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"Freedom of the Press belongs to those who own one."

A. J. Liebling of the New Yorker

December 12, 2001



Arafat or Saddam?

O *ne of my friends sent me an e-mail with this question: Who is next, Saddam or Arafat?*

My vote would be Arafat. I can think of no more destabilizing influence in the Middle East than Arafat's refusal to rein in the terrorists in his midst. Sometimes I feel the only way to handle the Middle East is to build a wall 100 feet high around the entire area, throw a cell phone over the wall and tell whoever gets it to call us when their feud is settled ... however it gets settled. If it gets settled.

The problems there are really insoluble, but they can be settled. Israel can settle them, even if they can't solve them, and I suspect that the voice that calls Washington on the cell phone will be that of an Israeli.

That doesn't mean that there will be justice, only that there will be quiet. Right now, I'll settle for quiet.

Several months ago I watched a PBS poignant story of a Palestinian man who still had the front door key to a home he had in what is now Israel. He had guarded that key for decades and he wanted to go "home." It was a tearful story. The camera crew took this pitiful man and his family to their old home, which is now owned by a Jewish family who had bought the old man's "abandoned home" many years ago. When the Jewish family was told of the Palestinian refugee's hope they



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asked, "And where are we to go? Are we to go back to Warsaw and evict the owners of our old home, and have them go to their old home and claim that back, and ..."

No, that is not a rational solution. At some point the Palestinians have to "get over it." They have let their pain fester in squalid refugee camps for more than half a century. They are smarter than that, but that is what they have done, and that hatred focused on Israel rather than on rebuilding their lives in any one of several countries that offered resettlement.

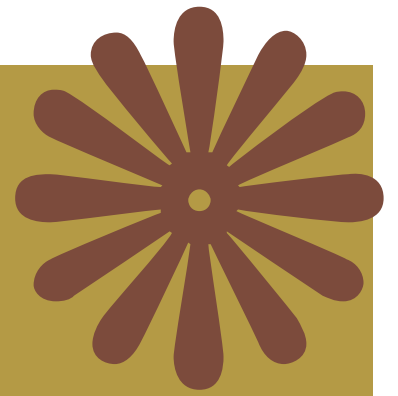
That festering hatred for those who settled their land under the United Nations, and the United States for having supported it, has spread throughout the entire Middle East, and has fostered terrorist movements in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq and almost everywhere else in the region.

Israel is here to stay, and Palestinian refugees need to accept that - but they don't. Israel needs to understand it has no right to push their settlements further into territory not given them by the United Nations a half century ago - but they don't.

There is no rationality in the Middle East. There is no justice in the Middle East. Sometimes might must make safe that which can never be made right. Israel alone has that might and when attacked four times in the past they have demonstrated their ability to use their might effectively.

Palestinian terrorists have targeted Israeli civilians by the hundreds. The United States needs to permit, even encourage, Israel to employ the same policies we have used ourselves.

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**"The best things and best people rise out of their separateness. I'm against a homogenized society because I want the cream to rise."
—Robert Frost**

