

Terrorism in the Arab-Israeli Conflict

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by

Neve Gordon

Assistant Professor of Politics and Government
at Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheva, Israel

George Lopez

Director of Undergraduate Studies,
Professor of Government and International Studies

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Introduction

The peace rally was coming to an end, and the extraordinary turnout seemed to reassure Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin that he had enough public support to carry on with the Oslo Peace Accords. Surrounded by bodyguards, he left the podium walking leisurely towards his car. Suddenly four shots were heard; Rabin fell to the ground as the bullets penetrated his body. The assassin, a Jewish extremist associated with a small group called Eyal (Fighting Jewish Organization), told the investigators that he murdered the prime minister in order to destroy the peace process.

Following the November 4th, 1995 assassination, Shimon Peres became Israel's Prime Minister. A secure 20 percent lead over his rival Binyamin Netanyahu motivated Peres to call for early elections, moving the date forward from the fall to May 29, 1996. A public-opinion poll taken on February 9th, 1996, four months after he entered office, indicated that the gap between the two politicians had not changed (Gallup Poll). On February 25, two suicide terrorists members of Izzadin el-Kassam, the military wing of the Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement), detonated pipe bombs which were attached to their bodies; one on a commuter bus in Jerusalem, killing 26 people, including three U.S. citizens, and wounding 80 others; another, at a bus station near Ashkelon, killing two Israeli soldiers. Messages received by news agencies said the attacks were perpetrated by the Hamas as an act of reprisal for the death of Yahya Ayyash. Ayyash, also known as "the Engineer," had masterminded several attacks against Israel, and was murdered on January 5th by a booby-trapped mobile telephone planted by Israel's secret service.

Reporting from Israel on the day of the two suicide attacks *New York Times*, correspondent Serge Schmemmann wrote that "while Prime Minister Shimon Peres and his Labor Party have held a sizable lead in public-opinion polls over the conservative Likud opposition since the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November, all political pundits have said that [the differential] could change sharply and rapidly if Palestinians terrorists struck again" (NYT 02/26/96). As if to fulfill Schmemmann's prediction, six days later, on March 3rd, a suicide bomber detonated a bomb on a Jerusalem bus, killing 19 people and injuring six others. The next day yet another Izzadin el-Kassam terrorist exploded himself outside Dizengoff Center, Tel-Aviv's largest shopping mall, killing 20 people and wounding 75, including two U.S. citizens.¹ A Gallup poll from March 15th indicates that Peres's lead decreased dramatically as a result of these attacks and that the gap between the two contenders was no longer significant, 44 percent for Peres as opposed to Netanyahu's 41 percent. Two and a half months later, Peres lost the elections by a margin of one percent, and Netanyahu, the newly elected prime minister, abandoned the peace process specified in the Oslo Accords.

These events seem to confirm that political terrorism is firmly linked to an existing political order in the sense that the objectives of the terrorists are to undermine (or uphold) a system of government or a specific policy promoted by the government. Both Rabin's assassin and the Hamas committed violent acts in order to cripple the peace process between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority. Moreover, history teaches that in this region it is not uncommon for terrorism to be employed as a political tool. Even before World War II the Middle East was infested with domestic terrorism, while in the 1960s it became the center for several prominent organizations which have

¹ According to Harvey Kushner, from the signing of the Oslo accords in September 1993 and until 1996 almost 200 Israelis died as a result of suicide attacks (Kushner 1996, 330).

employed terrorism in the international arena (Alexander *et al*, 1989, xi). Currently, five out of the seven states considered by the U.S. to be sponsors of international terrorism are located in the Middle East (United States 1998, 23).

Using terrorist attacks perpetrated in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a point of reference, this chapter underscores the significance of the controversies regarding terrorism's definition. After depicting a number of incidents of Palestinian terrorism, we turn to examine the definition of terrorism used by the United States Department of State. We inquire whether the definition captures the particular nature of these terrorist acts, examining whether it improves our understanding of the unique strategy employed by terrorists, while discussing the significance of including the perpetrator's identity in the definition. Next, we offer an alternative definition of terrorism which accentuates only the nature of the act, and introduce another set of cases, this time focusing on violent acts perpetrated by the state of Israel in Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This new definition and these cases enable us to problematize two components that are often associated with terrorism: the actor's identity and the methods employed. By way of conclusion, we argue for the establishment of international institutions that can help arrest terrorism.

