

JEWISH COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Hasbara Challenges Facing Israel and the
American Jewish Community
Chair: Charles Kriser
Part I: The View from Jerusalem
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CHARLES KRISER: Welcome. We've been getting calls, that is JCPA has been getting calls from around the country, from our constituents, voicing their concerns regarding the election in this country and in Israel, regarding the escalating violence, regarding the media coverage of same, and about the more aggressive propaganda by anti-Israel groups, like the IAP and others, and so on. We felt that we needed to have a place where we could come together and talk. And this is it: our town meeting on Hasbara Challenges Facing Israel and the American Jewish Community today.

Our meeting is going to be in two segments. We will begin by hearing from Alon Liel, the most senior person in the Israel Foreign Ministry, followed by Q&A. And then I will introduce the second segment by introducing our five panelists. And then Martin Raffel will be among you with the hand microphone for your questions for the panel. In all cases, let me urge you that you keep your questions succinct. We have a lot of people in the room, many of whom may well want to ask a question. And we'd really like if possible for everyone to have the chance to do that.

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Let me now tell you about Alon Liel, who has flown in especially for this meeting, an expression of the importance Israel attaches to the work of the organized Jewish community in America. Alon is currently the Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has been the Foreign Affairs Advisor to Ehud Barak, then Chairman of the Labor Party. He has been Director General of the Ministry of Economy and Planning. He received his BA, his MA and his Ph.D from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, his doctoral thesis being on the Dependence of Imported Energy and its Impact on Turkey Foreign Policy. He has written three books, one on Turkey in the Middle East: Oil, Islam and Politics. Another book on Black justice: The South African Upheaval. And a book again on Turkey: The Military Islam and Politics. He is married and has three children. And I give to you Alon Liel.

ALON LIEL: Good afternoon. I take here a big risk—the most powerful people in the Jewish community in the United States are watching my back. It's too dangerous. Too dangerous. I'm sorry. I apologize. I didn't plan it this way.

This session is on the Hasbara problems. But I want to start by looking at it from a wider angle. When we speak about our Hasbara problems it's divided into three main parts: the issues themselves, the logistics, and the enthusiasm. And I think we have had a problem with all three of them in the last decade.

Of course during the first 20 or even 30 years of Israel, there was a lot of enthusiasm. We were all pioneers. No problem with the issues. Israel was a successful melting pot; we were building a Jewish state. And the issues were no problem at all. We were in a state of war; we had to fight for our existence. Twenty years ago, when I served in Chicago, I tried to figure out what were our main issues.

And the issues were mainly focused on the beginning of the peace process. The famous sentence: 'No more war, no more bloodshed.' Egypt is making peace with Israel. We didn't know the term 'cold peace' then. So of course we dreamt about normalization with our neighbors, the biggest, the most important Arab state is making peace with us. I

think we still had the enthusiasm, and we definitely had the issues.

Ten years ago we had different issues. We had the big wave of emigration, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the war in the Gulf. Israel had economic prosperity.

I go back only five years ago. The Oslo Agreement, the peace with Jordan. If you remember, Peres was then Foreign Minister with a new Middle East. A lot of enthusiasm, definitely in '94 when we flew to Casablanca. In '95 still when we flew to the Amman Conference of Regional Economic Issues, and so on.

And here we stand now today, and I am looking at what's happening in Israel and I'm also talking to friends abroad in Europe and in the United States. We have definitely lost the enthusiasm. And we also in a way lost many of the issues we had. And I'll try to explain why. As you know, about three months ago, four months ago, we picked up two companies, American companies, to do our Hasbara, to assist us with Hasbara. Malcolm is here, Shula is here. Some of the leaders here in the community know a lot about it.

And they came to Israel and we had a session. And they asked me, "What are the issues?" Only a month ago they did, six weeks ago. And I told them, and I am responsible for the issues in Israel. I told them, "I don't know what to tell you. You start getting in shape. Start running on the machine. Call me in a month, I'll tell you in which direction to run."

