

Abandoning the language of hate to achieve peace

When Palestinians abandon the language of hate in exchange for the language of peace, then prospects for peace in the Middle East will be significantly enhanced.

VIEWPOINT

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BACK in 2003, I was asked by a senior television journalist, the late Richard Carleton, what it was the Palestinians had to give in order for peace to be agreed upon between Israel and the Palestinians. He was concerned that Israel wanted to trade concessions with the Palestinians in order to cut a peace deal while, in his view, the Palestinians had nothing to give, and so were forever, as he put it to me, disenfranchised.

I suggested to him that the Palestinians must give up teaching war and the killing of Jews to their children. After all, Resolution 242 calls for an end to all states of belligerency. The Oslo Accords expressed the same approach. Mutual respect for the right to life must be the bedrock of any move towards peace. Yet it remains a frightening reality that the Palestinian Authority's schools – not just Hamas' schools – present the homicide bomber as a moral example to follow. They do not teach that a Jewish life is as valuable as a Muslim one. They do not teach that peaceful coexistence is an acceptable outcome in

resolving a conflict with Israel.

To the western mind, celebrating the murder of innocents reflects a fundamental and persistent disregard for the right to life. The western mind also finds this culture of hate impossible to absorb into western thinking. Actions, such as Hezbollah's Sheikh Nazrallah's contrived and compulsory celebration of Samir Kuntar's murder of an innocent child, reflect values we simply do not share, and which we find difficult to understand. Ironically, the same psychological block led to the western world refusing to acknowledge the reality of Nazi policy that led to the Shoah. Yet to appreciate how great the challenge for peace really is, one must appreciate how well embedded that culture of hate has become.

Robert S Wistrich noted in his paper, *Muslim Anti-Semitism: A Clear and Present Danger* published by the American Jewish Committee, as follows: "One finds a growing readiness in the Arab world to believe that the Jews consciously invented the 'Auschwitz lie', the 'hoax' of their own extermination, as part of a truly diabolical plan to achieve world domination."

It should go without saying, but the harsh reality is that it needs to be said over and over again, that for Israel and her Arab neighbours to have real peace, it must last for generations, and for that to happen, the children must learn peace and not war.

There is a significant minority of Palestinians who genuinely desire peace, and do not support this culture of hatred. They need to be nurtured. Too many, however, continue to act on hateful and deceitful propaganda. Something has broken down in their concept of humanity. Until life becomes more valuable than death, peace becomes more valuable than war, and democracy replaces despotic dictatorship, a real and durable peace will remain a vision unattainable.

Imagine how things might be one generation later if Jew hatred was not taught in Arab schools anymore and instead, the values of respect, pluralism and peaceful coexistence replaced it.

Can those who hope for peace expect a new generation of Palestinians to grow up and earnestly become the peace partners that Israel actively seeks? Sadly, this remains unlikely. The next generation is already being raised on the milk of Jew hatred.

But imagine how things might be one generation later if Jew hatred was not taught in Arab schools anymore and instead, the values of

respect, pluralism and peaceful coexistence replaced it. It is neither realistic nor reasonable to expect peace to be made by those who grow up learning that peaceful coexistence of Arabs and Jews is not an option. When such change happens, and eventually it will have to, perhaps the generation after will know a real peace. Here is a hint of the most powerful concession the Arab world, including the Palestinians, can make to achieve peace.

Israel wants to make peace, and not unreasonably looks not just at the words but the conduct of its proposed peace partner to assess the sincerity of what it is offered in return.

The critical conduct that will persuade the world – not just Israel – that the Palestinians truly want to turn away from the path of destruction is the abolition of the teaching of hate and war, to be replaced by genuine education for peace.

When Israel next offers to exchange land for peace, the peace must include a demonstrated replacement of the teaching of hatred and murder with education towards enduring peaceful coexistence.

After all, if you teach that life has value for all human beings regardless of race, religion or other differences, then those who destroy life will be cast out rather than celebrated.

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