



ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

regardless of whether it is popular, convenient or expedient.

Again, Israel has no greater friend than Canada.

Why is it that we care so much?

Why is it that our prime minister and our government believe so deeply and so passionately in Israel's right

not only to exist, but also to exist as a Jewish state and to live in peace and security?

Why is it that our prime minister has said that "those who threaten the existence of the Jewish people are a threat to all of us"?

The state of Israel embodies principles that Canada values and respects. It is a beacon of light in a region that craves freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. A region where people are rising up against dictators, autocrats and oppressors who defied those basic principles, those values.

It is also, in no small measure, because Canada recognizes the long and unbroken history of anti-Semitism. And we know the dangerous facts of history and of human nature: that humans can choose to be inhuman.

Indeed, Israel today is a country whose very existence is under attack both literally and figuratively. Whether it be from rockets raining down on Israeli schools, or the constant barrage of rhetorical demonization, double standards or delegitimization, Israel is under attack.

It is symptomatic of that new ill—the new anti-Semitism.

Harnessing disparate anti-Semitic, anti-American and anti-Western ideologies, it targets the Jewish people by targeting the Jewish homeland, Israel, as the source of injustice and conflict in the world, and uses, perversely, the language of human rights to do so.

We must be relentless in exposing this new anti-Semitism for what it is. Of course, like any country, Israel may be subjected to fair criticism. And like any free country, Israel subjects itself to such criticism—healthy, necessary, democratic debate. But when Israel—the only country in the world whose very existence is under attack—is consistently and conspicuously singled out for condemnation, I believe we are morally obligated to take a stand.

For a country like Canada, the easy thing to do would be simply to go along with anti-Israeli sentiment, to get along with other countries.

It would be easier to pretend that engaging in anti-Israeli rhetoric is being somehow even-handed, and to excuse it under the false pretence of being an honest broker.

It would be easier to get votes, too, as taking a stand—even in defence of a friend—often risks offending someone.

Yes, it would be much easier for us to simply "go along to get along."

But Canada will not "go along to get along."

Canada upholds Israel's right to exist—as a Jewish state—in peace and security. On this point, there is no space for moral ambivalence. We are compelled as a country of free citizens to speak clearly. We have the right, and therefore the obligation, to speak out and to act.

Canada will not accept that, or stay silent while, the Jewish state is attacked for defending its territory or its people.

We uphold Israel's fundamental right to defend innocent civilians against acts of terrorism.

Just as fascism and communism were the great struggles of previous generations, terrorism is the great struggle of ours.

Far too often, the Jewish state is on the front line of our struggle and its people the victims of terror's scourge.

The Second World War taught us all the tragic price of going along just to get along. It was accommodation and appeasement that allowed fascism to gather strength. As Winston Churchill said: "An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last."

And so we defend Israel's right to exist.

We do so in the strongest of terms and with the full weight of Canada's "smart power."

That is not to say that Canada does not support the establishment of a Palestinian state. To the contrary, our government's position has been very clear. The status quo is not an option. We support a two-state solution that is negotiated by the two parties in good faith and without preconditions.

Events...

Sunday, February 5, 9:30am

Bar Ilan University's **Dr. Professor Mordechai Kedar** speaks on "The Other Voice in the Arab World - My Personal Experience" at Beth Emeth.

Quote of the Week...

Foreign Minister John Baird at Herzliya Conference: "Israel has no Better Friend than Canada"

Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird, currently visiting Israel, delivered a very pro-Israel and pro-Jewish speech, at the Herzliya Conference Monday night. Key parts of the speech are excerpted below.

This is my third visit to Israel, though my first as foreign minister. I was last here as transport minister in 2010. While I didn't make it during my posting as leader of the government in Canada's "Knesset," I have had constructive dealings with Israeli counterparts of each of the Cabinet portfolios I've held—and there have been several...

Over the course of our history, Canada has never shied away from standing up for what is right and just.

Indeed, like Israel, Canada has fought mightily against hatred and intolerance.

We have paid a high toll for the principles that guide us.

