

AXIOM: THE ISRAELIS ARE THE BAD GUYS

by Claude Moniquet, Chairman of ESISC

("Axiom," according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary: "*Established principle; self-evident truth*")

The position is clear. For the majority of Western media, once again, the "bad guy" is easily identifiable. This time it's not those dreadful Americans in Iraq, but instead those horrible Israelis.

We knew already that they were terrible, going abroad at nightfall like creatures thirsty for blood, their finger on the trigger of an assault rifle, just looking for an unfortunate Palestinian to gun down.

Now we know they are even worse than that. Did they not risk ruining the peace efforts of the (legitimately elected) Palestinian government by carrying out a military operation in Gaza, that perfect example of a harmonious city living in total security?

Never mind the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, which earned Ariel Sharon one of his rare international successes (was he not applauded by the UN General Assembly – something unprecedented for an Israeli prime minister?). Forget the fact that the government of Ehud Olmert is preparing to do the same thing in the West Bank. Forget the rocket attacks on Israeli civilians from the Gaza Strip. Forget the inter-Palestinian confrontations of recent weeks. Things have finally come back into line: the bad guys have stopped muddying the waters and have taken up their traditional role. Let's hear it for Israel.

Obviously, some troublesome souls might be tempted to come forward (though not in the majority of the media) with a few simple ideas. Recall for example how, at the start of Palestinian autonomy, Yasser Arafat had a magnificent card to lay for the good of his people and of the region as a whole. Recall how he preferred to continue with his usual double-play while squandering the money of the international community. Recall how Hamas won their election handsomely by virtue of the unspeakable corruption of Fatah which, despite millions of dollars annually in international aid, was incapable of building a hospital or creating a single job. Recall how Hamas, duly elected or not, was and remains a terrorist organisation whose "activists" (as the press calls them) rival those of Islamic Jihad and other radical organisations for the imagination they show in killing civilians. Recall how, when the Popular Resistance Committees murdered a young man of 18 hitchhiking in the suburbs of Jerusalem (the *Nouvel Observateur* considered he was "*executed*") they did no more than kill a young man, not as fighters for liberty but as pure evil bastards. But none of that is of any interest for most of the media, who cannot hear it and see no point in considering

it, because the Truth can be reduced to an axiom, self-evident and requiring no demonstration.

We could say we understand the suffering of the Palestinians, that we consider they have the same right as the Israelis to a state, and that their state ought to be viable and democratic. That is indeed the position of ESISC, as it is the position of the majority of Israelis. It could be suggested that the Palestinians are more victim than the Israelis, at least in recent years, of bad leaders who do not deserve the people they govern.

But that is of no interest to most of the media. What fascinates them – what sets off in them that strange creeping of the skin that occurs every time Israel defends itself (not, it has to be admitted, without errors and abuses, always atrocious for those who have to suffer them) is the power to chant, *ad nauseam*, the axiom that is their faith: "*The Israelis are evil and are the biggest if not the only obstacle to peace in the Middle East*". Here endeth the lesson.

That's what brings them joy. Does anyone dare to point out that this is a wicked joy, a *Schadenfreude* which is quite simply and no more than rejoicing in the misfortune of others? Of what importance would that be, so long as the *other* is an Israeli?

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