



SOUTH
AFRICAN
ZIONIST
FEDERATION

OPINION and ANALYSIS

Vol 7, Number 5: 28 October 2011

**A selection of some of the more challenging and thought-provoking
local and international writings on the Middle East**

<http://www.sazionfed.co.za>

- 1. *Ron Ben Yishai* **Shalit swap analysis: At the end of the day, Israel capitulated, Hamas showed flexibility**
The military impasse, the stands taken by the Shin Bet and the Mossad, Hamas elasticizing its stance, the Arab Spring and the Palestinian bid in the UN – all of these contributed to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to present the cabinet with the current Shalit deal, which would bring about the release of about 1,000 Palestinian prisoners.**
- 2. *Yossi Sarid* **The myth of Israeli solidarity**
It was a necessary decision, dictacted by the situation, confirmed by public opinion, validated by the media. All the cabinet did was add its stamp.**
- 3. *Isi Leibler* **On distinguishing between good and evil**
Aside from a minority of courageous moderate Muslims, the majority remain passive to outrages committed by Islamic extremists.**
- 4. *Barry Rubin* **The insanity of the Middle East - A handy guide**
Every day in the Middle East, terrible things take place. The worst are the material acts of violence and oppression. The second-worst are the lies and distortions of truth that help ensure things don't get better.**
- 5. *Maurice Ostroff* **Would-be bomber exhorts children to follow her example**
The title of the article by Deborah Orr in the Guardian of October 18, poses the interesting question “Is an Israeli life really more important than a Palestinian’s?”**

Shalit swap analysis: At the end of the day, Israel capitulated, Hamas showed flexibility

Ron Ben Yishai; Ynet News.com; 10 October 2011

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4134431,00.html>

The military impasse, the stands taken by the Shin Bet and the Mossad, Hamas elasticizing its stance, the Arab Spring and the Palestinian bid in the UN – all of these contributed to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to present the cabinet with the current Shalit deal, which would bring about the release of about 1,000 Palestinian prisoners.

Several architects can take credit for the decision: First and foremost new Shin Bet Chief Yoram Cohen, followed by Defense Minister Ehud Barak, IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen Benny Gantz and Mossad Chief Tamir Pardo.

Hamas' architects include Ahmed Jabari, head of its military wing, who was given the go-ahead by Politburo Chief Khaled Mashaal. On Egypt's part, the credit goes to Egyptian Intelligence Minister Murad Muwafi and German mediator Gerhard Konrad.

'Prisoner exchange deal only option'

Gantz and Cohen declared recently that they were unable to offer the government a viable plan that would enable Israel to extract Shalit successfully. The two reviewed the case upon taking office and both had come to the same conclusion – a prisoner exchange deal was the only way to ensure Shalit's release.

Barak reviewed the recommendations and in turn recommended that Netanyahu follow the creed cemented by former PM Yitzhak Rabin: If Israel cannot retrieve captives via a military operation then they must be retrieved via a prisoner exchange – regardless of how difficult it may be.

The defense minister played a key role in convincing Netanyahu to accept the deal – and this time both Shin Bet and Mossad chiefs endorsed it. Sources privy to the matter said that Cohen promised the prime minister that his organization would be able to monitor the "heavyweight" prisoners who would be allowed to return to the West Bank, and prevent them from "falling off the wagon."

Green light from jailed leaders

At this time, the actual details of the deal are still unknown, but it is clear that it will follow an outline set several years ago: About 1,000 prisoners will be released in two stages. The first stage, to be executed within a week, will see Israel transfer 450 prisoners to Egypt. Hamas had demanded their release, but they have cross-group affiliation and include many who were sentenced to life sentences. Upon the completion of this stage, Shalit would be transferred to Egypt and then returned to Israel. Two months from now, an additional 550 prisoners would be released, according to a list prepared by Israel.

The names of the prisoners included in the deal have yet to be published, but it seems Hamas had to elasticize its stance considerably. Until the very last moment Hamas adamantly refused to yield its objection to the expulsion of many prisoners from the West Bank. Now, Hamas agreed to the expulsion of 203 prisoners. It also had to forfeit its demand for the release of heavyweight arch-terrorists like Marwan Barghouti, Abdullah Barghouti and Ahmed Saadat.

Hamas in Gaza had an interest for a while now in securing a deal given the pressure and frustration of prisoner families. However, the head of Hamas' military wing, Ahmed Jabari, insisted on zero compromises. The group's Political Bureau Chief, Khaled Mashaal, supported him.