Because we really couldn't know what will happen with these Taba talks. We knew approximately—maybe more than approximately—what Barak wanted, what the government wanted. We didn't know if we have a partner; we didn't know if we can reach an agreement; we didn't know—because of these uncertainties—what the issues are. And now we are after elections, and we are getting organized regarding the issues. Regarding logistics, we are better off now after many years during which we thought Hasbara will not be needed any more. Now we are sure it will be needed for many years. And we are trying to check what the issues are and I'll be talking about it a little bit. But we are more worried at this stage about the enthusiasm.

And I'll tell you why. Something happened in Israel politically in 1967 that created a big rift inside the Israeli political map, inside the Israeli society. We had two ideologies. One said now we have the territories. We'll give them back; we'll make peace; and we'll have security. And the other ideology said, let's build the territories; let's settle in the territories; we'll have security and then we'll make peace.

I think both collapsed. Both ideologies collapsed. If the ideology of the right collapsed in '93, or maybe in '96 when Netenyahu accepted Oslo, I think the ideology of the left collapsed this year when we were ready to hand the territories to Arafat and he didn't only say, "No, thank you, I don't want the territories," he started shooting. So I think we both thought, both sides, right and left, thought that the territories are the key to the solution. And now we know that they are not the key to the solution. Both sides know there are limits, in a way.

And I think it's an opportunity now that both sides are more realistic. There is less enthusiasm behind the peace as the left saw it, and less enthusiasm behind the

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settlements as the right saw it. And I think we'll have to take care now on synchronizing the two ideologies, uniting the Israeli society, strengthening our democracy, strengthening our economy, as well as security. And maybe through this unity, renewing the enthusiasm and creating a strategy, or a policy that will be a more viable policy.

As you know, as we sit here, I think, the Central Committee of the Labor Party is voting whether if to join the National Unity Government or not. And I don't know, of course, the results. It will take I think another two hours before they will end the count. I personally hope that they will decide to join. I think that at this critical junction, it will be a terrible mistake on behalf of the Labor Party if they don't join the coalition.

I started saying that we have a problem not only with enthusiasm but also with the issues. And it's related because when you come to the Israeli public, or to the Jewish communities abroad, and you say now we have to move from conflict resolution to conflict management, how can you create enthusiasm around such a concept. What is conflict resolution? We are running to peace, world peace,

new Middle East with our neighbors, and so on. Conflict management is what they call now a low intensity word: to handle, to manage, the situation on the ground on a daily basis, sometimes with casualties.

And this is definitely a strategy that is not creating a lot of enthusiasm, by the way, unlike a war. When you face an overall war that was started by your enemy you, by definition, unite the society. And usually if the Israeli public sees it as a war for its survival, we know from the past that this is creating a lot of enthusiasm and unity and so on.

But now you come to the public and you say we don't go for conflict resolution, we go for a low intensity war. You just be careful when you drive on the road, just be careful when you get on a bus. This is a strategy that is a blow, I think, to their morale. And this is, I think, one of our problems today that if we have a national unity government, and even if we don't, the government is coming to the Israeli public and saying, "Look we started the peace process with the Palestinians eight years ago." Some even say, "Let's start from the beginning."

But most of the leaders would say, we cannot start from zero. And I think we agree that you cannot just erase the last eight years.

On the other hand, we cannot start from where we stopped. And the problem now is how to reignite the process. And where do you start? Can you start from the middle? Can you come to the Palestinians and tell them, "Okay you were offered 97% by Barak. I offer 42. Let's sit." Can he come? And it's a very, very complicated situation. And around this strategy, it's difficult to create enthusiasm and difficult to clarify the issues and so on.

I want to go more and speak about what our Hasbara problems at the moment are when we look at it from the defensive end, because most of it is imposed on us, as you know. In the last six months, we suffered a meaningful blow to Israel's image, especially in Western Europe. And we had problems in the States, as you all know, mainly on television. But the overall problem created in the States is by far not as meaningful as the one that was created in almost all of Western Europe. And when we speak about

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Western Europe, of course there were some countries where we were hit dramatically. A country like Belgium is the most difficult country for us today. Parliament, government, Foreign Minister, they are going to be the next Presidents of the EU. But the EU itself is a problem. And strangely enough, countries like India, China, Turkey, with which we have warm relations only in the last decade-- we didn't suffer a major problem regarding our image.

