

Media-ocrity of the Week

...It is important to note that the last time the question of Palestinian statehood took center stage at the General Assembly, the question posed to the international community was whether our homeland should be partitioned into two states. In November 1947, the General Assembly made its recommendation and answered in the affirmative. Shortly thereafter, Zionist forces expelled Palestinian Arabs to ensure a decisive Jewish majority in the future state of Israel, and Arab armies intervened. War and further expulsions ensued.... We go to the United Nations now to secure the right to live free in the remaining 22 percent of our historic homeland because we have been negotiating with the State of Israel for 20 years without coming any closer to realizing a state of our own. We cannot wait indefinitely while Israel continues to send more settlers to the occupied West Bank and denies Palestinians access to most of our land and holy places, particularly in Jerusalem.... Once admitted to the United Nations, our state stands ready to negotiate all core issues of the conflict with Israel...."—Excerpts from Palestinian Authority president *Mahmoud Abbas's NY Times op-ed, entitled *The Long Overdue Palestinian State, calling on the "peace-loving," third world dictatorships of the world to support his unilateral bid for Palestinian statehood at the UN General assembly in September, and affirming that the creation of "Palestine" is now a precondition for future negotiations with Israel. In response to Abbas's distorted historical account, the Atlantic's *Jeffrey Goldberg* wrote, "There is no particular reason to hope for a successful peace process when the leader of the Palestinians is selling a false history of Israel's independence.... Mahmoud Abbas cannot bring himself to note that the Jews accepted the partition plan, while the Arabs rejected it, and went to war to extinguish the new Jewish state in the cradle, and then lost their offensive war.... If only he...could find a way to**

avoid rehearsing old grievances and instead work toward a future in which [he] doesn't get all that [he] wants, but gets enough to live." (*NY Times*, May 16 & *Atlantic*, May 17.)

Weekly Quotes

"We must stop beating ourselves up and blaming ourselves.... We saw what happened along the borders of Israel yesterday. Thousands thronged against our fences in an attempt to invade our territory and challenge our sovereignty.... What were they yelling in Gaza yesterday? They were shouting that they want to return to Jaffa. What were they crying in Syria yesterday? They were chanting that they want to return to the Galilee. What did the leader of Hamas say yesterday? 'We want to see the end of the Zionist agenda,' the very same words used by his patrons in Iran.... My friends, the root of this conflict never was a Palestinian state, or lack thereof. The root of the conflict is, and always has been, their refusal to recognize the Jewish state. It is not a conflict over 1967, but over 1948, over the very existence of the State of Israel. You must have noticed that yesterday's events did not occur on June 5, the anniversary of the Six Day War. They occurred on May 15, the day the State of Israel was established. The Palestinians regard this day, the foundation of the State of Israel, their nakba, their catastrophe. But their catastrophe was that they did not have a leadership that was willing to reach a true historic compromise between the Palestinian people and the Jewish people."—This is not a conflict about 1967, this is a conflict about 1948, about the State of Israel's very existence. You must have noticed that yesterday's events did not take place on June 5, the day the Six Day War erupted, they took place on May 15, the day the State of Israel was established."—Israeli Prime Minister *Benjamin Netanyahu*, in an address to the Knesset plenum as part of "*Herzl Day*", reaffirming that neither "borders" nor "settlements" are the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but rather Israel's very existence, as

evidenced by the fact that "*Nakba Day*"—the yearly Palestinian commemoration marking the "catastrophe" of Israel's birth—is celebrated on Israel's Independence Day. (*PMO Website, May 16.*)

"Today, as the Palestinians and their supporters commemorate their so-called 'Nakba', it is imperative that the catastrophe that befell the Jews from Arab lands be remembered and recognized. While the Arabs in 1948 were involved in hostilities against the Jews, the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa were not present in a theater of war, yet overnight their citizenship was revoked, their assets stolen and they were expelled or forced to flee. There is also a massive disparity in numbers, while the Arab refugees numbered just over half a million, the Jewish refugees numbered over 900,000 and because they were urban and wealthy, their assets accounted for almost double those of the more rural Arabs. In any future agreement with the Palestinians, the issue of the Jewish refugees should be recognized and those who fled, and their descendants, ought to receive redress.... The Palestinian refugee narrative has been allowed to stand uncontested, too few people know about the real 'Nakba', that saw the dispossession of almost a million Jews, and it is about time for this to change."—Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister *Danny Ayalon*, exposing the tyranny perpetrated by Arab nations against their Jewish citizens following Israel's creation, which resulted in the forced expulsion of nearly one million Jews, and committing to fight the predominant and patently false narrative that only Palestinians were displaced during Israel's defensive War of Independence. (*Independent Media Review and Analysis, May 15.*)