However, in the meanwhile conditions changed: Iran recently curbed its financial support to Hamas and the group needs Arab and international donations in order to reinforce its hold on Gaza. Moreover, Hamas monitored with concern the boost in Abbas' status and needed a propaganda achievement that would overshadow the Palestinian president's accomplishments.

The prisoner leadership in Israel jails recently gave Jabari the green light to secure a deal as he sees fit. Mashaal and Jabari apparently reached the conclusion that they exhausted the negotiations with Israel and received the most they could get.

The negotiations lasted for five years and four months. Some would argue that a similar agreement could have been secured a year or two ago, yet this is doubtful. While the agreement constitutes painful Israeli capitulation and would grant terror group Hamas a prestigious, unprecedented achievement that would boost its status, Israel apparently managed to secure some of its demands. Moreover, the stubborn negotiations it conducted will have a deterrent effect.

Window of opportunity

The state of affairs in the Arab world also affected Netanyahu's decision. The prime minister realized that German mediator Konrad did as much as he could, and that the fate of the talks was in the hands of Egypt's military rulers. Israeli officials were gravely concerned that this regime could lose its ability to serve as mediator within a few months and come under the Muslim Brotherhood's influence. Moreover, Egypt's supreme military council also needed an achievement in the global and Arab theater.

Another factor was the situation on the Syrian front. Bashar Assad's regime endorsed the deal in order to improve its global status. The Syrians exerted their influence on Hamas' leadership in Damascus to show a little flexibility. Israeli officials feared that this Syrian influence, as feeble as it may be, would also dissipate should the Syrian president be toppled.

This is the "window of opportunity" officials in Jerusalem spoke of. This window could have been closed given further upheaval in the Arab world.

The change in the status of Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas as of late also played a role. In the past, Washington expressed its concern that a Shalit deal would boost Hamas' stature on the Palestinian street, thereby jeopardizing Abbas' position and Fatah's rule in the West Bank. Israeli officials shared this concern.

Yet in the wake of his UN bid, Abbas' position was greatly boosted and there is no fear that his stature would take a grave blow as result of the agreement. Netanyahu may have also had an interest in "making Abbas sweat" in response to the Palestinian leader's conduct on the international stage.

Hamas also had an interest in showing flexibility. The ground in Syria is shifting beneath the group's political leadership's feet in Damascus and it seeks a new base. This leadership now needs an entry ticket into moderate Arab states, headed by Egypt, Jordan and Qatar.

Will terror reemerge?

What remains is the substantive fear that the arch-terrorists to be released would restore Hamas' West Bank infrastructure. Such move could prompt, not far from today, casualties among Israelis - especially should another Intifada break out.

This fear, which is premised on solid reasons, will now force the Shin Bet and IDF to significantly boost its ant-terror operations and security deployment in Judea and Samaria while requiring great manpower and additional resources. Moreover, Israel will have to toughen its security demands in the framework of talks with Abbas, while he too will have to further toughen his stance.

Abbas will also be forced to decide whether to cooperate with Israel in monitoring the arch-terrorists and their aides, at a time when he's trying to promote reconciliation with Hamas and prepare for elections. We can only hope that these fears will be proven false and that Israeli society did not stretch the principle of mutual responsibility beyond reasonable limits.

The myth of Israeli solidarity

Yossi Sarid ; Haaretz; 21 October 2011

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/the-myth-of-israeli-solidarity-1.391194>

Once again we came out of it the best – no one can match us. “We’re different,” “The world watched in wonder,” “A moral victory for Israel.” One could see it that way, or a little differently.

All in the name of our unparalleled solidarity, by whose words all things came to be. Already it's not clear why a mass protest movement was formed here in order to restore the old solidarity to its glory days. If the crown hasn't fallen, then why restore it? Why leave one's home and one's apathy in order to pursue social justice and redistribute it?

Israeli solidarity was a lovely fairy tale, flattering to the national ego, told to a million poor children before bedtime. Are these children also all-our-children, even though they haven't been drafted yet? The fate of a civilian, whether big or small, is always less distressing, less frightening, than the death of a soldier, which is why his life is less valuable.

“All Israel are guarantors for each other,” limited by guarantee. Love thy neighbor as thyself? That too assumes that your neighbor is like you, not different or other, and preferably exactly like me.