When I single out Western Europe, and maybe also the more liberal part of the political map in the United States, I think it stems mainly from the fact that our problem, in the eyes of this human rights lobbies in the democratic world, is that we are too strong and the Palestinians are too weak. And most of our Hasbara problems today, especially today when everybody speaks about a possible collapse of the economy and the society in the Palestinian Authority, is from the fact that the Palestinians suffered a much more meaningful blow as a result of their intifada, the result of the this wave of violence.

They ruined their economy. They didn't collapse yet because Arafat still gets money from the outside to pay 100,000 salaries. But I think that with this terrible economic situation that we have in the West Bank and in Gaza, and if we have this economic collapse of the PA, and maybe Arafat running away, and we have the closure going on, I think most of our Hasbara problems will be human rights related.

We also saw here in the last six months an "excessive use of force" terminology. Although, as you all know, the violence was initiated by the Palestinians, and we are responding. But since we are, and we are, the strong side, and they are the weak side, so-called deprived of their rights and so on, I think most of the problems we'll have will be attacks on these issues. And we have to get organized.

MARTIN RAFFEL: Okay, we're now going to turn it over to you for some questions and comments. First, there was a request for a definition of Hasbara. Hasbara comes from the Hebrew word, *L'Hasbir*, to explain, to engage in public

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advocacy or interpretation on behalf of Israel Okay, who would like to ask a question or make a comment?

FRANZ: My name is Franz and I'm from San Francisco. And I'm interested in knowing whether the application of Israel to be part of the Security Council through Europe has been jeopardized by the actions of the last three or four months?

MARTIN RAFFEL: Let's take one more question, Alon, before you answer.

JACK KIRSHNER: Jack Kirshner, Middlesex County, New Jersey. It's been claimed in the newspapers that Mr. Barak himself had greatly downgraded the importance of Hasbara in his administration. Is it so, and if so, why?

MARTIN RAFFEL: Alon, we'll take one more.

FRANKEL: Frankel from Peoria, Illinois. I wanted to ask you, strategically, regarding the settlements within the Gaza Strip, what is the strategic importance of those? And since we hear that a lot of the clashes occur in those territories, is there any talk about withdrawal from those areas?

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ALON LIEL: Okay, first question was about the issue of the Security Council. As you know, for years we didn't belong to any of the groups in the United Nations. And only last year we were accepted to WEOG, the Western European and Others Group. And this was only in the New York surroundings, and not outside New York. And we are trying to expand it now to other organizations of the UN. But so far--we have also UN people, our UN mission people here, they can give you maybe more details. As far as I know, we don't, we did not submit our candidacy to the Security Council.

The representative of the Middle Eastern Group is probably going to be Syria. And the question is, how do we treat a Syrian presence as non-permanent member of the Security Council. From reports I've seen recently, the chances of this happening are very big. And I still don't know what the State Department position about it will be, but it's much more likely that you'll see Syria as a member of the Security Council in the near future than you'll see Israel there.

About Barak, speaking about no need for Hasbara, I would say it was Peres who came up with this concept. And I must say he convinced us when he came with this concept. It was '92, Peres became for the second time, now he might be the third time, Minister of Foreign Affairs. We had a conference, a gathering of the Consuls General in New York. I came from Atlanta, and Peres came with this concept that we don't need Hasbara any more because we will have a wonderful policy, a peace policy that the world will like. And since the world will like our policy, we can close the Hasbara departments.

I must say I was very enthusiastic about it. And so was I two years later when he came with the concept of the new Middle East. But I think this concept has collapsed, very recently by the way. Because we had a fairly reasonable, if not good, seven years between September '93 and the year 2000 regarding our international status and our international image. And I think we have now diplomatic relations with about 175 countries. And we have friendship, real, sincere, meaningful friendship with countries that didn't have diplomatic relations with us

until 10 years ago. Like China and India and Romania—not Romania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary. And some of them in the volume of several billions of dollars, if I take civilian and military together.

