

At 71 ISRAEL as a Jewish State is JUSTIFIED

A JEWISH STATE WAS NEEDED

On the 14th May 1948 the first Prime Minister of the modern State of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, proclaimed these words in Israel's Declaration of Independence:

"The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people—the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe—was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State..."

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions..."

The State of Israel has been faithful to the words expressed by Ben-Gurion. It has taken in millions of Jews from around the globe—hundreds of thousands who were refugees from war-ravaged Europe were among the first to arrive in 1948. Within months of the birth of the State, the Displaced Persons camps in Europe that housed devastated Jews were closed down as their occupants had gone home to Israel. Many more who were forced out of Arab States in the Middle East and North Africa in the first few years of independence arrived back home too. Israel has dealt with Jewish "homelessness" and continues to do so because Israel is the indigenous Jewish homeland.

All sectors of Israeli society—Jewish, Arab, Muslim, Christian, Druze etc. share equally in the benefits of the nation in education and culture, politics and religion, business and employment. All have the same equal opportunities you would find in any other genuine democracy. Of course there are problems being worked out within that democracy but there is not one democratic state in the world which is not still 'a work in progress'—New Zealand included. In his speech as Israeli Foreign Minister to the United Nations commemorating the Holocaust in 2005 Silvan Shalom said:

"Since its establishment Israel has provided a haven for Jews facing persecution anywhere in the world. At the same time, it has built a society based on the values of democracy and freedom for all its citizens, where Jewish life and culture and literature and religion and learning—all those things which the Nazis sought to destroy—can flourish and thrive."

Recent history proves that there needed to be a Jewish State and it must remain a Jewish State. Nazi Germany is long gone but anti-Semites are still found in every nook and cranny and they are increasing rapidly. Sometimes it is blatant and directed against the Jewish people simply because they are Jews. At other times it is veiled and directed against the State of the Jewish people in the form of anti-Israel policies at the UN. Anti-Zionist sentiment is another manifestation of anti-Semitism. Zionism is simply the ideal of the Jew to live on his natural, historical and ancestral homeland. Anti-Semitism is unjustified persecution against the Jewish People. Its political companion is espoused as anti-Zionist sentiments and anti-Israel conduct in international affairs. The Basic (Nation State) Law passed by Israel's lawmakers in 2018 which was decried by its opponents as apartheid and racist, is simply a clarification of what Ben-Gurion declared at Israel's independence. It is not anti-Arab or anti any race or religion. It simply enshrines the need to preserve the State of Israel as a Jewish State that will always remain just that, while at the same time giving respect and room to non-Jews who live within that state.

A JEWISH STATE MUST REMAIN

The nations who gathered at Evian in France in July 1938 just prior to the Second World War offered the Jews of Europe little hope of sanctuary or salvation. After gathering there to discuss the Jewish refugee crisis which was growing because of Hitler's policies, many of the 32 representatives seemed to be more absorbed by the luxuries and pleasures the holiday resort afforded than the refugee problem they had gathered to discuss. To the shame of the international community they offered

little to the Jews of Europe at a time when the fires of extermination were being kindled. Had there existed by this time the Jewish State that the League of Nations had promised years earlier then millions of European Jews could have been saved. Both Canada and Australia have recently made official apologies to the Jewish people for their callousness toward desperate European Jewish refugees. New Zealand had an affirmative part in the League of Nations decision in 1922 to grant Palestine to the Jewish people as their national homeland. Our nation also was part of the Evian discussion in 1938 and although Jewish refugees were taken in by New Zealand our quota was far too small. Everything changed with the reestablishment of Jewish statehood.

When the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East were being persecuted after the War it was the reinstated State of Israel which came to their rescue. More Jewish refugees were taken in by Israel in its formative years of existence because of Arab persecution than the displacement of Palestinian refugees as a result of Israel's War of Independence which was forced upon Israel by the Arab nations.

In 1967 as strong Arab armies began to mobilise and converge upon Israel's vulnerable borders with the express aim of destroying the 19 year old Jewish State, the United Nations abandoned their responsibility to step in and chastise the Arab nations for their threat to a sovereign democracy. Even France who at the time was Israel's closest ally abandoned her at her time of need. In desperation the Israelis were forced to act with a pre-emptive strike against the Arab air forces which were threatening them. Within six days, adding to the Arab shame for their aggression against Israel, was the Arab humiliation of a resounding defeat. The rest is history.