Who this week has not quoted Isaiah, saying of the soldering, it is good – but Israeli society was and remains torn: Jews and Arabs, secular and religious, sabras and immigrants, supporters of Greater Israel and of dividing the land, neo-liberals and social democrats. And every camp is divided internally, and anyone who is not with us is against us. That is the way of a society that privatizes property and the soul.

There can be no solidarity in a state that is notorious for the gap between its rich and its poor, that leaves behind millions of its people, that forces Holocaust survivors to fight for their dignity and crusts of bread. Look at what was done to the Zionist enterprise, which aimed for relative equality; it became Treasure Island for the few, and an island of inequality for the many.

Solidarity is not melting from the bottom up, it is collapsing from the top down. We look to the leaders that we raised up; they misused us, they feathered their own nests in between terms, and sometimes during them as well. Who wouldn't want to imitate them, to feast and filch? No one wants to be a sucker.

Gilad Shalit fell into this vicious vacuum like a gift from the heavens to us. It was no accident that we pounced on him like treasure hunters – Gilad still lives, the people of Israel lives with him. And it was no accident that a representative of Shas was in the studio of one of the local channel's live broadcasts, like someone whose politics are the symbol of national unity. For a moment, thanks to Gilad, we are a united people, and no one else will ask to have their personal status details on their identity card changed.

“Paying such a high, painful price for his release reflects the deepest feelings of the Jewish heart.” The exact reverse is also a possibility, that the release reflects a dread of the loss and disintegration of solidarity. The shoulders are slumped, therefore they are desperate for a congratulatory self-patting. A society that is afraid of itself seeks affirmation of its cohesiveness, its vitality. Too many Israelis feel as if they are in a pit, not necessarily one in the Gaza Strip, and are calling for solidarity from the depths of their solitude, because it is not good for people to be alone. “Only a strong society could have done this” – or maybe only a weak society that desperately needs positive reinforcement.

Gilad Shalit was immediately dressed in an army uniform, thy son’s last garment, for it is only by the color and the rent and the blood that we can still know him and identify with him. In that way the entire Israel Defense Forces can salute, as a single soldier, the prime minister who made the right decision and not necessarily a “courageous and leaderly decision.” It was a necessary decision, dictated by the situation, confirmed by public opinion, validated by the media. All the cabinet did was to add its stamp.

How is Gilad now to be rescued from his Israeli captors?

Candidly Speaking: On distinguishing between good and evil

Isi Leibler; Jerusalem Post; 26 October 2011

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/Article.aspx?id=243293>

Aside from a minority of courageous moderate Muslims, the majority at remain passive to outrages committed by Islamic extremists.

Good deeds and the spurning of evil preoccupied us throughout the Days of Awe and the festival period, climaxing with the redemption of Gilad Schalit.

We live in times when concepts such as good and evil are deliberately blurred. For example, the mass murder of Norwegians in July by a demented neo-Nazi psychopath – a diabolically evil act – was globally exploited by far-left and Muslim groups to suppress legitimate condemnation or designation of extremist Islamic behavior as evil, even accusing critics of inciting mass murder.

Yet throughout the Arab world we are now witnessing the sickening elevation to hero status of some of the world’s most demented killers.

This is hardly a new phenomenon.

Can you recall the last time you had a serious discussion in which the word “evil” was mentioned? It’s unlikely, because employing such a term today is often regarded as politically incorrect and likely to lead to accusations of bias or bigotry.

During World War II, that the Nazis were evil was never in dispute. That knowledge did not imply that the Allies were pure. The Versailles settlement was unjust. Mistakes were made. There were undoubtedly degenerates in our ranks who committed crimes, and we were certainly conscious of the moral shortcomings of our Soviet allies.

But we unequivocally recognized that the Nazis represented evil incarnate and were willing to stake our lives in the struggle against the forces of darkness which sought to undermine freedom and civilization.

OVER THE past half-century, as post-modernism enveloped the new Europe, conflicts became increasingly viewed from the perspective of moral equivalency. Today, it is considered bigoted to define

religious or nationalist crimes as evil.

This change in outlook is linked to the erosion of Judeo-Christian values, which despite being more frequently breached than honored, did at least provide a moral framework to distinguish between right and wrong.

It is no coincidence that Christianity in Europe has declined dramatically. In the UK today, more Muslims pray at mosques than Anglicans attend churches. Christian beliefs have been supplanted by secularism, and some churches have themselves adopted post-modernist concepts.

In contrast, in the US where religion continues to occupy a dominant role, morality remains relevant and politicians endeavor to frame their policies in a manner perceived to be ethical.

