.

Hamas shows little care or concern for the lives of civilians on either side, which constitutes war crimes. In stark contrast, Israel diligently strives to protect civilian lives. Since Oct. 7, the Israel Defence Forces has made over 20,000 phone calls, dropped 1.5-million leaflets and sent over four-million SMS messages warning civilians about upcoming military actions and urging them to temporarily move to safety zones.

Regrettably, the International Criminal Court has become a political tool of the Palestinians and their allies. Nevertheless, Hamas unequivocally violated every international military protocol and convention. If the court is to have any legitimacy at all, it will issue arrest warrants. If it were to disregard the well-documented truth about what Hamas did on Oct. 7 and in the month since, or if it were to adopt a neutral stance, the ICC would be failing humanity.

From Kristallnacht, we gleaned the ominous lesson that those who burn books will ultimately burn people. Modern events echo the Holocaust when the world's failure to act resulted in tragedy. Israel, learning from this history, is acting decisively by eliminating Hamas, mirroring what should have been done with the Nazis. An indictment of Hamas leaders by the ICC would underscore that Israel stands on the right side of justice.

SIX REASONS PALESTINIANS ARE NOT READY FOR A STATE

Synopsis: America is Israel's greatest friend and ally. Moving its Embassy to Jerusalem and brokering the Abraham Accords were some of its greatest accomplishments in recent years. But this administration's political pressures should not cloud its judgment vis-

a-vis the Palestinians. They have proved they are simply not ready for statehood.

If there was ever a great example of “chutzpah,” it would be the American proposal to declare a Palestinian state in the middle of Israel’s ongoing battle to defend its very existence against Hamas. The fact of the matter is that even if Israel is successful in its campaign, it would leave the Palestinian Authority (PA) in power, and it is not all that much better than Hamas.

It’s true that the PA is not Hamas, but it’s damn close. To this day, the PA still hasn’t condemned Hamas’s massacre of 1,200 innocents on Oct. 7, 2023. The Ramallah-based “authority” also hasn’t demanded the return of the remaining hostages held by Hamas — even though Hamas also killed and kidnapped Bedouin Muslims.

Now, the United States — along with Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Qatar — is aiming to both recognize and declare a Palestinian state. Siding with monarchies that seek to quell anger over the Palestinian issue within their own populations, Israel’s greatest ally is working on a pipe dream to calm the waters.

There are six critical factors that negate the possibility of a so-called two-state solution at this time.

First and foremost, undertaking such an initiative just over four months after the biggest massacre of Jewish people since the Holocaust disregards the pain and suffering experienced by Israelis. They are traumatized, and talk of peace, especially with the Palestinians, demonstrates insensitivity and will be met with resistance.

Second, Israel will not accept anything less than the complete and utter elimination of Hamas as a governing power or military threat in Gaza. U.S. President Joe Biden’s peace plan will reportedly seek an immediate, six-week ceasefire, which would allow Hamas to regroup.

At the same time, he is discouraging Israel from entering Rafah, which is necessary in order to wipe out Hamas.

Third, Israelis are unified behind not only the elimination of Hamas, but also the return of the hostages and the bodies of those who have been murdered. Thousands of Israelis live in towns and small villages on the outskirts of Gaza. Having met with many of them, I can tell you that few will return home if their safety and security cannot be assured.

Fourth, the PA represents a significant threat to Israel. It knows how to play the diplomatic game, but its hatred of Israel runs deep. It spends over \$300 million per year incentivizing its population to commit terror attacks against Israel. And the PA's policy of compensating terrorists is only the tip of the iceberg.

Fifth, the Fatah-run pseudo-government is one of the most antisemitic on earth. Its curriculum is riddled with antisemitic tropes and teaches Palestinian youngsters that Jews are colonizers — when, in fact, they are indigenous to the Land of Israel.

And the biggest antisemite of all is PA President Mahmoud Abbas, who peddles in Holocaust distortion. A few weeks before the Hamas massacre, Abbas was criticized for saying, “They say that Hitler killed the Jews for being Jews, and that Europe hated the Jews because they were Jews. No. It was clearly explained that they fought them because of their social role and not their religion.”

Sixth, before working to establish a Palestinian state, the international community must dismantle corrupt aid agencies like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Some UNRWA staff were found to have participated in the Oct. 7 massacre.

The Israel Defence Forces discovered a Hamas data centre operating under UNRWA's headquarters and feeding off its electricity

supply. One can only imagine what's taking place at UNRWA facilities in the PA-run West Bank.

As someone who has advocated for a two-state solution since Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed the Oslo Accords on the White House lawn, it's clear to me that the creation of a Palestinian state at this time would be an existential threat to the Jewish state. Israel is currently operating in the West Bank to protect its civilians and prevent terror attacks. Palestinian independence would prevent Israel's defensive measures.

America is Israel's greatest friend and ally. Moving its Embassy to Jerusalem and brokering the Abraham Accords were some of its greatest accomplishments in recent years. Its continued military support for Israel during this war with Hamas has been an incredible show of friendship.

But this administration's political pressures should not cloud its judgment vis-a-vis the Palestinians. They have proved they are simply not ready for statehood.

9/11 IS NOW MORE THAN EVER

Synopsis: The three words "war on terror" are rarely used anymore by government officials. Still, we are not safe. America and its allies, including Canada, bought us twenty years of relative tranquility by going on the offensive against the Taliban, al-Qaida, and ISIL. Our war on terror kept them on the run and with little hope of organizing substantial attacks against the West.

Many of us who lived through 9/11 suffered from a sort of post-traumatic stress disorder. The terror attack changed our lives forever, and as we near its 25th anniversary, the impact lingers.

In the days and years following the horrific attack, who among us felt at ease to fly, let alone see and hear a plane overhead? The nearest exit had to be a heartbeat away, and skyscrapers were off-limits for weeks and months following the event.

Images of 9/11 still haunt us. People leapt from the twin towers out of desperation, and the buildings collapsed consecutively like sandcastles. The dust on the faces of survivors as they ran for their lives from ground zero. The silence in the aftermath. No planes in the sky above.

Our sense of public trust and security was shattered. Airports became fortresses, cameras were installed everywhere, and it became clearer by the day that the West was no longer safe. This was an attack on freedom and democracy — our very way of life. An unprecedented number of terror attacks in Europe and even in sleepy Canada followed 9/11, justifiably launching the war on terror.

For families of the 2,977 murdered on that day, the pain is unimaginable. It was the biggest single-day atrocity on North American soil. But have governments forgotten the pain and suffering? Are they letting their guard down once more?

The three words "war on terror" are rarely used anymore by government officials. Still, we are not safe. America and its allies, including Canada, bought us twenty years of relative tranquility by going on the offensive against the Taliban, al-Qaida, and ISIL. Our war on terror kept them on the run and with little hope of organizing substantial attacks against the West.

Part of the West's amnesia includes the Afghanistan departure debacle. Leaving the nest of terror will prove to be a big mistake. The new Afghan Interior Minister is on the FBI's Most Wanted List, with the U.S. having offered \$10 million for information leading to his arrest since 2012. The Taliban will want its revenge. It will give refuge to

new and old terror groups and consolidate its power base. America lost its foothold — its airports and bases in the country — and its ability to have boots on the ground and in the region.

If 9/11 was a nightmare in our time, it's hard to fathom what our children may have to contend with in the coming decades. Pakistan, a nuclear regional power, may become further destabilized by the Taliban. By then, God forbid Iran may have a nuclear weapon as well. Now we are witnessing to emboldened terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah.

We were never supposed to forget nor let our guard down by pulling out of Afghanistan. Nation-building can take generations, and while imperfect, changes were happening on the ground — particularly through the education and empowerment of women. America's abandonment of Afghanistan, despite having a relatively small military presence (in comparison to South Korea, for instance, where it has been present since the 1950s), is a tragic mistake for the cause of human rights and to the memory of 9/11. Freedom and democracy are now less secure.

There is no time limit on preserving our freedom and our way of life. This 20th-anniversary memorial to the victims of 9/11 will come and go. We will keep taking our freedom for granted — ignoring the signs — until one day it's too late. 9/11 must be a catalyst for action, not just for memory. We must let our fear drive us to renewed action.

CHAPTER 7

DEFENDING FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM DIES IN DARKNESS

Synopsis: The crucial question for all champions of freedom and open society is whether democracy can survive under the cloud of intellectual boycott. We know such campaigns never end with the Jews, raising concerns about where they will stop. Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis wisely observed that the remedy for combating falsehoods is more speech, not enforced silence.

It's true that democracy dies in darkness. When intellectual pursuits are halted through ideological or political boycotts, we undermine the essence of freedom. Tyrannical regimes are infamous for engaging in such censorship.

The Nazis burned Jewish books, the Soviet Union controlled the media, and China restricts its citizens' access to the internet. Similarly, the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel aims to limit the cultural and informational engagement of Jewish people in Israel, thereby hindering intellectual freedom and eroding democracy.

