

Our World: A rotten state of affairs

Caroline Glick , THE JERUSALEM POST

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Something is rotten in the British Jewish community. In recent years anti-Jewish violence and the social ostracism of Jews and Israel have reached new heights in the United Kingdom. Yet rather than confront their bigoted detractors, the British Jewish establishment seems to be surrendering to them. Two recent episodes are notable in this regard.

One of the mainstays of the British Jewish calendar is the annual Limmud Conference, sponsored by the United Jewish Israel Appeal. The conference, which takes place each year during Christmas week, has been heralded by the British Jewish Chronicle as "The jewel in our community's crown."

This year, the organizers invited former Knesset speaker Avrum Burg to be the conference's keynote speaker.

It would be an understatement to refer to Burg as a fringe figure in Israel. Over the past several years, Burg has written in sympathy and support of Palestinian suicide bombers. This year, Burg published an anti-Zionist and arguably anti-Semitic book entitled *Defeating Hitler*, in which he compared Israel to Nazi Germany and described Zionism as a racist colonialist movement that has poisoned the soul of Jewry.

Burg, who recently received French citizenship, has called for his fellow Israelis to follow his lead and seek foreign passports. While even the Israeli Zionist Left has denounced him, "the jewel" of the British Jewish community has decided to honor him.

The Limmud Conference's move goes hand in hand with the British Jewish establishment's confrontation last week with Britain's Zionist Federation over the ZF's decision to cancel *Haaretz* reporter Danny Rubinstein's scheduled appearance at its annual conference.

THE ZF became uncomfortable with Rubinstein after it learned that on August 30, while participating in the anti-Israel conference at the European Parliament sponsored by the virulently anti-Israel UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Rubinstein referred to Israel as an "apartheid state."

When Rubinstein arrived in London the next day, he met with the ZF's leaders at the home of the organization's chairman, Andrew Balcombe. There, Rubinstein suggested that he not speak at the ZF's conference that weekend. Although they initially rejected the suggestion, Balcombe and his colleagues eventually agreed to cancel his speech.

The same weekend, Rubinstein spoke before British Jews at an event sponsored by the leftist New Israel Fund. There he castigated the ZF, saying that at the meeting at Balcombe's home he felt he was standing before a "court martial." He accused the ZF of leaving him penniless on the streets of London even though its leaders booked him a hotel room and offered to pay for it.

Rather than challenge Rubinstein on his defamatory attacks against Israel and against the ZF - attacks which abet the bigoted voices within Britain calling for boycotts of Israel and sanctioning attacks on British Jewry - the New Israel Fund, and the Jewish Chronicle, upheld Rubinstein as merely "controversial" and attacked the ZF for supposedly silencing free speech and debate.

WHILE MEN like Rubinstein and Burg are given places of honor among Britain's Jewish establishment, the ZF is having trouble finding a security company willing to protect its offices. Moreover, increasingly, British Jewish organizations express unwillingness to co-sponsor events with the ZF due to their unease at being identified with Zionists.

Although British Jewry's unwillingness to defend itself and Israel from defamatory attacks is disturbing, it is hard to judge British Jewish leaders too harshly given that their tendency to seek acceptance from their detractors and give voice to their opponents while blackballing their supporters isn't very different from the policies being promoted by Israel's Foreign Ministry. In fact, it is safe to say that while something is rotten in the British Jewish community, something is even rottener in the State of Israel's Foreign Ministry.

Danny Rubinstein told the ZF's leaders that he began openly referring to Israel as an apartheid state after former US president Jimmy Carter published his anti-Israel libel *Palestine: Peace not Apartheid* last autumn. Yet this fact didn't stop the Foreign Ministry from using Israeli taxpayers' money to send Rubinstein to India to give speeches at Foreign Ministry-sponsored events on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in February.

The Foreign Ministry's embrace of Rubinstein is noteworthy particularly when it is contrasted with the Foreign Ministry's contemptuous treatment of French Jewish activist Philippe Karsenty, who is being hounded by the French media giant France 2 television network for his dogged defense of Israel and the IDF.

ON NOVEMBER 24, 2004, Karsenty, who runs a media watchdog Web site called Media Matters, sent out an email to his subscribers in which he accused the France 2 television network of staging the purported IDF killing of the Palestinian boy Muhammad al-Dura at Netzarim junction in Gaza on September 30, 2000.

