

Will the Itamar Massacre Finally Change the Conversation?

By Adam Fishman ,National Executive Director



I've spent the last two days unable to release my thoughts from the senseless and brutal murder of the Fogel family in Itamar this past Friday night. To be honest, I'm not sure what is the proper emotional response to such wildly inhuman behavior. Horror is instinctive, sadness is expected, anger is automatic. But the thing that terrified me most over the last two days was the creeping feeling that this bloody massacre may not change anything. I'm deeply worried that even after the horrifyingly gruesome pictures have been seen, the lexicon of the conversation will remain the same empty pile of catch-phrases such as "peace process" or "settlements" or " 'East' Jerusalem" or "occupation" or "two states," etc.

Where is the tipping point? Will the Itamar massacre actually prompt a genuine change in how Israel's leadership conducts its side of the conversation? If our leaders are finally outraged enough to be even bolder than they've been, I truly believe it can.

The expected condemnations, some strong - some worthless, have come and are gone. Calling it a tragedy is never enough. Telling us that justice will be meted out provides us with only a modicum of satisfaction. Even to demand that the other side change their ways and end incitement, while necessary, seems to serve no purpose. Is anyone surprised that in Gaza, Hamas handed out candy to children in celebration of the "successful operation"? Have you not read the PA's comical assertion that - they're not responsible and cannot be blamed for THIS terrorist act, since THEIR terrorists never slit a baby's throat - as it slept next to its father - while murdering the parents - after slashing the children - in their beds - on a Friday night. It's sickeningly moronic to claim that there is only one recipe in the book of murder and terror. Friday night was merely another chapter in the volumes they've written; penned by their own leadership long before a single community was built in Judea and Samaria.

It has been shown and proven time and again that PA sponsored education and media continually poisons the minds of its people. Incitement from their government and religious officials is commonplace. Education of hatred in schools and mosques continues unabated. Martyrdom is glorified in their streets and city squares. And yet, can we really expect that the blood bath perpetrated in Itamar will be the thing that finally pushes Israel's leaders to change their approach to the worldwide "Israel conversation?" The precedent over the years suggests that depressingly, it won't change a thing.

Make no mistake, Itamar is no different than suicide bombers on busses in Jerusalem, in restaurants in Haifa, in hotels in Netanya or in discos in Tel Aviv. It is no different than Kassam rockets that rain down on kindergartens in Sderot. It is no different than the

shooting murder of the Yitzhak Ames and his nine months pregnant wife Talya last August in their car. When a Palestinian murderer lined up 10 month old Shalhevet Pass in the crosshairs of his rifle and put a bullet through her head - did we change the parameters of conversation?

Let's be abundantly clear that the primary cause for all of this bloodshed has been and continues to be the PA's constant call for the death of the Jew and destruction of the "Zionist entity." Let us also not discount that while the PA teaches, incites and proclaims hatred on Israel's doorstep, the unabashed choruses of "hear ,hear!" shouted throughout the world provides the PA with the strength to change absolutely nothing.

The call for the annihilation of the Jews did not die after World War II - it merely became unfashionable to express out loud for a very short while - only in whispers. Today, calling for the destruction of Israel and the Jews is not only fashionable, it's the norm. Israel's enemies abound and they do not hesitate to scream their bloody curses from the Arab street to the U.S. university campuses to the International conferences on "human rights" and "racism" to the parliaments of Europe and to the chambers of the UN. Even in Washington DC last week, the President had the gall to tell Jewish leadership that we need to "search our souls" regarding peace - is there any soul searching being asked for from the other side? In the last number of years those calling for Israel's destruction have better organized themselves and have now become a systemized, coordinated chorus of hatred.

I know that Israel's leaders have no illusions about any of this. Prime Minister Netanyahu immediately responded to the murders "demand[ing] that the Palestinian Authority stop the incitement that is conducted on a daily basis in their schools, mosques and the media under their control." At the Fogel funeral in Jerusalem Vice Premier Moshe "Bogie" Ya'alon predicted that the PA will name city squares for these murderers and blamed the PA and its "education of violence." "Our neighbors' education denies our right to the land [of Israel]," teaching their children that "from the Jordan [river] to the sea, Jews have no right to live." In an important and tremendous attempt to bring these truths to the rest of the world the Israeli Government has created the "Incitement and Culture of Peace Index" as a mechanism to track levels of incitement -
<http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/Spokesman/2011/03/spokeincitemen t130311.htm>.

This exposure is vital and needs to grow even more but I fear it won't change the conversation for a very long time since it relies solely on the other side to drop its ingrained biases and for them to ultimately recognize the true justice of Israel's cause. As a proud Israeli citizen and Jew, I still find myself looking for the outrage that will force our leaders to stop waiting for others to wake up and finally just change the conversation themselves.

At what point will Israel's leaders honestly say more than "never again"? When will they finally pound their fists on the podium and proudly proclaim to the world our right to live in this land? **What will it take for our leaders to forget about asking our enemies and the world to change its attitude toward us and begin to change our attitude toward them?**

I can only hope and pray that this time, our leadership will recognize that the 63 year old conversation has solved nothing and is worthless. A new dialogue is necessary and the time has come for **Israel to dictate the terms of its own destiny.**

I believe that Israel's leaders do have the courage to be, in the words of Likud MK Tzipi Hotovely, "unapologetic Zionists". Now is the time to make believers of us all.

Adam Fishman, Executive Director
American Friends of Likud

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Please join AFL for an exclusive briefing by Vice Premier and Minister of Strategic Affairs, Moshe "Bogie" Ya'alon at 7:00pm this Monday evening, March 21, 2011 at the Park East Synagogue (67th btw. Lex. & 3rd).

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