Novelist Sally Rooney made headlines by announcing that she would not sell the rights to her newest book to an Israeli publishing house wanting to translate it into Hebrew. Her stance is evidently tied to her support for the BDS movement, as she expressed willingness to have her book translated into Hebrew if it's not published by an Israeli company.

The downside of restricting free expression and the exchange of ideas is that it weakens freedom and democracy. The fall of the Berlin

Wall and Perestroika's reforms in the Soviet Union were possible because information flowed freely. The BDS movement, in contrast, does the opposite of what social change demands. Its false premise that Israel is an apartheid state distorts truth and reality, given that most Arab-Israelis prefer to live in Israel due to its freedom and democracy.

While acknowledging that all nations grapple with racism and ethnic and cultural strife, it's crucial to recognize the double standard applied to Israel. Focusing relentlessly on the Jewish state while giving a pass to other countries with far less respect for human rights and the rule of law is a bias seemingly reserved for Jews.

For instance, an official from the United Nations revealed last week that in Lebanon, Palestinians face legal segregation and are barred from certain professions. However, this actual example of apartheid in a Middle Eastern country is seldom mentioned by BDS proponents.

While it's valid to remind boycotters of historical restrictions, such as those imposed by the Nazis on commerce with Jews, and to argue that singling out the Jewish state for criticism, per the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition, is a form of racism, the larger question remains. Despite economic consequences faced by boycotters, Israel and the Jewish people will endure without certain books. As an ancient people, we have withstood the test of time with the five books of Moses.

The crucial question for all champions of freedom and open society is whether democracy can survive under the cloud of intellectual boycott. We know such campaigns never end with the Jews, raising concerns about where they will stop. Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis wisely observed that the remedy for combating falsehoods is more speech, not enforced silence.

The only way to bring about substantive change is through the pursuit of open markets, free discourse, and increased cultural and

scientific exchange. Those attempting to limit these pursuits ultimately do a disservice to humanity.

THE GOLDEN RULE FOR HUMANITY

Synopsis: Human rights start with the simple, religion-based Golden Rule that should govern our conduct every day — “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” It’s a basic principle that every child on the planet should be taught to observe.

All modern human rights frameworks are grounded in the travesty of the Holocaust. Soon after the murder of six million Jews and millions of others by the Nazis and their accomplices, the United Nations was founded in 1945 with the objective of maintaining international peace and security. What followed next was the publication of and supposed international agreement on perhaps the most significant document to safeguard humanity — The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Adopted by the UN General Assembly 73 years ago on this day — Dec. 10, 1948 — it would become the moral and ethical compass for the advocacy of peace and security. Our celebration of Human Rights Day annually on this date should come with a profound recognition that it arose from the ashes of children, women, and men who were murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz and dozens more death camps.

Without universal guidelines, humanity’s primal tribal traits give way to chaos and violence. Humanity requires governance, codes of conduct, and rules to build a productive civilization. For centuries, our moral compass was governed by religion. Much of what we see in today’s UDHR was not invented by its Canadian architect, John Peters

Humphrey, or by Eleanor Roosevelt, who pressed the document forward at the UN.

The UDHR is a secularization of basic religious precepts. Its premise is firmly grounded in the original rules handed to the Jewish people in the Torah at Mount Sinai. Eventually, these ideas were transmitted to other religions that sprouted from Judaism — particularly Christianity. We all know the basic principles found in most religions today: Honor thy mother and father; do not commit murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not tell lies; do not be envious of others.

Human rights start with the simple, religion-based Golden Rule that should govern our conduct every day — “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” It’s a basic principle that every child on the planet should be taught to observe. To commemorate human rights, let’s reinforce the UDHR’s basic foundational parameters, including that “everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security,” and that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

In a world that is tearing itself apart at the seams, getting back to these basic human codes of conduct is more essential than ever. In the past number of days, Canada has joined the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia in a diplomatic boycott of China’s Winter Olympics in protest over its human rights abuses. Indeed, democracies — as few as they are today — are the only governing bodies standing against such darkness today.

For instance, In Vienna, intensive discussions with Iran as Western allies try to avert a possible nuclear catastrophe with a radical Islamic regime clearly hell-bent on acquiring nuclear weapons. In many cases, defending human rights and averting a potential genocide involves more than negotiation and sanctions. In cases such as the Second World

War and even recently in Rwanda and Bosnia, stopping an evil regime has required a military solution as a last resort.

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) convention, adopted by the UN in 2005, requires member states to protect populations from genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and war crimes. But tragically, we are failing, particularly in the case of Syria, where more than 350,000 civilians have been killed in its civil war — without as much as a peep from Arab neighbors and Western allies. Yemen and Africa, too, are on the cusp of famine due to continued war and ethnic conflict.

As democracies decline in number and strength and as the United Nations community of assembled states continues to overlook its foundational principles of preserving human and civil rights, the future of humanity is in jeopardy. Many in Western society focus on scientific innovations, on the next start-up, on the next electric car, or their next vacation.

We forget how fragile and insecure we really are. All this around us is a social construct, and material things become irrelevant when chaos and violence engulf humanity. We need to protect our rights, our freedom, and democracy first if we are going to protect our children and grandchildren from the coming storm. Think about it.

DEMOCRACIES MUST DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS

Synopsis: Defending our borders against war criminals who seek asylum in the West should matter to all human rights activists. German lawyers wisely used the principle of universal jurisdiction to bring Raslan to justice, signaling to perpetrators worldwide that there can be no escape from justice.

International justice for war crimes is often too little and too late for its victims. In the case of Bashar al-Assad, the UN's Security Council

has repeatedly failed to refer the Syrian president and his collaborators to prosecutors at the International Criminal Court (ICC). The council excuses its selective attention to human rights by saying Syria is not a party to the Rome Statute, which created the court, and therefore it cannot be referred there.

This, of course, is nonsense. Germany put human rights first by sentencing a former high-ranking Syrian security service officer to life in prison. Anwar Raslan was found guilty of 27 murders, sexual assaults, and the torture of at least 4,000 people held at the infamous Al-Khatib prison, also known as Branch 251, in Damascus. With some 50 survivors coming forward, German authorities arrested Raslan in 2019 after he had the audacity to escape the Assad regime and seek asylum in that country.

Defending our borders against war criminals who seek asylum in the West should matter to all human rights activists. German lawyers wisely used the principle of universal jurisdiction to bring Raslan to justice, signaling to perpetrators worldwide that there can be no escape from justice. The UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, hailed the "historic conviction," saying that "this trial cast a much-needed, renewed spotlight on the kinds of sickening torture, cruel and truly inhuman treatment — including abject sexual violence — that countless Syrians were subjected to in detention facilities."

Bachelet is correct when she professes that "today's verdict should serve to spur forward all efforts to widen the net of accountability for all perpetrators of the unspeakable crimes that have characterized this brutal conflict." But what of the many other conflicts raging throughout the world? Last week, on these pages, I brought attention to the plight of the Christian community in such places as Nigeria, where they are murdered and persecuted by the dozens; the genocide of the Uyghur

peoples by China; and the incomprehensible subjugation of women in Afghanistan.

We need the UN Human Rights Council to speak louder about a multitude of issues affecting the world today. Among them is the oppression and eradication of Christians in not just Africa but in Asia and Arab countries in the Middle East as well.

My Christian friends have persuasively noted that while we speak about racism and intolerance against most other groups, our focus must also include what is possibly the most persecuted religious community on the planet. Silence is a form of complicity and for this reason, I will continue to bring attention to this pressing human rights issue.

In many ways, rising autocracy, nationalism, and radicalism force us to press further to promote human rights. We need a counterbalance to the evil and profane. We need to push back the darkness that can easily consume humanity and set us on a destructive path. That's why The Abraham Global Peace Initiative recently launched The Power of One — an exhibit that showcases such human rights trailblazers as Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and Mother Teresa. The world needs reference points to showcase good versus evil. We cannot allow a degradation of our conception of human rights and the normalization of crimes against humanity.

HOW CAN WE SLEEP WHILE OUR BEDS ARE BURNING?

Synopsis: Amidst turmoil, our beds continue to burn as human suffering pervades even the remotest corners of the globe. Whether due to information overload, a pervasive sense of helplessness, or a world polarized against multilateralism, vital resolutions like the United Nations' Responsibility to Protect are often overlooked.

As the world continues its relentless spin, the resonance of Midnight Oil's "Beds Are Burning" lingers in my memory as a poignant call to

confront our collective blind spots. The refrain, echoing like a sledgehammer, questions our ability to dance while our earth undergoes tumult and challenges our capacity to sleep as our beds metaphorically ignite.

While widely interpreted as a song about Indigenous rights in Australia, its relevance transcends boundaries. It encompasses not only Indigenous rights but also the broader spectrum of human rights and the urgent need to address our planet's welfare. Regrettably, despite the passage of time, the global landscape appears to have worsened, especially in the past decade.

