

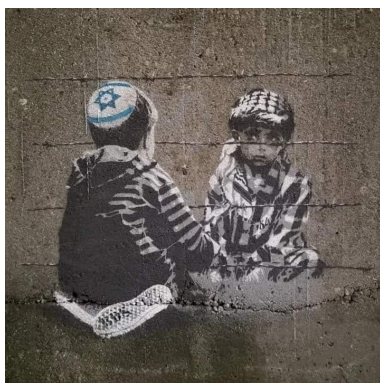
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Israël-Palestine. Peace would neutralize Iran threat

- Aujourd'hui - Israël/Palestine ou l'inverse - Israël-Palestine -



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Since the end of World War II the world has been rife with bloody conflicts in which, or after which, entire population groups have been murdered. One could cite the slaughter of millions by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, or the horrific tribal war in Rwanda, or the brutality in the former Yugoslavia, or the devastation in southern Sudan. But despite all this, the United Nations decided to devote a special memorial day only to the Holocaust of the Jews in Europe.

How was the Jewish Holocaust unique ? Not only due to its scope and cruelty, but also due to the complete lack of the circumstances that caused other massacres. The Jews were not exterminated to enable the Nazis to take over their territory, because the Jews had no territory. They were not exterminated for belonging to a different faith, because the Nazis and their partners were avowed atheists. They were not exterminated as part of an ideological struggle, because the Jews had no particular ideology. Nor did the extermination stem from lust for money : Most of the Jews were poor, and the wealthy ones would have willingly handed it over to the Nazis if this could have saved their lives. Rather, the Nazis viewed the Jews as "a virus" - that's why their extermination was so brutal and thorough.

Despite its uniqueness, the absurd mechanism that led to the Holocaust of the Jews did not disappear with the Nazis' defeat, and we must be on guard lest it rise up once again. Sixty-five years after the liberation of Auschwitz, it is possible to discern frightening signs of this same human mechanism that manufactures false and even hallucinatory accusations against the Jews or others. That is why the UN decided to mark the memory of the Holocaust instead of establishing a general memorial day for all human catastrophes.

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Israel's leaders, who traveled to Europe for International Holocaust Remembrance Day, did not go there only to strengthen the antibodies against modern-day manifestations of anti-Semitism. Rather, they went to muster political support for opposing the acquisition of nuclear arms by Iran, which openly threatens Israel with extermination.

Iran is not Nazi Germany "not with respect to its political regime, not with respect to its ideology, and certainly not with respect to its economic and military capabilities. Nor does Israel resemble the weak Jewish communities that lived in Europe at that time. But for all the differences, the Iranian regime has adopted the same total opposition to Israel's existence. It is therefore liable to slip into the same human mechanism that created the infinite hatred for Jews of the Holocaust era. And when Iran has nuclear weapons, it might be dragged, as Nazi Germany was, into mad aggression.

What can be done ? No one can promise that the sanctions planned by the international community will persuade Iran to desist from its race for nuclear weapons, yet an attempt to destroy its nuclear potential militarily is liable to drag Israel into a drawn-out, exhausting war against the Iranian nation and its regional allies.

But there is another way to neutralize the Iranian threat, one that is both more appropriate and more moral "a peace agreement with the Palestinians. Last month, the Palestinian minister of the Waqf religious trust, Mahmoud Habash, made a speech that inspired hope at a public prayer session in Ramallah. In the presence of the Palestinian Authority's senior leaders, he lambasted Iran's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Essentially, what he said was this : What do you have to do with us ? We don't need your patronage. You are only making the conflict worse, instead of helping us and the Israelis solve it via the method now accepted worldwide - two states for two peoples. By encouraging Hamas' extremism, you merely provoke a harsh response from Israel and thereby distance the solution for which we all yearn. Not one single Iranian soldier has ever shed his blood for our people the way the soldiers of Egypt and Jordan did, yet these countries later signed peace agreements with Israel.

Peace between Israel and Palestine would neutralize the poisonous sting of Iran's hatred for Israel and shatter the political-imaginative mechanism that makes it see Israel as "the little Satan" that must be destroyed at all costs. A joint peace front by Israelis and Palestinians could cause the Iranian people to recoil from the madness that has taken over the religious leadership of this great and honored nation. Therefore, the end of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would have a much greater impact than any Israeli or American military operation. That would only perpetuate this region's pain and suffering.