And we had a good, a very good decade internationally. A very meaningful decade. We are not dependent any more on Western Europe, and of course we are on the United States for strategic and maybe economic reasons. But let's say the United States and Western Europe are not our only friends in the world any more. And this is, I think, thanks to this peace policy, maybe even aggressive peace policy.

But it has collapsed. It has collapsed when Arafat told us "No" when we wanted to give the territories. And it has collapsed when he started shooting. And it collapsed because not only because we are Jews and Israelis and they don't like us in the region. It also collapsed because we are the First World in the middle of the Third World.

And you see as Americans what's happening to you from time to time--your representatives, your diplomats in

Yemen, in Kenya, when they are placed in the middle of the Third World. We are the First World sitting a few hundred meters from the Third World. And the bigger they get, the bigger the hatred. And when you have this hatred, and you have this violence, and you have fundamentalism, and you have corruption around you, you have these kinds of problems erupting. And when you have these kinds of problems, no peace policy will help you because you are shooting. And when you are shooting, you have to explain why you are shooting. And here we are again needing all our Hasbara logistics, arguments, and ammunition. So just to sum up this concept of good policy, no need for Hasbara, has really collapsed.

About the settlements, the question was on the settlements in Gaza, but I think I should say a word about the settlements as a whole. Barak put this issue in front of Arafat in a way that probably didn't have—and as we saw in the elections, more than probably—didn't have the backing of the majority of the Israeli public, definitely not the political map. And what he said was, "Take 94 to 96% of the West Bank and leave us the blocks of the

settlements where we have at least 80% of the settlers.
And we will even compensate you inside Israel."

So I think if we wouldn't have the refugee/Jerusalem tension, it might have worked. In Oslo they agreed to it but we saw that many things they agreed to in Oslo, when we came to the moment of truth, they were not there.

Regarding Gaza, we have 3,000 settlers there. And unfortunately we see, when we have violence that the violence is all over, not only in the settlements. It's true that in the settlements it's probably—I don't live there, but I can guess from what we hear and see—that it's probably a nightmare to live as a Jew, as an Israeli, in Gaza today. But the problem is far beyond it because you saw what happened last week in Azure. And we feel that the Palestinian violence, the fundamentalist aggression of Hezbollah, the aggression of Iran have little to do with the territories. Here and there it's a trigger. But the problems Israel is having are far beyond.

And I guess that when we have an overall agreement, even a partial agreement, then you can speak about removing settlements. But not unilaterally. I don't think the

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Israeli public will agree to such a gesture to Arafat today after he is shooting at us, his peace partners for six months now and killing Israelis almost on a daily basis. So I don't think it's a question at this stage.

CHARLES KRISER: Okay, we're going to now involve the other participants. We're going to widen our focus now to include Hasbara Challenges and Issues here in the United States, looking to Israel and looking outward to Europe. And it's going to be your chance to dialogue with the panel. The panel consists of representatives of the following agencies: The Presidents Conference, which is the umbrella body established by the organized Jewish Community to convey our concerns to the administration in Washington. AIPAC, serving as the community's legislative vehicle on the Hill. And the three defense agencies: ADL, AJ Committee and AJ Congress, all of which were out in front on pro-Israel advocacy even before the creation of the State.

Let me introduce to you Malcolm Hoenlein of the Presidents Conference, Steve Rosen of AIPAC, Ken Jacobson

of ADL, Phil Baum of AJC and Shula Bahat of AJ Committee.
The ball's in your court.

MARTIN RAFFEL: We're going to go straight to the panel
with some questions and comments.

LYNN LYSS: I'm Lynn Lyss from St. Louis. I think for
me one of the great challenges that we have in Hasbara is
explaining to the broader community, the Jewish community,
and even to myself, the value of withholding the taxes from
the Palestinian Authority, which seems to be pushing the
Palestinian people only further in poverty, which I think
exacerbates the potential for increased violence. How do
we explain that?