A high-ranking civil servant disclosed to me the harsh reality faced by approximately 20,000 Indigenous people in northwestern Ontario, living in conditions akin to a third-world existence. Access to drinkable water is a luxury, with many relying on boiling or trucked-in supplies. Shockingly, at least 23 communities grapple with the scarcity of necessities, including adequate housing.

Compounding these challenges are the enduring effects of multi-generational trauma stemming from the attendance of Indigenous children at residential schools. The civil servant revealed disturbingly frequent instances of physical violence and sexual abuse, perpetuated by their isolation, which shields us from acknowledging their plight.

Media outlets often neglect critical global events with profound consequences for humanity. The Uyghurs in China find themselves in dire circumstances, as recounted by Mehmet Tohti, the Canadian executive director of the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project. His mother's mysterious disappearance, presumably into a Chinese government facility, prompts a desperate plea for international intervention to safeguard his people.

Amidst this turmoil, our beds continue to burn as human suffering pervades even the remotest corners of the globe. Whether due to

information overload, a pervasive sense of helplessness, or a world polarized against multilateralism, vital resolutions like the United Nations' Responsibility to Protect are often overlooked.

Mass atrocities unfold while we sleep and distractions abound. Recently, over 50 people were beheaded in northern Mozambique, highlighting the alarming reality of Islamist violence. The toll in Cabo Delgado province since 2017 stands at an estimated 2,000 lives lost and 430,000 left homeless, underscoring the urgency of addressing these crises.

Despite the temptation to bury our heads in the sand, ignoring events shaping our world carries profound ramifications. Every action, whether positive or negative, sets off a chain reaction. Overcoming our blind spots becomes paramount, especially in the face of democracy's global erosion, as noted by Freedom House. Populist leaders rejecting pluralism threaten the fabric of democracy, necessitating our steadfast commitment to advancing peace, freedom, and democracy globally.

While Midnight Oil implores us not to dance while our earth is turning, I respectfully disagree — we must keep dancing. As long as our world keeps turning, dancing embodies hope, optimism, happiness, friendship, and resilience. However, let our dance be accompanied by an unwavering commitment to extinguish the flames engulfing our beds, ensuring a world where peace, freedom, and democracy prevail.

**MILLIONS OF JEWISH PEOPLE OWE THEIR FREEDOM TO
MIKHAIL GORBACHEV**

Synopsis: it took a very special person to realize the moment, capture its momentum and have the courage to inspire and mobilize that change for good. In the past few days world leaders have said he was “a courageous reformer,” that he had a “commitment to peace in Europe” and that he had the “imagination to see that a different future was possible.”

Having had the privilege of meeting 'Gorby,' it is easy to see how he rose to become a statesman of the world. The differences between Mikhail Gorbachev and Vladimir Putin could not be clearer. "Gorby," as he was called, wanted to end the threat of nuclear weapons, dissolve the Soviet Union, and align with the West for the benefit of his people. Putin, on the other hand, threatens to annihilate his adversaries with nukes and has re-isolated Russia from the West while launching an unjustified assault on Ukraine in an effort to re-establish the Soviet Union.

While spending nearly two hours with him, it is easy to see how this historic figure rose to become a statesman of the world. He was soft-spoken and kind and radiated humility and humanity. There was no vanity. No frill. Just a strong sense about his mission in life, which was to lift up the destiny of his people, who were then still lining up for bread.

For my generation who grew up under the threat of nuclear annihilation in the 1970s and 1980s, Gorbachev set a new world order, bringing about hope and optimism. No one of my generation can forget U.S. president Ronald Reagan's famous six words on June 12, 1987, that would change the course of history: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" Gorby heeded Reagan's call and the Berlin Wall, which had separated West and East Berlin, came down on Nov. 9, 1989, as crowds of Germans began dismantling the "iron curtain" by hand.

Every now and again, a real statesperson appears on the world stage with enough conviction and capability to make the world a better place. Gorbachev introduced new policies like perestroika (reform) and glasnost (openness) that completely revolutionized Russia and brought down the totalitarian U.S.S.R. The Soviet Union dissolved as its republics broke away seeking their own freedom, democracy and alliance with the West. Among them and most substantive were Poland and Ukraine.

Gorbachev was certainly controversial. He introduced difficult economic and political reforms on one hand, while making some ordinary Russians super-rich “oligarchs” who would take advantage of the confusion.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought freedom to millions of Jewish people who had been trapped in its republics, unable to emigrate or practice their religion freely. Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, the “Free Soviet Jewry” movement had gained momentum with enraged calls from leaders in the Jewish diaspora to “let my people go.” On Dec. 12, 1987, a quarter-million people gathered in Washington, D.C., on the eve of a historic summit between Reagan and Gorbachev, to demand freedom for Soviet Jewry.

The fall of the Berlin Wall two years later and the breakup of the Soviet Union set freedom in motion as more than one million Soviet Jews left tyranny to emigrate to Israel and North America.

Some believe the 30-year campaign to free Soviet Jewry was a campaign for humanity that contributed to the end of the Cold War and brought upon freedom for everyone. Mass Soviet emigration to Israel began around 1991 due to Gorbachev’s reforms and the substantive “wind of change” (a 1990 hit song marking the era by the West German rock band Scorpions).

Gorbachev’s legacy, however, is rapidly being eroded by the Putin administration, which is once again regressing Russia into tyranny. In recent months, as tensions with Israel have escalated over Ukraine, Russia has forced the shuttering of the Moscow office of The Jewish Agency for Israel — an agency specifically responsible for helping Russian Jews emigrate to Israel.

It’s part of Putin’s obvious strategic plan to re-establish the Soviet Union. Putin’s realignment with the tyrants of the world, including Syria and Iran not to mention China, has elevated global instability.

More significantly, it is jeopardizing critical Gorbachev-Reagan agreements including the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which was renegotiated in 2010. Some say we may have romanticized Gorby, that the winds of change had already been present.

However, it took a very special person to realize the moment, capture its momentum and have the courage to inspire and mobilize that change for good. In the past few days world leaders have said he was “a courageous reformer,” that he had a “commitment to peace in Europe” and that he had the “imagination to see that a different future was possible.” All of that is true. But what is also true is that now more than ever, we need good and decent leaders around us who can rise to the occasion.

SCHADENFREUDE: WHY PEOPLE TAKE PLEASURE IN SOMEONE ELSE’S MISFORTUNE

Synopsis: With Schadenfreude, there is a false sense of justice associated with seeing either someone or a nation being accused of being “bad.” This is why our conception of human rights on a social level and an international level is failing us today.

Who gets to interpret a country's record on human rights? Over the past number of years, we have seen the degradation and devolution of the meaning of such rights, particularly at the hands of international institutions. When we think of the United Nations Human Rights Council, for example, we expect an institution that exemplifies an impartiality codified in its conduct and behaviour. Likewise, we expect the UN General Assembly to equally condemn state actors when necessary and uphold the values it was entrusted with.

Time and again, however, our faith in justice and fairness has dissolved as we come to understand that despite this world's incredible achievements in science, medicine, engineering, and the arts, these

institutions are simply mirrors of humanity's primal tribalism — to divide and conquer.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights codified by the UN General Assembly and its affiliate institutions is supposed to uphold fairness, equality and justice for all humanity. The 196 nation states that have a seat in the assembly are supposed to provide freedom and equity to their citizens; they are supposed to respect religion and minority rights; and they are supposed to work toward ending slavery, poverty and conflict in all its forms.

But in reality, we live in a world where state actors and non-governmental organizations have co-opted the meaning of human rights — sometimes for political expedience. It is why small countries like Israel that do strive to advance freedom and democracy are overwhelmed at global forums by actors opposed to these values.

The degradation of human rights and their meaning can best be understood by a complex social behaviour called Schadenfreude. Its simplest meaning is a self-satisfaction that comes from learning of or witnessing the troubles, failures or humiliation of another.

With Schadenfreude, there is a false sense of justice associated with seeing either someone or a nation being accused of being “bad.” This is why our conception of human rights on a social level and an international level is failing us today. It has been co-opted by false narratives and actors that act according to political interest, and the world is not blind that in the case of Israel, Schadenfreude appears to be the motivation behind the relentless efforts by state actors and NGOs to attempt to showcase its behaviour as being “immoral” or “bad” and therefore requiring punishment.

This version of human rights — the one that picks on Israel and even Western values — is troubling. In recent months, the International Criminal Court's legitimacy has come to be questioned over what

appears to be a politicized decision to investigate Israel. Even though Israel is not a signatory to the Rome Statute, which established the ICC, and that the Palestinian Authority, which lodged the complaint, is not recognized as a “state,” the court is proceeding with its investigation.

