

Correspondence on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

23 March 2002

Below we post a selection of recent letters on our coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict together with Chris Marsden's replies.

Subject: your column on the Israeli reservists

This is a truly great piece of work. Christopher Marsden is to be congratulated. I feel very emotional about Israel because as a Jew I was raised to believe that Zionism was an unquestionably heroic value and the fate of the Jewish people depended on the survival of the Jewish state. The 1967 war was happening when I was a sixth-grader and in yeshiva we were all encouraged to cheer on the brave Jewish soldiers. I did not learn the truth of what went on in the Mideast until much much later in my life. I learned that it was only after World War II and the butchery of European Jewry—by the Europeans!—that the Zionist concept attained great coinage. Until then, Zionists were considered a minority, eccentric type of cult. The Holocaust changed everything; after that if you didn't support Israel you were some kind of a Jew-hater.

Many people do not know that most of the Jews shipped out to the Mideast to carve out a life in postwar Palestine, later to become Israel, actually had *no desire* to go there. Many had relatives in America and western Europe, but these countries did not want large influxes of Jewish immigrants. Tragically, even many Jews already living in those countries actively discouraged mass emigration by Jews, since they feared a wave of anti-Semitism would ensue, complicating their own comfortable lives. The tragic fact is that Europe and America turned its back on the very victims of their own lax attitude towards Nazi atrocities. It was easier to ship the Jews off to the Mideast and let them kill and dislocate some Arabs, than to face their own culpability.

So I am gratified that the wall of silence and disinformation about the occupation of Palestine is finally breaking down—imploding, as it were, from within, by Jewish youths who were, as they say, raised with the values of the Torah and forced to betray those values every day in an unjust, immoral occupation. I pray that the people of Israel will make the wise choice to live side by side with their neighbors and withdraw peacefully from occupied Palestinian territories, granting the Palestinians their own dignity and determinism.

Peace to all!

Thank you for a great website,

JGM

Re: Sharon's bloody offensive plunges Israel into turmoil

I have been following the happenings in the Middle East for the last few months. I was aware that Israel had committed some very terrible acts in the past. I just relied on the US networks and local newspapers for the news.

Since I got my computer and started to surf around I have gotten an education I'm not sure that I wanted. I knew that the US government had supported Israel but never realized the extent that we allowed such criminal acts to be carried out.

I had hoped that President Bush was going to change our policies a little. I was very happy when he announced last year that there should be a Palestinian state in the 1967 boundaries. He has since proven he is the

same as the presidents that came before him. Israel is allowed to continue its terrorist acts against Palestine. You can see the same pattern of events that Sharon used in Lebanon being played out in Palestine. I would hope that at some point the leaders in this country and rest of the world would soon stand up to Sharon and tell him it is time to quit. I guess the threat of being called anti-Semitic and have the world Jewish communities attack is too much for the leaders of today. We will continue to treat [with] Sharon and the other leaders of Israel the same as we did Hitler and Stalin.

The press seems unable to deal with the truth about Israel. It is either the fear of loss of revenue or orders from the owners.

It is the one thing that makes me feel sad to be an American. We, our President, goes around the world and says we will not allow terrorism anywhere. Yet we continue to support and send tons of money to Israel.

Thank you for the article. It was very informative. As I read it I remember the events as reported in the news at the time. I don't remember them being reported as they occurred according to this article.

Thank you again.

MC

Re: Sharon's bloody offensive plunges Israel into turmoil

After reading this article, it becomes painfully clear that Mr. Marsden is more interested in pushing his own agenda than presenting the truth. To someone who has followed the Arab-Israeli conflicts since the Bekaa Valley campaign in 1982, this article is nothing short of ignorant anti-Semitism.

I fully understand that Israel is far from blameless in the current intifada, but what this letter is about is truth and reality, not personal spin-doctoring.

There is no easy answer for the current problems in the Middle East. Many Palestinians live with an uncertain future, slowly suffocating in refugee camps.

I KNOW this. My problem with the article is that Mr. Marsden is deliberately twisting the facts to suit his own ends.

The Palestinians have initiated a wholly unprovoked outburst. Many terrorist apologists point to Sharon's September 2000 comments at the Temple Mount.

These people insist that his statements at Islam's third holiest site was the spark that ignited this firestorm, but what they forget is that the Temple Mount is Judaism's HOLIEST site, to say nothing of Christianity.

Civilians have been dying on both sides, but those on the Palestinian side are the unfortunate victims of stray ordnance and target misidentification. While this doesn't justify their deaths, it shows that civilians are NOT deliberately targeted by the Israelis. This is the truth, in spite of Mr. Marsden's efforts.

However, the same cannot be said for Israeli civilians, as they are deliberately targeted by the Palestinians, and murdered in cold blood.

If the Palestinians are such victims, then why have they rejected and continue to reject Sharon's demands for one week of calm before the resumption of talks?

The Palestinians can claim what they want about fear of attack, but

actions speak far louder than words, and their actions speak volumes about the Palestinian culture and mentality. Specifically, the actions of the Palestinians proclaim to the world that they firmly believe they have the God-given right to kill non-Palestinians, and that it is too much for the world to ask them to abstain from murder for a mere seven days.