Palestinian Terrorism

In 1948, following the partition of the country by the United Nations and after the British mandatory power pulled out, five Arab armies invaded Palestine -- those of Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon -- in support of the Palestinians. The ensuing war transformed the Arab-Jewish struggle in and over Palestine into an Arab-Israeli conflict. Indeed, the war's political consequences were momentous. On the one hand, the establishment of the state of Israel in an area larger than the one allotted to it by the U.N. partition resolution was consolidated. On the other hand, the Arab Palestinian state

envisaged by that resolution did not come into being, and the area allocated to it was divided by Jordan, Egypt and Israel (Rabinovich 1991, 38). In addition, the refugee problem was created, and today there are an estimated 3 million Palestinian refugees, of which over half live outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Boutwell, *et al*, 1995, 72).

Eleven years after the war, while living in Kuwait, Yasser Arafat founded Fatah, an organization whose major objective was to create a Palestinian state and, by extension, to annihilate Israel. It was only in 1965, however, that Fatah's military arm, al-Asifa (the storm), began carrying out guerrilla operations inside Israel (Cobban 1984, 23; Alexander *et al*, 1989, 7). A year earlier the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which would become the umbrella organization for most Palestinian groups, was founded by Ahmad al Shuqairy, who declared that the purpose of the organization was to "drive the Jews into the sea" (Anderson *et al*, 1995, 268).² While these were the initial signs of the Palestinian liberation movement's reawakening, the question of Palestine reemerged in the international arena in full force only after Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the Six Day War; this was the first time that one authority controlled all of pre-1948 Palestine.³

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) was founded a few months after the 1967 war, and, similar to the existing organizations, its objective was to establish a homeland for the Palestinians in what had become Israel. Already in mid-1968 its members hijacked an El Al (Israeli) airliner en route from Rome to Tel-Aviv, and in December, PFLP terrorists raided an El Al Boeing at the Athens airport, killing one Israeli (Alexander *et al*, 1989, 11). Despite the fact that it was a very small organization, during

² In 1969, Arafat became the chairman of the PLO, and retained this position until the signing of the Oslo Accords. He is currently the president of the Palestinian Authority in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

³ UN resolution 242 was adopted following the 1967 War. The idea of land in exchange for peace, which became the basis for the peace negotiations, was first articulated in this resolution.

the late 1960s and in 1970 the PFLP was the major perpetrator of Palestinian terrorism. Its leaders realized that the assaults not only imposed the Palestinian question on the international agenda, but that by committing terrorist acts the group broadened its support among Palestinians, thus strengthening its prospect of becoming a viable alternative to Fatah.

In September, 1970, PFLP terrorists skyjacked four planes (a fifth attempt to hijack an El Al airliner was prevented by Israeli security personnel on board). Three of the four were forced to fly to Zarqa airfield in Jordan and the fourth was flown to Cairo. While the 400 hostages were ultimately set free in exchange for the release of terrorists being held in West European jails, all four planes were blown-up in order to draw public attention. The Zarqa skyjacking brought to a showdown the mounting tension between the Palestinian refugees and King Hussein of Jordan, who felt that his sovereignty was being eroded as a result of Palestinian activity in the country. After a few months of fighting between the Jordanian army and the PLO, an estimated 3,000 PLO combatants and civilians were killed and about 150,000 Palestinians were expelled to Syria, most of whom sought refuge in Lebanon (Alexander *et al*, 1989, 13; Cobban 1984, 52).

These incidents lead to the creation of the notorious organization Black September, which, in its first four years of existence, functioned under the supervision of Fatah. By 1971 the clandestine group had assassinated Jordanian Prime Minister Wasfi al Tall in Cairo. Its most infamous terrorist act was, however, the Munich massacre. On September 5th, 1972, eight masked gunmen raided the compound of the Israeli team in the Olympic Village, murdering an Israeli athlete and his coach outright, and taking the remaining athletes hostage. In the skirmish between the terrorists and the German police, the former killed all nine hostages, while the police killed five terrorists capturing the remaining three (Alexander *et al*, 1989, 14; Anderson *et al*, 1995, 231; Nasr 1997, 59-

62).⁴ To be sure, the Palestinian question did enter the international public domain due to the Munich carnage, yet the actual act led to widespread moral indignation. Palestinians had violated, it appeared to many, an area that was safe and "beyond politics."