And now, piling on the ICC’s targeting of Israel, the Human Rights Watch organization published a report outrageously alleging that “Israeli authorities are committing the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. Israel is a small country that has suffered more violent confrontations with its neighbours than any other Western nation. It is a country that experiences terrorism — mainly from its Palestinian population — daily. As I write this piece, Israeli children are hiding in bunkers in the south trying to survive another round of rockets from Gaza. Yet the world is eerily silent. Where are its accusations of war crimes?

The pile-on-Israel continued as former CIA director John Brennan tweeted that he “always found it difficult to fathom how a nation of people deeply scarred by a history replete with prejudice, religious persecution and unspeakable violence perpetrated against them would not be the empathetic champions of those whose rights and freedoms are still abridged.”

In fact, despite the rocket attacks, the horrendous suicide bombings, the incitement and international campaigns to defame the Jewish State, Israel has continued to strive as a unified nation toward equality, opportunity and mutual prosperity. The strain it endures in the Middle East tinderbox would have broken most nations long ago.

Schadenfreude reminds us that when the Jews were marched out of their villages and shot at a nearby ravine, it was their neighbours who stood by. Schadenfreude teaches us why, 79 years post-Holocaust,

when an elderly Jewish woman (Sarah Halimi) is thrown to her death from a third-storey balcony, the world is silent.

As a proponent of human rights, I believe we have to reclaim their meaning, defend civil and universal rights, and ensure that critical analysis is fair and contextualized. What is truly holding the world together are strong moral and ethical values espoused by people who are exerting goodwill, compassion and kindness every day.

We need to reframe the meaning of human rights urgently and passionately. Schadenfreude is a dangerous human complex that needs to be exposed wherever it manifests — for the sake of humanity.

SAVING UKRAINE: A BATTLE FOR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

Tyrants rise and fall in every generation, enslaving, oppressing, and seeking supreme control. They attack freedom, aiming to satisfy an insatiable ego-driven need for greatness. In an age of nuclear weapons, they pose a threat to humanity.

As Putin's forces attack Kyiv, the Ukrainian people valiantly fight to defend their homeland, standing alone. However, this assault extends beyond Ukraine; it is an attack on democracy itself. For the first time in 80 years, democratic nations are on trial. The question is whether they will go beyond sanctions to defend freedom and save humanity.

In a State of the Union Address, U.S. President Joe Biden emphasized that Ukraine stands alone despite punishing sanctions on Russia. Putin's attempt to shake the foundations of a free world miscalculated, meeting a wall of strength in the form of the Ukrainian people. Biden made it clear that U.S. forces would not engage in the conflict with Russian forces in Ukraine, avoiding another world war due to the dangerous global climate.

However, leaving Ukraine to fight alone is irresponsible. Biden's words hint that Russia could have Ukraine in exchange for peace with NATO allied countries, echoing the ill-fated Munich Agreement of 1938. The parallels with appeasement of Nazi Germany, allowing the annexation of Czech borderland territories for peace, are evident. Failing to stand up to a bully can lead to dire consequences, as history has shown.

Kyiv is compared to Masada, where a Jewish tribe made a last stand against the Romans, defending their freedom. While the brave Ukrainians are not expected to face a similar fate, in the eyes of the world, they stand as a symbol of resistance against tyranny, defending not only their people but western civilization.

Despite 134 countries condemning Russia at the United Nations, Ukraine stands alone against a superior force. The harsh lesson is observed globally — if Ukraine must stand alone against tyrants, will the U.S. come to Israel's defense if Iran attacks? Recent events, including the Afghanistan debacle, raise concerns about America's commitment.

In the aftermath of Russia's assault, other autocracies eye Taiwan, South Korea, and Israel. A new world order defined by autocracies threatens our freedom, as empires rise and fall when people take their freedom for granted. The imperative to remember past atrocities is vital as tyrants eventually fall, evil fails, and justice prevails.

Putin may soon be gone, but until then, the fragility of our existence is a stark reminder. Each generation must learn and re-learn the lessons of resisting tyranny. It is time to break the cycle and stand with Ukraine, advocating for freedom and democracy.

CHAPTER 8

ON MORALITY

ESTABLISHING A NEW ROADMAP FOR MORAL CLARITY

Synopsis: This might sound old-fashioned, but it is hard to find people like MLK and Elie Wiesel drawing lines in the sand against, for example, the pro-Hamas demonstrators on our streets calling for the eradication of the Jewish State. MLK himself unequivocally said that “peace for Israel means security, and we must stand with all our might to protect its right to exist.” But no one “woke” in the education system these days dare repeat these words.

Each year, we celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Day. For those of us who grew up in the “old world” following the Second World War, the establishment of human rights norms based on foundational Judeo-Christian principles in the West of freedom, civil rights, and democracy—the values that MLK espoused—seems like a distant memory.

The moral compass established following the Holocaust and with respect to the civil rights movement, which was enthusiastically supported by the Jewish community standing with MLK, is being decimated by educators, demonstrators, and even political leaders attempting to establish a new world order, flipping the West’s foundational principles on their head.

Our situation is far worse than spoiled youth who are being mistaught in schools who are allowed to march out of class in support of Hamas. It’s time for the grown-ups in our communities to take back our cities that are being hijacked by people bringing hate into our

communities. In this, police services are stepping up to protect the Jewish community.

This might sound old-fashioned, but it is hard to find people like MLK and Elie Wiesel drawing lines in the sand against, for example, the pro-Hamas demonstrators on our streets calling for the eradication of the Jewish State. MLK himself unequivocally said that “peace for Israel means security, and we must stand with all our might to protect its right to exist.” But no one “woke” in the education system these days dare repeat these words.

Raoul Wallenberg, whom as Canadians we honoured this week as part of an annual day of commemoration of his legacy, would be livid seeing how some of our schools are allowing students to set up boycott campaigns against Israel, the embodiment of the Jewish people. What good was it for our nation to have made him an honorary citizen if our political leaders fail to realize their hypocrisy? Every nation is allowed to defend itself except for the Jews.

We are in an existential crisis brought on by a radical ideology operating on our streets. Here are several recommendations that might turn back the clock to the days when morality and respect were part of our social fabric:

First, while we must defend the right to demonstrate in a democracy, there must be limits where public safety and security are at stake. Disallow protests that call for the genocide of the Jewish people and side with terror-designated groups like Hamas. Arrest anyone who is intimidating communities.

Second, the federal government must update its terror-designated group list and strengthen measures that allow for criminal charges to be laid with sympathizers. In the UK this week, for example, Home Secretary James Cleverly announced that Hizb ut-Tahrir is a terrorist group and that it could no longer organize rallies and demonstrations.

At the European Union, Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar has been added to the terrorist list. The United States just announced that the Houthis have been designated a terrorist organization. In Canada, we should be adding the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps to our terror organization list.

Third, we must immediately and without delay update how we prosecute hate speech and hate crime. We must give law enforcement the tools they require to maintain law and order. For example, police must be able to immediately lay charges on the scene, with pending consent by the Attorney General.

Fourth, our schools, including universities, must be depoliticized, especially of extremism. They have become warzones that mirror armed conflicts 10,000 miles away. Politicization by the majority-body students is leading to radical indoctrination and distracting students from learning.

Fifth, we need to stand with our friends and allies. Few disagree that Canada has lost its standing in foreign affairs. Canada's wavering support of its greatest democratic ally in the Middle East (Israel) is frightening. Our leaders are actually on the fence about the fabricated "genocide" charges levelled against Israel by South Africa. They cannot choose between standing alongside their friend (Israel) or with a terrorist group (Hamas).

Finally, we must strive to create a national identity. Without one, we are weak and exposed to both internal and external influence that may not reflect our character. We no longer speak about preserving freedom and democracy. We care not about our national security, as made clear by the possible admittance of Hamas sympathizers into our nation.

It is not too late for us, but for most of us who grew up here, we long for our Canada that was safe and secure. We long for our Canada

whose citizens were respectful of one another. Where no one raged on our streets calling for our death or burning down our stores. We long for a Canada that stands for freedom and democracy and distinguishes friend from foe. We need to get back to our grounding — to our foundational principles and the values we cherished. Not this.

ELIE WIESEL: THE LAST OF THE GREATS

Synopsis: For Elie Wiesel and all those of his generation who advocated for social justice, the commitment to fighting for freedom often led to criticism and ridicule. However, if there is one lesson these great men and women could teach us, it is to stand up for what we believe and know in our hearts to be right and true – even if we are standing alone.

Elie Wiesel was the last one. Not the last Holocaust survivor. Not the last author or philosopher, but the last of the last from a generation of wise people who served as humanity's conscience.

We still needed his wisdom to help us navigate these tumultuous times. Britain's renowned Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks defined this sentiment just a few days ago when he wrote, "there is a widespread feeling that the world in the 21st century is running out of control... these are dangerous forces, the far right seeking a return to a golden age that never was, the far left in pursuit of a utopia that will never be. They are both enemies of freedom."