"Nazism was defeated, but the Nazi ideology and its anti-Semitic roots are still nested in many places around the world. We, the Jews, certainly can not ignore it, when *Mein Kampf* and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* are still available to anyone in many languages, and when a state that calls for the destruction of a nation is still a member of the UN. We can not stay complacent when faced with calls for genocide, and we will not be silent about the tragedies of other nations."—Knesset Speaker *Reuven Rivlin*, in a special Knesset Plenum to commemorate the 66th

anniversary of Nazi Germany's defeat, warning that although Nazism was vanquished its anti-Semitic ideology persists, and, as such, the Jewish people must be vigilant in the face of new existential threats posed by the likes of Iran. (*Jerusalem Post*, May 18.)

"It would be a natural move for Iran to open an embassy or representative office in Gaza. Gaza is now a region almost free of occupation and Iran can have an active embassy in Gaza as it will have the same kind of mission in Egypt in future. Iran was the first government which recognized Palestine and allowed opening of the Palestinian embassy and today the Palestinian ambassador is active in Iran"—Representative of the Palestinian *Islamic Jihad* Movement in Tehran, *Nasser Abu Sharif*, calling on Iran to open a Mission in Hamas-ruled Gaza, in order to foster bilateral relations with the Palestinians. Palestinian Ambassador to Tehran *Salah al-Zawawi* echoed Abu Sharif's statement and commended the "Iranian nation and government's support for the victory of Palestine." (*Independent Media Review and Analysis*, May 11.)

"While no trial can bring back those that were murdered, holding those responsible to justice has an important moral and educational role in society. The conviction today of Demjanjuk underscores the fact that even though the policies of the 'Final Solution'—the systematic murder of six million European Jews—were set and carried out by the German Nazi regime, the murder could not have taken place without the participation of myriads of Europeans on many levels. Their role was also criminal."—Chairman of Israel's *Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum* *Avner Shalev*, praising the conviction of John Demjanjuk for his role in orchestrating the murder of 27,900 Jews during the Nazi Holocaust. Nazi hunter *Efraim Zuroff* of the *Simon Wiesenthal Center* asserted "The conviction today of death camp guard Ivan Demjanjuk, who actively participated in the mass murder of tens of thousands of Jews in the Sobibor death camp, sends a powerful message that those responsible for Holocaust crimes can still be held accountable even though decades have passed since they were committed." (*Jerusalem*

Post May 12.)

"Where is terrorism? [Hamas] entered into the elections and after the elections this is how they were reacted, I mean, calling them terrorists, this would be disrespect to the will of the Palestinian people."—Turkish Prime Minister *Recep Tayyip Erdogan*, in an interview with U.S. talk show host Charlie Rose, discrediting the notion that Hamas is a terrorist organization, and affirming Turkey's support of the Fatah-Hamas unity pact, which Erdogan views as a sign of progress that will bring peace to the region. (*Jerusalem Post*, May 12.)

Short Takes

AL-QAEDA NAMES NEW LEADER—(*New York*) According to reports, Egyptian Saif al-Adel has been appointed as "caretaker" leader of al-Qaeda, following the death of Osama bin Laden. The decision comes as a surprise, as many expected bin Laden's longstanding deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, to fill in for the slain leader. Al-Adel is a former Egyptian Special Forces soldier, and, according to the FBI, he is wanted in connection with the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. The 50-something al-Adel has a bounty of \$5 million on his head. (*Associated Press*, May 18.)

US MIDEAST ENVOY MITCHELL RESIGNS—(*Washington*) U.S. Middle East peace envoy George Mitchell has shocked the Obama administration by handing in his resignation, a move that reflects his frustration with the White House's shifting and incoherent mid-east policy. Mitchell, a former U.S. senator who helped broker the Northern Ireland peace deal, was one of the first members of Obama's foreign policy team to be announced and has shuttled extensively between Washington and Middle East capitals trying to set up new negotiations. Direct peace talks resumed briefly last year but broke down when the Palestinians demanded that pre-conditions over settlement construction in the West Bank. (*Reuters*,

May 13.)