In two world wars—and in conflicts before and since—we have paid in blood spilled and lives lost. All in defence of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Most recently, we answered the call as part of the NATO-led, UN-sanctioned mission to protect the people of Libya.

We "punched above our weight" to prevent the slaughter of innocents in Benghazi.

We supported all Libyans in their quest to end four decades of oppressive, one-man rule. We supported their desire to share in that country's immense natural wealth. And we supported their calls for democratic self-determination, in which all Libyans have a role and voice. We knew this would not be easy. It is proving not to be. But it was what was right.

The massive wave of change that has swept across Libya and the Arab world in the past 12 months has been truly remarkable. It is not done yet—witness the courageous struggle of the Syrian people at such great cost to themselves against the appalling violence of the Assad regime. Nor is the precise outcome of any of these transitions by any means certain. What is emerging, though, presents both challenge and opportunity.

It is, as our prime minister calls it, "the paradox of freedom: That awesome power, that grave responsibility—to choose between good and evil."

Israel, of course, is no stranger to this.

And perhaps no other nation has more at stake in the choices the newly free will make in the coming months and years.

I can assure you that Canada will stand with you in the face of challenge.

For the same reasons Canada was one of the first countries in the world to list Hamas as a terrorist entity.

For the same reasons Canada was the first country to sign on to the Ottawa Protocol on Combating Anti-Semitism.

For the same reasons Canada this year voted against a package of one-sided, imbalanced resolutions at the UN.

The Canadian tradition is to stand for what is principled and just,

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We believe that the statement by the Quartet this past September lays the foundation for a return to negotiations. We encourage both sides to accept the Quartet's principles and return to sustained, direct talks. In that sense, we hold out hope for recent, helpful interventions by Jordan and others.

Let me conclude by looking forward.

First, a quick story: I was at the United Nations when Prime Minister Netanyahu (or Bibi) addressed the General Assembly this past fall. I was proud to take my seat and listen to what he had to say. And when you talk about leadership—that, friends, was leadership. He didn't go there to win applause; he went to speak the truth.

He spoke out against militant Islam.

He expressed Israel's continued hope for peace.

He urged Palestinians to make peace, recognize Israel and return to the table.

One line in particular that resonated with me was the call to "stop negotiating about the negotiations."

Canada could not agree more.

The unifying factor in the uprisings that have crested across the Arab world is a popular despair about a lack of jobs, hope and opportunity.

Such sentiments are natural, yet such uprisings are, by their nature, unpredictable and tough to corral once unleashed.

By returning to negotiations for a lasting peace, by resisting temptations to apply preconditions to talks, and by avoiding measures that would seek to prejudge the outcome of the talks, the Palestinian leadership could immediately take steps toward a more measured, stable transition to statehood.

Hamas, and other leaders who advocate violence, must renounce terrorism and the barbarians that commit it if they are to play a legitimate part in the future for Palestinians.

A negotiated settlement is the best route forward to ensure that Palestinians are "neither the citizens of Israel nor its subjects," to quote Prime Minister Netanyahu last fall.

Palestinians and Israelis deserve free states of their own. They deserve to live in peace, security and human dignity. To that end, both must use the responsibility of their freedom for good.

Canada stands willing to help in any way it can. Our large diaspora communities are certainly watching closely.

More than 60 years ago, Israel appeared as a light in a world emerging from deep darkness. Against all odds—and despite concerted efforts by some—the light has not been extinguished. It burns still. And it burns ever brighter when upheld by the principles of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. There is room for more light in this region—especially as the darkness of swirling regional uncertainty threatens to close in. There is room for two states respecting the principles of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rules of law.

Working together, we strengthen and affirm these important principles in word and deed. And we declare our choice to use our freedoms and shared humanity for good, not evil. Thank you. (DavidWeinberg.ca Jan 31)

Commentary...

Hamas and the Washington Establishment By Caroline B. Glick

To date, the Republican presidential primary race has been the only place to have generated any useful contributions to America's collective understanding of current events in the Middle East. Last month, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich became the first major political figure in more than a generation to pour cold water over the Palestinian myth of indigenous peoplehood by stating the truth, that the Palestinians are an "invented people."