Elie Wiesel's life was buffeted by such extreme ideologies, and his caution remains significant. In today's world, where life often seems to have little value, where faceless innocents are slaughtered by the dozens in terror attacks and quickly forgotten, Elie Wiesel reminded the world of life's incredible value. He remained forever astonished "that I survived the Holocaust and went on to love beautiful girls, to talk, to write, to have toast and tea and live my life."

His generation was the generation of the 20th century that struggled to put a broken world back together. His generation was the generation of Martin Luther King Jr. A generation that fought for social justice and humanity. It was a generation that spoke about not being silent. In King's words, "our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Similarly, Wiesel would argue "we must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

With Elie Wiesel's passing, the great generation that empowered us and guided us to speak out against repression, violence, and hatred - is gone. Gone are the icons who refused to shake hands with the devil, choosing instead to impart their righteousness through their actions and wisdom. Mahatma Gandhi, one of the first leaders widely revered for his non-violent methods, gave the world a new path toward freedom. He put the responsibility for social change on each and every one of us, instructing, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." And so, each of us becomes the centre – the bridge and the pinnacle – for expressing goodness.

A similar inner wisdom and peace is found in the profound writings of Helen Keller, who believed the moral imperative to improve the world starts from within. Deaf and blind from childhood, Keller understood better than most that "the best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched – they must be felt with the heart."

The 20th century also gave us Mother Teresa as a guidepost for compassion. She dedicated her entire life to extensive humanitarian work in Calcutta, caring for refugees, the sick and the orphaned with love and affection. Mother Teresa showered the world with good will and believed that "kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." And among the last of the greats was Nelson Mandela – the man who freed South Africa from the chains of the racist

project known as apartheid. He understood that “to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”

Freedom from our oppressors. Freedom of faith. Freedom from hunger and deprivation. Freedom from darkness. Freedom from hate and intolerance. This is the wisdom that our great prophets have imparted to us.

For Elie Wiesel and all those of his generation who advocated for social justice, the commitment to fighting for freedom often led to criticism and ridicule. However, if there is one lesson these great men and women could teach us, it is to stand up for what we believe and know in our hearts to be right and true – even if we are standing alone.

This moral compass is the greatest gift left to us by Elie Wiesel. We are now all committed to serving as humanity’s conscience.

THE DESPICABLE SILENCE WHEN IT COMES TO SEXUAL ASSAULT OF JEWISH WOMEN.

Synopsis: The undeniable atrocities and war crimes of Oct. 7 stand as a stark reality. Yet, for some, being born Jewish and an Israeli citizen seems to exempt you from the application of international law. Antisemitism trumps justice, even in the face of rape and murder. Shame befalls any human rights organization that fails to acknowledge these crimes.

In the realm of democracies, it appears that the cherished Judeo-Christian principles, foundational to many societies, have taken a backseat. The moral compass seems skewed, flipped by a self-destructive generation quick to label anyone they disagree with as racists or colonialists.

As we approach the UN-designated International Day for the Prevention of Violence against Women, it's disheartening to note the silence from women's groups on the horrifying rapes and assaults suffered by Jewish women at the hands of Hamas on Oct. 7. As a father of two girls, witnessing feminist groups treating these atrocities differently is deeply troubling.

Israel's First Lady, Michal Herzog, addressed this silence in a recent Newsweek article, condemning women's groups for not denouncing the heinous acts witnessed at the Nova music festival. Reports detailed Hamas terrorists engaging in gang rapes, murder, and mutilation of women. Shockingly, a video even captured terrorists torturing a pregnant woman and removing her fetus.

Despite ample video and physical evidence of these crimes, there is a deafening lack of condemnation. Herzog revealed that forensic scientists found evidence of women and girls subjected to violence so brutal that their pelvic bones were broken. Disturbing videos, such as those of young Israeli girls mistreated in Gaza, further highlight the gravity of the situation.

One perplexing aspect is the contradiction with Islamic teachings, which strictly prohibit rape and consider it haram (forbidden), imposing severe punishment on the perpetrator. Modesty, especially for women, is deemed sacred in Islam. The question arises: Why haven't Muslim groups condemned Hamas for these crimes? Is it because the victims were Jewish?

Notably, organizations like UN Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women failed to immediately denounce these rapes. Sadly, lessons from history remind us that denial and distortion are common tactics of antisemites. While not all feminists and leftists share these views, all antisemites invariably deny the truth.

Relying on organizations advocating for human rights to uphold truth and justice is increasingly challenging. Recent weeks have seen an alarming effort to suppress and deny the crimes committed by Hamas, as if they never occurred. That's why I am now in Israel to collect as much evidence as possible — to safeguard the truth for the onslaught of denial that will undoubtedly hit us at the next fabricated “Israeli apartheid week” at your local campus.

It is disturbing the University of Alberta sexual assault center signed on to a letter that questioned whether these assaults happened and underscores the gravity of the situation. Fortunately, the university swiftly dismissed the director, reaffirming its commitment to morals and ethics. The kind note from the Acting-Dean was appreciated, demonstrating there is still hope for our campuses.

The undeniable atrocities and war crimes of Oct. 7 stand as a stark reality. Yet, for some, being born Jewish and an Israeli citizen seems to exempt you from the application of international law. Antisemitism trumps justice, even in the face of rape and murder. Shame befalls any human rights organization that fails to acknowledge these crimes.

On International Day for the Prevention of Violence against Women, there's a final opportunity for these organizations to break their silence and stand against injustice. The time to act is now.

WHERE IS TRUDEAU'S MORAL CLARITY ON ISRAEL'S WAR AGAINST HAMAS?

The images of premature babies outside incubators in a Hamas-controlled hospital and the tragic deaths of women and children in Gaza evoke deep emotions, emphasizing the equal preciousness of all life. Israel makes every effort to preserve life, while Hamas uses its population as human shields, sacrificing them for gullible western sympathy.

By now we know that these hospitals housed and covered up Hamas' terrorism against Israel. One wonders if many of the doctors and staff at these hospitals were not Hamas operatives themselves.

But Prime Minister Trudeau, known for his empathetic communication, went overboard against Israel again by declaring "The world is witnessing this killing of women, of children, of babies. This has to stop." It made Canadians wonder just whose side Trudeau is on — Canada's democratic ally or the jihadists?

His statement was so over the top hurtful it sent a shudder down the Jewish community in Canada and it provoked an immediate reply from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who said: "It is not Israel that is deliberately targeting civilians but Hamas that beheaded, burned and massacred civilians in the worst horrors perpetrated on Jews since the Holocaust ... The forces of civilization must back Israel in defeating Hamas barbarism."

Ever since our prime minister wrongfully implied Israel was to blame for an errant Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket that hit Al-Ahli hospital, that sent thousands of Antisemitic rioters to our city streets (in reality, the rocket didn't even hit the hospital, only the parking lot).

Canadians are puzzled about Mr. Trudeau's moral clarity, and ability to differentiate between terrorists and a democratic state defending itself.

After the horrifying brutality of the Hamas Oct. 7 massacre in which 1,200 Israelis were murdered (the vast majority civilians) and 239 hostages taken, the U.S., the U.K., Germany, France, and Italy, issued a joint statement condemning the attack with moral clarity and a clear strategy.

Mr. Trudeau initially appeared to be in agreement, acknowledging Israel's right and obligation to defend itself against Hamas. Western

nations emphasized that Hamas, as a terrorist organization, did not represent the aspirations of the Palestinian people

However, concerns arise as Mr. Trudeau seems to have shifted away from both moral clarity and a viable strategy in this war against terrorism. His concern about human life lacks proper assignment of responsibility for civilian deaths in Gaza. International law is not a suicide pact; rights come with responsibilities, and intent in war is seminal.

Senior Hamas member Ghazi Hamad's statement, that Oct. 7 should be repeated, underscores the proud commitment to atrocities and the intention to repeat them until Israel is eliminated. In such a scenario, what actions would Canada take when faced with an existential threat?

Mr. Trudeau's declaration that Israel's defence is unacceptable due to civilian casualties implies a demand for Israel to fight with both hands tied behind its back. Imposing such conditions on a defending ally seems impractical and potentially detrimental to their survival.

But Israel's survival may not be atop of Trudeau's list, it seems. Recently, Canada announced an increase in funding to the infamous United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA). It's the same organization that has said more about Israel in this war than about Hamas hiding its munitions in its schools.

Despite our incessant warnings that money is fungible and therefore the organization is indirectly subsidizing antisemitic curriculum in its schools and worse, helping incentivize terrorism (through payments to martyrs), our prime minister turned a blind eye. We even published a comprehensive report on funding of Palestinian terrorism on the matter that was signed by Judea Pearl, whose son Daniel was beheaded by Pakistani Jihadis and by Stuart Force, whose son Taylor was murdered by Palestinian Jihadis.

