

Israeli Rightists Threaten Arab Civilians

Israel's right-wing leaders feel they can count on U.S. politicians to rubber-stamp pretty much whatever Israel does to the Palestinians, with some extremist rabbis even glorifying the racist mass murderer Baruch Goldstein. Which leaves Lawrence Davidson wondering what it will take to change behavior in Washington and Tel Aviv.

By Lawrence Davidson

In his speech to Congress on May 24, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu boasted that "of the 300 million Arabs in the Middle East and North Africa, only Israel's Arab citizens enjoy real democratic rights."

This is, of course, a variation on the oft-cited claim that Israel is "the only democracy in the Middle East." Leaving aside places like Lebanon and now potentially Tunisia and Egypt, one can ask just how "real" are these democratic rights the Prime Minister claims for Israel's Arabs? Here is some recent evidence that speaks to this question.

—At the end of September, the Israeli government announced "a plan to displace 30,000 native Bedouin Arabs [all of whom are Israeli citizens] ... from their homes [in the Negev]."

This would constitute "the biggest dispossession plan of Palestinians issued by Israel since 1948. It would forcibly relocate about half of the Bedouin population from their existing villages, which are older than the State of Israel itself."

Why should Israel do this to the Bedouin? Is it to facilitate their enjoyment of their "real democratic rights"? Well not quite.

According to the head of the Regional Council of Ramat Ha-Negev, a Zionist settlement in the region, the reason goes like this, "I want the Negev to be Jewish. Jewish settlement must grow, must continue. What do you mean by 'they [the Bedouin] also have rights'? You know what after all this it is no longer possible to conceal the core problem, which is the struggle over the land. Who does this land belong to us or them?"

—At the beginning of October, leaders of the Jewish settler movement announced what one analyst called their intention "to turn Palestinian population centers into another Srebrenica." This was their reaction to the prospect of

international recognition of a Palestinian state.

An article in Al-Ahram Weekly noted that “Kiryat Arba Rabbi Dov Lior, an extremist Talmudic sage, was quoted this week as calling for ‘collective punishment’ of Palestinians,” including children.

Initiating Balkan-style killing fields would represent a marked escalation of ongoing lower-level terror tactics which have seen the destruction of Palestinian crops, the harassment of Palestinian adults and children, the practice of arson against mosques, and the occasional outright murder.

While this threat was directed mainly at the Palestinians of the West Bank, the Israelis are bound by international law to see to their civil rights as well. And since Netanyahu’s vaunted claim implies Israel’s civilized, law-abiding status relative to the Arab states, that Palestinian population must be taken account of.

To show the extent of their respect for the rights of the Palestinians, settler rabbis have evoked the memory of their American-Israeli “saint and hero,” Baruch Goldstein, whose claim to lasting fame is the massacre of Muslims at prayer in Hebron back in 1994.

And, there has been much recapitulating of the message delivered in October 2010 by “the spiritual leader of Shas, the powerful religious political party that the status of non-Jews is similar to that of beasts of burden.” And just how many “real democratic rights” do the animals of Israel have?

—Just in case you think that these threats are hyperbole, take a look at reports and video on the recent pogrom-like violence near the settlement of Anatot. On Sept. 30, Palestinians along with Israeli allies came to help a Palestinian farmer plant trees on land he owns near the settlement.

They were attacked and beaten by settlers some of whom were armed policemen. The attackers have been accurately described as “nearly a lynch mob.”

Then on Oct. 3, a mosque in the upper Galilee village of Tuba-Zangariyye was set on fire by arsonists who left behind the message “Price Tag.” This is a terrorist tactic used by Israeli right-wing extremists.

Every time the Israeli government gets in the way of their racist and expansionist ambitions (which really is not often enough) the extremists retaliate with acts of terror against Palestinians.

Woeful Ignorance

The truth is that Arab-Israelis have always been second-class citizens,

suffering systematic and state-sanctioned discrimination. Most of them are effectively segregated out from the majority Israeli Jewish citizenry.

In this way their “real democratic rights” are rendered largely symbolic. The only reason they are allowed to vote is because their votes cannot change the system that discriminates against them.

The Palestinians in the Occupied Territories are even more vulnerable. They are not citizens at all and, even if Israel annexes the West Bank they never will be. This is because making them citizens would greatly enhance the likelihood that Arab-Israeli votes might, in fact, become sufficient to alter the system.

The Zionists will never let that happen. If the choice is between democracy and keeping Israel a Jewish state, the Israeli establishment will jettison democracy without thinking twice. In fact, there is a portion of Israeli Jews who have already jettisoned any regard for “real democratic rights,” even for themselves.

It is interesting to note that 95 percent of the U.S. Congress seems oblivious to all this. Indeed, a good number of them recently went off on an all-expenses-paid junket to Israel which objective observers might consider the equivalent of giving material aid to a terrorist organization.

There is good reason to believe that this oblivious state of mind is not shared by many of their constituents who are slowly but surely being educated about the criminal nature of Israeli behavior.

Unfortunately these constituents have not, as of yet, made their representatives’ slavish attachment to Zionist lobby money and influence a voting issue. When will they do so? Perhaps soon after it is brought home to them that Israel, the “democracy,” has an unsavory resemblance to Alabama or Georgia in the 1930s and 1940s.

If the settler rabbis have their way this likeness will grow rapidly and thus become harder to hide. Through their sacrilegious misreading of the Talmud, these holy men appear anxious to bless lynching on all days of the week except the Sabbath.

It is not only American congressmen who are ignorant of Israel’s deteriorating national character. One might ask just how many Israeli Jews know how close they are to the precipice of committing pogrom-style violence or worse. Some of course do.

In a June 14 piece by Ilan Peleg and Dov Waxman they tell us “We believe that unless immediate, serious and dramatic action is taken to improve the situation of the Arab minority and majority-minority relations, great dangers are in store

for Israel. It is no exaggeration to say that domestic stability, Israeli democracy and future Israeli-Palestinian peace could all be undermined by a continued deterioration in Arab-Jewish relations in Israel.”

But polls of Israelis show that the majority, caught up as they are in the dominant culture of victimhood and fear of the Arabs, are either ignorant of or unconcerned about the dangers of which Peleg and Waxman warn.

Indeed, most of them want the Arabs segregated or just kicked out and therefore have no problem with their society’s deteriorating majority-minority relations.

Lessons of Indoctrination

All of this raises some serious issues:

–For citizens of many countries, their national environment is like a great big Skinner Box, a laboratory apparatus devised by B.F. Skinner to study, condition and alter the behavior of animals. In other words, it is a hothouse of indoctrination.

Americans were taught to hate and fear communists, Russians were taught to hate and fear capitalists, and Israeli Jews are taught to hate and fear Palestinians.

Nation states do a good job at such indoctrination making it part and parcel of the acculturation process. And, under the right circumstances, whole populations can easily move from hatred and fear to actual mayhem.

–This sort of deep-seated indoctrination results in nationwide habits of thought that are remarkably hard to change. Think of the inertia of a large body, say a planet, moving through space. It is going to take a lot of force to overcome that inertia, usually force of catastrophic intensity.

To put it another way, whole populations trained to see the world one way, usually do not shift perceptions unless something really bad happens to them. That something can be military defeat, deep and unbridgeable societal divides leading to civil war, or the severe costs of isolation and economic boycott visited on them by the outside world.

The severity of these forces are testimony to just how stubborn indoctrinated populations can be.

Any way you look at it, the situation for those Palestinians under Israeli domination is likely to get worse before it gets better. And it is going to take a force of catastrophic intensity to really change Israeli behavior. My money is on BDS Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.

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