

Creating Palestine on the slit throat of a 3-month-old Jewish baby?

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As I write this, I look at the faces of three Jewish children — Yoav, 11, Elad 4, and Hadas (barely 3 months old) murdered in their sleep, along with their parents, Udi and Ruth Vogel, in their home in Itamar on Israel's West Bank. (New York Times and One [Family.org](#), March 12).

Close to midnight on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, the killers entered through a living room window to slash their throats. As of this writing, the suspects are alleged to be from the Palestinian village of Awarta — and members of the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, the terrorist wing of Mahmoud Abbas' "moderate" Fata Party ("Are Israeli Settlers Human?" Wall Street Journal, March 15.)

Palestine Authority President Abbas called the murders "a despicable act" (Washington Post, March 14) and "inhuman." Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu was not moved — nor would I have been — by Abbas' denunciation. He charged that the Palestinian Authority had not done nearly enough to stop the "incitement" to violence against Israel in Gaza and from other Palestinian streets that have been shown on television in those homes, and shown in the textbooks and other lessons in Palestinian schools. Netanyahu asked Abbas to say in Arabic his reactions to the murders on the West Bank (Jewish Week, March 18).

I also consider a form of incitement to future murderous raid the following report (powerlineblog.com, March 13): "Gaza residents from the southern city of Rafah hit the streets Saturday to celebrate the terror attack in ... Itamar ... residents handed out candy and sweets, one resident saying the joy 'is a natural response to the harm settlers inflict on the Palestinian residents in the West Bank.'"

I join the curt response to the Gaza delight in the blood-soaked bedrooms in Itamar that Bret Stephens wrote in the March 15 Wall Street Journal: "Just what kind of society thinks it's 'natural' to slit the throats of children in their beds?"

Not only in Gaza but also in Ramallah and other Palestinian cities, public squares have been named after suicide bombers as well as such other tributes as naming summer camps after suicide bombers and other assassins of Israeli Jews.

My own history with Israel began before it became a nation. In the 1930s, as a child in then endemically anti-Semitic Boston, I, with other Jewish kids, would knock on the doors of our neighbors in the Jewish ghetto to ask for donations to plant trees in the British mandate land of Palestine...

We knew that Jews lived there, and believed — with the ghastly encouragement of Adolf Hitler — that there must soon be a safe homeland there for the people chosen to be the objects of the oldest continuing bigotry on Earth.

Fifty years later, in the 1980s, I was reporting in Israel for the Village Voice in New York. My sources included Palestinian nationalists; liberal Zionists; members of Israeli human rights groups critical of the government's treatment of Palestinians; and veterans of the growing Israeli Peace Now Movement that included armed forces veterans of all preceding Israeli wars, I began to hope there could eventually be what has come to be called a two-state solution. (Peace Now was against building settlements on the West Bank.)

And by 1993, back in New York, I was greatly heartened by the public signing in Washington of the Oslo Accords, the principles of interim self-government, by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (they later shared a Nobel Peace Prize) and President Bill Clinton. Also on board were Mahmoud Abbas for the PLO and the then Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, the latter long working for meaningful reconciliation.

But then came the Palestinian suicide bombers, murdering Israelis of all ages in restaurants, on the streets, anywhere — and lionized by so many Palestinians. Among the Palestine leaders facilitating this deadly work was Arafat.

In March of this year, the savage killings of the three Jewish children and their parents was no surprise to me, nor were the celebrations on Palestinian streets. Even if a two-state solution comes into suspicious being, I believe it will be fragile — so deep and widespread is many Palestinians' bottomless hatred of Jews. And in view of the chronic conditioning of Palestinian schoolchildren that Israelis are subhuman, how many generations will it take before other Jewish babies can sleep safely in Israel?

There is a beginning movement, particularly among Palestinian youth organizations, for Palestinian Unity between Fatah, headquartered on the West Bank and Hamas in Gazas, (New York Times, March 15), but will the agenda include discussion about the killing of the 3-month-old baby on the West Bank?

On the Tuesday after the instant pogrom in Itamar, Isabel Kershner of the New York Times (March 16) reported from there that "many of the residents attended a newborn's naming and circumcision. The baby was given the name Yair, which contains the Hebrew initials of four of those who were slain.

"Amid the grief, there was rejoicing at Itamar's latest addition."

I let myself dream that I might have had something to do with one or more of the trees in Itamar.

The day before, (New York Times, March 15) Israel seized a Liberian-flagged ship that Benjamin Netanyahu says was carrying weapons originating in Iran on the way to Gaza, where Hamas will store them for future extermination of more of their closest neighbors.

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