As Gingrich explained, their invention came in response to Zionism, the Jewish national liberation movement. Since they were created somewhere around 1920, the Palestinians' main purpose has not been the establishment of a Palestinian state but the obliteration of the Jewish state.

For his truth telling, Gingrich was attacked by fellow politicians and policy hands on both sides of the ideological divide. To his credit, Gingrich has not backed away from the truth he spoke. Rather he has repeated it in two subsequent Republican candidates' debates.

The second important contribution that Republican presidential candidates have made to the discourse on the Middle East was undertaken by Texas Gov. Rick Perry during a candidates' debate in South Carolina on January 17, shortly before he pulled out of the race. When asked about Turkey, Perry said that country "is being ruled by what many would

perceive to be Islamic terrorists." He went on to say that the US ought to be having a debate about whether Turkey should continue to serve as a member of NATO.

Like Gingrich, Perry was pilloried by all right thinking people in the US foreign policy elite. And like Gingrich, Perry was right. The hoopla his statement generated showed just how destructive so much of America's received wisdom about the Middle East has become. Moreover, it demonstrated the extent to which the US has adopted Middle East policies that are inimical to its national interests.

After Hamas won the Palestinian elections in January 2006, Turkey was the first country to invite Hamas's terror master Khaled Mashal to Ankara. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's move provoked criticism from the Bush administration. But Erdogan just shrugged it off. And he was right to do so. By 2006, then secretary of state Condoleezza Rice had come to view Erdogan as the US's indispensable ally in the Muslim world. As she saw it, he was proof that Islamist parties could be democratic and moderate.

The fact that Erdogan embraced Hamas could not get in the way of Rice's optimistic assessment. So, too, the fact that Erdogan embarked on a systematic campaign to stifle press freedom, curb judicial independence and imprison his political critics in the media and the military could not move Rice from her view that Erdogan personified her belief that moderate jihadists exist and ought to be embraced by the US.

Rice's starry-eyed view of Erdogan set the stage of US President Barack Obama's even stronger embrace of the increasingly tyrannical Turkish Islamist. Since Obama took office, not only has Ankara stepped up its support of Hamas, and ended even the pretense of a continued strategic alliance with Israel that it maintained during the Bush years. Turkey began serving as Iran's chief diplomatic protector while vastly expanding its own strategic and economic ties with Tehran.

In the face of Turkey's openly anti-American behavior and actions, Obama clings to Erdogan even more strongly than Rice did. Obama reportedly views Erdogan as his most trusted foreign adviser. According to the media, Obama speaks with Erdogan more often than he speaks to any other foreign leader. In a recent interview with Time magazine, Obama listed Erdogan as one of the key foreign leaders with whom he has formed a friendship based on trust.

Over the past few weeks, Turkey has emerged as Hamas's largest financier. During an official visit in Turkey, Hamas's terror master in Gaza Ismail Haniyeh received a hero's welcome. Erdogan pledged to finance the jihadist movement to the tune of \$300 million per year.

Commentators claim that Turkey's sponsorship of Hamas was necessitated by Iran's abandonment of the terror group. Iran, it is claimed, cut Hamas off in August due to the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood's refusal to actively assist Iran's other Arab client – Syrian President Bashar Assad – in massacring his domestic opponents.

These analyses are problematic for two reasons. First, it is far from clear that Iran cut Hamas off. Iran's rulers have invited Haniyeh to Tehran for an official visit. This alone indicates that the mullahs remain committed to maintaining their relationship with the jihadist movement that controls the Gaza Strip.

And why would they want to cut off that relationship? By serving as Hamas's chief sponsor since 2006, Iran has won enormous credibility in the Arab world. This credibility has bought Tehran influence with the likes of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and beyond. Particularly now, with the Brotherhood taking over Egypt and much of the Arab world, Iran would only stand to lose by cutting off Hamas.

The second problem with these assessments is that it makes little sense to believe that Turkey has replaced Iran as Hamas's main state sponsor since Iran and Turkey are not necessarily competing over Hamas. Given the interests shared by Tehran and Ankara, it is far more reasonable to assume that they are coordinating their moves regarding Hamas.