Terrorism was utilized by the different Palestinian groups not only in the international arena, but inside Israel as well. In 1974, for example, three members of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a splinter group born out of an ideological division within the PFLP, took over a school in Ma'alot, an Israeli town located near the Lebanese border. When the negotiations broke down and the Israeli troops stormed the dormitory, the terrorists machine-gunned the children, killing 27 and wounding an additional 70 (Anderson *et al*, 1995, 90; Alexander *et al*, 1989, 209). Also during that year, three Fatah members penetrated the Israeli town Naharia via boat, murdering four Israelis and wounding eight others, while three members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine -- General Command, another PFLP splinter group, attacked the Israeli town Qiryat Shemona, killing 20 people and wounding 16, before committing suicide by setting off explosive charges (Alexander *et al*, 1989, 210-214; Anderson *et al*, 1995, 285).

Over the years, Western countries, Arab states, and moderate Palestinians also became targets of Palestinian terrorism. Perhaps the most notorious terrorist group was Abu Nidal's organization, which in the mid-1980s lit "a bonfire of violence" in the region (Seale 1992, 228). Abu Nidal conceived the Middle East conflict to be a zero-sum game, and anyone willing to compromise in order to reach a peaceful resolution was

⁴ A few months later Black September skyjacked a Lufthansa plane and Chancellor Willy Brandt decided to release the three terrorists who had been captured in exchange for the hostages on the plane. In a three year period, from 1971 to 1974 the Black September carried out at least 34 noteworthy actions: 16 of which were bombings; 11 assassinations; 3 hijackings and another 3 hostage seizures; and 1 rocket attack on the U.S. embassy in Beirut (Anderson *et al*, 1995, 61).

consequently considered to be an enemy of the Palestinian cause.⁵ A few incidents from 1985 exemplify the scope of Abu Nidal's activities. In May, Egyptian police arrested an Abu Nidal agent who was planning to detonate a truckload of explosives outside the U.S. embassy in Cairo, while in August, an explosion at a hotel resort near Athens injured 13, including six British citizens. A grenade attack on the Café de Paris in Rome injured 40 in September, and in November an Egyptian airliner was hijacked by Abu Nidal terrorists and forced to land in Malta; six passengers were killed before Egyptian commandos stormed the plane. In December, Abu Nidal gunmen simultaneously attacked El Al ticket counters at both Rome and Vienna airports, hurling grenades and opening fire at the crowd; some 20 people were killed, and 120 wounded in this foray (Alexander *et al*, 1989, 208; Seale 1992, 234-37; United States 1987, 3).

With this generalized portrayal of Palestinian terrorism in mind, we can turn to examine the common characteristics of all these acts, whether it be the Munich massacre, the assassination of Jordan's Prime Minister, or the bombing of a restaurant in Rome. This inquiry is intimately related to terrorism's definition, for it is precisely the definition that is supposed to capture both the common and unique attributes of the phenomenon signified by the word terrorism. Although no single definition of terrorism has gained universal acceptance, we chose to explore the one employed by the United States Department of State because it is predominant and has immediate implications on policy (United States 1998, vi). The definition is divided into three clauses of which the first one reads:

⁵ In April 1983, for instance, Abu Nidal operatives assassinated Issam Sartawi, a PLO leader who publicly advocated dialogue with Israeli peace activists.

- The term "terrorism" means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant⁶ targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.

The activities described above correspond with this clause of the definition as they were violent, premeditated, and usually perpetrated against noncombatant targets. In addition, the acts were politically motivated. Nonetheless, the clause, or for that matter the definition itself, does not capture a certain dimension that we tend to associate with terrorism, and that appears to be integral to all the acts just mentioned; namely, that the political objective is not encapsulated in the act itself. Similar to Rabin's assassin who slew the prime minister in order to arrest the peace process, the purpose of Palestinian terrorism is not to kill innocent people, but to advance certain political goals. While acts committed during guerrilla warfare or a military assault may be an end in themselves (like capturing a disputed territory), a terrorist act is always a means and therefore its political objective always transcends the act itself. Leila Khaled, a well known terrorist who was captured during a failed El Al hijacking in 1970, made a similar point when she stated that "the hijackings were used as a kind of struggle to put the question -- who are the Palestinians? -- before the world. Before we were dealt with as refugees. We yelled and screamed, but the whole world answered with more tents and did nothing" (cited in Nasr 1997, 57).

