

Must Lebanon and Gaza be destroyed for three kidnapped Israeli soldiers?

LETTER FROM AMERICA

What about the Bush administration sacred mantra, "Democracies do not attack democracies"? Although Lebanon has not attacked Israel, Israel, presumably a democracy, has proved Bush wrong by attacking a sovereign democratic country, Lebanon.

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED

At a time the world should be commiserating with India for the Mumbai massacre of over two hundred innocent civilians, Israel hogs the world's limelight with a two-pronged attack on Gaza and Lebanon, for the kidnapping of three Israeli soldiers.

With an American crutch, Israel can act independently and inconsiderately, without fear of aftermath. Peace can be achieved only when all parties share an interest in it, and who needs peace when you have America?

armed forces have invaded neighboring Lebanon, as Israeli artillery blasts away at that country and as the Israeli Air Force bombs Beirut. Now the masquerade is over, Israel has made itself visible to the world as a militaristic nation that continues to impose a brutal occupation on the Palestinians and that has violently invaded Lebanon.



bridges and electric plants have been destroyed." A Princeton clergy elaborated in our local newspaper on July 13: "The 1.5 million residents of the Gaza strip are sealed into a prison without clean water, food or electricity; without the means to export goods, without access to international financial aid or aid from non-government organizations -- not even from the UN High Commission for Refugees -- and without personal funds from family members from other countries.

ports Israel to the hilt. All the rage in the Western world currently is how to punish Iran for its nuclear ambitions. No one wants to discuss the excesses being committed by the nuclear-armed Frankenstein created by the West, Israel! Emboldened, rogue Israel is looking for an excuse to attack Iran next! It may be recalled that the dictator Shah signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty without consulting the Iranian people. Israel has not signed it. It is now becoming clear to why the West insists on keeping the Islamic nations disarmed, militarily weak and without nuclear-capability -- so that they and their proxy states like Israel can attack Muslim countries with impunity.

Israel's knee-jerk reaction to any crisis is to shell, bomb, invade and blockade Arab lands, as it is doing in Gaza and Lebanon now. After a while, the Times adds, such operations "lose its clear territorial and counterterrorism definition," and begins "to take on a perverse momentum of its own." What about the Bush administration sacred mantra, "Democracies do not attack democracies"?

Anyone visiting the occupied territories would notice that Israel is becoming more and more entrenched in the West Bank. Noam Chomsky believes that Israel's sole intention is to make sure that no Palestinian state ever exists. With America in its pocket, Israel can do pretty much what it wants and flout international laws at will, as it is doing now. The world is being asked to accept two sets of laws; one for Israel and one for the rest of the world.

Middle East in flames

ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN

The Middle East is once again the theatre of bloodshed and destruction on a large scale. Against Israeli bombardments of Gaza and now the Lebanon, the Palestinians are no longer depending on rock throwing children or suicide bombers but rockets launched at Israeli targets by the Hezbollah.

Mediteranean started breathing again. The hard working and talented Lebanese went ahead to work and with their well proven business acumen succeeded in rebuilding the country. It is a painful spectacle to see the rubble in beautiful Beyrouth. The Israelis are insisting that the Hezbollah must return the captured soldiers.

Jewry, who have given unconditional effective support to Israel. No US politician worth his or her salt can do politics without a pilgrimage to Israel. Israel continues to dream of becoming the dominant power in the Middle East. On the basis of her being the sole possessor of nuclear weapons this claim cannot be dismissed.

M. FAZLUL HAQUE Bangladesh economy cannot sustain the impact of all time high prices of crude oil and refined petroleum products. The government of Bangladesh should immediately take the following steps to arrest the tremendous shock and impact of record high prices of oil:

What should we do about oil prices?

M. FAZLUL HAQUE

Oil prices hit record highs above us \$78 per barrel in the Asian market. Israel's escalating offensive in Palestine and Lebanon and the Iran nuclear issue sparked new fears of widespread Middle East crisis which is ultimately destined to help rise the prices of crude oil.

- 8.Steps should be taken for manufacturing bio-fuels. 9.Bio-gas plants should be installed for producing cooking gas and limited electricity wherever possible. 10.Markets and shopping malls should be closed after 6:30 pm. 11.Government should immediately approach bilateral and multi-lateral donor countries/agencies to provide grant for financing petroleum products purchase, otherwise all the development efforts will be stalled.

- 12.Encourage CNG conversion of vehicles. Government should consider giving soft loans to CNG conversion workshops to import CNG kits and CNG cylinders. 13.CNG refueling stations along the highways of Dhaka-Chittagong, Dhaka-Sylhet and Dhaka-Bogra should be installed by RPGCL or private parties. In this case preferential treatment should be given for allotment of land and/or acquisition of land. 14.Super gas network should be installed along the streets and highways in and around Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet cities to supply natural gas at required pressure to CNG refueling stations.