STEVE ROSEN: I don't know if these things are
working. The withholding of taxes is not a pretty picture.
It's an economic squeeze. It's making people's lives more
difficult that are already suffering. The problem we have
is that all the other measures that are available to the
government of Israel are also problematic. The use of
violence on a large scale is deplored; the use of selective
targeting is deplored; the use of the economic squeeze is
deplored. What our friends have been saying to us is,

please give us a list of the things you want us to do. We have to restore safety to ordinary people in Israel.

It is very clear from the results of the election that took place, whatever else the election meant, it clearly meant that the people of Israel do not have a sense of personal safety. They can't drive on their roads without being targeted. They can't buy earthenware and sit and drink coffee in a café without being torn apart for being Jews. And so they are using the instruments at their disposal.

I would argue that the economic squeeze is actually less brutal than the alternatives. But if that's not the case, then somebody ought to sit down and come up—but we American Jews can not say to the Israelis, please don't use methods A, B C through Z because each one of them makes us uncomfortable at our country club where we can't explain to our friends why you're doing this. This is a very drastic situation.

SHULA BAHAT: I want to agree with Steve—and by the way, my sense is that this panel is really, would be quite in agreement on a number of issues. Just think about any

other country—not Israel—in a state of war. And I really see Israel now in a state of war. What other measures would any other country use? Probably worse than the ones that Israel does. Israel still lets some people work in Israel from the West Bank in Gaza. And frankly I think we need to support it and explain to people, take it from the Middle East situation and bring it to any other conflict situation, and I think that the reason and the logic of the Israeli stance can be better explained on that backdrop.

MARTIN RAFFEL: Okay, we're going to get another question here.

EDITH EVERT: Edith Evert, from New York. Some of the worst publicity Israel gets has to do obviously with the level of response to the intifada. And there's been a lot said that the level of the response need not be a lot of gunfire, a lot of tanks and so forth, that there are methodologies of crowd control, like water cannons, like other kinds of soft bullets, like tear gas. And there are lots of newspeople there, because Israel's a democracy, there are lots of newspeople there who see it and report

it. And so I'm just wondering whether there couldn't be some rethinking of that response.

MARTIN RAFFEL: Okay, Malcolm, the excessive force concern.

MALCOLM HOENLEIN: Well I think that both questions reflect the problem when you denigrate the importance of Hasbara. Because frankly, people should have been informed of the answers in both cases. In the case of taxes, you heard two very good explanations as to reasons. But more than that, the PA, if you give them the \$57 million are going to use it to continue the violence. It doesn't go to the people. Had they been using the money in the correct ways, instead of the corrupt system which has been established, and the hundreds of millions of dollars of aid that have not benefited the people, Gaza's situation today is worse than before the inpouring of hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars, probably already in the billions, since Arafat became the Mayor of Gaza.

So we have a very different situation which grows out of the failure to appreciate the need even in good times to have Hasbara, so that you have a mechanism in place to be

able to deal with situations that arise. And second you have the problem for a generation that doesn't know the answers, even the most fundamental answers. When you don't engage in Hasbara, they lose sight of it. So people use figures, 78%, 22%, with anybody having—people having no context in which to understand it.

And when you come, then, to the issue of excessive violence, you also don't create a context. People don't know that there were 3,000 live ammunition incidents initiated by Palestinians to which Israel responded. That if you take the 3,000 incidents and you look at the total number of casualties, the fact is that it's less than any riot, or probably any demonstration in New York City or any other place in the world, let alone Washington. So that what we have done is to allow the media to distort the realities.

When you see the pictures of the reporters lining up and the people, engaging the people to throw stones so that they get the picture. But if you look at the pictures of the reporters, you get the other side of the story. So

that I think the answer is that you can defend Israel's position on excessive violence.

Water cannot be used in these kind of closed situations, and especially when you have isolated outposts of two or three soldiers being besieged by 1,000 demonstrators. You can't have water cannons waiting everywhere for it.