In this climate, many liberals refuse to take part in the battle against the new global evil confronting us. They fail to acknowledge that the radical elements dominating the Muslim world today represent no less a threat to western civilization than the Nazis in the 1930s. Even many committed Jewish leaders blur the reality, accusing those who point out that the Arab Islamic world is largely dominated by extremists of promoting “hysteria” and “ideological Islamophobia.”

The level of moderation in Islamic societies can be assessed by posing a number of questions: Do Islamic leaders and activists promote moderation or do they at best stand aside and avoid condemning the jihadists? Do most share the goal of imposing Sharia law throughout the world? Endorse freedom of worship? Protest against the violence and murder directed at critics of their prophet or Islam? Demand the curbing of the violent passions which incite hatred and extremism in their mosques, media outlets and schools? Most of the ruling elites in today’s Islamic Arab world would fail to provide acceptable responses to such questions.

In fact, it may not be politically correct to say, but the sad reality is that aside from a minority of courageous moderate Muslims – primarily domiciled in non-Muslim communities – the majority at best remain passive in relation to outrages committed by Islamic extremists.

Indeed, it is unfortunately indisputable that the vast majority of Arab Muslims identify with the naked evil radiating from the venomous, genocidal statements of Ahmadinejad, Hezbollah and Hamas, which leave nothing to the imagination.

And alas, the misnamed “Arab Spring” has merely resulted in an upsurge of regional extremist Islamic fundamentalist power.

It is not only adherents to the Hamas Charter who unashamedly endorse the murder of Jews and boast that they will never forgo the goal of destroying the Jewish state. The Palestinian Authority is merely more circumspect in statements designed for Western consumption. But a recent poll by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion demonstrated that the vast majority of Palestinians remain committed to our destruction.

Eighty percent responded that it was the duty of Muslims to participate in jihad to eradicate Israel and 73% endorsed the Hamas Charter quoting from the hadith, a call from the prophet Muhammad to kill all Jews.

All PA state instrumentalities – mosques, media and education system – glorify and sanctify mothers of suicide bombers, honoring as “martyrs” those who murder Israeli civilians.

We should be highlighting the contrasting societal responses to evil in democratic countries and Islamic fundamentalist regimes.

Critics of Islam in Western countries do not hail as national heroes liberated psychopaths who murder women and children.

They do not name city squares, erect statues or name football teams to commemorate the perpetrators of such actions. Nor do they hold street parties and hand out sweets to children to celebrate the death of innocent Muslims killed in the war against terror.

But in the wake of every attack on Israeli civilians, that is precisely what happens in the Palestinian street, yet those who condemn such behavior as barbaric are frequently accused Islamophobia and racism.

It is rational, not “racist,” to deem such behavior evil. Prior to Nazi indoctrination, Germany was considered the most cultured European nation.

Since the defeat of Hitler and the implementation of a normal educational curriculum, the evil instilled by the Nazis has been neutralized.

Instead of exposing the criminality and evil of the Palestinian regimes and proclaiming that there is still no credible Palestinian peace partner, we bury our heads in the sand, pleading for a renewal of ritual negotiations with those committed to our demise.

This repeatedly culminates with a “we give and they take” process as the Palestinians endeavor to dismember us in stages. It also contributes to the global climate of opinion in which our adversaries relegate us to pariah status.

The Palestinians are considered the most talented of all Arabs. Provide them with humanitarian leaders. Grant them an enlightened education to substitute the hatred and culture of death in which their youngsters are brainwashed and new humanitarian leaders would emerge, enabling Palestinians and Israelis to jointly create a magnificent region of peaceful coexistence and creativity.

But as Mahmoud Abbas demonstrated in his recent UN General Assembly address, for now, that is but a distant dream.

The time has come to evaluate the evidence, exercise moral judgment and act rationally. To flee from reality and submerge ourselves in a delusionary, *Alice in Wonderland* environment is highly tempting. But it may incur a heavy price on our children, who will ultimately be obliged to confront the existential threat emanating from the evil surrounding them.

The Insanity of the Middle East: A Handy Guide

Barry Ruben; The Ruben Report; 24 October 2011

http://calevbenyefuneh.blogspot.com/2011/10/rubin-region-distorting-truth-in-middle.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+LoveOfTheLand+%28Love+of+the+Land%29

Every day in the Middle East, terrible things take place. The worst are the material acts of violence and oppression. The second-worst are the lies and distortions of truth that help ensure things don't get better. Every day in the West, the lies are echoed, amplified, and invented. This also helps ensure things don't get better in the Middle East and that they do get worse in the West.

