

# Disgrace in Durban

The U.N. conference on racism was worse than just hot air. BY CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER



AP / Wide World Photos

*Cuban strongman Fidel Castro and Yasser Arafat in Durban, Aug. 31.*

THERE ARE FEW MUSEUMS as powerful as the Holocaust Museum in Washington, but it contains what appears to be a structural oddity. The exhibit fills three floors. The middle floor covers the Holocaust itself; the last, the rescue and aftermath. But the entire first floor, which can take hours to go through, consists of the prelude, the 1930s and the relentless Nazi campaign to delegitimize the very existence of Jews.

Why is the prelude given as much space as the Holocaust itself? Because the prelude is so crucial. Unless the Jews had first been stripped of their very humanity, their extermination would not have been possible. Before the great crime comes the great lie.

*Charles Krauthammer is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

Which is why the U.N. Conference on Racism in Durban is so important. It has been wrongly dismissed by many as mere hot air, the usual Third-World-dictators-in-committee cavorting in their playpen of meaningless demagoguery. But that misses the point. This was a universal conference whose overriding objective was to brand one country and one people as uniquely, transcendently evil. The whole point was to rekindle the Arab campaign to delegitimize the planet's single Jewish state—and thus prepare the psychological and political ground for its extinction.

Whether the final communiqué contained that language is irrelevant. The charge that Zionism is racism dominated all debate both inside and outside the conference. For two weeks, it became the subject of discussion in every capital from Pretoria

to Paris and all the media in between. As one of the Egyptian delegates explained with satisfaction, Zionism as racism is now back on the international agenda and returned to diplomatic discourse at the highest level.

Of course, it is absurd that Israel be vilified as racist by the likes of Sudan, whose Arab government is conducting a genocidal war against the black Christians in the south; Iran, which hangs Jews for being Jews; and Uganda, which expelled all its Indian citizens. But just because the accusation is Orwellian does not diminish its political significance.

Yasser Arafat's speech was particularly important. He portrayed Israel as the last of the colonial nations. And not just colonial, but *intrinsicly* racist. Since everyone agrees racism and colonialism are evil and their eradication a positive good, to place Israel in that category—again, uniquely—is to legitimize its destruction.

For believers in Oslo, the irony is rather extreme. Many Israelis and Americans made themselves believe that Arafat was sincere when he signed that piece of paper in September 1993 recognizing Israel. That he continually said and did otherwise (for instance, creating textbooks whose maps show Palestine with no Israel) was willfully ignored. But after Durban, it can no longer be ignored or denied. In Durban, Arafat did not just declare his own rejection of Israel's right to exist. He tried to enlist the entire international community to join in that rejection.

But Durban went far beyond simple nonrecognition. It also went far beyond just states defaming Israel and Jews. Non-governmental organizations—led by Palestinian and other Arab “human rights” groups and supported by many other NGOs from around the world—issued their own declaration characterizing Israel as “a racist apartheid state” and accusing it of “systematic perpetration of racist crimes including war crimes, acts of genocide, and ethnic cleansing. . . . alien domination and subjugation.” This has been correctly termed the

most anti-Semitic international document produced since the Third Reich.

It took almost a decade of relentless anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda to prepare Germany, and indeed the rest of Europe, for the mass murder to follow. Durban marks the beginning of an Arab campaign of comparable dehumanization.

By invoking the word genocide regarding Israel's treatment of Palestinians, the campaign against Israel goes nuclear. Genocide is the ultimate crime. Genocidal societies are not just to be shunned; they must be destroyed. Their eradication is not merely desirable; it is imperative. The point of accusing Israel of genocide is to make the destruction of Israel an act of righteous justice, to enlist non-Arabs and non-Muslims in a secular jihad.

That such a monstrous proposition should even get a hearing anywhere is shocking. And that it would be the central focus at a conference supposedly opposed to racism—and the subject of serious textual negotiations involving such otherwise rational international players as Canada, Norway, and the European Union—is, in itself, a scandal.

It is also a demonstration of how far-reaching and effective the Palestinian campaign against Israel has been. This is not hot air. This is a program with two parts. The part in Durban was intended to legitimize the eradication of Israel. The part on the ground—in Israel—is intended to achieve that outcome by means of war.

For the time being, the war consists of relentless terrorist attacks, against a background of running gun battles, drive-by shootings, and roadside bombs. But this is just the beginning. The ground is being prepared for two major possible escalations. One is the explosion of the conflict into a regional war in which Syria, Iraq, Iran, and possibly Egypt and Saudi Arabia join the fight against Israel, a replay of 1948-49 with the same objective, a *judenrein* Middle East. Were this to happen, the Arab

states might be accused of border-crossing aggression. Armed with an overwhelming international consensus that Israel is colonialist, racist, and genocidal, however, the aggressors would be transformed into liberators.

But there is a second and even more ominous possibility. There is already discussion in the Arab press of the legitimacy of using weapons of mass destruction against Israel. "The Palestinian Resistance can obtain such weapons for its battle against the enemy at a minimal cost," writes Issam Al-Ghazi, editor of the Egyptian weekly *Al-Maydan*, speaking of

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"biological and chemical weapons—the atomic bomb of the poor." How? "One hundred mice with the 'Super Plague' virus . . . could be released in the streets of Tel Aviv. Likewise, a small bottle of Plague-infected mosquitoes can be used to destroy entire Israeli cities."

Of course, the practical considerations against doing so—Israel's retaliatory deterrent—have not changed. But the moral considerations are changing. The vicious international campaign to place a genocidal Israel outside the pale of humanity is establishing the psychological basis for genocidal attacks on Israel itself.

That such a program should draw legitimacy from a conference sponsored by the U.N., paid for by the West, and dedicated to combating racism is grotesque. Which is why the Bush administration was right to walk out of the conference. It should

never have shown up in the first place. You do not show up at a Nuremberg rally.

Moreover, walking out is not enough. It is too passive a response to a frontal assault on decency. What can the United States do? There is one simple straightforward action it can take to shift the focus of debate from the delegitimation of Israel back to where it should be: the delegitimation of those conducting this cynical campaign. What to do? Put back on the State Department terrorism list those who are plainly and openly practicing terrorism—the PLO and the Palestinian Authority. That means cutting off all American aid to, and official recognition of, the Palestinian Authority.

It is not just what Arafat says in Durban. It is what he does on the ground in Israel. Almost weekly there is a mass murder of Jews (and many that are stopped by Israeli preventative measures) that occurs under the protection of the Palestinian Authority, with the encouragement of the official Palestinian media, and to the congratulations of Yasser Arafat. After a suicide bomber murdered 21 youngsters and horribly maimed dozens of others outside a Tel Aviv discothèque, Arafat sent the killer's parents a letter thanking them for their son's "heroic martyrdom operation, . . . the model of manhood and sacrifice for the sake of Allah and the homeland."

We Americans have our own forms of pariahhood. We rightly ostracize and isolate the likes of Syria, Libya, and the Usama bin Laden gang. The PLO was taken off this list in 1993 when Arafat signed the Oslo accords promising to make peace, renounce violence and terrorism, and accept Israel as a legitimate member of the Middle East community. With all of these promises betrayed—now publicly and openly in Durban—there is no possible excuse for the United States to keep the PLO and the Palestinian Authority off the terrorism list.

Arafat is preparing a war of extinction against a friend. It is time to put him beyond the pale. ♦