



Back To The Bashing

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Western views toward Israel have returned to Kafkaesque normalcy after a brief break for sanity, as the United States now argues that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is making Islamic State group recruiting easier, and Europe punishes Israel and rewards the Palestinians for their ongoing conflict.

Israel's return to normal status comes just three months after the U.S. and the European Union initially supported Israel's summertime military operation in response to rising rocket fire from Gaza and blasted Hamas for launching the rockets or letting other like-minded groups do so.

Once again, the West blames the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for the region's multiple raging disputes and puts the onus on the Israeli government to make peace with those who reiterate their vow to destroy it.

In Washington, Secretary of State John Kerry returned from the Middle East recently to declare, "As I went around and met with people in the course of our discussions about the [Islamic State group] coalition, the truth is we – there wasn't a leader I met with in the region who didn't raise with me spontaneously the need to try to get peace between Israel and the Palestinians, because it was a cause of recruitment and of street anger and agitation ... And people need to understand the connection of that. And it has something to do with humiliation and denial and absence of dignity."

Kerry's assertion is demonstrably false, however. Islamic State group recruitment is driven by broad, anti-Western hatred rather than narrow Palestinian statehood, while Middle Eastern autocrats always want to shift the U.S. focus away from their own failings and toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

From Europe, EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton mouthed the usual global drivel about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ignoring Hamas' terrorist pursuits to explain last summer's 50-day Israel-Hamas war this way: "I want to stress one more time that the solution for Gaza cannot be found in Gaza alone," she said. "Only a credible resumption of the peace negotiations can allow for a durable solution to the current crisis."

On the continent, meanwhile, governments are taking steps to recognize a "State of Palestine" (sidestepping the very Israeli-Palestinian peace talks that they promote) while EU members threaten Israel with sanctions if its settlement activities continue while progress lags on Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.

This month, Sweden's government recognized Palestine, Britain's Parliament passed a non-binding resolution to do so and top French officials urged Paris to take similar action if peace talks prove fruitless. With such steps come more European calls to boycott Israeli products, particularly those made on Israeli territory beyond the pre-1967 borders to which Europe wants Israel to retreat.

At an Oct. 12 international conference in Cairo, some 50 nations pledged \$5.4 billion in Palestinian aid, with half of it earmarked to rebuild Gaza. Kerry got the ball rolling by announcing at the outset that Washington would contribute \$212 million, while the EU pledged \$568 million.

Thus, the West eagerly promotes global efforts to rebuild a narrow strip that's still controlled by Hamas, which launched thousands of rockets at Israeli population centers before the Israeli government responded, stored their weapons in schools and mosques and hid their fighters among civilians so that Israeli military action would mean the gruesome deaths of hundreds of Palestinian women and children.

To secure the new aid, Hamas didn't have to promise to seek peace with Israel, disavow new rocket attacks or sacrifice its weapons. Nor, despite assurances to the contrary, would donors have any realistic way to ensure that Hamas, which previously diverted humanitarian aid to build the sophisticated network of tunnels that Israel discovered after launching its counterattack, wouldn't do so again.

Donor promises to funnel the aid through the "moderate" Palestinian Authority, which controls the West Bank, and bypass Hamas are hardly reassuring. For all their friction, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas formed a unity government for the Palestinian territories and, in fact, held their first joint cabinet meeting this month in Gaza.

In essence, the West blames Israel for not securing peace with a terrorist group that's now rearming, vows to reignite the fight at some future date and proclaims that it could destroy Israel for good if it could wrest control of the larger, more strategically placed West Bank from the Palestinian Authority.

Ah, good. The stars are once again in their proper celestial places – and Israel is once again the Jew among nations.