This dimension of political terrorism is hinted at by the definition's affirmation that terrorism is "usually intended to influence an audience." One should keep in mind, however, that the Palestinian terrorist acts were meant to affect three distinct audiences, albeit in different ways. First, the terrorists intended to intimidate and create fear in the

⁶ For the purpose of this definition, the term "noncombatant" is interpreted to include, in addition to civilians, military personnel who at the time of the incident are unarmed and/or not on duty... (United States Department of State 1998, vi).

Jewish and Israeli public, and thus undermine the Israeli government which is responsible for guaranteeing the population's security (clearly some groups had similar objectives regarding Jordan and perhaps other countries). The logic underlying this objective is based on the denial of Israel's right to exist. Later, the abandonment of terrorism became a card in the negotiation process; U.S. and Israeli recognition of the PLO was contingent upon its renunciation of terrorism.⁷

Second, the terrorist's strove to gain widespread exposure through the media in order to present the plight of the Palestinians to the public (this is the idea conveyed by Khaled). The Palestinians wanted recognition from the international community that they had been dispossessed and that they too deserve a homeland. It was not a question of more tents for the refugees, but of self-determination. Third, in the competition over Palestinian support each group recognized that terrorist acts were usually very advantageous. Generally speaking, the Palestinian population supported the groups which it believed were fighting for the Palestinian cause. Consequently, when the PFLP embarked on a campaign of international terrorism in the late 1960s it won public support. Today, however, things are quite different. Support for Abu Nidal declined in the late 1980s, and even the Hamas's suicide bombings are criticized by the majority of the Palestinian population.

Returning to the State Department's definition, one also notices that this clause includes the identity of the actor. Insofar as only "subnational groups or clandestine agents" are the perpetrators of terrorism, a state, as such, cannot practice terrorism. Accordingly, terrorism is confined to non-state actors. While the methods of terrorism are not mentioned in the definition itself, the exclusion of state actors from the definition implicitly delimits the methods employed by terrorists to those available to non-state

⁷ In 1988, Yasser Arafat declared publicly that the PLO renounces terrorism, this lead to Washington's recognition of the organization and opening of diplomatic talks.

actors. Tanks and warplanes, for instance, are not used by terrorists, and systematic interrogation which might include torture is not considered to be terror. Conversely, if tanks and warplanes are employed, then the act is not terrorism. While the acts we described correspond with this aspect of the definition, the question we intend to ask in the next section is whether the identity of the actor and the methods it uses should be integral to terrorism's definition.

The second clause of the State Department's definition is based on what appears to be a tautological idea: the difference between terrorism and international terrorism is the international dimension.

- The term "international terrorism" means terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country.

In other words, two categories are introduced -- citizenship and territory -- in order to affirm the international component: any terrorist act that involves a plurality of at least one of these categories is considered to be international. Clearly the acts described above satisfy this clause.

The third and final clause intends to capture not only the term "terrorist group," but the notion of state-sponsored terrorism which was officially introduced by the State Department in 1979.

- The term "terrorist group" means any group practicing, or that has significant subgroups that practice, international terrorism.

This clause is complex because it attempts to corroborate the notion that only non-state actors can practice terrorism while simultaneously granting a role to the state. By distinguishing between a group that actually practices terrorism and a group that does not employ terrorism but "has" "significant subgroups" that practice terrorism, the State Department makes room for the idea of state-sponsored terrorism without having to

entertain the notion that states are actually perpetrators of terrorism.⁸ This clause is also in tune with the predominant assumptions of the realist school because it reinforces the notion that states are the major actors in the international arena.

State sponsorship is an important aspect of terrorism since it is well known that most terrorist groups cannot function or even survive for an extended period of time without the support of states. As the State Department suggests, states tolerate and support terrorist groups by allowing them to open offices within their territories which are used for recruitment of personnel and planning of terrorist acts. States provide funding for terrorist groups, supply safe havens for terrorists, help train agents, and even use their diplomatic leverage in order to facilitate communication between, and transfer explosives into, other countries. In this manner, states enhance the terrorist's capabilities and make law enforcement efforts to counter terrorism more difficult (United States 1998, 23).

