



ISRAEL MATTERS!

Publication of the Israel Affairs Committee of Temple Beth Shalom

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November 2018

Summer Musings - Israel, Iran, BDS

At a public event early in Hassan Rouhani's tenure as the Iranian president, he was widely reported to say, "Israel is an old wound that needed to be removed." The AP sought to temper those remarks by reporting "they should be seen in the context of internal Iranian politics where softening the establishment's anti-Israeli stand is not an option."

In a report about last month's cancelled soccer match between Israel and Argentina, *The Washington Post*, reported, "The BDS movement aims to pressure Israel into complying with international law vis-a-vis its policies toward the Palestinians by discouraging the purchase of Israeli goods, pressuring international companies not to conduct business in Israel and urging celebrities not to visit or perform in the country."

My precise comment to the AP and the *Washington Post*: hoey and malarkey. Let's get the facts straight.

Neither Iran nor the Boycott, Sanctions, and Divestment (BDS) campaign accepts the legitimacy of the Jewish state. Nor does the Palestinian Authority that controls the West Bank; nor Hamas that controls Gaza. Not one statement of acceptance in 49 years by Iran since its founding as an Islamic Republic in 1979. Not one statement of acceptance by the Palestinians in more than 70 years since the United Nations adoption of the Partition Plan (Resolution 181) for the establishment of two states on November 29, 1947.

In speaking to reporters just last month at the annual Quds (Jerusalem) Day rally in Tehran, President Rouhani told reporters, "Israel can never feel that it is in a safe place." In reporting on the event, the Iranian news agency *Fars*, went on to write, "Today, nations declare that freedom of Quds (Jerusalem) and the entire Palestinian territories is the cause and wish of all of us and they will never forget this cause."



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Turning to BDS, there's unmistakable clarity from one of the founders of the movement, Omar Barghouti. Omar has been utterly clear about the goal of his movement. He has publicly stated, "A Jewish state in Palestine in any shape or form cannot but contravene the basic rights of the indigenous Palestinian population and perpetuate

a system of racial discrimination that ought to be opposed categorically....definitely, most definitely we oppose a Jewish state in any part of Palestine. No Palestinian, rational Palestinian, not a sell-out Palestinian, will ever accept a Jewish state in Palestine.”

There it is. Simple, direct, and unambiguous. Palestinians want the territory from the Jordan River to the sea and will accept nothing less. That is at the heart of BDS. If the movement truly supported a two-state solution, then Barghouti would be talking about two states for two peoples, living side-by-side in peace and security, not about never accepting Israel as an independent Jewish state.

Barghouti has never been lacking in Chutzpah. He is a Qatari-born Palestinian who moved to Israel and enrolled in Tel Aviv University to get a Masters Degree in Philosophy while conducting an academic boycott campaign against Israel. Then when his alma mater was going to hold a series of lectures at London’s School of Oriental and African Studies, Barghouti led the campaign for the “Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel” denouncing Tel Aviv University for (and these are his words, not mine) “the oppressive and criminal activities fostered, facilitated, and celebrated by that institution.”

Now to bring the Omar Barghouti story closer to home, our home – specifically to Sheffield-Sterling-Strathcona Hall at Yale University. On April 23, 2017, Omar Barghouti was awarded the Gandhi Peace Award for “outstanding

contributions to world peace.” It was Omar’s second appearance at Yale. In his acceptance speech, he said, “I am accepting the award on behalf of the political prisoners suffering in Israel’s apartheid dungeons.” Political prisoners? Like his distant cousin Marwan Barghouti who is serving five life sentences for numerous murders and being the mastermind behind the first and second Intifada? Apartheid dungeon? Really? His 19 minute and 42 second speech was interrupted by applause on a number of occasions. At Yale no less.

By the way, immediately following the presentation of his award, Omar offered the following preposterous assertions in a live-on-air radio interview with Democracy Now.

“About a year ago, Israel established a so-called tarnishing unit...which openly aimed at tarnishing the reputation of Palestinian, international, and Israeli human rights defenders. So this latest phase of repression comes in that context and in the context of a McCarthyite war launched by Israel, for more than three years now, against the BDS movement worldwide.” Tarnishing unit? McCarthyite war? *So, torture is very prevalent in Israeli prisons, in the detention system, in particular including against hundreds of Palestinian children. Torture? Against children?*

The interviewer let the falsehoods go by without interruption. My immediate thought was that sometimes chutzpah goes big at both ends of a conversation.