

### No peace while he's still in place

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The recent decision of the Israeli government to deport Yasser Arafat from the disputed territories has unleashed a flood of international indignation, with a collection of the most military buffoons rallying to the Palestinian leader's defense. Even the United States, although voting an Arab-drafted U.N. Security Council resolution condemning the Israeli decision, has pressured Israel not to harm Arafat or send him into exile. The U.S. stance is particularly puzzling given President Bush's statement on June 24, 2002, that "peace requires a new and different Palestinian leadership" and that "a Palestinian state will never be created by terror."

As long as Arafat dominates Palestinian politics, there will be no end to terror. From the beginning of his political career in the early 1980s, violence has occupied a prominent position in his world. The more he resorted to violence, the more he was revered with it. He has never, even upon his return for the suffering and destruction he has brought upon his own people and other Arabs. Instead, he has viewed the atrocities as necessary consequences of his revolutionary exploits. According to the Israeli newspaper *Al Haniman*, he granted to fellow members of the Fatah leadership, shortly before the signing of the Oslo accords in September 1993, "just as I ruled Jabalton from the Beirut suburbs of Fakhani, as I will rule the territories from the West Bank city of Jericho."

Indeed, after the Oslo agreement, he achieved a firm hold in the West Bank and Gaza. But rather than use it to lay the groundwork for Palestinian self-rule, as envisioned by the accords, Arafat set out to build up an extensive terrorist infrastructure. He consistently failed to disarm the terrorist groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad as required by the Oslo accords,

and thereby tacitly approved the murder of hundreds of Israelis by these groups. He created a far larger Palestinian army (the so-called police force) than was permitted by the accords. He indoctrinated his people with a hatred of Jews and Israelis rivaling that of the Nazis. In September 2000, he resorted to mass violence in order to publicly discredit newly elected Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In September 2000, shortly after rejecting an offer by Netanyahu's successor, Ehud Barak, to create an independent Palestinian state in 82 percent of the West Bank and 100 percent of the Gaza Strip, he went even further: he endorsed an initiative that continues today.

Had Arafat chosen to accept the Israeli concessions offered by Barak, a Palestinian state might exist now. It is clear that, for all his rhetoric about Palestinian independence, Arafat has never been an interested in the actual attainment of statehood as the violence attests to.

Arafat has failed his people, sacrificed them in a devastating and unnecessary war. Now Bush has presented an alternative vision, that it cannot be implemented with Arafat in

### Commentary



Nations affirmed it. Again, Israeli leaders ignored the popular character of Palestinian demands and blamed the leadership. It was Arab leaders who were keeping the refugees in camps to use them as pawns, the claim went, and not that Israel was defying the international community. Today, Israel again turns attention on the Palestinian leadership. It thus associates commanding members of military groups, while hundreds of innocent bystanders are killed in the process. It thus calls for the appointment of a first (and now a second) Palestinian prime minister, even though this "democratic reform" lacks popular support. And now it plots to get rid of Yasser Arafat.

# Issues around Arafat

The Palestinians deserve a profound structural reform that will sweep Arafat and his corrupt Palestinian Authority from power. Free West Bankers and Gazans from the stifling PLO grip, eradicate the endemic violence from Palestinian life, and teach the virtues of peaceful coexistence with Israel. This is certainly a difficult and protracted process requiring sustained international guidance and support. But if history tells us anything, it is that any other alternative is a recipe for disaster.

Ethan Aas, author of "Arafat's Vice" writes this piece for the Los Angeles Times.

also reveals a deep misunderstanding about what drives Palestinian. The Palestinian movement is not the handwork of terrorist leaders. It is a popular struggle for national independence. Even when its means are deplorable, its roots lie in the genuine miseries of Palestinians and their grassroots demand for change. Israeli supporters have a long history of blaming Palestinian actions on evil leaders. Early in the 20th century, Zionist efforts to buy up land and establish Jewish-only institutions met with protests from indigenous Arabs, who feared that they were being turned into strangers in their own territory. Most Jewish settlers did not recognize, or did not want to recognize, that their nationalist nationalist struggle in the same land.

Indeed, the first Jewish settlers claimed that the problem lay with Arab leaders. It was the implementation of the plan, who were stirring up the masses, they claimed, and not the masses who had a will of their own. When two-thirds of the Arab population fled during the year of 1948-1949, Israeli accused the Arab leadership of encouraging the exodus. Even before the fighting finished, these refugees clamored for their right to return, and the United

### Targeting leaders ignores reality

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Israeli's recent decision to remove Yasser Arafat has many people up in arms — and with good reason. Not only does it flout Ariel Sharon's indifference to international law, but it



Candidates Sam Katz, left and John Street are in a mayoral race that closely resembles their 1999 clash. Personality and race might determine the outcome.

## Street and Katz in a close one

John Street, the incumbent Democratic mayor of Philadelphia, is in the fight of his political life. He has bid for a second term. There has been no debate, the race has been tight on issues and heavy on tactics. Personality and race may well determine the results. And that might give his challenger the edge.

Street's Republican opponent once again is businessman Sam Katz, who challenged Street last time and lost by only 257 votes in a town where registered Democrats outnumber registered Republicans four to one.

Street has taken on three of the long-term cancers affecting many urban centers like Philadelphia: poor schools, neighborhood blight, and drug-related violence and crime. All of those afflictions are interwoven.

credited with heading the schools in the right direction. Side Street's mayor's crime initiative, police uniformed patrol in the city's toughest, most dangerous neighborhoods, Superintendent Johnson, Street's police commissioner, has strong support among police officers and most community leaders. In many neighborhoods, people have felt safer since Street became mayor. As for blight, Street's program, the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI), has

towered thousands of abandoned cars, torn down abandoned houses, and cleaned up 31,000 vacant lots.

NTI has been criticized by many, including Katz, who says it is moving too slowly. But as NTI executive director Joe Smith says, the problems of poor housing and neighborhood blight have been allowed to fester for more than 30 years. As Smith says, "It's going to take more than three years to turn that around."

Street is not alone in being criticized by many, including Katz, who says it is moving too slowly. But as NTI executive director Joe Smith says, the problems of poor housing and neighborhood blight have been allowed to fester for more than 30 years. As Smith says, "It's going to take more than three years to turn that around."

The plan has not been perfect, but more has gone right than wrong. By spreading responsibility on issues like using wooden fences, ornate and clumpy canopies, NTI has changed the look of old neighborhoods and in many has helped to stop deterioration. He has acted to transform the landscape of the inner city more than any of his predecessors. Center City

continues to prosper; and property values have increased in many neighborhoods. He has exhibited fiscal discipline in running the city, as even his harshest critics will concede. Given all these accomplishments, why is the race so close? Katz did not distinguish himself as either a school board member or as head of Greater Philadelphia First. And when you set Katz's actual accomplishments next to Street's, and consider that ratio of Democrats to Republicans, the results of recent polls have been stunningly lopsided.

Maybe it boils down to personality and race. Neither favors Street. Street is famous for not being warm and fuzzy; Katz is seen as affable and accessible.

For far race, white voters in this city have never given a majority of their votes to a black candidate. Black voters, on the other hand, have often supported white candidates, even those with strong black opponents. And in this election, not all the criticism of Street is coming from whites. Some blacks are angry at him for not doing enough to provide jobs.

That doesn't mean anyone has to like it. Or that we aren't missing a chance to have an election based on things that count for once.

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Send: Russel Simmons on the youth vote. For commentary on regional topics, please see B2.

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