Although we have not yet mentioned this aspect of Palestinian terrorism, some of the aforementioned violent acts were sponsored by states. As indicated, according to the State Department, five -- Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and Syria -- out of the seven states which are considered to be sponsors of international terrorism are located in the Middle East (United States 1998, 23). Consider, for a moment, Syria's role as a sponsor. While Syria has not been directly involved in terrorists attacks for some time now, in the early 1980s it was considered to be a haven for terrorist groups. A 1987 State Department report discussing Syria's complicity in terrorism stated that:

Syria prefers to support groups whose activities are generally in line with Syrian objectives rather than to select targets or control operations itself. Damascus utilizes

⁸ The analysis of 'state terrorism' or 'the state and terrorism' does have a literature and a meaning, as well as a rhetoric, long-standing in the study of political terrorism. A decade ago, scholars (Stohl, 1988; Duvall and Stohl, 1988; and Stohl and Lopez, 1988) provided the demarcations among important categories, for example, distinctions between state-supported vs. surrogate terrorism.

these groups to attack or intimidate enemies and opponents and to exert its influence in the region. Yet at the same time, it can disavow knowledge of their operations. Such Syrian-supported groups have carried out scores of attacks against Palestinian and other Arab, Turkish, Israeli, and Western targets during the past 3 years (United States 1987, 1).

The State Department suggests that 500 people were either killed or wounded by Syrian-supported groups during the period 1983-86. In the report one finds a testimony provided by Nizar Hindawi, an Abu Nidal operative who was caught while trying, by means of a pregnant Irish girlfriend, to place a bomb on an El Al plane leaving London's Heathrow to Tel-Aviv. Hindawi's investigation revealed that he was recruited by an aide to Major General al-Khuli, chief of Syrian Air Force intelligence. From the evidence presented during his trial we learn that "al-Khuli's operatives: (1) supplied Hindawi, a Jordanian, with a Syrian passport; (2) gave him \$12,000 and promised him more money when he completed the mission to plant a bomb aboard an El Al civilian airliner; (3) provided him with the bomb which he carried into London aboard the Syrian Arab Airlines, which also gave him SAA crew member hotel accommodations; and (4) trained him in the bomb's use" (United States 1987, 1). Hindawi's case exemplifies how closely a state can work with a terrorist group, so much so that it is hard to determine who is the actual initiator of the terrorist act: Abu Nidal or Syria.

The State Department also asserts that "when King Hussein launched his February 1985 peace initiative [with Israel], Jordan became a major target [of terrorism]. But when Jordanian-Syrian relations warmed in mid-1985, attacks on Jordanians at home and abroad diminished" (United States 1987, 2). This trend not only lends considerable support to the claim of Syrian control of terrorist groups, but also attests that it is using these groups to advance its own political goals. Terrorism becomes the tool of a state without the state

actually having to practice it. Sponsorship shifts the power from the terrorist group back to the state, in the sense that if Jordan is interested in stopping the terrorist activities it needs to appease Syria and not the actual perpetrators. Terrorist groups, one should note, have complex relationships with their state-sponsors. On the one hand, terrorists usually have their own agenda and do not want to be co-opted by states. Concerned that his autonomy was in jeopardy, Abu Nidal moved from Iraq to Syria and then to Libya. On the other hand, the state supports and protects the terrorist group. Other than Abu Nidal, Syria is said to have supported a variety of Palestinian terrorist organizations including Saiqa, Abu Musa's group, the PFLP, and the PFLP -- General Command. Non-Palestinian groups like the Japanese Red Army and the Pakistani al Zulfikar received Syrian assistance as well.

The manner in which the State Department defines terrorism is crucial since it determines the data incorporated into its "terrorism data bank." Not only the State Department, but the CIA and even RAND conceive terrorism to be the illegitimate use of force by non-state actors and "rogue regimes" like Libya and Syria. This definition has immediate, and at times far-reaching, political implications. The inclusion of the "state-sponsored terrorism" category, for example, plays a significant role in U.S. politics, since U.S. law imposes trade and other restrictions on countries that sponsor terrorism. On a deeper level, the integration of the actor's identity in terrorism's definition opens the door for a double standard. If the actor's identity and not solely the act itself determines whether it falls under the term terrorism, then, at least theoretically, terrorism can always be attributed to the state's official enemies and never to the state itself or its allies. Keeping this in mind we now turn to examine Israel's actions.