And so all of the alternatives—did you know that they had extensive study groups—and Alon can discuss them—looking into alternative methodologies. The fact is that no one has come up with an alternative methodology which you can have 25 different incidents breaking out, when you have road side shootings, when you have road bombs being placed upon the roads upon which civilians are traveling. The answer is that Israel's response has been, if anything, the most restrained of any country in a similar circumstance.

MARTIN RAFFEL: I did read that, Alon, Israel did look into alternative crowd control techniques. Do you want to comment on that?

ALON LIEL: I want to comment on many things, yes. I'll comment on this but I want to say something about the nature of the closure at the moment. At the moment it's a full closure. Full closure. And nobody is allowed in to work. And this is a big change. It's only after the recent attack. And it's a very difficult situation to explain. But we have to explain it. It stems from security reasons only.

And if I look at the near future and maybe more than that, I think if this goes on, the issue of the disengagement, which until not long ago was called separation--and we really beg you not to use this term--disengagement between us and the Palestinians will pop up. Some of the military people tell us that it will be almost impossible to meaningfully open the border again. Because when you are down to zero, all the workers, the Palestinians workers that work in Israel at the moment, are illegal workers. There are about 20,000 of them every day. But we went down from 120,000 and most of them were illegal. So the issue of the disengagement between us and the Palestinian--and I don't know exactly if Sharon will

adopt this policy because it was a Barak policy or a policy of the security establishment—will have to be explained, tackled with. And if you want I can elaborate on this.

Regarding the different measures to counterbalance the violence, we must understand that the intifada is not an intifada any more. There were two months of intifada in which we had about 40 shooting incidents a day and lots of riots. Then we had two months, December and January, of less than 20 shooting incidents a day and almost no riots. And now we are up to about 30 shooting incidents a day and no riots almost at all. It's only terrorist attacks, mainly on the roads.

So the issue of measures regarding demonstrations is not the issue any more. The issue is how do you get rid of terrorism. And this is the problem we are having. And the criticism is not excessive use of force any more, but targeting the leaders. And here we have a lot of criticism. And by the way, today the Human Rights report of the U.S. State Department came out and I guess it will be headlines tomorrow in the United States and probably all over the world.

MARTIN RAFFEL: That is critical of Israel's policy of targeting certain individuals?

ALON LIEL: I only saw some drafts, but I don't want to guess. It's just being published now.

MARK SCHICKMAN: Mark Schickman, from San Francisco. And this is a question for the American communal representatives. Eight years ago the American Jewish community spoke powerfully and strongly with a mantra that Jerusalem is the eternal, undivided capital of Israel. Five months ago, the Israeli leadership was prepared to move on that issue. At this point, what can the American Hasbara position be on that and can we credibly at this point and as strongly say that Jerusalem is going to be the eternal, undivided capital?

MARTIN RAFFEL: Ken and Phil, you're in line if you want to tackle those questions?

KEN JACOBSON: Keep in mind that this is very different from the first intifada. And it's not only reflective of what we say. You see editorialists who had very little good to say about Israel during the first intifada, who are covering this in a very different way. The Washington Post

is a classic manifestation of it, in which they see all of the specifics in the context of the border questions. And I think that basic understanding of it, together with the explanations you heard, makes a very, very different presentation. And the basic explanation, we've heard it a million times among ourselves, but people like The Washington Post and Tom Friedman and others basically point out you had an Israeli leader ready to offer real peace and the Palestinians, who had an opportunity to end the occupation, instead turned to violence, which is inexcusable. And when you see it in that context it's very different, together with the fact that the Palestinians now have real weapons as opposed to the last intifada.

On Jerusalem, it seems to me that we as a community have really maintained the position of a united Jerusalem with it being the sole capital of Israel. That doesn't mean—we don't know where the issues are going to go. For example, there were exit polls taken among the Israeli people in the election. Besides whom they voted for, they were asked on several critical issues: the Palestinian state, dismantling of settlements. And on the issue of

Jerusalem, a far more significant number said that they were ready now, as opposed to two years ago, to consider what kinds of compromises they might want to make in the context of a real peace process on the subject of Jerusalem.

