



THE JEWISH CHRONICLE
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COMMENT & ANALYSIS

LETTERS

A chance to speak

Tzipi Livni could scarcely have given a stronger endorsement of the call by Mick Davis last year – repeated with even greater vigour this week – for diaspora Jews to speak out about Israel when they disagree with its government's behaviour. Not only did she say that diaspora Jews had the right to be listened to in Israel; she said they had a duty to speak. Indeed, while Mr Davis was widely criticised for speaking in his capacity as a communal leader rather than as an individual Jew, Ms Livni said that leaders have the very same duty to speak. So it ill behoves those who disagree with Mr Davis' right to speak his mind to argue that they are speaking on Israel's behalf, as if Israelis themselves are somehow offended at the upstart diaspora.

The woman who may well be Israel's next Prime Minister has demanded that he – and the rest of us – speak. As we said when Mr Davis first raised the issue, it is bizarre to demand that our communal leaders adopt a vow of silence on matters of specific Jewish concern. As a people, we debate and discuss. It is in our DNA. It is what defines us. But be clear: both Ms Livni and Mr Davis have called for a conversation, not a speech.

And conversation is a two-way process in which there is room for differing views to be expressed. So that does not mean that only one view should be put forward – the critical. This newspaper has grave reservations about the current Israeli government's genuine commitment to seeking a two-state solution. There is plainly more – a lot more – that could be done. So we make clear our view, and of course hope that those in power listen. But equally there are many in our community who take a different view. Mr Davis has, by default, become Anglo-Jewry's spokesman for the view that the current Israeli government is on the wrong trajectory. But it would be wrong if only that view was heard from the UK. Ms Livni naturally welcomes the expression of views critical of Mr Netanyahu; he is her political opponent. But she must also, if her admirable words are to have a real impact in changing the relationship between Israel and the diaspora, welcome equally heartfelt views in support of government policy. As must Mr Davis. And we must all do the same – listen to and discuss and then, if we wish, reject – the views of those with whom we disagree. Then we really will have a big conversation, of which we can all be proud.

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MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, EGYPTIAN DEMOCRACY AND OBSTACLES TO PEACE

▶ **As a friend of the people of Egypt**, omissions of the dark side of the Muslim Brotherhood in Lawrence Joffe's otherwise brilliant analysis (*JC*, February 4), horrify me.

Although the Brotherhood has done some excellent educational, health and charitable work, and officially renounced violence in the 1970s, other members or splinter-groups murdered Premier Nokrashi, President Sadat, and many civilians. They fathered Hamas, and other violent organisations. Zawahiri, Al Qaeda's deputy leader, is a former member. They distributed *Mein Kampf* and the fraudulent *Protocols* during the Second World War and their most famous spokesman, Sayyid Qutb, proclaimed a paranoid hatred of Jews.

Their offshoots tried to kill President Mubarak a number of times. He, whatever his faults, courageously defied them by refusing to fight Israel. In doing so, he saved many Egyptian lives. **Andrew M Rosemarine**, Cavendish Rd, Salford

▶ **Am I alone in considering your headline *Israel trembles as Egypt quakes*** (*JC*, February 4) a most negative comment on the current situation in Egypt? Israel never trembles

but stands firm and proud as the only truly democratic nation in the Middle East, and the latest development in Egypt is one we need to encourage in the region, so that other surrounding countries might aspire to a 21st-century outlook and afford their peoples a legitimate right in the running of their lives.

In that part of the world, we are all too aware of the danger of extremist elements taking control. However, one would hope that a more positive headline would send a message that, when these dictatorships outstay their welcome, the true voice of the majority should be heard, loud and clear.

Stephen Vishnick
High Road, London N20

▶ **If Louis Theroux's *The Ultra Zionists*** film did nothing else, it at least showed that Jews were ethnically cleansed from the West Bank and Hebron by Arabs.

This fact is conveniently ignored by Stanley Walinets in his assertion (*Letters*, February 4) that Jewish settlers are illegal and physically aggressive to Palestinians.

If it's illegal for Jews to return to where they were expelled from, how

could one even think about considering that Palestinians can return to a place they left, largely of their own volition? Jews had lived there for millennia and remained until murdered and cleansed, returning only as a result of unsuccessful physical aggression by Arabs.

Adrian Korsner
Chandos Avenue, London N20

▶ **Matthew Herman's vision in Ramallah** of a path to peace (*JC*, January 28) was delusionary. I too was there and heard clearly the intransigent negativity of the young Palestinian graduates regarding Israel and their refusal to acknowledge Jewish association with the Jewish homeland.