When an airliner of innocent Jews was taken hostage and ended up at Entebbe airport in Uganda in 1976 it was the State of Israel who came to their rescue. The Jews of Ethiopia were rescued from great peril in dramatic airlifts in operations that took place in 1984 and 1991. These airlifts would rival any of the Bible stories that have made the people of Israel famous from antiquity. With the demise of the Soviet Union in 1989 it was the State of Israel that offered many of the Jews of that crumbling empire a real refuge and hope. Over a million came from the former Soviet Union in just 10 years. Without the State of Israel these Jews would have been at the mercy of non-democratic regimes which were cruel, ruthless and anti-Semitic.

There needs to remain an independent Jewish State that can function with or without the cooperation of other nations. The horror of all horrors—the Holocaust—just 75 years ago, as well as blatant and increasing anti-Semitism everywhere, demands the continuation of Jewish statehood. The Jewish people are justified in having their own sovereign state. They have learned from centuries of experience at the hands of merciless persecutors. Now amid threats from Iran and others who have stated that their aim is to completely destroy them; when it comes to the security of their very existence *"we will defend ourselves by ourselves"*. This is the lesson they have learned after millennia of Jew-hatred.

NEW ZEALAND MUST BACK THE JEWISH STATE

The anti-Semitic movement which is trying to disguise itself as a humanitarian cause for the Palestinian Arabs—BDS (for Boycotts, Divestments and Sanctions against the State of Israel)—is primarily a political weapon in the hands of Israel's enemies to try and discredit and delegitimize the Jewish people in their quest to maintain their self-determination. The chant of the BDS activists which correlates with their maps of Palestine (showing no room for a Jewish state) is *"From the River to the Sea Palestine will be free!"* This really is the intent and purpose behind BDS—not just to delegitimise Israel but to damn the State altogether. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau summed it up when he said of BDS in January, *"we need to understand that anti-Semitism has also manifested itself not just as in targeting of individuals, but it is also targeting a new condemnation or anti-Semitism against the very State of Israel...which can be characterised by the three d's—demonization of Israel, a double standard around Israel and a de-legitimization of the State of Israel...I will continue to condemn the BDS movement"*.

There is indeed a double-standard in the UN when it comes to Israel. We saw that at the end of 2016 in UN Security Council Resolution 2334 when Israeli settlements were condemned outright, without respect to secure borders or to the historical connection the Jews have to the land. The ratio of condemnations dished out by the UN against Israel as compared to the rest of the world is usually at

least four condemnations to Israel for every one condemnation to all the other nations combined. That's a DOUBLE STANDARD. When despotic and un-democratic nations are by-passed and the one true democracy in the Middle East is ostracised unjustly then it's time for NZ to stand aside from the crowd and vote against these anti-Israel resolutions. National Party leaders who were in government at the time UNSC Res. 2334 was passed have since admitted that the resolution was "wrong". In a more recent case on 6 December 2018 under the Labour-led Government, NZ voted in favour of a UN resolution condemning the terrorism of Hamas but immediately prior to this abstained on another resolution to require a two-thirds majority for the Hamas condemnation to be passed. NZ honourably condemned Hamas terrorism in one vote but first dishonourably killed that vote by sitting on the fence. Why require a two-thirds majority to condemn terrorism? Again it seems truth was sacrificed for appeasement to Arab pressure. The elusive Middle East peace deal, if ever realised, will never produce a lasting peace as long as historical truth is its sacrificial lamb—a sacrifice the UN seems eager to make but a deal Israel should never accept.

The best chance of a real deal will only be achieved if the United Nations step aside and allow honest negotiations to go ahead between the Israelis and the Palestinians. At present the Israelis are being coerced into giving up land that is theirs historically. The Palestinians are demanding that territory as if it is theirs. The historical record backs the Jewish people. Any deal is going to require cooperation from both sides. The Israelis have shown their willingness to placate the Palestinians on this but the Palestinians have not returned the favour. Let's be clear: the Israelis hold land they have a right to hold. The Palestinians want that land. The best chance for a peaceful outcome is NEGOTIATION and respect between the two parties. The best way to botch this is by continued unfair and one-sided UN resolutions against Israel which New Zealand often supports. Despite his domestic challenges in Canada recently, the NZ Government could still learn from Justin Trudeau.

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