

essay

Israel Can't Let Israeli Arab Inequality Linger

Violent Jew-haters among Israeli Arabs foster fear among Israeli Jews. But as a democracy, the only authentic one in the embattled Middle East, Israel must strive not to tie its entire Arab community, which accounts for a fifth of the total population, to the sins of the terrorists within. To do so is discriminatory and divisive.



Benjamin Netanyahu

Critics say Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has led the campaign to sow hatred toward Israeli Arabs. Opposition political leaders claim he fanned hostility against Israeli Arabs by linking a deadly terror attack at a Tel Aviv bar to “wild incitement” and “disloyalty”

in the Arab community, the *Times of Israel* reported. Two Israelis were murdered and six others were wounded in the Jan. 1 machine-gun attack. A taxi driver was murdered soon after. Israeli security forces tracked the suspect, Israeli Arab Nashat Melhem, 31, to northern Israel and killed him in a Jan. 8 shootout.

The night after the Jan. 1 attack, Netanyahu ventured to the Tel Aviv site. He blasted anti-Israel “incitement” by Israeli Arabs and vowed to compel national loyalty from them. He also called for tougher law enforcement in Israel’s Arab population centers.

Netanyahu wasn’t wrong to address the festering problem of Jew-hatred in the Israeli Arab community. Such hatred pulsates from Palestinian Authority (P.A.) mosques, official communications, TV shows and sports tournaments. That’s despite a new study funded by the U.S. State Department finding a downturn in anti-Zionist vitriol emanating from Palestinian schoolbooks.

The P.A., which governs much of the West Bank and wants east Jerusalem to become the capital of a Palestinian state, labeled Melhem “one of the dearest martyrs” — a *shahid* who died for Allah, meaning with Allah’s blessing. The perception that Israeli Arabs are allied with Palestinian hate-mongers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip haunts Israel. So does President Reuven Rivlin’s warning that a growing number of Israeli Arabs are expressing support for the Islamic State.

But more than 1.7 million Arabs live in Israel, nearly 21 percent of the 8.4 million people who call it home, according to Jewish Virtual Library. And not all Israeli Arabs hate Israel, despite the recurring drumbeat of hatred by Islamic extremists. Even Netanyahu acknowledged pockets of Israeli Arabs have lashed out against violence “and wish for full law enforcement in their communities.”



Robert Sklar
Contributing Editor

BALANCING ACT

Many Israeli Arabs know their standard of living is unmatched by Middle East standards. Israel can and must do more, however, to equalize Arab and Jewish living conditions.

Compelling national loyalty, of course, is a pipedream. Sure, Arab Knesset members should condemn the [Tel Aviv] murder “clearly

and unequivocally,” as Netanyahu urged. “Murder is murder,” he said. “It must be condemned and acted against by all sides.” In contrast, Israel has been quick to condemn Jewish terrorists, especially West Bank settlers, who have preyed on innocent Palestinians.

Israel could help inspire loyalty among Israeli Arabs by accelerating its promise of raising their quality of life. Spurs include economic incentives, job creation, construction equality, improved schools and better policing. Increasing the number of police stations in Arab sectors and hiring more Arab officers to staff them certainly would be welcomed. So would a crackdown on arms trafficking and illegal weapons in these areas — a concern that Israeli Arab lawmakers maintain the Netanyahu government has ignored.

Netanyahu himself admitted law enforcement in the Arab community has been lagging for the life of the state. The

Israel could help inspire loyalty among Israeli Arabs by accelerating its promise of raising their quality of life.

“Arab community can police itself” philosophy long in place now pales against the relentless forces of indoctrination exerted by Islamic extremists toward young, impressionable Israeli Arabs.

PLEDGE OF HOPE

Two days before the Tel Aviv attack, the Netanyahu government announced a five-year, \$3.84 million plan to stimulate economic development in the Arab community and tackle the inequality in municipal allocations statewide. A new poll by the Institute for National Security Studies, an Israeli think tank, suggests more than half of all Israeli Arabs consider their relations with Jews “good,” inspiring a glint of hope.

At his Jan. 10 cabinet meeting, Netanyahu vowed to equalize the rights and privileges of all Israelis — to “make a very great effort to ensure that the State of Israel has one law, applied uniformly everywhere.”

He added, “This is the right thing for all Israel’s citizens — Jews and Arabs as one.”

Hopeful as that sounds, a political pledge that fails to bring sustained change ultimately will ring hollow and do nothing but breed ill will. *

editorial

Academic Scholars Opposing BDS Fight Back

It’s heartening that two groups of American scholars voted within days of each other against boycotting Israeli academic institutions. Freedom of expression allows such boycotts, but when it comes to scholarly considerations, wisdom clearly should prevail.

Political views that, by extension, restrict the ability of scholars in a particular country from working with fellow academics in other countries are an anathema. They violate the fundamental principle of academic freedom, as the Association of American Universities (AAU) asserts.

It’s wrong to stifle learning because of politics. Political differences are commonplace on university campuses.

On Jan. 10, the American Historical

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Association (AHA) rebuffed a resolution condemning Israel — a strong rebuke to the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Four days later, the AAU reaffirmed its 2013 opposition to boycotts of Israeli academic institutions.

Those two votes helped to offset a Nov. 21 pro-boycott vote by the academic group representing American anthropologists. The American Anthropological Association’s full membership, 10,000 strong, will consider the boycott resolution later

this year. The American Studies Association and the Asian-American Studies Association have passed similar resolutions.

AAU represents 62 major public and private research universities, including the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Brandeis, Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Columbia.

In a thoughtful 2013 statement, AAU argued the boycott of Israeli academic institutions “violates the academic freedom not only of Israeli scholars, but also of American scholars who might be pressured to comply with it.”

AHA, with a membership of more than 5,000 historians and history professors, rejected a resolution proposed by Historians Against the War, an independent alliance.

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