Israeli State Terrorism

Before the state of Israel was established the Jewish population living in Palestine formed different political organizations, some of which had military arms. Irgun and Lehi were two relatively small groups that adopted terrorism as a strategy of political action.⁹ Lehi terrorized the British forces in Palestine during the 1940s, and murdered at least 15 moderate Jews. In 1944, Lehi operatives working in Cairo assassinated Lord Moyne, the British minister for Middle East Affairs. Lehi and Irgun members collaborated in 1946, bombing the British civil administration offices located at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. Over 90 people were killed in that operation, many of whom were Jewish. One month before the British forces pulled out of Palestine, the two groups attacked the Palestinian village Deir Yassin, killing some 250 men, women and children; "there were also cases of mutilation and rape" (Morris 1987, 113). The news of the massacre and threats that more was to come prompted many Palestinians living in nearby villages to flee their homes when, a month later, the fighting between the Jews and Arabs began (Anderson *et al*, 1995, 194; McGowan, 1998).

These actions, while not adding to our understanding of terrorism, indicate that Palestinians were not necessarily the first perpetrators of terrorism in the Middle East. But the question that interests us here is whether Israel, as a state, employs terrorism and not whether certain Jewish groups practiced terrorism prior to the establishment of the state. Since the State Department restricts the *actual practice* of terrorism to non-state actors we cannot use its definition of terrorism in the following discussion. Accordingly, we have formulated a different definition of political terrorism:

Terrorism is a form of political violence that by design violates some of the society's accepted moral and legal codes, is often ruthlessly destructive, and is somewhat unpredictable in who

⁹ Today's prominent political party Likud is a direct extension of these two groups. Prime Minister Menachem Begin was the leader of Irgun and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was the leader of Lehi.

will be its instrumental targets. Terrorism hardly constitutes mindless violence. Instead, it reflects a detailed strategy that uses horrific violence to make people feel weak and vulnerable, often disproportionate to either the terrorist acts or to the terrorists long term power. This fear seeks to promote concrete political objectives.

This definition captures all the incidents of Palestinian terrorism described above. Yet it does not identify the perpetrator of the act, and therefore does not determine in advance that non-state actors are the sole agents of terrorism. Once the actor is considered to be an insignificant variable, it becomes easier to judge the act according to its nature. Terrorism can no longer be consigned only to the competing sources of power -- i.e., official enemies -- but may be attributed to any actor. Consequently, some of the major aspects that allowed for the emergence of a double standard are overcome. The definition also does not indicate the means by which terrorism is carried out, entailing that the perpetrators can use hand-guns and small bombs, or tanks and warplanes. As a result, it enables us to treat Israel and the Palestinians, at least initially, as having an equal capacity to employ terrorism.

Examining Israel's actions in Lebanon one notices that it has often used methods of terror. Notable examples are the two fairly recent operations: Accountability (July, 1993) and Grapes of Wrath (April, 1996). Israel's stated political objective in these Operations was to foment a refugee flow from southern Lebanon to the north in order to put pressure on the Lebanese government, so that it, in turn, would curb guerrilla actions perpetrated by the Hezbollah. In a report on Operation Accountability, Human Rights Watch (HRW) asserts (past tense):

While Israel has claimed that broadcast warnings to the civilian population in southern Lebanon were made with a view to protecting civilians from collateral injury in attacks on strictly military objectives, a number of factors make it reasonable to assume that the intention was in fact to sow terror among the civilian population. The SLA [South

Lebanon Army]¹⁰ radio station broadcasts threats of a general nature, warning anyone remaining in certain areas that they would be in danger of being hit. As the pattern of physical damage showed, the IDF/SLA [Israel Defense Force] then subjected entire villages to area bombardment. The threats and the nature of the attacks make it clear that in significant areas in southern Lebanon whole populations -- indeed anyone who failed to flee by a certain time -- were targeted as if they were combatants (1996: 9).

HRW notes that in addition to subjecting villages to a massive shelling barrage, "the IDF also executed what appear to have been calculated direct attacks on purely civilian targets. One such series of attacks was carried out against Sidon's wholesale vegetable market, far from the front line in south Lebanon" (1996, 9). HRW estimates that some 120 civilians were killed and close to 500 injured during the Operation. In addition, the bombing led to the immediate displacement of an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 people, while four months after the attack some 32,000 to 40,000 civilians were still displaced (HRW 1996, 83). "By the end of Operation Accountability, conservative damage estimates suggested that some 1,000 houses had been destroyed, and 15,000 houses had sustained light damage. Israeli forces cut civilian water and electricity supplies, damaged schools, mosques and churches, and targeted a number of cemeteries with shell fire" (HRW 1996, 8).