Iran became Hamas's chief financier and weapons supplier the same year that Erdogan emerged as Hamas's most important political supporter. And in the six years since then, Iran and Turkey have become strategic allies. Even with regards to Syria, the fact that Assad remains in power today is due in no small measure to the fact that Erdogan has used his influence over Obama to ensure that the US has remained on the sidelines and so effectively supported Assad's survival.

In light of Erdogan's enormous influence over leaders in both US parties, it is little wonder that Perry's factual statement about the nature of the Turkish government and the need for the US to reassess its strategic alliance with Turkey provoked such an across the board outcry. Erdogan's close relationship with Obama – like his previously close relationship with

Rice – renders it well nigh impossible for US government officials and inside-the Beltway “experts” to make the kind of commonsense assessments of Turkey’s counterproductive regional role that an outsider like Perry was able to make from his perch in Austin, Texas.

Contrary to what several leading commentators have argued since the onset of the Syrian popular rebellion against Assad, Hamas has not been seriously damaged by the events. True, its leaders are looking for a new place to station their headquarters. But there is no law that requires terrorist organizations to have one central office. The families of Hamas’s leadership have decamped to Jordan. Hamas leaders have close relations with the Qataris – who remain major funders – as well as with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Sudanese regime.

In addition to these state supporters, through its relations with Turkey and Fatah, Hamas has Washington as well. To understand how Washington acts as Hamas’s protector, it is necessary to consider the nature of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

Since its inception in 1993, the peace process has been predicated on Israeli concessions to the Palestinians. To the extent that Israel makes concessions, the peace process is seen as advancing. To the extent that Israel fails to make concessions, the peace process is seen as collapsing. True, at certain times, the Bush administration blamed the Palestinians for the failure of the peace process, but the blame owed to the fact that Palestinian terrorism made Israel less amenable to concession making.

Palestinian terrorism was not in and of itself blamed for the demise of the peace process. Rather it was perceived as the means through which Israel avoided making more concessions. And at certain times, the US supported Israel’s avoidance of concession making.

Since Israeli concessions to the Palestinians are the only tangible component of the peace process, the US, as the chief sponsor of the peace process, requires the Palestinian Authority – run by Fatah – to be accepted as a credible repository for Israeli concessions regardless of its actual nature. Consequently, despite Fatah’s two unity deals with Hamas, its sponsorship of terrorism, its incitement of terrorism, its refusal to accept Israel’s right to exist, its adoption of negotiating positions that presuppose Israel’s demise, and its conduct of political warfare against Israel, neither the Bush administration nor the Obama administration ever showed the slightest willingness to consider ending their support for the PA. If Israel has no peace partner, then it can’t make concessions. And if it can’t make concessions, there is no peace process. And that is something that neither the Bush administration nor the Obama administration was willing to countenance.

It is true that under Obama the US has become far more hostile towards Israel than it was under Bush. The most important distinction between the two is that whereas George W. Bush sought to broker a compromise deal between the two sides, Obama has adopted Fatah’s negotiating positions against Israel. As a consequence of Obama’s actions, the peace process has been derailed completely. Fatah has no reason to compromise since the US will blame Israel no matter what. And Israel has no reason to make concessions since the US will deem them insufficient.

Noting this distinction, Washington Post commentator Jennifer Rubin wrote this week that for the benefit of the peace process, it is important for a Republican administration to be elected to replace Obama in November. As she put it, “If history is any guide, progress is made in the ‘peace process’ when the Israeli prime minister operates from a position of strength and has the full support of the US president. We might get there, albeit not until 2013.”

The problem with her analysis is that it is of a piece with the insiders’ attacks on Gingrich and Romney alike. That is, it is based on the false assumptions of the peace process and the generally accepted wisdom embraced by the American foreign policy elite on both sides of the aisle that the PA is a reasonable repository for Israeli concessions.

