

Arguing for Palestine

Baron Frankal

"Enough already" I can hear you cry. But Selwyn Dorfman's three-article series 'Arguing for Israel' has provoked me to respond.

Israel's second longest-serving Prime-Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, joined the ranks of all the country's other PMs in 2009 in arguing for a two-state solution to the enduring conflict; and the first appointment to his new coalition was Tzipi Livni, who made its realisation central to her campaign.

They are both then part of the majority of Israelis, and an overwhelming majority of Jews around the world, that see a two-state solution as the only way there can ever be peace in the Middle East. I would imagine that includes a large majority of Menorah members. It certainly includes me.



Taken by the author a day or so after Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in 1995, at the spot where he was murdered, having been there on the night of the rally.

Sometimes we need to stop and reflect for a moment exactly what a two-state solution is. It means that alongside a secure and peaceful State of Israel, there must also be a State of Palestine. That is a state with borders, with a government, with police, courts and yes, with a seat at the UN. So, if we want to see a secure and peaceful Israel, we need to work towards a Palestine. It is not then a dirty word, a concept to thwart and oppose, but rather something that everyone who supports Israel should want to see.

There are of course other ways. Israel could seek to maintain the status quo of effective control of the West Bank, settling more of its Jewish population there, with rights for those settlers that cannot be given to the rest of the (arab) population, like voting for the Israeli government, using many main roads and buying or living on state-controlled land. Or, we could seek a one-state solution, with everyone within "Greater Israel's" borders having those equal rights; but at that point, because the majority of the population is arab, Israel quickly ceases

to be a Jewish state. If neither of these alternatives is tempting, the only answer is the two-state solution. Israel is one of those states, and Palestine is the other.

I write as a humanist who wants peace, as a Jew and as an Israeli; as someone who made aliyah, speaks Hebrew, has worn the uniform of the Israel Defence Forces, and brings up his children to love the country, which is where we'll be for their barmitzvah. I want them to love a

country that is democratic and, if not a light unto the nations, is at least not a disgrace amongst them, as any occupier eventually and inevitably becomes. For an end to come to this extremely unhappy situation, that too many of us, too much of the time, turn too many blind eyes to

the worst bits of - and we all know there are many - we need Palestine.

So, for me, if you are a Zionist, a lover of Israel, if you want to see the country I volunteered for thrive, and even survive, in our and our children's lifetime, then things need to change. And they need to change by a new country being born. That country is Palestine. Without it, there will be no peace, but more conflict and more wars.

Foolish games that do exactly the opposite of building trust, respect and necessary mutual interest, make an impossibly hard task even harder. Our job, as friends and supporters of Israel, is to help remove obstacles from the path to peace, not to construct new ones. I would like to think that Menorah is a community that wants peace, welcomes peace and would do all we can therefore to welcome a peaceful Palestine into the world. It's hard to say, it's harder to do, and the time's not right; but when did we ever want to do the easy thing rather than the right one, and if not now, then when?