Now I've found, from the most unexpected place, a single sentence, an ancient proverb, that explains it all. It comes from the Navahos and it goes like this:

You cannot awaken someone who pretends to be sleeping.

In other words, you cannot convince someone who is not merely mistaken but is deliberately lying. They have abandoned professional ethics, democratic and intellectual norms. They have embraced being propagandists and supporters of authoritarian and bloody regimes. Obviously, this doesn't apply to everyone, and in those others are the hope for something better. It is those people, who honestly don't realize that their leaders follow foolish policy, their newspapers all too often lie, and their universities (or at least significant sections of them) have abandoned the pursuit of truth in favor of the manufacture of lies.

If that seems extreme, perhaps that means you fall into that last category of the decent but deceived. Let's look at some specific cases.

1. The newspaper.

If there would ever be a last straw for me regarding what was once the English-speaking world's greatest newspaper, it is this one, the New York Times editorial of October 19, 2011:

"One has to ask: If Mr. Netanyahu can negotiate with Hamas—which shoots rockets at Israel, refuses to recognize Israel's existence and, on Tuesday, vowed to take even more hostages— why won't he negotiate seriously with the Palestinian Authority, which Israel relies on to help keep the peace in the West Bank."

What has one thing have to do with the other? Israel isn't negotiating with Hamas on a political level but to save the life of a young Israeli who has been in horrible captivity for five years. And this is one with no illusion that Hamas will continue to wage terrorism.

But what's really disturbing here is the idea that it is Israel and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who have been refusing to negotiate with the Palestinian Authority rather than the other way around. It is frequently repeated in the mass media and it is so obviously absurd that it must now be considered a deliberate lie by propagandists rather than an honest or ignorant or ideologically driven error.

Funnily enough, within hours of this editorial claim we have...

2. The "Moderates"

The ultimate Palestinian "moderate," Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, explained:

"We want to see an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967. We want the Palestinian people to live with dignity. Fayyad said the Palestinians are committed to resolving the conflict, but that "the conditions are not right to resume talks."

In other words, even when the Palestinian prime minister openly rejects talks and even after dozens of previous rejections by him and Palestinian "President" Mahmoud Abbas, and dozens of documented acceptances of negotiations by Netanyahu and Israel, the lie that Israel doesn't want to negotiate and the PA does is repeated.

Obviously, this is not a misunderstanding but a lie. One reason for this lie is that if the truth were to be told it would have to be explained why the "poor," "desperate," "victimized" Palestinians don't want to negotiate. And the answer would have to be an uncomfortable truth:

Their leaders don't want peace, compromise, or a two-state solution but total victory.

And that truth would require a change in the Western policy and understanding of the issue.

Finally, note the reaction of the leaders of the two Palestinian regimes:

Abbas told the released prisoners: "You are freedom fighters and holy warriors for the sake of God and the homeland."

And Hamas deputy leader Abu Marzouk insisted: "The rest of the prisoners must be released because if they are not released in a normal way they will be released in other ways."

By murdering Israeli civilians, both the "moderate" and the "radical" explain, these people have done nothing wrong and are free—even encouraged—to do so again in future. You cannot build a democratic state on the basis of calling terrorists "freedom fighters" (and note the "secular" Abbas's reference to jihad). And you cannot compromise with another side when you continue to urge and justify the deliberate murder of its civilians.

3. Do Concessions Bring Moderation or Compromise on the Other Side?

Israel did not do the prisoner swap because it expected that would change Palestinian thinking or behavior. But many in the West don't understand that concessions simply bring more demands and greater intransigence. (Israel knows the intransigence already exists so from its standpoint the prisoner swap does no harm in that department.)

How did Abbas react to the prisoner swap? By demanding that Israel release even more Palestinian terrorists!

Here's the Time Magazine coverage:

"As Palestinians exult in the release of 477 prisoners from Israeli jails, and anticipate the arrival of the 550 more due to be freed in December under the terms of the bargain Hamas brokered for Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas is pushing Israel to release even more, citing what he terms a secret promise from a previous prime minister."

Of course, no such promise exists. On the contrary, Abbas rejected Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's peace proposal.

But, wait, there's more! Here's the Washington Post coverage on that point:

"Newly released Palestinian prisoners held rambunctious homecoming receptions...as leaders of the Hamas militant group that secured their freedom expressed hope that Israel would ease the blockade it imposes on the Gaza Strip."