Less than three years later, Israel launched a similar attack, this time calling it Grapes of Wrath. According to Israel's prestigious paper, *Ha'aretz*, (4/21/96) internal reports of the northern border's military command indicate that in the first few days of the Operation Israeli Air Force planes bombed 300 sites in Lebanon, resulting in the displacement of approximately 400,000 civilians and demolition of over 200 houses.

¹⁰ Israel's mercenary army in Southern Lebanon.

Moreover, some 198 civilians were killed, including the 97 refugees in the village of Kana killed as a result of the miscalculated firing of a rocket.

To be sure these Operations correspond with the definition of terrorism for they violate some of society's accepted moral and legal codes, they are ruthlessly destructive, and unpredictable in who will be targeted. Similar to Palestinian terrorism described earlier, the objective of Israel's Operations in Lebanon was not to kill civilians. Yet the Israeli generals who planned the action knew in advance that innocent people would surely die as a result of the bombing, and in line with the definition these generals contrived a detailed strategy that uses horrific violence in order to make people feel weak and vulnerable. The engendered fear seeks to promote concrete political objectives which exceed the violent act, since, as mentioned, Israel terrorized the population of southern Lebanon, so that it, in turn, would pressure the Lebanese government to clamp down on the Hezbollah. Considering that Operation Grapes of Wrath was launched a few weeks before the 1996 Israeli elections, it is also conceivable that Prime Minister Shimon Peres wanted to influence the Israeli public as well by showing that he is not weak and indecisive on matters of security.

Other activities in Lebanon correspond with this definition of terrorism. For instance, Israeli commando units kidnapped Sheik Abd al-Karim Obeid and Mustafa al-Dirani from their homes in 1989 and 1994 respectively. Both Shi'a leaders have since been held incommunicado; they have never been charged or tried and Israel has declared that they will be released only in exchange for Israeli service persons missing in Lebanon (MIAs) or for concrete information about these Israelis. According to HRW, Israeli officials have also indicated more generally that the release of other Lebanese detainees is linked to the issue of Israeli MIAs. HRW points out that insofar as Israel conditions the release of Lebanese detainees on securing information from third parties about Israeli MIAs, "those detainees are being held as hostages." Hostage-taking is indefensible, HRW

contends, and cannot be justified by the actions of other parties to a conflict (HRW 1997, Appendix 1).

Israel has employed terrorism not only in the international arena, but also in the territories it occupied in 1967, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. During the Intifada (Palestinian uprising that began in December 1987) Israeli undercover units penetrated Palestinian settlements, killing Palestinians by means of summary executions; the unit locates the victim and without attempting to arrest him, shoots in order to kill. These units, according to HRW, killed more than 110 Palestinians from the beginning of the Intifada until November 1992.¹¹ Interestingly, the Israeli government acknowledged its responsibility for many of these killings, even though they "constitute violations of international law and of the law that Israel professes to apply in the occupied territories" (HRW 1993, 1). Aside from the fact that the *state* of Israel was the perpetrator of these killings, the actions and methods used by the undercover units and the objectives Israel wanted to achieve by these killings conform to the definition of terrorism used here.

Israel's practice of state sanctioned torture also qualifies as an act of political terrorism. It is well known that torture is not only used to extract information or to control the victim; it is also used to control the population as a whole. As an imminent threat, torture is used to intimidate groups or individuals which oppose the existing order within the country they reside. When one analyzes the history of the use of torture, where it was practiced and why, one will see that torture is not simply about inducing a person to

¹¹ The victims of these executions are of two kinds: "wanted" men and masked people. Of the 110 people killed by the undercover units, 42 were wanted. "Wanted" men are "Palestinians named on a security force's list of militants who are suspected of being armed, highly dangerous, and responsible for politically motivated violence." Note that they are merely suspected. Masked people are "youths who mask their faces, whose identities are not known to the security forces when they encounter one another, who generally are unarmed, or carry at most "cold weapons" such as axes and chains, and who are routinely shot while imposing no imminent mortal danger to security agents" (HRW, 1993).

speak, but rather it is about silence -- ensuring that particular activists are broken and popular opposition remains suppressed (HRW, 1994; Gordon *et al* 1995; PHR, 1995; B'Tzelem, 1997).