This new generation of Palestinian "moderates" continues to justify and commend suicide bombings. I found these "moderates" to be irrational, still displaying a virulent hatred of "Zionists".

The views expressed by Seeds for Peace graduates defines their tolerance as a begrudging acceptance of the reality of Israel's resilient presence – which they would remove if they could.

Judy Kahan
St John's College, Cambridge

CHIEF'S 'INFLAMMATORY' TRANSPLANT VIEWS

▶ **As a consultant in an intensive care unit for children**, I unfortunately have to deal regularly with families who are facing the death of their child. These parents and carers also have to deal with the added difficult question of whether their child's organs could potentially be used to save the lives of several other children and adults.

The concept of brain-stem death has been widely accepted since the 1960s, following evidence showing that the loss of life-sustaining brain stem function in certain situations was irreversible, and cardiovascular death inevitably followed. There is a growing waiting list of desperately ill children and adults waiting for a life-saving organ.

Many halachic authorities, such as the respected ethicist Rabbi Moshe Tendler, have accepted the concept of brain-stem death in Jewish Law. I was therefore dismayed to read Rabbi Sacks's using such inflammatory language as: "Everyone would agree that you may not remove the vital organs of someone who is still alive to save someone else's life. That would be committing murder". This implies that doctors are doing something unlawful. In UK law, once brain-stem death is confirmed by two independent clinicians, the patient is legally dead, even though the heart may still be beating.

The Chief Rabbi is doing a disservice

to the unfortunate people waiting desperately for a life-saving donated organ. **Simon Nadel**
St Mary's Hospital and Imperial College London W2

▶ **As the recipient of a donated kidney**, it saddens me greatly when the Chief Rabbi discourages transplants where the donor's heart is still beating, whether by life-support machine or otherwise. He fails to understand the effect on those individuals waiting for the chance to be that next recipient.

Large numbers are dying on the waiting lists for transplantation. The "brain-stem death versus the heart beat death" debate is just semantics as a person who is brain-stem dead will not make a recovery and his or her organs should not be discarded.

I was fortunate that someone's family took the extremely brave decision to donate their young relative's organs. It is a miracle that the family, at a time of such distress, realised that out of the tragedy of one death the lives of seven or more people may be saved.

For Jewish people in this country not to participate fully in this wonderful programme will certainly be viewed by others as that we are willing to take but not to give.

Barry Jacobs
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LEAP YEAR AND YAHRZEIT ABSURDITIES

▶ **Please can someone explain the absurdity of having yahrzeit in Adar when it falls in a leap year.**

If one has a loss in a leap year in either Adar Rishon or Adar Sheni, one knows when the yahrzeit is in a leap year. And in a non leap year one observes the yahrzeit during the one Adar.

However, if one has a loss in Adar during a non leap year, then during a

leap year, one has to observe yahrzeit in both Adars.

Surely this is absurd and one should just observe the yahrzeit during Adar Sheni, Adar Rishon being the extra month. We observe only one Purim and that is in Adar Sheni. Surely it would be much nicer to celebrate two Purims than observe two yahrzeits.

John Krieger
Uphill Road, London, NW7

JLC AND LEADERSHIP

▶ **I applaud the concerns expressed by Lord Levy** (*JC*, January 28) and Baroness Deech (*Letters*, February 4). The Jewish Leadership Council turned a worthy concept into reality and has achieved meaningful results.

It would be a mistake for it eventually to undertake the leadership role of the Community. The JLC chose its right initials for its mission but, I would suggest, the wrong words. It should have named itself, the Joint Liaison Committee, comprising the leadership of Jewish communal organisations and involving other leading personalities across the whole spectrum of communal life. Its mission should have been, independently and objectively, to confront long term, cross-communal strategic issues.

While acting as an independent organisation/charity, with its own constitution, structure and funding, the "Joint Liaison Committee" could have operated under the auspices of the Board, as several other organisations have done over the years.

Jeffrey Pinnick
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▶ **Notwithstanding that I hold Baroness Deech and Lord Levy in the highest regard**, I find it difficult to understand their seeming determination to undermine the Jewish Leadership Council from without rather than seeking to change it from within.

I take it as a given that both Baroness Deech and Lord Levy took their places around the JLC table in the belief that it could achieve what other communal bodies, including the Board of Deputies, could not.

In any event, you do not join a body with the word "leadership" in its title and expect it not to seek, in one way or another, to lead – which is, it seems to me, the essence of their complaints.

Michael Lazarus
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