It seems to me what the Israeli people were saying, which we should take that message, is that we are not ready to make any such decisions in the kind of process that was going on. The basic message that they were sending was not opposition to a peace, but opposition to a process that was seen as a one-sided process, in which, as one Israeli writer said, the Israelis felt they were suckers. They were offering land for nothing. And so the answer is, I think we can readily maintain our position of Jerusalem united, the capital of Israel.

And the real issue should focus on when are the Palestinians finally going to start to accept Israel's legitimacy, educate their people, do something about terror. To the point that, down the road this issue may well come to the fore. The simple fact is this government is not going to be negotiating on Jerusalem in the near

future. And I think we're in a position to simply say what we have always said. And down the road we will deal with the issue as it comes forward if there ever are real negotiations on the issue.

MARGO DIX: I'm Margo Dix from Atlanta. I'm the community relations director in Atlanta and I have a very practical question. With all due respect, I find it a little unusual that we have only one Israeli on our panel. And in our communities, we're in the position of expressing our support for Israel, trying to garner our community efforts to address the issues and the media response. And what I'd like to know is what is the Israeli government going to do to help us. We have a panel of Americans here. I'd like to know what the Israelis are doing?

MARTIN RAFFEL: Alon, before you answer that question. Phil, you wanted to respond to some of the previous ones?

PHIL BAUM: There's a certain sense of fate and doom when your number comes up here. I feel I'm at a bakery. And my number has arisen and now I have to say something, you know. I was prepared to be quiet and inoffensive. Let me just say, you'll be sorry you had my number come up.

The fact is I think Hasbara is a lot more complicated than we make it appear, in general. It's a very difficult and complex matter. And I think it has to be taken with a certain measure of sophistication on the part of American Jews, a certain matter of patience and understanding on the part of American Jews, as well as Israelis.

In a way, Shimon Peres was both right and wrong, as I'll try to indicate in a moment. The American Jewish Congress has been very sensitive to the need for better Hasbara. I can tell you—you may not know this—but since the Lebanese war, when we found out the Israeli Hasbara was a mess, that it was terrible, so the mythology developed that Americans know better how to do PR than the Israelis do. Although our own PR abroad was pretty terrible, but nonetheless we managed to convince the Israelis that we knew what to tell them to do.

So for the last 15 years or so, we have been bringing over every year some 10 mid-level Israeli bureaucrats who deal with the media, who have to answer questions in the media, and we give them intensive two week training under the auspices of Burson Marsxeller, a major and very expert

PR firm in this country—how to appear on camera, how to answer questions, what to do when your number comes up on a panel of this kind. Things of that kind.

And I don't know if it works. We think it works. We live in the hope that it works. The Israelis tell us that it works. And we now have representatives all over the country who have been trained in PR in this country.

But let me say to you, you know, it's helpful to some degree, but the major PR advantage that Israel had was that Mr. Barak was prepared to give back almost everything that anybody would want, more than anybody believed he could possibly concede. And he considered dividing Jerusalem—all the things that were up for grabs, that were controversial and difficult for the Israelis to achieve, he offered. And then Arafat and the PLO rejected it. What better Hasbara could you have? Here the Israelis, generous and open and ready to deal, ready to be tolerant and understanding, and the Palestinians rejected it.

That seems to me to be the best possible kind of PR you can have. And if Mr. Peres is right, it means that it doesn't matter what kind of PR we give, what kind of

training Burson Marxseller gives 10 Israeli bureaucrats every year, the big issue is what counts. And on the big issue, Israel scored a PR victory.

But it didn't work out that way. Because despite all of that, despite Israel's concessions, nonetheless we still have the sense in this country that the media don't deal with us with the kind of understanding and sympathy that we're entitled to, that Israel's entitled to.

