

New US Ambassador to Israel Represents Ben and Jerry's Version of Diplomacy

Perhaps it's a coincidence that I just finished reading Richard Heideman's new book, *The Bloody Price of Freedom* last week, the same week in which U.S. Ambassador Thomas Nides said he was "infuriated" by settlement growth. Nides would do well to read the book too. I'll lend him my copy.

"I'm a bit of a nag on this, including the idea of settlement growth, which infuriates me when they do things that just infuriate the situation in east Jerusalem and the West Bank," Nides wrote. He was clearly playing to his audience and likely believes what he said. He's also representing the Biden administration, which seems to support an "anti-settlement" policy, hanging on to hopes that the Palestinian Authority is somehow prepared to step up to make peace after squandering numerous opportunities over decades.

Nides somehow believes that constructing new homes in my neighborhood is, as Palestinian Arabs preached for 50 years, an obstacle to peace. Hanging onto the two-state illusion, Nides stated, "We can't do stupid things that impede us for a two-state solution ... we can't have Israelis doing settlement growth in east Jerusalem or the West Bank."

Nides' comments were not only mistaken, but they were also shockingly undiplomatic for America's new ambassador to Israel. Were Ambassador Nides to read Heideman's book he'd learn, among other things, about Israel's strong legal case combatting antisemitic and anti-Israel attacks, to which it has been subject since 1948, including combatting terror.

While Nides held no punches about being infuriated over "settlements," he swung and missed relating to the real

obstacle to peace, the PA's refusal to accept Israel's existence and make peace for real, while combatting terror and eliminating incitement to terror. As wrong as he was, at least he opened the door to acknowledge that, "By the way, the Palestinians are not perfect, either ... I want to be clear here."

Included in this, Nides mentioned the PA's "pay to slay" program, providing stipends for terrorists and the families of terrorists. "These martyr payments, you know we can debate and talk about it, have caused enormous amounts of problems. And I'm working ... to figure out how to stop it, because it gives the haters—and there are haters—who say: 'We can't do this because they are paying for people to kill Jews.' Again, it's more complicated than that. I just want to make clear that not everyone is perfect."

Just to be clear, Nides is infuriated with my new apartment, but providing cash subsidies to terrorists and their families is debatable and causes problems. He did everything but borrow Jimmy Carter's critique of Palestinian Arab terror as being bad for business, but not morally repugnant or illegal. Yes, according to U.S. law, pay to slay is illegal. That was encoded in what's known as the Taylor Force Act. Taylor Force was an American Christian who was murdered by a terrorist.

No, Mr. Ambassador, there's really nothing to debate or talk about. Palestinian Arab incitement and actual terror is the obstacle to peace, not my apartment. I was thinking about this from a personal perspective and realized that if, God forbid, I were to be killed by a terrorist, because I live in a "settlement," the ambassador would not show up to pay his condolences to my American family, because he is not only infuriated by our home but won't dignify the Jewish people's legitimate and historic right to live in Judea and Samaria. I guess he's representing the Ben and Jerry's of diplomacy.

It was also more than coincidental that in the same week of

Nides' shameful comments, I met an old friend. Kathleen Luken knows something about terror and pay to slay. Her twin sister, Kristine, was murdered by Palestinian Arab terrorists in December 2010. Because the terrorists were caught and imprisoned, according to the PA's pay to slay policy, the terrorists are ranked high up in the amount they or their families received. Too bad they weren't killed too; they'd have received that much more.

For Kathleen and me, it was like a reunion of old friends, only we had just met in person for the first time. We didn't talk much about Kristine and her murder or how Kathleen was doing. It was just a special visit. But previously, Kathleen shared her thoughts on pay to slay:

I think it is atrocious and abhorrent that the Palestinian Authority provides financial support to the families of those who perpetrate such evil and call them "national heroes." It is a practice that keeps Palestinians in a cycle of hate and in prison of their own making. Bitterness and anger will do that. They as a people will not be able to rise above and make a home, a living, be productive with this misplaced erroneous evil mentality. They are misguided—nothing will ever change with this approach. It will just continue to blind each generation—the sick cycle will continue until one person at a time chooses. I realize it is far more complex than I can imagine but there is a better way, and it starts by stopping the encouragement and financial rewarding of killing Jews or anyone—all are fair game for their hatred and evil. Their hate keeps them bound. It is more than sad as that the terror attacks are accepted blindly as an acceptable way of life. I hope that Palestinians choose a better way, a way of peace, respect and honoring of all life—every life matters and is valuable and precious.

To be charitable, maybe Nides was just reading things from left to right in English when he really meant to be reading

things from right to left as in Hebrew. Pay to slay is infuriating and the true obstacle to peace. My home, not so much.

Like Taylor Force, Kristine Luken was an American and a Christian. The ambassador may not be able to change the administration's policy, but he should try looking at things more openly, from a position of reality, and not based on tried and failed policies of the past. To that end, Nides has a historic opportunity to redirect American policies and perhaps do so in a way that is constructive and not backward as he articulated. I'm pleased to invite Nides for coffee, lunch or even Shabbat dinner to discuss and debate things that are debatable and to decry things that are evil.

It's an open invitation. {eoa}

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