

Nader'08 Gonzalez

ISSUE STATEMENT Foreign Policy - Israel

To illustrate how little has changed in four years, other than conditions becoming worse, the 2008 Nader/Gonzalez campaign is posting these policy positions on various injustices, necessities, and redirections that were prepared initially for the 2004 Nader/Camejo campaign. Such a short historical context should give our supporters and viewers an even greater sense of urgency to stop the corporate interests' and the corporate governments' autocratic control -- and the resulting deterioration -- of our society and country.

Independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader continued his dialogue with Abraham Foxman, the National Director of the Anti-Defamation League. The dialogue, which began this summer when Foxman criticized Nader for questioning the militaristic approach of the Sharon government and the U.S. government's puppet-like support of Israel, has focused on whether criticizing Israel is akin to anti-semitism.

Nader favors a two-state solution and believes that the United States needs to highlight the broad and deep peace movement in Israel and its counterparts among Palestinians and among Americans of the Jewish faith. In this letter Nader urges Foxman to meet with these people so Foxman "can play a part in the historic effort to establish a broad and deep peace between the two Semitic peoples."

Criticizing the Israeli Government is not for Israelis Alone

October 12, 2004

Mr. Abraham H. Foxman
National Director
Anti-Defamation League
823 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Foxman:

You started your last letter with the sentence: "We are not engaged in a dialogue about the issues you raised in your letter." That is precisely the point, is it not, Mr. Foxman. For many years you have eschewed engaging in a dialogue with those in Israel and the United States who disagree with your views. Your mode of operation for years has been to make charges of racism or insinuation of racism designed to slander and evade. Because your pattern of making such charges, carefully calibrated for the occasion but of the same stigmatizing intent, has served to deter critical freedom of speech, you have become sloppy with your characterizations when it comes to attempts to hold you accountable. Of course citizen groups make charges all the time but their critics and corporate adversaries do review and rebut which keeps both sides more alert to accuracy especially when they desire press coverage. Few groups get the free ride that has been the case of the ADL when it

Nader'08 Gonzalez

ISSUE STATEMENT Foreign Policy - Israel

ventures beyond its historic mission into covering the Israeli militaristic regime and its brutalization and slaughter of far more innocent Palestinians it occupies, than the reverse casualties inflicted on innocent Israelis.

Your insensitivity here is legion. You fail to understand that your studied refusal to reflect the condemnations of Israeli military action and mayhem against civilians, by the great Israeli human rights organization B'T selem and the major international human rights organizations, contributes to the stereotypic bigotry against Palestinian Arabs and the violent Gulag that imprisons them in the West Bank and Gaza. Yours is more than the “crime of silence” so deservedly condemned in other periods of modern history when despots reigned. You go out of your way to silence or chill others who are raising the same points that B'T selem and Rabbis for Justice and other U.S. and Israeli peace groups, such as Rabbi Lerner’s Tikkun initiative, do.

You are not above twisting words of those you take to task in order to be able to deploy the usual semantic vituperatives. My comments related to the Israeli government – with the fifth most powerful and second most modern military machine in the world – through its prime minister possessing the role of puppeteer to puppets in the White House and Congress. You distorted the comment into “Jews controlling the U.S. government.” Shame on you. You know better. If you do not see the difference between those two designations, you yourself are treading on racist grounds. Indeed, you are too willing to justify any violence against innocent Palestinian children, women and men in the mounting thousands on the grounds of inadvertence and security when such casualties are either direct or foreseeable results of planned military operations. Your refusal to condemn bigoted language, cartoons, articles and statements in Israel up to the highest government levels, can be called serious insensitivity to “the other anti-Semitism.” Both Jews and Arabs belong to the ancient Semitic tribes of the Middle East –either genealogically or metaphorically. There is, as you know so well, anti-Semitism against Jews in many places in the world. There is, as you always ignore, aggressive anti-Semitism against defenseless Arabs in many places in the world and in Israel whose military might and nuclear weapons could destroy the entire Middle East in a weekend.

Consider for example, one of many, many episodes of similar impact excerpted from a publication by Jules Rabin, “An Israeli Refusnik Visits Vermont, The Man Who Didn’t Walk By,” August 3, 2004:

The man who “didn’t walk by” is Yonatan Shapira, until recently pilot of a Blackhawk helicopter and captain in the elite Israeli Air Force. I met Yonatan not many days ago when he came to speak in my town, Montpelier, Vermont, about a major turning point in his life.

Yonatan is a lover of his country, a composer, and a handler of extraordinary machines. He was dismissed from Israel’s air force in 2003 because he refused to take part in aerial attacks in areas of the Occupied Territories of Palestine where there exist large concentrations of civilians liable to become a “collateral damage.” In Yonatan’s view, such attacks are both illegal and immoral because of the near-inevitability of their killing innocent civilians. In support of his

Nader'08 Gonzalez

ISSUE STATEMENT Foreign Policy - Israel

position, Yonatan cites the authority of the Israeli army's own code of ethical behavior, and the fact that, (by a recent reckoning) of 2,289 Palestinians killed by the Israeli Defense Forces in the current Intifada, less than a quarter (550) were bearing arms or were fighters.