Leading up to the Hamas massacre, the murder of dozens of Israelis was partly and indirectly funded by UNRWA, which receives funding from Canada. When one Canadian diplomat called our reaction to Canada's \$100 million allocation "harsh" we wondered just how out of touch with its own complicity in driving Palestinian terrorism our government is. Does this response still seem harsh in the face of such brutal massacres of Jews? Or is it still okay because local politics trumps morality?

The money we and other western democracies give the Palestinians went to building the tunnel system in Gaza, rather than to improving Palestinian lives. The Hamas rockets fired at Israeli citizens are made possible by our aid money. And the massacre itself, quantified by the sadistic hatred of the jihadists, can be linked to the school textbooks that teach hate in UNRWA schools.

How is it possible that Hamas leaders who are basking in the sun in Qatar are worth \$5 billion? Most were once labourers on construction sites. It's because they have taxed our aid money and siphoned it into their personal bank accounts, instead of helping and uplifting Gazans. They want them to live in squalor and misery.

Mr. Trudeau's inversion of truth is not dissimilar to the leftist's moral bankruptcy of blaming the Hamas massacre of Jews on Israel. Even UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres had the audacity of alluding that the killing of Jews was brought on by themselves. It's the post-colonialist, woke, perversion of reality. It's like saying the horrific murder and treatment of our indigenous population by colonizers was their own fault.

In truth, the blame of the death of civilians on both sides is on Canada and other western nations. Our tax dollars continue to perpetuate Palestinian animosity against Israel by keeping them in a refugee holding pattern, unlike any other refugee group on earth.

Trudeau owes Israel and the Jewish community an apology for putting the blame on them, rather than on where it truly belongs — on Hamas. Hamas is centrally responsible for the deaths of civilians on both sides, but Canada and the West need to recognize that by funding UNWRA we unwittingly or irresponsibly have contributed to this disaster.

THE WORLD NEEDS HEROES LIKE WALLENBERG

Synopsis: People like Wallenberg are our moral compass when it comes to understanding the difference between good and evil. The macro level is often relatively easy to understand, as the forces between good and evil, darkness and light, continue to battle one another through every generation.

Every year, on January 17th, we pause to celebrate the life and legacy of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, on the anniversary of his detainment and disappearance in 1945. We are fascinated by the story of a young man who risked everything to save thousands of Hungarian Jewish children, women, and men from Hitler's gas chambers.

He was disappeared 78 years ago, but his bravery, kindness and compassion linger onward, posing the ultimate question: how do we instill these valuable character traits in each one of us? Wouldn't the world be a better place if we were all like Wallenberg?

We know there are global events that are beyond our individual control. Russia's assault on Ukraine is an example of bad people misbehaving because of personal ego and a lack of self-control.

Similarly, we see the tyrants in Iran repressing their own people in the name of religious beliefs that keep them in power. Their ideology drives them to develop weapons of mass destruction and sow hate and discord throughout the Middle East. Wallenbergs they are not.

People like Wallenberg are our moral compass when it comes to understanding the difference between good and evil. The macro level is often relatively easy to understand, as the forces between good and evil, darkness and light, continue to battle one another through every generation. But the character traits we need to explore and understand go deeper. They exist on the individual and the person-to-person level.

Wallenberg displayed humanity's best character traits: kindness and altruism. He was assigned to Budapest as Sweden's special envoy in 1944 and, while there, issued thousands of fake protective passports to Jewish refugees and sheltered many of them in the 32 buildings he rented and declared as Swedish territory. His action was a personal volition, going above and beyond the call of duty and out of the bounds of his diplomatic charge.

We need to understand the character traits that drive heroic people like Wallenberg to selfless acts of valour. His actions and those of the Swedish legation in Budapest are legendary. He successfully negotiated with the Germans that bearers of protective passes would not have to be identified with the yellow Star of David. He even rallied other diplomats around him, including the Hungarian minister of foreign affairs, to issue 9,000 protective passes.

In one eyewitness account that encapsulates the fortitude of this man, his driver, Sandor Ardai, recounted one of the many times Wallenberg intercepted an outbound train filled with Jews heading to Auschwitz:

"He climbed up on the roof of the train and began handing in protective passes through the doors, which were not yet sealed. He ignored orders from the Germans for him to get down, then the Arrow Cross men began shooting and shouting at him to go away. He ignored them and calmly continued handing out passports to the hands that were reaching out for them....

“After Wallenberg had handed over the last of the passports, he ordered all those who had one to leave the train and walk to the caravan of cars parked nearby, all marked in Swedish colours.”

We should all ask ourselves what we would do if we were in the same position. Would we risk our lives to save others?

In a world still fraught with conflict and viciousness, we certainly need more Wallenbergs. Days celebrating Raoul Wallenberg and Martin Luther King Jr. pass us by yearly. Some of us stop, listen, and think about what these heroes can teach us.

The truth is, however, that Gandhi had it right when he counselled his people to, “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.” These are tough words to live by, but we should all strive toward that end every single day.

Sadly, Wallenberg was disappeared in 1945, taken by the Russians and presumed dead. His legacy carries us forward knowing that people like him will rise in times of need and desperation. But the world desperately needs more of them — and fast.

CHAPTER 9

OSEH SHALOM (MAKING PEACE)

OSEH SHALOM WITH POPE FRANCIS

Synopsis: For centuries, the church accused Jews of deicide, murdering Jesus, thus spreading anti-Jewish hatred at a time when most education and knowledge came from, or was regulated by, the church. We were at the mercy of crusades, missionaries, inquisitions, and pogroms. Centuries of hatred gave momentum to the eventual murder of six-million Jews in the Holocaust.

Ahead of my meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican, my rabbi reminded me about the importance of interfaith dialogue in the Jewish faith. Every day, Jews around the world turn to Jerusalem and recite the “Oseh Shalom,” the prayer for making peace. We are directed to self-actualize peace — for Israel, for the Jewish people and for the world.

Thus, after a long journey of bridge-building and interfaith dialogue, I arrived at the invitation of the Vatican to attend an audience with Pope Francis. Along with a colleague of mine and the thousands of worshippers who attended the service, we were treated with honour and respect by being placed immediately adjacent to the Pope himself, a sign of the weight the Vatican places on Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Pope Francis doubled down on Oseh Shalom by coming directly to meet us and accept the beautiful menorah I presented to him on behalf of the Abraham Global Peace Initiative. In Judaism, the menorah symbolizes light over darkness, hope over despair. The national symbol of ancient and modern Israel, the menorah is a reminder of the destruction of our Temple in Jerusalem and our triumph over evil throughout the ages.

When I presented the menorah to the Pope, I explained that as we light the menorah each day of Hanukkah, the light becomes more powerful, overtaking darkness; likewise, the more unified we are against antisemitism, hate and intolerance, the stronger our combined impact.

It was not always this way in the Catholic Church. For centuries, the church accused Jews of deicide, murdering Jesus, thus spreading anti-Jewish hatred at a time when most education and knowledge came from, or was regulated by, the church. We were at the mercy of crusades, missionaries, inquisitions, and pogroms. Centuries of hatred gave momentum to the eventual murder of six-million Jews in the Holocaust.

Finally, in 1965, under the leadership of Pope Paul VI, the Vatican released a ground-breaking "Declaration on the Relations of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," or "Nostra aetate." The document calls for "mutual understanding and respect" between Jews and Christians and affirms that "the Jewish people ... cannot be held guilty for the death of Christ."

Decades later, Pope John Paul II was the first pope in the history of the Catholic Church who made interfaith dialogue and bridge-building with the Jewish community a priority. He courageously brought to the forefront critical questions about the church's historic perpetuation of antisemitism.

In a 1998 cover letter for an interfaith document released in memory of the Holocaust, Pope John Paul II wrote, "On numerous occasions during my pontificate I have recalled with a sense of deep sorrow the sufferings of the Jewish people during the Second World War. The crime which has become known as the Shoah remains an indelible stain on the history of the century that is coming to a close."

The document itself asked “whether the Nazi persecution of the Jews was not made easier by the anti-Jewish prejudices embedded in some Christian minds and hearts. Did anti-Jewish sentiment among Christians make them less sensitive, or even indifferent, to the persecution launched against the Jews by National Socialism when it reached power?”

For his part, Pope Francis travelled to Israel and visited Yad Vashem in 2014. In 2019, he described the persecution of Jews as “neither human or Christian,” adding that, “The Jewish people have suffered so much in history, they have been chased away, they too have been persecuted.... The Jews are our brothers and should not be persecuted, understand?”

I was asked by a priest why it was important to meet with the Pope. Christianity is a part of the Abrahamic faith, I explained. As such, it’s our mutual responsibility to carry out God’s will of Tikkun Olam, to repair of the world. As the forces of hate and evil continue to gain ground, Jewish and Christian people coming together for the first time in history can be a force for good the likes of which has never been seen before. For me, Oseh Shalom is not only a directive. It’s a commandment.