U.N. SAYS IRAN VIOLATED ARMS BAN—*(United Nations)* According to a new United Nations report, Iran has been shipping weapons to Syria in violation of a U.N. arms-export ban. Of the nine reported violations, six arms shipments from Iran were to Syria, whose government is conducting a deadly crackdown on anti-regime protesters. In all such incidents, the arms were found to be “carefully concealed” to avoid inspection and hide the identity of the end user. The report also said Iran continued “willful” circumvention of sanctions through the use of “front companies, concealment methods in shipping, financial transactions and the transfer of conventional arms.” *(Wall Street Journal, May 12.)*

AHMADINEJAD'S MENTOR CRITICIZES HIM—*(Tehran)* The spiritual mentor of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has harshly criticized the Iranian president for his role in an internal power struggle that has split the country's hard-liners, indicating that Ahmadinejad's own support base is fraying. The cleric is the latest high-profile figure to censure Ahmadinejad, who sparked a political confrontation last month by firing his intelligence minister without consulting the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The president's mentor, Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, said Ahmadinejad is increasingly turning friends into enemies and demonstrating what he called “illogical and cheap” behavior. The showdown is being interpreted as further evidence of a growing rift between Ahmadinejad and the ruling theocracy and a sign that Khamenei is seeking to tighten his grip on political affairs before parliamentary elections next year and a presidential election in 2013. *(Washington Post, May 14.)*

SYRIAN PRESIDENT SAYS SECURITY FORCES MADE MISTAKES—*(Beirut)* Syrian president Bashar Assad has admitted that his security forces made mistakes during the uprising against his regime, blaming poorly trained police officers for a crackdown that has killed more than 850

people over the past two months. Assad's comments come following a brutal attack on the western town of Talkalakh, which left more than 27 dead. Syrians pouring over the Lebanon border in recent days described horrific scenes in Talkalakh, including execution-style slayings and lifeless bodies littering the streets. Western powers continue to threaten the Assad regime with sanctions, while maintaining the hope that Assad will implement reforms. (*Washington Post, May 17.*)

WAR-CRIMES PROSECUTORS SEEK GADHAFI'S ARREST—(Tripoli) The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor is seeking arrest warrants for Col. Moammar Gadhafi, his son Saif al-Islam as well as Abdullah al-Senussi, a senior intelligence officer. According to chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo "The evidence shows that Moammar Gadhafi personally ordered attacks on Libyan civilians. [He] committed these crimes with the goal of maintaining his authority." If indicted by ICC judges, Col. Gadhafi will be subject to an international arrest warrant, to be enforced by all members of the United Nations. An adviser to the rebels' National Transitional Council called the announcement "a huge boost for morale." (*Associated Press & Wall Street Journal, May 16.*)

THOUSANDS OF EGYPTIANS PROTEST AGAINST ISRAEL—(Jerusalem) Thousands of Egyptians have staged mass demonstrations outside the Israeli Consulate in Alexandria and the Israeli embassy in Cairo. Mobs of chanting dissenters—"With our souls, with our blood, we redeem you Palestine."—descended on the Israeli Missions to push their military rulers to cut ties with Israel, and do more to help Palestinians. Egyptian riot police fired tear gas and live ammunition to disperse the protesters, and a security official confirmed that at least 185 demonstrators were arrested. Egypt's Health Ministry said at least 353 people were hurt. (*Associated Press, May 16 & Jerusalem Post, May 13.*)

TALIBAN LAYS CLAIM TO DEADLY PAKISTAN BLAST—(Islamabad) A pair of suicide bombers have struck paramilitary recruits at a training center in

volatile northwestern Pakistan, killing at least 80 people. The Pakistan Taliban claimed responsibility, saying the attack was its first to avenge the slaying of Osama bin Laden by U.S. forces. The bombers, wearing explosive vests packed with nails and ball bearings, targeted a poorly equipped and trained force that was leaving a center at the Shabqadar Fort in the town of Charsadda. The bombing is likely to deepen the anger in Pakistan over the U.S. raid against bin Laden, which was launched without Pakistan's knowledge. (*Wall Street Journal, May 13.*)