Here it is worth noting that this week Fatah-controlled PA TV aired a sequence venerating the murderers of the Fogel family. Udi and Ruth Fogel and their children Yoav, Elad and Hadas were brutally murdered in their home last March.

Fatah’s glorification of their murderers is yet further proof that the foundations of the peace process are false. Peace cannot be based on appeasing societies that uphold mass murderers as role models. It can only be based on empowering free societies to defeat societies that embrace murder, terror and in the case of Hamas, genocide.

And this brings us back to the Republican primaries and Gingrich’s and Perry’s statements. For the US to secure its interests in the Middle East, it requires leaders who are willing to reassess what passes for common wisdom on both sides of the aisle. (Jerusalem Post Jan 30)

Documenting Palestinian Criminality By Isi Leibler

We are told, day after day, that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas is a genuine moderate committed to achieving a peace settlement with Israel. In addition to the international community, even some Israelis – admittedly a dwindling minority – also chant this mantra.

Abbas and his chief negotiator, Saeb Erekat, bolster this theme by uttering soothing statements in English, endorsing peace to the gullible international community. Yet they speak with forked tongues because in Arabic, to their own people, they deny Israel’s right to exist and promote vicious hatred against Jews.

They also claim to have reneged violence. But the PA never conceded that terrorism was immoral. They simply concluded that having failed to achieve their objectives by violence, their goals could best be promoted by temporarily suspending terrorism in order to gain Western support.

Abbas made it clear that he “had the honor of firing the first shot in 1965” and was only opposed to terrorist attacks “at this time” for tactical reasons and that “in the future things may change.” Yet, even within this framework, Fatah has still succeeded in killing more Israelis than Hamas.

The true objectives of the PA are reflected in the poisonous hatred against Jews and Israel inculcated into their people through the broad range of institutions they control, permeating every level of society– from kindergarten upwards.

This can be traced to the very inception of the Oslo Accords. Before that, the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis, while far from ideal, was certainly better than it is now; current polls indicate that 84 percent of Palestinians endorse the murder of Israelis.

In addition to denying Jewish sovereignty, the PA from the outset indulged in the most horrendous demonization, describing Jews as the descendants of apes and pigs, comparing them to Nazis while simultaneously praising Hitler, accusing them of stealing Palestinian body parts, using human blood during Passover, promoting AIDs and many other loathsome blood libels.

This defamatory torrent impacts directly on Israel’s diminished standing in the international community.

In response to this, an important book compiled by Itamar Marcus and Nan Jacques Zilberdik titled *Deception: Betraying the Peace Process*, has just been released. It meticulously documents the poisonous behavior of the Palestinian Authority during 2010 and 2011 throughout the broad range of institutions they control. It will become an important source for pro-Israeli activists and provide irrefutable evidence in response to those denying the criminality pervading Palestinian society.

Itamar Marcus founded Palestinian Media Watch (PMW) in 1996 as a nonprofit organization to monitor the Palestinian media. Its documentation of Palestinian behavior, including systematically taping official Palestinian TV, became an important source for parliamentarians and serious journalists throughout the world. His briefing of US legislators was a major factor contributing toward the prevailing pro-Israel orientation of Congress and the American people. The book and the PMW website chronicle obscene examples of incitement, especially in the wake of the release of the terrorists in the Schalit exchange. Chairman Abbas, who publicly embraced these mass murderers, summed up the PA approach when he stated “every prisoner is for us a saint and we must exalt him.”

He subsequently appointed Mahmoud Damra, a notorious terrorist, as his advisor. The state-controlled Palestinian media sanctified the murders committed by the released terrorists. Thus Ahlam Tamimi, the woman who orchestrated the suicide bombing at the Jerusalem Sbarro restaurant which killed 22 civilians including seven children, was quoted proudly proclaiming she would do it again; Abbas al-Sayed who perpetrated the Passover suicide attack at the Park Hotel in Netanya which killed 30 Israelis was described by Abbas as a “hero” and “symbol of the Palestinian Authority.”