Karsenty called for the resignation of France 2's permanent correspondent in Israel, Charles Enderlin, and of France 2's News Director, Arlette Chabot, for their role in promulgating the alleged hoax. France 2 and Enderlin sued Karsenty for defamation. They won their lawsuit last October. Next week, Karsenty's appeal of the verdict is set to open.

It will be recalled that on September 30, 2000, France 2 ran 55 seconds of footage from the Netzarim junction filmed by its Gaza cameraman, Talal Abu Rahma. The footage showed Muhammad al-Dura and his father, Jamal al-Dura, crouching behind a barrel beneath a concrete wall. Shots were fired and Muhammad lay down in his father's lap, and then moved his leg and arm. In his narration of the edited, blurry footage, Enderlin announced that the IDF had killed the boy. France 2 offered its edited video free of charge to anyone who wished to broadcast it.

In the days, weeks and months that followed, the al-Dura tape became the iconic image of the Palestinian war against Israel and, indeed, of the general global jihad against the West. It was invoked by the Palestinian mob in Ramallah that lynched IDF reservists Yosef Avrahami and Vadim Novesche on October 12, 2000. It was invoked by mobs of Israeli Arabs as they opened their violent riots on October 1, 2000.

THE IMAGE of al-Dura has been used in Hamas and Fatah terror recruitment videos, television shows and educational materials as a means to encourage Palestinian children to become suicide bombers. The al-Dura tape was used repeatedly in al-Qaida's videotape of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl's execution in

February 2002 and in other al-Qaida recruitment videos. His image was published in Iraqi Republican Guards newsletters and indoctrination materials before the 2003 US-led invasion. His name has been invoked repeatedly at Islamist and leftist anti-Israel demonstrations throughout the Western world.

Yet the IDF could not have killed the boy. An IDF investigation of the event in late 2000 showed that it was physically impossible for the IDF forces to have either seen or shot at the al-Duras from their position at the junction that day. Aside from that, independent investigations of the events of the day, carried out most notably by Prof. Richard Landes and shown at his Augean Stables Web site, and by Metula News Agency, showed that the event was likely staged. As investigators showed, throughout the day, Palestinian cameramen openly staged scenes of "carnage" performed by amateur Palestinian actors and Red Crescent ambulance drivers.

At one point, a cameraman from Reuters and another man crouched behind the al-Duras, filming staged scenes while the two were supposedly under fire, and in imminent peril.

A DOCUMENTARY by German filmmaker Ester Schapira, *Three Bullets and a Dead Child: Who Shot Mohammed al-Dura?*, was released in late 2002. The documentary, like later investigations by the *Atlantic Monthly* and other publications, concluded that the IDF could not have killed the boy.

Since the controversy first arose, independent investigators have repeatedly asked France 2 to release the 29-minute unedited version of Rahma's film. The requests have been refused.

During his trial last summer, Karsenty presented all the investigative evidence that had been accumulated to that point. The prosecution brought no witnesses, and challenged none of his evidence - sufficing with a letter of support for Enderlin written by then French president Jacques Chirac.

In his ruling last October, the presiding judge argued that although his evidence of the hoax was substantial, Karsenty's allegations could not be credible since "no Israeli authority... has ever accorded the slightest credit to these allegations."

For the past year, Karsenty and his supporters have repeatedly begged the IDF and the Foreign Ministry to support him in his appeal. They have repeatedly appealed to the IDF and the Foreign Ministry to request the unedited France 2 footage. Although various promises of assistance have been made, a week before his appeal, Karsenty has yet to receive any letters of support that he could introduce at his appeal from the Foreign Ministry. According to people close to the trial, Israel's ambassador in France, Danny Shek, enjoys warm relations with Enderlin.

FOLLOWING the Israeli government's lead, most major Jewish organizations in the Diaspora have refused to support Karsenty or to demand the release of the unedited footage of the 2000 film that has served to justify and incite murder and hatred of Jews in Israel and throughout the world ever since. Among American Jewish organizations, the Zionist Organization of America is the only major group that has come out strongly in support of Karsenty.

It is hard to know what to make of this rotten situation. As Jews begin our new year on Wednesday evening, it can only be hoped that with the new year will come a new understanding of our rights and responsibilities.

After seven years of the Palestinian jihad, and six years of the global jihad, it is high time we understood that if we do not defend ourselves and oppose our enemies and detractors, no one will do so for us.



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