

Orla Guerin Covers the Holocaust Commemoration in Israel

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Orla Guerin has for 20 years been a BBC correspondent in the Middle East, covering Israel and the Palestinians. She's acquired quite a reputation, over those years, for her palpable dislike of Israel and her deep sympathy for the Palestinians. But before getting to her latest outrage, let's remind ourselves of what has been left out of the BBC's coverage – not just by Guerin, but also by others – of that Arab-Israeli conflict.

Here are some of the things you won't have learned about from the BBC in its thousands of reports about Israel and the Palestinians:

You won't find out what the Mandate for Palestine states about Jewish settlement on the land, nor what territories were to be

included, according to that Mandate, in a future Jewish state. You won't find out that 77% of the territory originally to have been included in the Mandate – all the land east of the Jordan River – instead became the Emirate of Transjordan. You will not learn what Lord Caradon, the author of U.N. Resolution 242, insisted was its correct meaning, recognizing Israel's right, in accordance with that resolution, to have "secure" – i.e., defensible – borders – through territorial adjustments.

You will not ever have heard the words "dhimmi" and "jizyah" used or explained on the BBC. You will have no notion, from the BBC, which in this case mainly means their correspondent Orla Guerin, of the dozens of antisemitic passages in the Qur'an. You will never have been informed, by the BBC, that the Qur'an describes Muslims as the "best of peoples" and non-Muslims as the "most vile of created beings." You won't learn, from the BBC, that the Qur'an instructs Muslims not to take Jews or Christians as friends, "for they are friends only with each other." You won't learn from anyone at the BBC that there are more than one hundred Qur'anic verses that command Muslims to engage in violent Jihad, to fight, to kill, to smite at the necks of, to strike terror in the hearts of, Infidels. You won't learn from anyone at the BBC that Muhammad in a famous hadith said that "war is deceit." You won't find out that he claimed in another well-known hadith that "I have been made victorious through terror." You won't discover from the BBC that Muhammad consummated his marriage to little Aisha when she was nine years old, and he was fifty-four. You won't learn from the BBC about Muhammad's evident pleasure when he learned of the murders, by his loyal followers, of three people – Asma bint Marwan, Ka'b bin al-Ashraf, and Abu 'Afak – who had mocked or criticized him. You won't discover, despite that disturbing history, that Muhammad is regarded by Muslims as the Perfect Man (al-insan al-kamil) and the Model of Conduct (uswa hasana).

But what you will learn, from the likes of BBC Middle East correspondent Orla Guerin, is how the Israelis take every occasion to oppress the “Palestinian people.” The existence of this “Palestinian people” is simply assumed by Orla Guerin, even though there is plenty of evidence that the Palestinians are a “people” invented for purely political reasons. Zuheir Mohsen, the Palestinian leader of the terrorist group As-Saiqa, famously said that “the Palestinian people do not exist. The creation of a Palestinian state is only a means for continuing our struggle against the state of Israel for our Arab unity. In reality today there is no difference between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese. Only for political and tactical reasons do we speak today about the existence of a Palestinian people, since Arab national interests demand that we posit the existence of a distinct ‘Palestinian people’ to oppose Zionism. Yes, the existence of a separate Palestinian identity exists only for tactical reasons.”

The “Palestinian people” do not differ in language, religion, clothing, cuisine, customs, folk and fairy tales, from Jordanians or Egyptians or other Muslim Arabs in their immediate neighborhood. But Orla Guerin has never discussed this, just as she will never touch the contents of the Qur’an. Such things are better left passed over, Orla Guerin knows, in silence. The contents of the Qur’an would only confuse, and might even alarm, the BBC audience that needs to be kept in the dark about so many things having to do with Islam, including the Jihad against Israel. Orla Guerin stays well away from this subject; she has covered Muslims for more than twenty years, and never cited the Jihad verses in the Qur’an or addressed the unseemly character of Muhammad.