Senior Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar claimed that Israel should now, "Make an end to the blockade," no doubt so that Hamas could import more weapons, money, equipment, and gunmen to attack Israel.

So now that Israel has made a big concession they can only demand more concessions. Note that as the pattern of the entire "peace process" and another factor making peace impossible and so much of Western policy in the region entirely futile.

4. The moral bankruptcy of the "International Community"

UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki-Moon said:

"I am very encouraged by the prisoner exchange today after many many years of negotiation. The United Nations has been calling for (an end to) the unacceptable detention of Gilad Shalit and also the release of all Palestinians whose human rights have been abused all the time."

It would be bad enough if the leader of the global community made a moral equivalence between Shalit and terrorists who had murdered Israeli civilians but in fact he treats the latter as superior. He doesn't mention their murderous deeds (which almost all of them admit, indeed brag about) or their conviction in courts. But he claims, on no basis whatsoever, that their human rights have been abused! A listener would think these are Palestinian civilians pulled at random off the streets! In short, he has declared that

the terrorists are the true victims.

And this is the agency supposedly fit to judge the future of the conflict and which constitutes one-fourth of the Quartet that's mediating, with Hizballah-friendly Russia the second one-fourth?

But here's some insane comic relief (in Dutch). A Dutch poet with a Palestinian father) is a darling of the leftist elite--he was elected to a four-year term as "Poet of the Fatherland" in 2009 by several organizations including the most prestigious newspaper there.

He has written an open letter to Holland's foreign minister saying that Israel's government has proven it seeks to commit ethnic cleansing and that the prisoner swap shows it values the life of a Palestinian to be only a tenth of a percent of that of an Israeli. It has been published in NRC Handelsblad, the Dutch equivalent of the New York Times or Guardian.

In other words, by trading 1000 Palestinian terrorists for 1 Israeli prisoner it is racist because it didn't exchange 1 Palestinian prisoner for 1,000 Israelis. And this is what passes for brilliance today in European intellectual circles.

In the words of the Greek playwright Euripides, though many have said something similar, "Those whom God wishes to destroy, he first deprives of their senses." Thus the Middle East and those who misinterpret it in the West are setting up their own destruction. Perhaps the real reason they cannot forgive Israel is that it does not choose to join them in this endeavor.

Would-be bomber exhorts children to follow her example

Maurice Ostroff; Response to The Guardian; 21 October 2011

<http://ilmondoedio.wordpress.com/2011/10/21/what-the-guardian-should-have-told-us-but-didnt-by-maurice-ostroff/>

The title of the article by Deborah Orr in the Guardian of October 18, poses the interesting question "Is an Israeli life really more important than a Palestinian's?"

But a much more important question that emerges from Ms. Orr's article is whether the Guardian is depriving its readers of important news and information that would enable us to understand the reported events. Omitting relevant information can be as misleading as providing incorrect information.

In Ms. Orr's article a photo is included with the caption "Wafa al-Biss, one of the freed Palestinian prisoners, on her return to her home in the northern Gaza Strip. Photograph: Mohammed Salem/Reuters".

Egregiously the article withholds information, headlined in the Reuters report, that on her return to Gaza, Wafa told cheering schoolchildren she hoped they would follow her example. She said, "I hope you will walk the same path we took and God willing, we will see some of you as martyrs,"

The unusual example Ms. Al-Biss exhorts Palestinian children to follow is certainly newsworthy and relevant and intellectual honesty would require that the report make at least some mention of it.

In 2004/2005 Wafa's life was saved by doctors at Soroka hospital in Beersheba where she was successfully treated for massive burns suffered in a gas-tank explosion. She developed a good relationship with the medical team and her family was so appreciative of the six-month treatment she had received that they wrote a letter of appreciation to the doctors. It said "the care was wonderful and warm"

Nevertheless, on June 20, 2005 Wafa entered the Erez crossing ostensibly to travel to Soroka hospital for further treatment but this time, with the intention, by means of an explosives belt hidden in her underclothes, to carry out a suicide bombing in the hospital where she had received such excellent treatment.

Her heavy clothing aroused suspicion at the crossing and when the explosive belt was revealed, she attempted unsuccessfully to detonate it.

Under questioning Wafa revealed that she had been instructed by the Fatah al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade to use her personal medical authorization documents, to carry out the suicide attack in a crowded portion of the Israeli hospital.

An NBC video clip of the incident is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22XEkJY62VA>

NOTE: The views expressed in certain articles are not necessarily those of the SAZF
