

Keep It In Context

The current conflict between Hezbollah and the State of Israel is one that needs to be put into context. It is a conflict that has come from provocation by the former and self-defence by the latter. Hezbollah's ongoing rhetoric calling for the destruction of Israel, and its acts of terror against the Jewish State since 1982 is a fact. Such acts include the continual bombardment of rockets on Israeli towns and villages on the border with Lebanon, resulting in many civilian casualties, as well as the current, unprovoked kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers and the killing of 8 others.

Hezbollah's position as a Middle East terrorist organisation also needs further context. In 1982, Hezbollah's original aim was to oust the Israel Defence Forces from Lebanon. In May 2000, then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak unilaterally exited troops from Lebanon. This disengagement was acceptable by the United Nations, who then redrew the international borderline between Israel and Lebanon. Israel's olive branch did not stop Hezbollah's terror tactics against Israel. Even when the international community, through the UN Security Council, passed resolution 1559, calling on the disbandment of Hezbollah, their thirst for Israeli blood did not stop. Today, this terrorist organisation holds 23 seats in the Lebanese parliament.

The democratic world has rightly reacted with outrage at Hezbollah's recent acts of terror. The leaders of the United States, Russia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan have acknowledged Hezbollah's provocation and Israel's clear right to defend itself, remarks endorsed by the leaders of Australia's political parties. Even Jordan's King Abdullah II and Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian president, have criticised Hezbollah for harming Arab interests. Similar language was used by Saudi Arabia,

which accused Hezbollah of "adventurism" in provoking Israel's response and putting all Arab nations at risk.

From Israel's perspective, it is a country and a people, in a constant state of self-defence. Defending itself from Hezbollah, HAMAS, Iran, etc., Israel One must not forget the Holocaust and what it meant to world, let alone European Jewry to loose six million lives. The argument has often been put that that if there were a State of Israel in the early 1940s, then maybe many Jews would have been able to seek refuge from slaughter.

Now, in 2006 the Jewish people in Israel and around the world are still subject to hate and racial violence based on nothing more but pure blind ignorance.

One such act of discrimination happened to me over the weekend in my office at the University of Queensland. I had a series of anti-racism, pro-democracy, pro-Israel posters on my walls which were all defaced with anti-Israel and vile slogans. One must ask, why do such things happen in an environment of such (supposedly) educated individuals at one of Australia's most respected universities?

I think it is ignorance. Ignorance of the facts, ignorance of the issues and ignorance of history. Harvard University law professor Alan Dershowitz once said that: "It is in the hands of the students and individuals whom are more susceptible to the ongoing misrepresentation of the facts to be able to differentiate between fact and fiction." It is the prerogative of every individual to seek the truth and not let it be taught to them.

For the truth about the Middle East, I would encourage everyone to try and differentiate between fact and fiction.

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