



## U.N.fit for Leadership

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On Tuesday, President Bush will host Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert at the White House at the same time that former President Jimmy Carter will host U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour in Atlanta. The difference between the two envoys, both traveling under the banner of rights and freedoms, could not be starker.

On May 12, Arbour issued a stupefying press release. In the context of a message, about the "deteriorating situation in occupied Palestinian territory," Arbour stressed: "The rising number of lives lost, whether as a result of targeted killings or suicide attacks, home-made missiles or artillery fire, is unacceptable." The United Nations highest-ranking human-rights officer cannot distinguish between suicide bombing and targeting the would-be bombers or their masters. She cannot discern a difference between the missiles di-

rected at Israeli homes and schools from Gaza, and the artillery fire from Israel directed at the launching pads or the launchers.

In fact, not once in her lengthy remarks did Arbour mention terrorism or self-defense. On the contrary, she explicitly described her goal as "making the parties to the conflict stop this new cycle of violence."

The moral depravity of Arbour's message resonates across the U.N. system. This month the U.N. Palestinian representative, Riyadh Mansour, issued two letters to the U.N. Security Council. The first, dated May 5, contains the "names of martyrs killed by the Israeli occupying forces" (emphasis mine). Included in the list is Sami Salim Mohamed, the Palestinian suicide bomber that killed 11 people and wounded 66 at a food stand in Tel Aviv on April 17. Ten days later on May 15, the U.N. representative issued another letter

listing as a “martyr” Elias Ashkar. The Israeli army had successfully targeted and killed Ashkar, the man responsible for constructing the Tel Aviv bomb and dispatching the bomber.

Mansour’s messages also found their mark. Following the Tel Aviv bombing, the U.N. Security Council engaged in negotiations over whether to condemn the attack. But an agreement could not be reached, even for a press statement. Council member Qatar refused the necessary consensus. Only a week later, however, the council had no difficulty adopting a presidential statement condemning “in the strongest terms,” as “terrorist acts,” the bombings at an Egyptian Red Sea resort.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan is similarly conflicted. At the end of April he issued his first-ever report on “a global counter-terrorism strategy.” An intensive first reading of the report ended this past Friday. Annan decided to duck entirely the question of the definition of terrorism, since no common ground exists within a U.N. framework that counts state sponsors of terrorism as family. What Annan did manage to include however, was a lengthy section called “We must address conditions conducive to exploitation by terrorists.” In this section, he urged “we must be vigilant against the defamation of religions,” suggesting the adoption of “voluntary codes of conduct for journalists covering terrorism” – code language for censorship.

Not surprisingly, Annan’s “condi-

tions conducive to exploitation by terrorists” quickly digressed into an attack on foreign occupation. It is a short step to the usual Islamic diversionary tactic, the phenomenon of root causes. Annan was at pains to fathom the terrorist and his protégés’ inspiration; he proffered, for example, “violent conflict,” “poor governance,” “lack [of] equal opportunities,” “youth unemployment,” “marginalization,” and “alienation.” Having explored the reasons to hate, he exhorted U.N. members to “focus on dissuading potential terrorists from choosing terrorism in the first place.” (Limited sanctions are reserved for the Taliban, al Qaeda, and their associates.)

The secretary-general’s report buries the fact that work on the U.N. comprehensive convention against terrorism has ground to a halt, because the Organization of the Islamic Conference has refused to schedule another meeting. Omitted altogether is the fact that the U.N.’s lead antiterrorism body, the Counter-Terrorism Committee, has never named a single terrorist, terrorist organization or state sponsor of terrorism. But Annan has a solution for the Committee’s future: “I urge relevant organizations to build further on such synergies among various entities.”  
Feel safer?

U.N. depravity and deceit in combating terrorism ought to send a clear signal to both President Bush and Prime Minister Olmert: Solutions to their common problems do not lie through the U.N. Not through praying for a serious U.N. Security Council resolution on Iran.

Not through hoping that the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) will save Palestinians from the consequences of having empowered killers and racists as their representatives. Not through imagining

the Middle East Quartet will drive fair and balanced negotiations.

U.N.-led multilateralism is neither a substitute for leadership, nor a vehicle for winning the war.

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