On January 22, I heard a BBC reporter from Bush House, London, in a voice not quite as plummy as those in decades past, briefly mention the Holocaust commemoration events that were then taking place in Israel. **Then, quickly turning to another**

news item – no need to spend more than a minute or two on six million dead Jews – he said “and now about another people who have also suffered persecution,” and segued into a story about the Rohingyas. So the suffering of the Jews under the Nazis, with six million people tortured, gassed, shot, electrocuted on fences, buried alive in pits, burned alive in crematoria, subject to ghoulish medical experiments is casually described by the BBC news presenter as “persecution.” And what happened to the Rohingyas in Myanmar is thus likened to what happened to Jews in Europe, though only 24,000 Rohingyas have died, while 740,000 are alive in Bangladesh, and several hundred thousand others are still living, unharmed, in Myanmar. There were killings – even war crimes – but not a “genocide” as that word is generally understood, which would apply only if all or most of the Rohingya had been rounded up rather than allowed to leave Myanmar and murdered, as happened to the Jews during the Holocaust.

But worse was to come on the BBC that day. There was a brief, almost cursory, report from Yad Vashem by Orla Guerin; her appalling comment on Israelis, during the very moment when Holocaust commemoration ceremonies were being held in Jerusalem with 40 world leaders, is discussed below. Some people hold Guerin in high regard – the same people who think Jeremy Corbyn, Ken Livingstone, and George Galloway are all fine fellows. She was the winner of a Television Journalist of the Year Award in 2018, which says something, none of it good, about that year’s judges. She is famous for her palpable want of sympathy for Israel and its people; some people, such as Natan Sharansky, believe her distaste for Israelis is pathological, and amounts to antisemitism. Time and again her coverage of Israel and the Palestinians has been held up for examination for obvious bias– so many stories, so much trenchant criticism – but that has not prevented the BBC from keeping her on for two decades as their correspondent covering Israel and its enemies. 2

[Here](#) is the latest example of Orla Guerin's coverage of Israel:

Outrage erupted on Thursday after a BBC report on the Holocaust commemoration events currently underway in Israel used the opportunity to slam the Jewish state.

The Thursday [January 22] ceremony in Jerusalem marking the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz was attended by dozens of world leaders, including Britain's Prince Charles, Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President Emmanuel Macron and US Vice President Mike Pence.

The segment in question ended with a narration by Orla Guerin, a veteran international correspondent for the BBC, who has long been accused of bias against Israel.

Over images of the Hall of Names at Yad Vashem, in which photographs and names of victims of the Nazi genocide are displayed, Guerin said, "In Yad Vashem's Hall of Names, images of the dead. Young soldiers troop in to share the binding tragedy of the Jewish people."

"The State of Israel is now a regional power," she added. "For decades it has occupied Palestinian territories. But some here will always see their nation through the prism of persecution and survival."

Reaction to Guerin's statement was immediate and angry. Gideon Falter, chief executive of the UK-based Campaign Against Antisemitism, said, "The BBC is supposed to inform the British public, not feed them propaganda. Few could imagine perverting what is supposed to be an educational piece about the Holocaust to instead fuel the very antisemitism that such education is supposed to prevent, but that is what the BBC has done."

"It was utterly appalling to watch Orla Guerin hijack a segment dedicated to remembering six million murdered Jews,

and instead use it as a vehicle to desecrate the memory of the Holocaust with her hatred of the Jewish state," he continued.

Referring to the British television regulator Ofcom, Falter declared, "Ms. Guerin and the BBC editors who allowed this to be aired must be made to face the consequences of this sick act, which is why we are now making an official complaint and will take the matter to Ofcom if necessary."

Amanda Bowman – vice president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews – also condemned the BBC report, saying, "Orla Guerin's attempt to link the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the horrors of the Holocaust was crass and offensive."

Noting longstanding criticism of Guerin's reporting on Israel, Bowman stated, "Her lack of partiality on the Israel-Palestine conflict has long been a matter of concern and it is questionable why the BBC would even use her for this sensitive assignment. As we approach Holocaust Memorial Day, the Jewish community is within its rights to expect an apology."

Voices on Twitter also condemned Guerin's statement. Historian Simon Sebag Montefiore wrote, "This @bbcnews commentary on Yad Vashem by Orla Guerin linking the Holocaust to the Israel's West Bank occupation is truly foul – managing to be both shamefully amoral + historically inaccurate, utterly cynical and complacently self-righteous all [at] the same time."

Gerald Steinberg, head of the monitoring group NGO Watch said, "@OrlaGuerin clearly violated journalistic ethics – she has a long history of #antiSemitism and Israel derangement going back at least 20 years."

The organization Students Supporting Israel (SSI) asserted, "This @BBCNews report exposes the inherent problem and hate towards Jews & Israel in the British #Media."

