

John Kerry's Israel Speech Dishonored Martin Luther King Jr.

In his recent speech about Israel and the Palestinians, Secretary of State John Kerry unfairly blamed Israel and minimized Palestinian violence. But he also did something else: He grievously dishonored the African-American civil rights movement just weeks before Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

In his Dec. 28 address at the State Department, Kerry recited a litany of accusations against Israel. The unkindest cut of all was his charge that Israeli policies are creating "segregated enclaves" for Palestinians and a "separate but unequal" system for Israelis and Palestinians.

Kerry's choice of language could not have been an accident. He didn't speak off the cuff. He didn't ad-lib his 73-minute lecture. He spoke from a carefully prepared text that he and his speechwriters must have spent many days, if not weeks, preparing.

Kerry knew which catchphrases would resonate the most strongly with the American public, especially in the final days in office of the first African-American president. He invoked the words "separate but unequal" in order to equate Israel with some of the ugliest images from America's past.

But Kerry got it exactly backwards.

It is the Palestinians, not Israel, whose behavior is similar to the segregationists of America's civil rights era. I suspect Dr. King would have understood that very clearly. After all, the Palestinians demand that Jews be kept out of certain areas, just as the white segregationists demanded that blacks be kept out of certain areas. The Palestinians have

repeatedly lynched Jewish passersby, just as the white segregationists lynched blacks. The Palestinians smear Jews with anti-Semitic slurs, just as the white segregationists smeared blacks with racist slurs.

Anybody remember that disgusting cartoon of an Israeli soldier preparing to rape a Palestinian woman, which was posted on the official website of the Palestinian Authority's (PA) National Security Forces, in November 2014? How different was that from white racists in the American South who falsely accused African-Americans of assaulting white women?

I wonder if Kerry and his staff are aware of the fact that the majority of Israelis are "people of color." They are immigrants from, or descendants of immigrants from, African and Middle Eastern countries. Moreover, Israel is the only country in the world that ever sent its planes to a famine-ravaged African country to airlift tens of thousands of starving blacks—Ethiopian Jews—to safety.

In its daily life, Israel ensures civil rights for people of all colors and faiths. Contrast that with the Arab world, where racism against Jews and other non-Arabs is rampant. To this day, there are Arab countries (Sudan, Mauritania) where black slavery still exists. For some reason, human rights groups—including those who claim to revere Dr. King's memory—don't pay much attention to it.

By contrast, the PA promotes racism every single day. How? By inciting its citizens to engage in racist violence that targets members of one ethnic group, Jews. The PA does not encourage violence against "Israelis." It encourages violence specifically against Israeli Jews. Not Israeli Arabs. Only Israeli Jews.

Palestinian-populated areas are not "segregated enclaves." The only reason there are no Jewish residents of those areas is that a racist PA refuses to let Jews live there. And if there

is anything “unequal” about the residents of the PA-governed areas, it is because the PA refuses to hold democratic elections, thereby depriving its Palestinian residents of their equal rights.

Kerry’s inappropriate use of civil rights-era rhetoric libels Israel and slanders the cherished memories of all those who fought and sacrificed in America’s civil rights movement, including American Jews who went to prison and, in some cases, even gave their lives. To compare them to the Palestinians, whose “struggle” consists of bombings, stabbings and lynchings, is a grievous slur and dishonors everything we commemorate on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. {eo}

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