Most of the pipelines were built a long time back and lack proper pressure for supply of gas to CNG refueling stations. 15.All the production wells in all the producing fields, bottom hole surveys and pressure tests should be carried out in phases and corrective measures should be taken to ensure uninterrupted supply of natural gas.

Who needs the G8?

DENIS MACSHANE

If the G8 did not exist, would anyone want to invent it? The forum started in 1975 as a fireside chat among six national leaders, all of whom spoke English. That was in the good old days when communism still ran half of Europe, the Chinese rode bikes and terrorism consisted of local affairs containable in obscure corners of the world like Ulster, Sri Lanka or the Pyrenees.

the nearby cities of Geneva and Lausanne were trashed by anti-globalization protesters. Far from convincing citizens that such world leadership enhances economic security and political stability, the G8 has become a symbol of how a tiny, self-selected group of leaders can no longer come up with answers adequate to today's challenges.

more the sherpas -- devote half a year or more to producing a final communiqué that is as unreadable as it is unread. An obvious task for this year's G8 would be an EU-US-Japan agreement to wind down of barriers to agricultural trade and increase north-south investment so the world's poor have a reason not to migrate en masse. Yet no G8 summit to this point has managed to get an extra cent of investment flowing south, nor persuaded the protectionist agro-lobbies in the United States, Japan and Europe to reduce their subsidies and barriers to open trade. This year will be no different.

The one raison d'etre for the G8 would be to defend open trade, open borders, open minds. But the lowest-common-denominator politics practiced at its gatherings ensures that nothing but lip service is put toward that effort. (And the image of G8 meetings, blocked off by riot troops, aptly symbolizes the protectionist attitude more common among these nations.) The World Economic Forum at Davos is a more useful place for politicians to meet economic players and each other for discussions that are not pre-cooked; trips to see President Bush in Crawford or Chancellor Merkel in Berlin get better results.

Radicals push for war

DAVID IGNATIUS

AFTER Hizbullah guerrillas captured Israeli soldiers Wednesday, a furious Dan Halutz, Israel's military chief of staff, warned that the Israeli Army would "turn back the clock in Lebanon by 20 years." Unfortunately, that statement was truer than he may have intended. By pounding Beirut's airport and other civilian targets Thursday, the Israelis have taken a step back in time -- to tactics that have been tried repeatedly in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories without much success.

Ehud Olmert, wants to emulate the toughness of his predecessor, Ariel Sharon, but that shouldn't include a replay of Sharon's 1982 Lebanon invasion, a strategic mistake that spawned Hizbullah in the first place. Hizbullah's action in seizing the Israeli soldiers was utterly reckless. That's the new part of this crisis -- that Iranian-backed radicals deliberately opened another front in a war that, in their minds, stretches from Gaza to Iraq. Watching Nasrallah's performance at a news conference Wednesday, he seemed almost to be inviting an Israeli counterattack -- knowing it would destabilize the Lebanese government of Fouad Siniora, whose establishment in the wake of the Syrian withdrawal last year was one of the few solid achievements of US policy in the region.

Rather than reinforcing the image of strength, the use of force (short of outright, pulverizing invasion and occupation) has encouraged contempt. The danger of Iranian-backed adventurism is immense right now, but that's all the more reason for America and Israel to avoid past mistakes in countering it. Reliable strategic lessons are hard to come by in this part of the world, but here are a few. The first is that in countering aggression, international solidarity and legitimacy matter. In responding to the Lebanon crisis, the United States should work closely with its allies at the G-8 summit and the United Nations. Iran and its proxies would like nothing more than to isolate America and Israel.

would be to negotiate the return of the Israeli-occupied territory known as the Shebaa Farms. That chance is lost for now, but the Bush administration should find other ways to enhance Siniora's authority. A final obvious lesson is that in an open, interconnected world, public opinion matters. This is a tricky battlefield for an unpopular America and Israel, but not an impossible one. To fight the Long War, America and Israel have to get out of the devil suit in global public opinion. For a generation, America maintained a role as honest broker between Israel and the Arabs. The Bush administration should work hard to refurbish that role. In the Lebanon crisis, we have a terrifying glimpse of the future: Iran and its radical allies are pushing toward war. That's the chilling reality behind this week's events. On Tuesday, the Iranians spurned an American offer of talks on their nuclear program; on Wednesday, their Hizbullah proxy made what Israel rightly called "an act of war." The radicals want to lure America and Israel deeper into the killing ground, confident that they have the staying power to prevail. We should not play their game.

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