

Is Kerry Offering Excuses for Palestinian Terrorists and Blaming Jewish Victims?

Recent remarks by Secretary of State John Kerry give new meaning to the term “Foggy Bottom,” a name synonymous with the location of the U.S. State Department. One might say these remarks represent seeing the peace process through foggy glasses, and a new low, or “bottom,” of U.S. policy vis-a-vis Israel.

I was shocked to see the plethora of news reports and op-eds in the *Jerusalem Post* on Friday, October 16. The number of articles and column inches highlighting and bashing Kerry's comments was unprecedented to the best of my recollection about any one subject in one day's newspaper.

The *Post's* lead editorial, “Kerry and Free Will,” led the barrage by quoting Kerry's incendiary remarks, “*There's been a massive increase in settlements over the course of the last years and there's an increase in the violence because there's this frustration that's growing.*”

The editorial continued, “According to Kerry, the building of houses in Judea and Samaria inexorably leads human beings with full control of their cognitive abilities to take to the streets of Jerusalem and Ra'anana and Itamar to hack people to death. If you ask Kerry, humans, or at least Palestinians, simply react (and) are conditioned by factors considered by Kerry to be beyond their control.

“But wait a minute. Could it be that Kerry is missing something in his analysis? Perhaps Palestinians are not simply captives to external stimuli. Perhaps they have control over their actions, just like you and me. Yet they choose time and again—tragically and violently—to embrace an ideology of

victimhood and death worship that views the spilling of Jewish blood as a holy duty and self-destruction in pursuit of this goal as the highest form of martyrdom.”

Columnist Caroline Glick’s “Kerry, Israeli Arabs and the separation delusion” challenged Kerry’s statement on the facts, and noted, “Kerry and his spokesmen have alleged that the current Palestinian convulsion of murderous violence is a product of ‘a massive increase in settlements.’ Yet as Haaretz (Israel’s left wing, pro-Arab daily) reported, Israel has built fewer homes for Jews in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria since 2009 ... than it had since 1995.”

Another columnist, David Weinberg, penned “Kerry, Stay Home” regarding the possibility that he was planning a trip to Israel. In the end, he is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Netanyahu in Germany. He wrote, “Kerry and his boss, U.S. President Barack Obama, are responsible for shaping the broader inflammatory context that has spawned the current wave of Palestinian terrorism against Israel. He and Obama are guilty of encouraging Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas in the latter’s escalating campaign of brazen lies, violent confrontations and diplomatic assault against Israel.

“Kerry has been utterly silent. He has had no comment of any of these Palestinian outrages. When Prime Minister Netanyahu raised concerns about low Jewish and high Arab voter turnout on Israeli election days Obama and Kerry went bananas. They quickly and loudly blasted him (Netanyahu) as a racist. This shows the prejudicial way in which Obama and Kerry approach the Israeli-Palestinian arena.”

Rabbi Shmuley Boteach wrote in “Kerry’s Broken Moral Compass,” that “Kerry’s comments about the recent wave of terrorist attacks ... Are contemptable. This is an astonishing justification for cold-blooded murder of Israeli men, women and children. Kerry is offering excuses for the terrorists and blaming the victims with (his) malignant words. This isn’t the

first time he has made such outrageous comments with regards to Israel and his reasoning and logic reveal how broken his moral compass has become.

“Kerry has again expressed a disturbingly amoral perspective on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and where the blame belongs. Does he really think that settlements are the root cause of cold-blooded killers stabbing women and children? Or that building houses is what causes terrorists to drive their cars into groups of pedestrians, then exit the vehicle and begin hacking to death the injured as they struggle to crawl away?”

It gives me no pride to call out John Kerry like this. I don't mean to be seen as piling on, but his comments are so outrageous, so dangerous, they cannot be left alone. Sadly, it's hard to disagree with any of these remarks, and the twisted perspective they represent.

However, I have a different perspective, a more personal perspective, as to why Kerry is wrong. Recently we began some renovations at my house. We hired Omar, the Palestinian Arab contractor who supervised building my house a decade ago. Omar has always been friendly, professional, and reliable. He is quick to talk with pride and affection about his five kids. We are about the same age. I have six kids.

But having Palestinian Arabs in our home working with construction tools and my kids around is cause for some stress these days. I trust Omar but don't know his workers, so I hid our kitchen knives. Neighbors are quick to remind me not to be so trusting of Omar, or any of his workers. We live in troubled times.

But when Kerry blames construction in “settlements,” it's the homes for Jewish families that he is finding offensive. But nine out of 10 times, they are built by Palestinian Arabs like Omar. Not only are these not an excuse for justifying the

terrorism and violence that Kerry has done. The fact is that building our homes provides a point of civil interaction between Arabs and Jews that's not only not in conflict, but provides our Arab neighbors with a good living.

And that's not just the men actually working in our house, but the carpenters, building supply distributors, and others who make a good living. If this were to stop, so would their income.

Over the years, I have hosted diplomats from the American consulate in Jerusalem. Each year, there's someone else in charge of visiting, digesting data, and reporting on life on the ground in Israeli communities like mine, over the "green line." What they call "settlements." Its inefficient to me that by the time a young diplomat just begins to understand the situation, a new person is appointed to replace the old one, as if there were a one year expiration date stamped on their side like a box of breakfast cereal.

I have shared the same assessment with each one. It is the polar opposite from the view that Secretary Kerry has presented. Perhaps the memos from low-level U.S. diplomats with my opinions never made it to Washington. Perhaps they got misplaced. Perhaps this is a case of being in the fog and looking at the trees.

Either way, Kerry is wrong. Dead wrong. And expressing these views not only doesn't prevent death and violence, it encourages it. {eoa}

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