

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### If Palestinians are 'terrorists,' then what about Israel?

Re June 9 column, "Thomas learned little from history": Richard Cohen is correct that comments of Helen Thomas are extremely insensitive to Jews, particularly those who survived the Holocaust. However, his July 1 ["Ease Gaza blockade, but see the evil of Jew-hating Hamas"] column comparing the Palestinian political faction Hamas to Adolf Hitler's Third Reich is an example of what he deplored in Ms. Thomas' comments.

Israeli leaders and some American defenders of Israeli policies toward Palestinians are also insensitive. Israeli leaders never acknowledge the legitimacy of the comments of their harshest critics, especially Jews. Instead, they attack Noam Chomsky, Richard Goldstone, Norman Finkelstein, Naomi Klein, and others with false and vile terms, such as "self-hating Jews." Non-Jewish critics are routinely labeled "anti-Semites." Falsely smearing someone as an anti-Semite is as revolting as being one.

Palestinians have been so often labeled as terrorists that many think "Palestinian" is an adjective for "terrorist." The Israeli-government and settlers terrorize Palestinians every day but Israeli terror is rarely acknowledged. For decades, the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] was labeled as a terrorist organization; now it is Hamas, and most recently the people Israel murdered on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla. Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims are tired of the repeated assertions of terrorism made by defenders of Israeli government policies. Jews do not like being labeled with nasty and false stereotypes; neither does anyone else.

Israel is far more violent than the PLO or Hamas have ever been. Israeli leaders perennially deny carefully documented

charges made by highly respected human rights organizations that Israel severely abuses Palestinians and violates international law.

I remember 40 years ago some Palestinians hijacked airplanes, but today it is the Israeli government that hijacks ships. Palestinians engage in amazingly little violence despite the never-ending Israeli provocations.

**TOM ELLIS**  
Albany

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### Columnist's take on Gaza war didn't match U.N. fact-finders'

Mona Charen wrote a Nov. 2 column, "U.N. Report on Gaza war unfairly blames Israel." She was referring to the Sept. 29 release of a 575-page report of the U.N. Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict prepared by a team of four, led by Richard Goldstone, a Jew and a widely respected former South African judge.

The Goldstone team concluded that during the Israeli assault in Gaza last winter that killed about 1,400 Palestinians and 13 Israelis:

- ◆ Israel targeted civilians;
- ◆ Israel specifically targeted Palestinian infrastructure, including hospitals; and destroyed Gaza's only operating flour mill, a wastewater treatment facility, spilling 200,000 cubic meters of raw sewage onto adjacent farmland, and two water wells, pumping machines and other water equipment;
- ◆ both Israel and Hamas appeared to commit war crimes;
- ◆ Palestinians did not use hospitals to hide Hamas officials;
- ◆ there is no evidence ambulances targeted by Israel were carrying Hamas officials or munitions;
- ◆ there is no evidence Hamas used human shielding; and
- ◆ there is considerable evidence Israel used captured Palestinian men as human shields.

The report confirmed conclusions reached by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and several Israeli human rights groups including "Breaking the Silence," which contains testimony of 30 Israeli soldiers who participated in the attack.

In an Oct. 18 column in the Jerusalem Post, Goldstone wrote that he has supported Israel and its people all his life, he had refused to take the assignment until the mandate was

enlarged to investigate acts of both Israel and Palestinians, he expected Israel would cooperate with the inquiry and its refusal to do so was a "grave error."

He said, "Our mission obviously could only consider and report on what it saw, heard, and read. If the government of Israel failed to bring facts and analysis to our attention, we cannot fairly be blamed for the consequences. Those who feel that our report failed to give adequate attention to specific incidents or issues should be asking the Israeli government why it failed to argue its cause."

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# OPINION

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