Guerin's distaste for Israel and biased reporting have been a focus of concern and derision for decades. In 2015, The Independent quoted former BBC Chairman Lord Grade criticizing one of her reports for "equivalence between Israeli victims of terrorism and Palestinians who have been killed by Israeli security forces in the act of carrying out terror attacks."

"This directly misleads viewers," he said.

The Guardian reported in 2004 that Natan Sharansky, then Israel's minister for diaspora affairs, had called a Guerin report on a Palestinian child soldier "cynical manipulation of a Palestinian youngster for propaganda purposes."

"It showed, he said, "a deep-seated bias against Israel."

Sharansky said the report applied "such a gross double standard to the Jewish state" that "it is difficult to see Ms. Guerin's report as anything but antisemitic."

Orla Guerin has a long record of denigrating Israel, and Israelis; her "Israel derangement...goes back at least 20 years." But her comment on January 21, linking the Holocaust to Israel's treatment of Palestinians in the West Bank, as part of the BBC's coverage of the Holocaust commemoration in Israel, was unusually foul. We'll look at her remark tomorrow.

Let's go over Orla Guerlin's remarks on the BBC from Yad Vashem:

Over images of the Hall of Names at Yad Vashem, in which photographs and names of victims of the Nazi genocide are displayed, Guerin said, "In Yad Vashem's Hall of Names, images of the dead. Young soldiers troop in to share the binding tragedy of the Jewish people."

"The State of Israel is now a regional power," she added. "For decades it has occupied Palestinian territories. But some here will always see their nation through the prism of

persecution and survival."

There is a hint that Yad Vashem is being instrumentalized by the Israeli government. It is being used as a "binding tragedy" for the Jewish people, represented here not "by housewives and children and old men, some of them the descendants of Holocaust victims" who come to Yad Vashem, but only by "young soldiers" – a subliminal hint that Israel is a militarized little Sparta. And in Orla Guerin's worldview, it is not Judaism, not the Torah or Talmud, not several thousand years of Jewish history, but the Holocaust alone that is the "binding tragedy of the Jewish people." And according to Guerin, the Israeli "fixation" on the Holocaust has led them to think of themselves as permanently in a war for their "survival" that is a figment of their overheated imaginations.

Much worse followed. Guerin describes Israel as a "regional power." Guerin has always liked to emphasize Israel's military might, as part of her complaint that this "mighty" state – so small it can hardly be discerned on any world map, and only eight miles wide at its narrowest point in the pre-1967 armistice lines that Guerin thinks it must again squeeze into – ought to be more magnanimous toward the poor Palestinians. Let's remember that the total area of the 22 Arab states is more than one thousand times that of tiny Israel. Let's also remind Guerin that Israel has had to fight three major wars for its survival (1948-49, 1967, 1973) and several smaller campaigns in the Sinai (1957), in Gaza (2004, 2008-2009), in Lebanon against the PLO (1982) and Hezbollah (2006), as well as fight terrorism day in day out, year after year. In 2019 alone, the Shin Bet prevented 560 attacks on Israeli citizens. For nearly two years Hamas has been conducting the Great March of Return, sending incendiary kites into Israel that have set fire to tens of thousands of acres; the terror group has also lobbed missiles into towns in southern Israel. In Lebanon, Hezbollah has seen its terror tunnels discovered and destroyed by Israel but at the same time, Iran has been helping to

improve the precision of the 140,000 missiles Hezbollah has already received from Tehran, given to the terror group for future use against Israel. And Iran has been building its own bases in Syria from which it hopes to threaten Israel.

Israel has its hands full with state and non-state actors who wish to harm it, but for Orla Guerin, it's a "regional power" with few worries. She doesn't mention that Iran, with its vast oil wealth, which has enabled it to build a formidable stockpile of advanced weaponry, and with a population ten times that of Israel, has repeatedly threatened to destroy the Jewish state; the regime holds endless rallies where tens, even hundreds, of thousands chant "Death to Israel." There is Turkey, once a friend and now an enemy of Israel, whose leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has proposed that a pan-Islamic army be formed to "destroy Israel." That is Israel's reality. It has to work constantly to protect its people from attacks by Hamas, Hezbollah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists. It has to prevent Iran from building permanent bases in Syria. And while it has done much to slow down Iran's nuclear program, from the Stuxnet virus that caused centrifuges to speed up and self-destruct, to the killing of Iranian nuclear scientists, Israel cannot let up in its efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Orla Guerin doesn't take such threats, from Iran and Turkey as well as from the Arab terrorist groups, to heart, but the Israelis can't afford her blithe indifference.