CAN A SAUDI-ISRAEL PEACE DEAL BE MADE?

Synopsis: A deal with Saudi Arabia would allow Washington to ensure Riyadh continues to be an ally in the region, but for that to happen the Saudis need to be seen to be advancing the Palestinian cause, at least on paper. The Palestinians have always been used by the Saudis as a Trojan horse to leverage military hardware and other support from the U.S., and this is no exception.

Prior to October 7th, 2023, it became obvious that America’s negotiations with Saudi Arabia have nothing to do with Israel and the

Palestinians, and everything to do with U.S. national security. The White House is rightfully concerned about China's encroachment in the region, which includes a plan to build a military base in the United Arab Emirates and is looking to shore up a longstanding ally that is increasingly making inroads with Beijing.

The Saudis, for their part, are smartly leveraging the United States to further their own national interests, demanding security guarantees and assistance developing a nuclear power program.

The Biden administration distanced itself from Saudi Arabia following the Jamal Khashoggi assassination. Since then, the Saudis have raised eyebrows in Washington by cozying up to China.

Last year, the Saudis hosted high-level Ukraine peace talks that included a delegation from China. Although U.S. representatives attended the talks, China was seen as the main power broker. According to one news report, "Merely having a Beijing delegation at the summit was a major cause for optimism."

To make matters even worse for America's longstanding hegemony in the region, the Saudis and the Iranians recently normalized relations after severing diplomatic ties seven years ago. This, too, was a snub at the Biden administration, which has been unable to resurrect the Iranian nuclear deal.

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But interest in the Palestinians is waning on all sides. The Palestinian leadership's corruption has seen them lose support among

many Arab leaders. By now, the Palestinians would have had their own state, had they accepted the countless peace deals presented to them since the Oslo Accords.

Nevertheless, America needs Israel's acquiescence on the Palestinian issue. This may include a freeze on settlement expansion and the construction of an airport, to free up movement on the Palestinian side.

Given the situation in the Palestinian Authority, including disunity between Gaza and Ramallah, and increasing terrorist activity in places like Jenin, none of the parties to this potential agreement — Israel, Saudi Arabia or the U.S. — have all that much interest in seeing the formation of a Palestinian state at the present time. It's obvious that the Palestinian Authority has lost the confidence of its own population and, more significantly, of the international community.

Israel, on the other hand, despite its political differences, has become a regional superpower. Its recent peace agreements with the United Arab Emirates, Morocco and Bahrain have been a boon to the regional economy. Innovation and trade are blossoming, as the flow of goods and services between these countries continues to increase.

The Saudis, looking ahead into their future, want a piece of the action, and have made their own moves to improve relations with the Jewish state. Last year, for example, Saudi Arabia granted Israel permission to fly over its airspace. The Saudis have also softened their negative, and sometimes antisemitic, rhetoric about Israel.

Israel wants to normalize ties with the Saudis, as well, but probably not at any price. Even with American pressure, the current government is unlikely to compromise on the Palestinian question. The war with Hamas has hardened Israel's position vis-a-vis any rapprochement with the Palestinian Authority.

Sure, the Biden administration would like a diplomatic win in the Middle East. But more importantly, its threatened by China and Russia's growing dominance in the region.

The Saudis, noticing America's growing weakness and criticism of its human rights record, have moved away from their long-time partner and friend. But it's not too late. A renewed deal could be struck with the Saudis and, as a bonus, a peace agreement with Israel would increase regional stability. In a fractured world, where despot regimes are gaining strength, the time for peace and global stability is now.

THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS: A HISTORIC MILESTONE

Synopsis: In contrast to Israel's relatively cool peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan (which have recently warmed thanks to the Abraham Accords), the peace with the U.A.E. is warm and friendly. Unlike Israel's relationship with Jordan, grounded in military protocols, its ties with the U.A.E. are based on people-to-people connections.

The Abraham Accords marked a transformative moment for Israel and the United Arab Emirates. Despite cultural and religious disparities between the two nations, their relationship feels remarkably natural. Even the call to prayer at Dubai's Al Maktoum International Airport seemed ordinary as I boarded an El Al flight to Tel Aviv, accompanied by Israelis carrying their shopping bags back home.

During my stay in Dubai, everything felt seamlessly integrated. It wasn't until I observed a flight billboard at the airport listing Tel Aviv alongside Tehran, Beirut, and Jeddah that the true significance of this ground-breaking peace initiative finally struck me.

The ability to fly over once-forbidden Saudi airspace between Israel and the U.A.E. has fostered a vibrant ecosystem, reaping significant economic rewards for both nations. Trade between Israel and the U.A.E. exceeded US\$1.2 billion (C\$1.59 billion) in 2021, surpassing

US\$1.4 billion in the first seven months of the current year. Both countries jointly established a multi-million dollar R&D fund, with the U.A.E. committing an additional \$100 million to venture capital funds in Israel.

In contrast to Israel's relatively cool peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan (which have recently warmed thanks to the Abraham Accords), the peace with the U.A.E. is warm and friendly. Unlike Israel's relationship with Jordan, grounded in military protocols, its ties with the U.A.E. are based on people-to-people connections. Normalization feels entirely natural as both countries pursue modernity, technological prowess, and an improvement in the socioeconomic status of their people.

During my foundation's joint event with the Crossroads of Civilizations Museum, commemorating two years since the signing of the Abraham Accords, Britain's Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, astutely observed that in the U.A.E., where Jews are thriving, the Jewish community is growing. Israel's Deputy Consul General explained that there is virtually no antisemitism in the U.A.E., as the population takes cues from its leadership.

The expanding Jewish community now enjoys a selection of kosher restaurants and at least three synagogues, including the Palm Synagogue, where I was fortunate to spend Shabbat and meet many community leaders. Numerous Israeli and even Canadian Jews have relocated to the U.A.E. for work, becoming integral parts of the growing Jewish community. Hearing people speak Hebrew is now commonplace in malls and other venues.

Ahmed Obaid Almansoori, a prominent Emirati who founded the Crossroads of Civilizations Museum, has emerged as a cultural icon and champion of normalization. He guided me through his museum's Holocaust exhibit, claiming it to be the only one in the Middle East

outside of Israel. Almansoori has been educating Emirati students about the Holocaust, using his collection to advance peace, tolerance, and Jewish-Arab solidarity.

In my speech at the museum marking Kristallnacht, I noted that the museum perfectly embodies the Abrahamic values of friendship, pluralism, and co-existence. Almansoori believes, “We need to stop antisemitism, anti-Zionism, and the delegitimization of Israel. People should move forward and try to build bridges.” This sentiment is gradually gaining traction throughout the Middle East.

If successful, it will not only boost trade, prosperity, and peace within the region but also undermine antisemitism and delegitimization campaigns at the United Nations and on university campuses. As I emphasized in my remarks, our responsibility is to seize this exceptional opportunity by being physically present and extending our hands in peace. That’s precisely what we are doing.

JEWISH HERITAGE STRENGTHENS MOROCCO-ISRAEL RELATIONS

Synopsis: Moroccans believe that, given the country's historic Jewish population and heritage, peace and economic development with Israel are natural. While the Abraham Accords provided an opportunity for both countries to re-engage, most Moroccan leaders view them as a re-activation of diplomatic relations already in place.

Morocco welcomed us with open arms as part of our efforts to build a global consensus in support of freedom, democracy, and human rights. In a world rapidly descending into war, chaos, and crimes against humanity, exemplified by Russia's bombardment of Ukraine, Morocco stands out as a nation moving in the right direction.

Despite its deep complexity and rich traditions, the country's political leaders and civil society are steadfastly focused on economic

and social development, expanding Morocco's footprint, and fostering imagination.

The contrast between the old and the new is striking. Outside my hotel window in Rabat, a beautiful egg-shaped Grand Theatre resembling a futuristic space shuttle stands, and a few miles away, a rocket-like tower, believed to be the tallest in Africa, is under construction. However, amidst these modern structures are old, rickety fishing boats on the river, juxtaposed with Rabat's centuries-old Great Mosque, where calls to prayer resonate throughout the day.

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Serge Berdugo, president of a prominent Jewish community group and a key ambassador for King Mohammed VI, asserts that Morocco and Israel have a longstanding relationship, with the Abraham Accords receiving a boost due to Morocco's involvement.

Morocco's deep-rooted connection to its Jewish heritage is enshrined in its constitution, as noted by Elmehdi Boudra, president of the Mimouna Foundation and a member of our organization's Global Advisory Board. Boudra, focused on advancing pluralism and Moroccan-Jewish heritage, proudly highlights a plaque in the Jewish Museum that emphasizes the country's commitment to a diverse national identity.

Over the past twenty years, Morocco has undergone significant changes, addressing challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, and economic instability. While acknowledging its non-wealthy status, a government official emphasized that Morocco is rich in values,

particularly in fostering a grassroots value system promoting inclusivity, tolerance, and respect.