ITALY WILL/WILL NOT RECOGNIZE PALESTINIAN STATE—(*Rome*) According to Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, Italy will never recognize a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state. During a speech at a reception to mark Israel's Independence Day, Berlusconi praised the Jewish state as the only democracy in the Middle East, and affirmed "there is no other course [to solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict] other than an agreement between the two states." Five days later, Italy's president Giorgio Napolitano announced during a news conference in Bethlehem with Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas that Italy was upgrading its Palestinian delegation to full diplomatic status. (*JTA, May 12 & 17.*)

SUSPECTS ARRESTED IN ALLEGED NEW YORK SYNAGOGUE TERROR PLOT—(*Jerusalem*) Ahmed Farhani and Mohamed Mamdouh have been arrested for buying a gun, ammunition and a grenade as part of a plan to blow up a New York synagogue. Ferhani, a 26-year-old Algerian, and Mamdouh, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen of Moroccan descent, have been arraigned on initial charges including conspiracy as a crime of terrorism, a rarely-used state law. An undercover detective had secretly recorded both men ranting about their hatred of Jews and discussing a synagogue attack, according to prosecutors. Both deny the allegations. (*Haaretz, May 18.*)

OBAMA'S HALF BROTHER VISITS ISRAEL—(*Jerusalem*) U.S. president Barack Obama's half brother, Mark Ndesandjo, has visited Israel for the first time in order to reconnect with his Jewish roots. Ndesandjo, 45, was

born to Barack Obama Senior's third wife, a Jewish American kindergarten teacher and the daughter of Lithuanian immigrants. One of the main purposes of Ndesandjo's visit was to meet with the Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel, Yona Metzger, to receive a blessing and a letter for his mother, Ruth Nidesand. According to reports, Metzger asked Ndesandjo to do "a noble favor for the Jewish people," by convincing Obama to release Jonathan Pollard, who has been serving a life sentence in the U.S. since he was convicted of spying for Israel in 1986. Ndesandjo agreed. (*Ynet News, May 11.*)

BELGIAN JEWS SHOCKED BY JUSTICE MINISTER'S CALL TO 'FORGET' NAZI PAST—(*Jerusalem*) Belgian Justice Minister Stefaan De Clerck has stunned the country's Jewish community by voicing support for an initiative to provide amnesty to Nazi collaborators during WWII, and for his suggestion that it may behoove the government to "forget" its Nazi past. Eli Ringer, council member of the Forum of Jewish Organizations (FJO) said that he was dismayed when he heard about the amnesty proposal, which was raised before the French speaking parties in Belgium. Ringer added that there would be a big problem if the proposal was accepted by the government, and that it is incomprehensible that the government would implement a law that would wipe out the lessons of the past. (*Haaretz, May 17.*)

SWEDEN'S QUEEN TO PROBE FATHER'S 'NAZI TIES'—(*Jerusalem*) Sweden's Queen Silvia is investigating her late father's activities in Germany and Brazil during World War II to clarify reports about possible ties to Nazis. Walther Sommerlath's alleged links with Germany's Nazi party were first reported in 2002 by Swedish media, which claimed he joined the party in 1934 and took over a business from a Jew in 1939 under unclear circumstances. Royal Court spokesman Bertil Ternert said the investigation was launched in reaction to the "Kalla Fakta" ("Cold Facts") TV program that aired in November. The results of the investigation are expected this fall. (*Ynet News, May 17.*)

**ISRAEL TO PROMOTE DEAD SEA'S NEW 7 WONDERS
CANDIDACY—(*Jerusalem*)**

Israel's Cabinet has allocated more than \$2.5 million to promote the candidacy of the Dead Sea as one of the New 7 Wonders of Nature. The Dead Sea is one of 28 entries to have reached the finals of the competition; other candidates include the Grand Canyon, the Amazon rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef. Approximately 1 billion people are expected to vote to determine the winners, which will be revealed on November 11, 2011. According to Israel's Ministry of Tourism, the selection of the Dead Sea as one of the New 7 Wonders of Nature could lead to a significant increase in the number of tourists visiting Israel. (*JTA, May 9.*)