Despite its remarkable feats of military derring-do, Israel can never let its guard down. Its leaders wake up each morning to find out how many terrorist attacks have been foiled the day before, and how many succeeded. They are filled in on what threats against Israel have been made this week in Tehran, in Istanbul, or what plots against Israelis have been hatched in a cafe in Beirut or Baghdad, or London, or Paris. They worry about the new precision guided missiles that Hezbollah has just taken delivery of from Iran. And they ask themselves,

constantly, how many of the 22 members of the Arab League, and how many of the 57 states in the Organization of the Islamic Conference, must Israel worry about today? And next year? And the year after next?

But for Orla Guerin, Israel is not in real danger. The Jewish state likes to think of itself, and to present itself to the world, as under constant mortal threat. But according to Guerin it's nonsense, a calculated wallowing in false fears; Israel holds up for the world the spectre of the Holocaust, but it has no real worries. Israel is mighty, while the Palestinians are the helpless ones, their lands taken from them, and now "occupied" by Bible-crazed Jewish settlers who have the gall to want the world to feel sorry for them. But where's this great threat Israelis supposedly face? How many Israelis died as a result of the Great March of Return? One. And how many Palestinian who took part in those peaceful protests were killed by Israelis? 267. Orla Guerin asks: What more do you need to know?

"For decades it has occupied Palestinian territories. But some here will always see their nation through the prism of persecution and survival."

No, Israel has not "occupied Palestinian territories." After the Six-Day War, Israel was finally in a position to enforce the legal claim it had always had, based on the Mandate for Palestine itself. And furthermore, it has an independent claim based on U.N. Resolution 242, and its author Lord Caradon, to "secure" – that is, "defensible" – boundaries, which meant there would be territorial adjustments based on Israel's determination of its security needs. Guerin doesn't know or care about the Mandate for Palestine, or U.N. Resolution 242. Her mind was made up long ago. She's chosen her side. She's never wavered. The West Bank is now and forever "Palestinian."

And then there is that last, vile sentence: **"But some here**

will always see their nation through the prism of persecution and survival." For Orla Guerin, it doesn't matter that Israel has had to fight more wars, in its short history, than any other country on earth. These Israelis want pretend they are still being persecuted, still under some kind of genocidal threat. Orla Guerin is heartily sick of these Israelis who want everyone to view everything through the prism of the Holocaust. How dare they worry about their persecution and survival? It's the Palestinians who are being persecuted; it's the Palestinians who may not survive. Israelis are both neurotic and cruel. Neurotic, because they have no real security worries but think, or pretend to think, that they do. They have tanks, they have planes, they have helicopters, they have drones, they have nuclear submarines. What more do they need? Their worries are baseless. And Israelis are cruel, because Israel is a mighty power, and it's the poor Palestinians who are helpless, whose land has been taken, and held onto, by Israel, without any justification whatsoever.

Yes, Israel still wants the world to feel sorry for it, to think that the country's survival is at stake. Orla Guerin won't stand for that nonsense. She's not going to pass on Israeli propaganda. She's going to tell the truth, even if the Jewish lobby complains to the BBC executives: Israel hasn't much to worry about. Oh, there may be a tunnel or two – only to bring in goods the Israelis won't let them have, like building materials– but those tunnels have all been easily discovered and destroyed. And a few missiles are occasionally lobbed from Gaza into Israel, but they always land harmlessly in some open field. And let's not forget that every Israeli home has a bomb shelter, so they wouldn't have to worry in any case – unlike the Palestinians, who have no shelters and no place to run. And with that kind of constant pressure on the Palestinians, there is always bound to be someone, maddened with rage and grief over his people's misery, who lashes out. That's why every so often there's a stabbing of a soldier at a bus stop, or of a policeman in the Old City. But that's about

it. And that soldier, that policeman, are seen by the Palestinians as the face of an oppressive and militarized state. "For god's sake," Orla Guerin wants to shout at these Israelis wallowing in self-pity, "it's Holocaust this and Holocaust that. Persecution. Survival. That was a long time ago. Get over it. And stop making life miserable for the Palestinians. Jews suffered during the Holocaust, and so they have a special responsibility to behave decently toward the Palestinians, instead of emulating the behavior of those who once tormented you. And that's what I have reported on, and I will continue to report on."

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