Casablanca's first female mayor, Nabila Rmili, shared her initiatives to advance women in society, including policies for women's employment, amendments to family laws, and protection against abuse. She stressed the importance of female representation, noting that Morocco's three largest cities have female mayors serving as role models.

Elected parliamentarian Najwa Koukouss echoed a growing trend in Morocco, expressing a commitment to breaking free from what she calls the "poverty of the mind." She advocates for change in social, educational, legal, and human rights areas, focusing on advancing her country and its people.

Child marriage, a concern for Koukouss, led to a change in the law, making it illegal to marry anyone below 18 years old. Canada's Ambassador Nell Stewart emphasized her commitment to gender equity, overseeing projects supporting women's rights while fostering the peace agreement with Israel and pursuing economic prosperity.

Amid the ongoing Hamas war against Israel, the fragility of our global order is evident. The Abraham Accords offers this region an unparalleled opportunity to build more than peace and prosperity—a chance to construct an "Abrahamic Tent" of shared beliefs and values that can unify against hate and evil. Morocco, a nation swiftly moving in the right direction, stands as a beacon of hope.

THE YEAR OPTIMISM SHINED

Synopsis: The year 2020 will be remembered as a time of plague, as well as heightened social strife and political polarization, but it also saw historic peacemaking in the Middle East. Along with the vaccines that will hopefully bring an end to the pandemic, this year will also see

a growing acceptance of our fellow men and women due to mass social activism.

In 2021, people doubled down on their optimism and moved the needle to advance humanity. That year was a revolutionary year. It was not because of the shocking assault on the American Capitol that January.

We were at the precipice of a new world order bound by human enthusiasm for social change, as creators, innovators, and social activists worked to break down barriers and build bridges of understanding between peoples.

Our world is basically good. That goodness shone in 2020 like never before as scientists raced to develop a coronavirus vaccine faster than anyone ever thought possible, health-care providers valiantly cared for the ill at their peril, and ordinary people acted in their communities to extend a loving hand. That momentum was spiraling into other areas, including peacemaking.

Gulf states signed a détente deal with Qatar, re-establishing ties, and opening borders in the region. The push for peace spread all over the Middle East. For the first time in history, delegations of leaders from the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco poured into Israel — shattering old hatreds and building new relationships between governments.

But it's the individual level that matters most, and we also witnessed ordinary people rising to the challenge and taking risks to usher in social change, even at a personal cost. For instance, Tunisian singer Noomane Chaari and Israeli Ziv Yehezkel recorded a wonderful piece meant to break down barriers, called "Peace Between Neighbours." Like others, Chaari came under fire for promoting peaceful coexistence with Israel.

Naysayers and traditionalists who sow hate and fear will always exist. We see them everywhere. But in 2020, Martin Luther King Jr.'s words resonated more than ever: "The ultimate measure of a man (or a woman!) is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

We know from history that the people who can make a difference in turbulent times are those who are willing to courageously sacrifice and defiantly show kindness and compassion. They refused to be silenced into submission or to go along to get along. It's this attitude, in fact, that brought the Middle East to a more peaceful place.

Our ethical code is firmly embedded in our shared human veneration of people we have defined as champions of humanity. They are the people who have broken down barriers, stood resolutely by their ideals, and refused compromise. They are the Rosa Parks, Oskar Schindlers, Helen Kellers, and Mahatma Gandhis, who taught us to challenge prejudices (including our own) and rise above our primal instincts.

That's why 2020 was different. People doubled down on their optimism and moved the needle to advance humanity. My friend David Onley, the former lieutenant governor of Ontario who has championed accessibility his entire life, told me that his chosen words for 2021 were "wisdom, courage, and determination." Optimists are natural builders, creators, and visionaries. They see human potential, rise above hate and despair, and foster friendship despite the danger. If there is a lesson from 2020, it's that in tragedy, humanity can also find opportunity. By speaking out about peace and a better world, cultural warriors brought MLK's words to life.

Individuals like Jerusalem's deputy mayor, Fleur Hassan-Nahoum, who shattered ancient myths and tribalism by crisscrossing the Middle

East as the co-founder of the UAE-Israel Business Council. Or Houda Nonoo, a former Bahraini ambassador to the United States and Canada, and Ahedya Al-Sayed, the first female president of the Bahraini Journalist Association. They engaged with people from around the world and defied traditional barriers.

The year 2020 will be remembered as a time of plague, as well as heightened social strife and political polarization, but it also saw historic peacemaking in the Middle East. Along with the vaccines that will hopefully bring an end to the pandemic, this year will also see a growing acceptance of our fellow men and women due to mass social activism. “Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability,” said MLK, “but comes through continuous struggle.” It’s time to take that struggle to the next level.

Let’s pray the next level means a greater focus on peace, prosperity, and the advancement of pluralism around the world. We need humanity to come together now more than ever. That’s my message of hope in this new year.

CAN THE PALESTINIANS MAKE PEACE?

Synopsis: Nothing ever seemed to be good enough for the Palestinians, but the world had been changing all around them. Arab delegations had been secretly coming to Israel and vice versa over the last three years. The Arab media had softened its hostility toward the Jewish state.

In 2020, a political earthquake was underway in the Middle East, as, suddenly, Arab nations seemed to be falling head over heels for Israel.

A mere 29 days after the United Arab Emirates made a surprise peace announcement with Israel at the behest of the United States, the Kingdom of Bahrain admirably joined the peace parade. Like the

U.A.E., Bahrain agreed to establish full diplomatic ties with the Jewish state. It became the fourth country (including Egypt and Jordan) to make peace with Israel. The timing was impeccable, as Bahrain joined the U.A.E. on the White House lawn for a historic signing of the peace accord.

Everyone celebrated these achievements except the Palestinian Authority, which was quick to condemn the peace deal and withdraw its ambassador, as it did when the U.A.E. announced its agreement. Naturally, Hamas and Islamic Jihad also had strong words for Bahrain. But the wind of change picked up speed. Speculation persisted that Oman, Saudi Arabia, or Morocco could be next. It was no coincidence that the Arab League rejected the Palestinian call to condemn the U.A.E's embrace of Israel.

Before then, making peace with the Jewish state had always been contingent on a peace agreement with the Palestinians. But everyone had lost count of precisely how many times the Palestinians either rejected statehood or missed an opportunity to make peace.

Soon after the Oslo Accords, then-PLO leader Yassir Arafat turned his focus away from peace and toward suicide attacks against the Jewish state. Other peace initiatives were later rejected by the Palestinians, including generous offers by Israeli prime ministers Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert. Even former U.S. President Donald Trump's "deal of the century" was rejected.

Is it any wonder that many Arab countries, which were desperate to modernize and gain international acceptance, would not want to continue waiting for the Palestinians to make peace before entering into economically advantageous trade and diplomatic agreements with Israel?

Nothing ever seemed to be good enough for the Palestinians, but the world had been changing all around them. Arab delegations had been

secretly coming to Israel and vice versa over the last three years. The Arab media had softened its hostility toward the Jewish state. Scholars and clergy had called for greater tolerance and acceptance. Business leaders had quietly reached out to one another, even negotiating deals.

So much had changed, and the time was ripe for peacemaking. Middle East rulers were more interested in prosperity, in science and innovation, than in Hamas' rockets and suicide belts. They were weary of the Iranian threat, the spread of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic State, and the Syria-style anarchy that could spread with public discontent.

A peace agreement not only provided access to Israel's high-tech and medical-sciences sectors, but it was also a gateway to U.S. and European markets. It created more educational opportunities and prosperity in the region. And it provided more access to advanced weapons like the F-35 that could offset emerging threats. The Palestinian Authority, unfortunately, refused to realize that a comprehensive peace agreement would help bring security and sustainability for its people and legitimize its quest for statehood.

More significantly, an Israel buoyed by peaceful relations with its Arab neighbors would soften its posture. This had already happened with respect to the U.A.E.'s demand that Israel back down from its plan to annex some parts of the West Bank. It was time for the Palestinians to embrace the potential that peace could offer them, as well as the leverage that the U.A.E. and Bahrain could bring to the table.

It was only a matter of time before the next Arab country joined the march toward peace in the Middle East. The clock was ticking. Is it too late?

A NOTED DEFENDER OF HUMANITY FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Avi Abraham Benlolo is described as Canada's most prominent and noted expert in Holocaust studies, countering Antisemitism and promoting human rights. He is the Founding Chairman and CEO of The Abraham Global Peace Initiative (AGPI), a Canadian NGO which promotes Human Rights. In recognition of this effort, he has received numerous awards including an honorary doctorate from University of Haifa; an Order of Vaughan for his distinguished contribution to equity and diversity; the Queens Diamond Jubilee Award for contributions to Canada and a race relations award for best practice, based on distinguished service in promoting human rights. He is a featured media personality, has a weekly column in the National Post and a documentary film producer.

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