At the same time, Yonatan has declared himself absolutely ready to fight in the defense of Israel proper.

Yonatan was shocked into his refusal to obey orders by two occurrences, among others.

One was the action of a fellow Israeli pilot who fired a 1-ton bomb from his F16 fighter jet, as ordered, at a house in Al-Deredg, where a suspected Palestinian terrorist was staying. Yonatan identifies Al-Deredg as one of the most crowded districts of Gaza, and indeed of the world. Besides the targeted Palestinian, 13 local people were killed in that attack: 2 men, 2 women, and 9 children, one of whom was 2 years old. 160 other people were wounded in the explosion. A 1-ton bomb, Yonatan calculates, has approximately 100 times the explosive power of the type of lethal belts worn by Palestinian suicide bombers. In proportion to the US population and the fatalities of the original 9/11 disaster, now an icon and classic measure of terrorist devastation, the fatalities of that single attack on tiny Gaza (population 1,200,000) were greater by 10% than the fatalities in America's own 9/11.

Nor was the bombing of Al-Deredg unique in the scale of its impact on civilian life. Yonatan has cited the casualties resulting from 7 other targeted assassinations conducted in Palestine by the Israel Defense Forces, where, along with 7 other targeted individuals, 44 bystanders were killed. Taking Palestine's overall population at 3,500,000 and that of the US at 290 million, those 44 bystander deaths would represent, in proportion to the US population, another one and a-third 9/11's.

As a volunteer in Selah, a group that assists victims of Palestinian terror, Yonatan has first-hand knowledge of the appalling effects of the multiple 9/11-scale attacks that Israel has itself experienced, at the hands of Palestinian terrorists. He was nevertheless – or – consequently – appalled by the action in Al-Deredg of his fellow pilot. He considered the means used in the attack, a 1-ton bomb, and its goal, the assassination of one man, to be wildly disproportionate to the attack's predictable collateral effects, and a violation of the rules of engagement concerning which all Israeli soldiers are instructed. Those rules, as Yonatan has understood them, include the obligation to refuse to obey orders that are clearly illegal and immoral.

The other occurrence Yonatan cited, that pushed him to become a refuser, came out of a disturbing exchange he had with the commander of the Israeli Air Force, General Dan Halutz, concerning his refusal to serve on a mission in the Occupied Territories. In Yonatan's words: " In the discussion of my dismissal, I asked General Halutz if he would allow the firing of missiles from an Apache helicopter on a car carrying wanted men, if it were traveling in the streets of Tel Aviv, in the knowledge that that action would hurt innocent civilians who happened to be passing at the time. In answer, the general gave me his list of relative values of people, as he sees it, from the Jewish person who is superior down to the blood of an Arab which is inferior.

As simple as that."

Nader'08 Gonzalez

ISSUE STATEMENT

Foreign Policy - Israel

Yonatan is convinced that actions like those of his fellow-pilot and attitudes like those of his commanding general are destroying Israel from within, whatever their effect on Palestine.

Superficially, Yonatan conforms to a stereotype of a career military officer, air force style. He's tall and lithe, dresses trimly and wears his hair closely clipped.

He departs from the military stereotype in other respects. There's nothing of the eagle in his bearing. He's unassuming, and in conversation and argument, he's almost humble in his appeal to his interlocutor's reason and understanding. He listens and speaks with the innate respect and the close attention of a scholar pursuing an investigation, or a navigator studying a chart.

If you do not condemn such behavior as anti-Semitism against Arabs, by your international stature, you are not restraining the present Israeli government's sense that it can conduct such operations with impunity, with a free pass from moral condemnation by a man so accustomed to moral condemnations.

Attached is a copy of my letter to you of August 5, 2004 in which I urged you once again to address. In addition, would you use the same words in your previous letter regarding my characterization of the puppeteer-puppets relationship to the writings of Tom Friedman, Rabbi Michael Lerner and many other Americans and Israelis of the Jewish faith? If not, why not? Is there a thinly veiled bias working here or would you have to use another one of your semantic sallies – portraying them as “self-hating” Jews?

In conclusion, Abraham Foxman has a problem. He is in a time warp and cannot adjust to the new age of total Israeli military domination of the Palestinian people. A majority of the Israeli and Palestinian people believe in a two state solution – an independent, viable Palestinian state and a secure Israel. This is the way to settle this conflict and live in peace for future generations. The ADL should be working toward this objective and not trying to suppress realistic discourse on the subject with epithets and innuendos. As former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak stated in Chicago last June, Israel needs to begin disengaging from the occupied territories and not wait for the right Palestinian Authority. The overwhelming preponderance of military force permits this to happen.

If you have not met frequently with the broad and deep Israeli peace movement, you might wish to change your routine so that you can play a part in the historic effort to establish a broad and deep peace between the two Semitic peoples. The exchanges should be videotaped and widely distributed to further the cause of peace and to witness Abraham Foxman dialoguing without his customary lines that evade the issues.

Sincerely,
Ralph Nader