Only recently, while commemorating the 47th anniversary of Fatah, the Mufti Muhammad Hussein, the PA’s highest religious authority, appointed by Abbas, proclaimed that the killing of Jews was a major Islamic goal required before the Islamic Resurrection. The moderator introducing him reiterated that “our war against the descendants of apes and pigs is a war of religion and faith.”

Just last week PMW reported how official PA TV conveyed “greetings” to Hakim Awad, the barbaric and unrepentant murderer of the Fogel family, which included a four-month-old infant and children aged three and 11 years. His mother was honored on the program and conveyed “greetings to dear Hakim, the apple of my eye, who carried out the operation in Itamar, sentenced to five life sentences.”

His aunt also related to “Hakim Awad, the hero, the legend.” How can

people claiming to be promoting human rights conceivably associate themselves with a regime which adulates such monsters on its controlled TV outlets?

The book itself provides chilling documentation demonstrating how an entire generation is being brainwashed into absorbing a culture of death and slaughter. The Palestinian children's programs promoting hatred and evil are incorporated into textbooks, music videos and summer camps, all blatantly indoctrinating children with the sanctity of shahada (martyrdom) and murder of Jews.

Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, purportedly the most moderate of all Palestinian leaders, is cited for his speech praising four terrorists and sponsoring of a Palestinian children's summer camp in which the participants were divided into groups labeled with the names of terrorists, including a notorious bus hijacker.

Marcus and Zilberdik point out how, in the course of one day, a Palestinian child can walk on a street named after the mass murderer Abu Jihad, to a school named after the founder of Hamas, where he will read hate-filled textbooks, work in a computer room named after a suicide bomber, spend the afternoon at a soccer tournament with the teams named after suicide bombers, go in the evening to the Abu Iyad community center, the orchestrator of the massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics, and finally return home to view anti-Semitic cartoons on TV before going to bed.

After reading this book, a number of questions come to mind.

The US Congress was considering terminating the funding of the PA general budget unless it terminated incitement, glorification of suicide bombers as heroic role models, payment of over \$5 million a month for "salaries" to 5,500 terrorists in Israeli prisons, and pensions to the families of terrorists. Why did Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu ask them to desist? Why does Prime Minister Netanyahu so frequently pay lip service to Abbas as a peace partner and, other than very recently, fail to systematically highlight the criminality of the Palestinian leaders?

If our prime minister agreed not to publicly highlight these evils in order to placate President Barack Obama, we are likely to pay a bitter price. If the civilized world is made aware of the culture of death and hatred which permeates Palestinian society, we would be in a far stronger position in the ongoing war of ideas.

And finally, how can President Obama and Western countries justify their repeated vitriolic condemnations of Israeli construction in Jewish suburbs of Jerusalem and yet have so little to say about a society which indoctrinates its children with such a barbaric worldview? How can Secretary of State Hillary Clinton validate her silence over these issues after having so passionately condemned Palestinian incitement against Israel when she was a Senator?

After reviewing these horrific texts, which document such a savage, officially-imposed jihadi culture, it is surely delusional to view the current Palestinian leadership as peace partners. Such a calculated policy of deception reflected by the disparity between reality and duplicitous statements designed for foreign consumption is not merely an expression of malice. It is a manifestation of a determined policy to poison the people against any possible accommodation with Israel. It provides a devastating response to the question raised in the introduction to the book. Was a genuine peace process ever intended? (Jerusalem Post Jan 31)

BDS and Academia By Asaf Romirowsky And John R. Cohn

A self-proclaimed National Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Conference is set to take place at the University of Pennsylvania, an Ivy league institution in the heart of Philadelphia, during the weekend of February 4. Last held in 2009, according to the organizers, the BDS movement intends to focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by demonizing Israel while propagating the Palestinian victimhood status in order to gain global sympathy. They believe that if universities, companies and even countries boycott, divest from and sanction Israel it will pressure the government to change its so-called "hard-nosed" policies toward the Palestinians and in addition to give up land Israel supposedly "stole" from the Palestinians in 1948 and 1967.