Arresting Terrorism

Once one accepts the above definition of terrorism, it becomes obvious that states can terrorize, and can use soldiers, airplanes and tanks to do so. The means applied are irrelevant; a plane bombing in southern Lebanon or a suicide bomber can achieve similar objectives. Again and again states utilize methods of terror against their enemies in order to accomplish a particular premeditated political goal. Israel's violence, and that used by states as diverse as Nigeria and U.S.A., suggests that terror should *not* be reduced to the difference between non-state and state action. The character of the perpetrator does not determine the nature of the act, or conversely, the character of one act does not necessarily predict the type of perpetrator.

By way of conclusion we would like to raise two issues which may be instrumental in the reduction of terrorism. First, we believe that the significance of excluding the actor's identity from terrorism's definition cannot be over emphasized. On the meta-level, such an exclusion problematizes the Weberian hypothesis that the state has monopoly over the legitimate use of force. This hypothesis, it appears, is based on the presupposition that legitimacy is determined *vis-à-vis* the state. For if the state has monopoly over the use of legitimate force it must first be able to determine legitimacy, indicating that the state precedes legitimacy or, more precisely, justice. But if one conceives the state as having the capability to practice terrorism, which we believe to be by definition illegitimate and unjust, then justice must precede the state. Once one agrees that the state is not above justice, one will be able to accept that it can employ illegitimate violence and practice terrorism.

Disrupting the dichotomy between state and non-state actors *vis-à-vis* the idea that the state holds the monopoly over the legitimate use of violence, mitigates the double standard mentioned earlier. While we believe that the way terrorism is currently constructed has more to do with *who* is the actor and what is its specific relation to the existing hegemonic system, and not so much upon the *type* of actor (state or non-state), the actor's exclusion from the definition will surely help eliminate some of the doublespeak that surrounds the discourse on terrorism. Once the definition of terrorism focuses solely on the nature of the act, it will be harder to persevere in the common practice of referring to terrorism perpetrated by the state or an ally as "maintaining order," "ensuring security" or "upholding democracy." Exposing terrorism for what it is, is a necessary first step towards arresting it.

Second, one needs to go beyond the debate pertaining to terrorism's definition and recast the discourse surrounding the violent acts. One way to begin is by confronting, where appropriate and relevant, the all-too-linear view taken by social science in analyzing political violence. More precisely, we contend that the cause-effect assumptions about insurgent terrorism need to be challenged. Consider the effort of mainstream scholars and policy makers to trace the *causes* of terrorism to either the presence of technology, transnationalism and telecommunications, or to ideology -- usually Marxist (Lopez 1995, 264).¹² We, by contrast, do not believe that an examination of ideology or technological development will disclose terrorism's causes; moreover, its time to probe the issue from a fresh standpoint. This entails asking new questions like how does the absence of certain

¹²Technology refers to the availability of arms and related tools for carrying out terror. Transnationalism involves the movement of peoples with relative ease across borders; such that terrorists could be trained in one state, perpetrate their deed in another, and move to a safe haven in yet another. Telecommunications is considered to promote terrorism because it guarantees a wider audience, and helps make terrorism into a form of political theater. Finally, Marxist ideology is conceived as being the source of terrorism.

rules and institutions in the international order create conditions whereby groups and states with grievances find little recourse, save resorting to terrorist violence?

With questions like this, one could, for example, stimulate an investigation of how, in countries where terrorism is prevalent, the development of global institutions such as an international criminal court or mediation agency -- which would hear and judge the grievances of both state and non-state actors -- could prevent terrorism by providing non-violent alternatives. Investigations like this are fundamental, and they might even lead to the establishment of such institutions.

Rethinking international terrorism along these lines helps *resist* the tendency to conceive terrorism positively, as induced from an internal character or disposition which compels the actor toward violence. Paraphrasing the famous philosopher Simone De Beauvoir, people are not born, but rather become terrorists. Accordingly, terrorism should be considered as predominantly negative, namely that it arises due to social injustice accompanied by a lack of meaningful alternatives by which disempowered political groups or even states might have their grievances redressed. Such an outlook is essential to any effort which strives to curb terrorism. It is clear to us that as part of the peace process the different parties must acknowledge the historical use of terrorism by *both* actors, for only the delegitimation and renunciation of such terrorism will prevent violence from derailing the process and destroying the promised comprehensive peace. And only a just peace can deal a death blow to Middle East terrorism.

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