

The NDP's Palestine Motion Was Wrong-Headed From the Start



Canada's House of Commons

by Conrad Black

The stormy debate in the House of Commons over the NDP's motion to recognize a Palestinian state, ending with a profound last-minute government modification of the bill, revealed the widespread misunderstanding in Canadian official circles of the nature of the present conflict in Gaza. As originally formulated, while the NDP motion unambiguously recognized the right of Israel to exist, implicitly as a Jewish state, it ascribed no blame whatever to Hamas, which

has governed Gaza for over 16 years, for the outbreak of the present war.

No such motion could remotely be acceptable in the legislature of any country that authentically wishes a just resolution of the ancient conflict in the Middle East now raging in Gaza. It is not six months ago that Hamas, which Canada recognizes as a terrorist organization, violated a long-agreed ceasefire with Israel, invaded that country by land, sea, air, and tunnel, and brutally massacred approximately 1,200 Israelis, 85 percent of them civilians and many of those women, the very young, and the elderly. In many cases, women and children were violated and murdered in the most depraved and sadistic manner imaginable, with the declared objective of incurring the greatest possible revulsion in Israel and the rest of the civilized world. It was a vintage case of premeditated terrorism.

It was also the greatest single death toll of Jews in one day since the end of the Holocaust, with the liberation of the Nazi death camps in the last weeks of the Second World War in Europe, not excluding the wars of survival that Israel was forced to wage in 1948, 1967, and 1973, as well as the Suez War of 1956. Israel suffered a loss of life that was proportionately 20 times as great as the American loss of life at Pearl Harbor, which was at least almost entirely confined to personnel of the United States Navy, and in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, in New York and Washington. Israel immediately announced that it was at war, formally confirmed that condition, and formed an all-party national unity government representing all shadings of opinion among the almost 80 percent Jewish population of that country, which was created by the United Nations as a Jewish state and homeland in 1948.

As formulated—and this same misconception affected much of the debate over the NDP measure—the atrocities of Oct. 7, 2023, were treated as just another border incident in the long

history of skirmishing between Israel and extreme Muslim entities on its borders. The character of that onslaught was intended by its authors and accepted by its victims to be an act of war, not just a border incident, and this was stubbornly ignored by the New Democrats in composing their bill. They presented what amounted to a no-fault motion, seeking the restoration of a peace that has never existed since Israel unilaterally and voluntarily withdrew from Gaza in 2006.

The real problem in the Arab/Israel conflict has been successfully reduced to a dispute between Israel and the adjoining territories, whose status has not been agreed upon, which claim to represent a nationality separate and distinct from the other Arab countries in the area, and who further deny that the Jews have any right to a Jewish state. This is no longer a view that is shared by the Arab powers who, despite the customary window-dressing of support for the Palestinians, are sitting conspicuously on their hands. They detest the Muslim terrorists just as much as the Israelis do and are ultimately more dangerously threatened by them than Israel is.

An appropriate measure for the Canadian Parliament would have placed the blame for this conflict squarely where it belongs, and would have emphasized the sine qua non for any resolution of the problem would be for the stateless Arabs, in the still unallocated territory of the old League of Nations Palestine mandate, to recognize the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state in exchange for the recognition of their right to a state whose borders would have to be negotiated. This is what the British foreign secretary and former prime minister, Arthur Balfour, proposed in 1917 when the Turks still ruled the territory. And this is the basis for Palestinian claims to nationality.

Balfour promised a homeland for the Jewish people without compromising the rights of the Arabs. It is the details of

this almost impossible demarcation that have yet to be determined. No well-meaning calls for a ceasefire and the triumph of humanitarian instincts—in a place where any such benign human trait has rarely been in evidence since biblical times—will facilitate peace, promote Western unity on the issue, or confirm any distinction whatever upon Canada.

The Jews have been a presence in the Middle East for over 5,000 years and were one of the larger groups along the eastern Mediterranean shore until the majority of Jews became Christians in the early Christian era and in emulation of Christ himself, an Aramathean Jew ethnically, but evidently the first Christian. The Palestinians, initially the Philistines, arrived by sea approximately 2,600 years ago but never actually governed themselves beyond tribal matters, as first the Persians, then the Macedonians, then the Seleucids, Romans, Byzantines, Arabians, Christian crusaders, Turks, and the British and French governed the geography now claimed by the Palestinians.

There is absolutely no contradiction between endorsing the rights of Israel to exist as a Jewish state, and the rights of the Palestinians to have their own state. The Palestinians were undoubtedly roughly treated by Israel at the founding of that state, but in the context of all of the Arab powers attacking Israel and urging both revolt and flight upon the Palestinians. They have been shabbily treated as pawns by the Arabs since.

It is the Arab powers, and not Israel, that has maintained the Palestinians in their destitute and radicalized condition, and it is the ancient enemy of the Arabs—the Persians, Iran—which now subsidizes Palestinian terrorism and uses the Palestinians as cannon fodder in the completely illegal but historically precedented Iranian effort to encroach upon the Arabs, while sounding the most hateful tocsin of all: anti-Semitism. One more time, and despite the fact that the world created Israel as a homeland for the Jews, the Jews are to be subjugated,

expelled, or simply murdered.

Shame on all those who would facilitate such an infamy on a people that has been oppressed so often, has suffered so deeply and unjustly, and yet has achieved so much and has made the desert bloom in the only democracy in the Middle East. I excuse the New Democratic MPs from being useful idiots for the parties of evil unintentionally, but their ignorance of the implications of their motion cannot be so easily excused. The fact that the government came to its senses just before the NDP motion passed, to turn it into the usual pabulum of irrelevant and hopeful platitudes, is slightly commendable. Better by far is the position of the Conservative Party from the outset that the current conflict is a just response by Israel to a monstrous provocation.

The Hamas leadership has declared that it will win if it is not exterminated as a military and terrorist force. The united government of Israel has pledged to exterminate it as a military and terrorist force, and this course is the only discernible method to translate the present conflict into serious progress towards a comprehensive and durable solution.

It is clear from the ratio of combat to noncombatant deaths that Israel is proceeding as gently as it can. We should encourage Israel to allow as many women, children, and elderly people out of Rafah as possible and to assure that the unambiguously civil population receives adequate assistance, but we should also encourage them to wipe out Hamas as a terrorist organization to the last individual. It is not for us or any other country to tell Israel how to win this war. Israel is acting on its pledge after the Holocaust that Jews would "never again" go passively in large numbers to their deaths. Nor should anyone ask that of them.

The road to peace in this conflict is not a "peace of the brave"—it is the extermination of the evil by the just.

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