A closer look at the BDS movement and its methodology shows not legitimate criticism but actually a racist and anti-Semitic program. In a world where refugees have been created and resettled by the tens of millions, including over 900,000 Jews that fled Arab states, BDS targets only Israel. Its stated goals vary but all include the "right" for descendants of Palestinian "refugees" to "return" to a country they have never seen, thus bringing about the end of Jewish Israel.

The movement takes care to give the impression that ending specific

Israeli policies such as the "occupation" or "apartheid" will also bring an end to efforts to ostracize Israel. Their maximalist demand – the elimination of Israel as a Jewish state – is carefully hidden but readily apparent to a careful examiner.

It is a matter of great concern that respected universities lend their space and name to such conferences in addition to the participation of their faculty and others from around the country. In North America, whatever goes on in a classroom is deemed protected by "academic freedom," whether it is academic or not. Only sexual harassment appears exempt from this blanket protection. Gradually, campuses have become an "academic freedom" zone where protests and other activities now qualify as academic "speech."

This freedom to critique is, predictably, directed mostly at the twin Satans, Israel and America, although efforts to curtail speech that academics find unpleasant and unacceptable have been longstanding in the form of "speech codes" and restrictions on "hate speech." Clearly academic freedom is a one-way street; only those having the correct opinions may claim it.

As such, we commend the University of Pennsylvania for clarifying it does not support or endorse the BDS movement, as well as for its clear statement that "The University of Pennsylvania... has important and successful scholarly collaborations with Israeli institutions that touch on many areas of our academic enterprise."

Universities which should be bastions of critical thinking and opposition to fallacies of argument have become fertile ground for myth, fantasy and lies about history. North American college campuses have been suffering from an significant increase in anti-Israelism. This new situation has demonstrated the need for a clear and inclusive definition of anti-Semitism and an answer to the question of whether anti-Israelism constitutes anti-Semitism.

The apparent dilemma has been that anti-Israelism itself is not blatantly or even necessarily anti-Semitic but rather may appear merely critical of "Zionist policies," thus distinguishing between Jews and Zionists. This well-worn distinction has enabled the anti-Israeli camp to pose as legitimate critics. What has actually emerged, in effect, is a new form of anti-Semitism, because the state of Israel acts as a proxy for Jews at large. To the extent that it becomes harder to make a case for Israel on campus and in the Jewish community in general, the environment has become increasingly hostile to the pro-Israel community.

All of this has lent legitimacy to those who advocate for BDS. This paradigm is unique to the debate about Israelis and Palestinians and cannot be found in any other academic discipline. No university would host an "academic" conference on whether blacks are biologically inferior to whites, but even though the BDS movement makes a similar outrageous comparison one is considered acceptable and the other not.

Moreover, the involvement of Jewish individuals in such forums has become another indicator that this "genuine debate" deserves to be explored. In the US, politicized writing and teaching have often displaced scholarship, and academic freedom has been redefined as the liberty to dispense with academic standards. In response, hiring token Israeli Jews who subscribe to the anti-Israel narrative and support the BDS movement has become common practice on American campuses, thereby eliminating debate while providing the illusion of balance and using their Jewishness as a carte blanche to criticize Israel and question its existence.

Combating BDS has become complicated and confusing especially for those who want to believe that there is room for debating the "facts" presented by the BDS movement. What makes this battle so arduous for the pro-Israel community and so attractive for the antagonizers of Israel is the umbrella of academic freedom that argues that it is legitimate to debate all aspects of Israel, from specific policies to its elimination, in contrast to racial and gender discussions where such unsupported slanders are correctly and forcefully rejected by university communities.

Many in the Jewish community in their naïveté are willing to engage in these debates precisely because they are cloaked in academic freedom, which gives them the impression of legitimate criticism rather than racism.

On a positive note, the racist nature of the BDS movement has redrawn the lines of acceptable discourse. We are now seeing a sure but steady understanding of the real threats BDS and its sympathizers represent to not just the pro-Israel community but to honest academic discourse on the Middle East. The hope is that rejection of their hateful message will catch on. (Jerusalem Post Jan 30)

Asaf Romirowsky is deputy director of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (SPME) and John R. Cohn is a professor of medicine at Thomas Jefferson University and an SPME board member.