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Anti-Semitism on the rise in West

By Laurence H. Kant

In the current propaganda war, Israel's self-defense has been decoupled from local and worldwide anti-Semitism and from American interest in free, democratic and egalitarian societies. But that is at our peril.

We seem to live in a 1930s time warp. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad advocates Israel's eradication through a "one bomb solution" and cheerfully denies the Holocaust. Iranian TV airs discussions confirming the "myth" of the Holocaust.

In a surreal parody, Ahmadinejad hosts a Holocaust conference, featuring such infamous hatemongers as David Duke, former Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, and Frederick Toben, an Australian holocaust denier who alleges that Jews intentionally spread AIDS in the United States.

Ahadinejad and Iranian commentators also accuse Jews of perpetrating the "true Holocaust" by murdering countless Iranians and Christians over the centuries. According to their twisted logic, Jews invented the 1940s Holocaust to cover their own crimes.

These are not merely the mad ramblings of one man or government. Throughout the Middle East, state TV outlets frequently broadcast productions denying the Holocaust and demonizing Jews. One popular soap opera, *Knight Without a Horse*, graphically portrays Jews slitting the throats of Muslim children to obtain blood for baking matzohs. The show purports to depict the early 20th-century anti-Semitic forgery *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which describes Jews as seeking world domination through clandestine control of economies and governments.

Other TV programs customarily portray Jews as sub-human by featuring interviewees, including children, who denounce Jews as apes, pigs and dogs. According to one interpretation, Allah turned Jews into these animals because Jews did not accept the prophet Muhammad.

Some programs depict Jews as demonic beings, kidnapping children for body parts and torturing Jesus and Muhammad.

Anti-Semitism, 2,500 years old, has likewise reasserted itself in the West. Attacks on Jews and Jewish property have escalated in Europe to an extent unseen since Nazi days.

In the United States, FBI statistics show that 67 percent of religiously motivated hate crimes are directed against Jews, including the display of swastikas, cross burnings and ethno-racial slurs and threats.

Over the last year, mainstream figures, including former President Jimmy Carter, have accused the Israeli "lobby" of controlling U.S. foreign policy.

While concern for U.S. interests may motivate these individuals, their accusations resemble the nefarious claims of others, including Nazis, who argue that Jews seek international supremacy.

Actor-director Mel Gibson even declared that Jews were responsible for all the wars in the world.

Naturally, Jews everywhere are living with heightened anxiety as attempts to demonize them and calls for the annihilation of Israel evoke the Nazi agenda.

Indeed, Adolf Hitler initiated his genocidal project by first dehumanizing Jews, murdering them and finally eradicating other so-called undesirables, including Roma-Gypsies, gays and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The official PLO and Hamas charters demand Israel's destruction and the deportation of Jews. And extremist Muslim groups advocate the destruction of Western civilization after they "wipe Israel off the map."

Nevertheless, the Israeli government continues to offer to negotiate with Palestinian leaders because Israelis are committed to peace and a Palestinian state.

Of course, Israelis have made errors along the way, but Israel is a democratic society, characterized by vigorous debate and self-criticism.

An open and diverse culture infused with entrepreneurial spirit, Israel has always had a natural and mutually beneficial partnership with the United States.

When all parties recognize the legitimacy of two viable, democratic states -- one Jewish (Israel) and one Palestinian -- and renounce as evil all anti-Semitic actions and words, the Middle East may flourish, and religious reconciliation among the Abrahamic faiths can take place.

Otherwise, we face a nightmare.

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