From a cultural perspective, the Palestinians are the only “civilized” culture in the world based on hatred. The overwhelming majority of Palestinian adults teach their children to hate all things non-Palestinian, especially all things Israeli. They call for an Israeli withdrawal to pre-1967 borders, but the truth is that the Palestinians refuse to acknowledge even the possibility of the existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East.

The Palestinians claim to be freedom fighters, but the TRUTH is that they are murderers and terrorists who care for nothing but themselves. They are a hateful culture, and have repeatedly said they will not accept an independent Israel.

To close, I would ask Mr. Marsden this: If the Palestinians refuse to halt their murderous rampage for one short week, what could possibly make you think that they will honor ANY peace accord, no matter what concessions Israel might make? No, the Palestinians have complete control over their own destiny, whether they want to accept responsibility for their actions or not, and they have the power to end the violence at any time, and for any duration they desire, even permanently. Thank you.

SD,

Lakeland, Florida

Chris Marsden replies:

Your email is of interest only as an example of the pro-Zionist defence of Sharon’s actions we receive at regular intervals. Others are virtually unprintable, because they take the form of a stream of frothing invective against the Palestinians or Muslims in general. I have been accused of believing that “the blood of a Jewish child has no value” and even being supportive of the Nazi Holocaust.

Essentially your somewhat more moderated argument can be reduced to the assertion that the Palestinian people are terrorists and murderers with whom no compromise is possible. Hence, despite your acknowledging the desperate fate suffered by the Palestinian masses, you essentially justify every crime perpetrated by the Likud-Labour coalition and the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF).

Your insulting reference to my supposed anti-Semitism only discredits you. I for one am confident that the many Jewish people who are expressing their disgust at the murderous rampage carried out daily by the IDF on the West Bank and Gaza Strip will know how to distinguish between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

Re: Protest by Israeli reservists opens new chapter in the struggle against Zionism

This e-mail is to give you some feedback on your article about Israeli reservists refusing to serve in the West Bank. In it you complimented the reservists for standing up for what they believe is immoral. However, you condemned the Palestinian for attacking innocent civilians.

While the 300 or so refuseniks are to be lauded for their courage, I see no point on criticizing the Palestinians. Just like the majority of Jews are neither refuseniks or supporters of the refuseniks, not all Palestinians necessarily support attacks on innocent civilians. They have been pushed into a corner and have to fight a force that is more than 100 times greater than them.

The colonizers that live in the West Bank and Gaza constantly attacked innocent Palestinian civilians. Your article makes no mention of that. Not even the sanctity of their homes is respected. The fact is they are being constantly terrorized, humiliated, brutalized and killed by the IDF and the colonizers of the West Bank and Gaza (i.e., the settlers). Their houses continued to be destroyed by bulldozers and their land confiscated.

The refusal of some 300 refuseniks to continue to take part in this ethnic

cleansing have changed nothing in their current situation. So they must fight and do it by all means necessary. If Arab nationalism is what give [sic] them the strength to continue their fight [so] be it! They don’t have smart weapons to zero in on their targets. So if they must kill Israelis citizen [so] be it! The State of Israel is to be held responsible for the killing of these citizens. Their actions provoked it. They have the blood of their citizens in their hands.

MR

Chris Marsden replies:

The *World Socialist Web Site* has written extensively on the crimes perpetrated against the Palestinians by the Zionist state, the IDF and the right-wing settlers. And my article never makes the inexcusable political error that you do of identifying the entire Palestinian people with the Islamic terrorist groups such as Hamas. I can only conclude charitably that you were so anxious to mount a defence of terrorism and Arab nationalism that you did not take time out to read more extensively from our coverage.

Let me be frank in my reply to you. You may view yourself as a friend of the Palestinians, but you are anything but. The tragedy they have suffered since 1948 is as much an indictment of the Arab nationalist regimes and movements as it is of the racism and repression carried out by the Zionist state. Arab nationalism does not give the Palestinians strength. It politically neuters and suppresses any independent political activity by the Arab working class in conjunction with their Jewish brothers and sisters, the only basis on which social, political and racial oppression can be ended in the Middle East. For this same reason, your attitude of callous indifference to the death of Israeli citizens is politically reactionary and—I might add—morally disgusting.

To identify the Jewish working class with the crimes of the Israeli bourgeoisie and its state is only the obverse side of the coin to our previous correspondent’s blanket condemnation of the Palestinian people as “murderers and terrorists”. The State of Israel may indeed be ultimately responsible for the present conflict, but the innocent men, women and children killed by suicide bombers in night-clubs, shopping malls and on buses are most certainly not—a fact confirmed by the widespread support for the reservist officers’ protest which I drew attention to and which you consider to be insignificant. Nothing would be more certain to maintain the political grip of Zionism over the Israeli working class than your insistence that the victims of terror bombings are to be viewed as mere collateral damage in the national struggle of the Palestinians.



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