A recent example of that is an interview that Bryant Gumbel had with Dennis Ross. And during the course of his questioning, Gumbel asked Ross, "What chance does peace have when you have a guy like Sharon, who's there and he won't deal with anybody. And objective observers all recognize he's a man who is unwilling to compromise on any count whatever." And he said, "you know, how are you going to handle, when Sharon is going to enforce his views with the brutality with which he is characterized."

That happened, that's PR, that's Bryant Gumbel. It's a national television network. And it affects the public temper. And there's something at work in the consciousness of the American people that's troublesome. One of our

problems is that Sharon now has an image in this country that is almost impossible to overcome. We have to deal with that somehow. Acknowledge it, recognize it and confront it, and relate to it. It's ridiculous that this image should haunt the new government of Israel before it has a chance to do anything. That's a challenge and a task for all of us to deal with.

When it comes to Jerusalem, it's a very difficult problem, if I may say so. And because I disagree, I think, with some of my colleagues on the panel here. Because I have long been dedicated to the proposition, at a great cost to me organizationally, internally, my own organization, that the fate and decision making of the Israeli people belongs to them. And that the American Jews have a very limited role to play in trying to induce them to take positions they don't want to take. Left to their own devices, they might not take it. Therefore, it seems to me we should be more modest in our attempts to persuade them to take positions that go against their grain. Left to themselves, they wouldn't want to do it. We know

better. We have a greater moral sensitivity. We should try to persuade them.

On Jerusalem, we have been dedicated to the proposition that Jerusalem should remain eternally united for the Jewish people. And some say it's an existential question. Malcolm has said it's an existential question. And I'll tell you, I've been around this business for a long time. Almost every issue that's important and critical in the relationship between the Israelis and the Arabs is existential in nature. I can't tell you how many times I've been confronted with existential challenges.

For me, the existence of Israel is the existential question. What I'm concerned about is preserving the survival of a free democratic state in Israel, safe and secure for the people of Israel. And I want to ensure that they are the ones to make up their own minds about what has to be done politically to ensure their survival.

Now when it comes to Jerusalem, if I said--I think we have, as far as I'm concerned, an immortal claim to Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel. But if the government of Israel and the people of Israel

supporting that government, electing that government, now decide that so far as they are concerned, they can live with giving up with some of the neighborhoods in Jerusalem that nobody goes to anyway—Jews don't go to anyway—if they decide that that's important to the preservation of their survival and the integrity of their standing in the world, and they want to do it, I'm not going to sit here in this country and say, "No you may not do it because we don't like it because it goes against our dogma and our opinions."

As far as I'm concerned, I think Jerusalem should remain undivided and the eternal capital of Israel. And I would hope that would be the end result. If the people of Israel, in their corporate decision-making, decide that it's in their welfare, it's indispensable to their well-being, that there be that kind of division, I say to you it's up to us to accept that decision.

MARTIN RAFFEL: Margo asked a pointed question of Alon, first of all, about what Israel's doing for Hasbara. Alon, please briefly. And then we're going back to the panel for a response.

ALON LIEL: I want to relate to two of the issues here that I think are extremely important. And with all the importance of logistics and we do things now and we spend more money, and do you have an address in New York that the communities can—I think on the issues we have to sharpen things and to discuss it. And it's very important for me also to hear the American leadership on it.

On Jerusalem, on Jerusalem, we must remember what happened. In Camp David, we didn't reach the finish line six months ago. And then we had the talks in Bowling, finished about two months ago. And in Bowling, the formula popped up of dividing Jerusalem in a deal that meant no Palestinian refugee would enter Israel. And this was a formula that brought the teams—not the Israeli public and not the Palestinian public—but the teams that were sitting in Bowling to a finish line. When they came back it was not approved by the Palestinians, not approved by the Israelis. We are not there. And the problem is to reignite the process somewhere. And not the issue of Jerusalem, and not the issue of refugees. I agree that it's not an issue for the near future.

The other thing that Phil said, I agree 100%. Our main Hasbara asset as this moment is a guy called Yasser Arafat. He is our main Hasbara issue. And if we are talking big, big—not what happened to this guy, or to the other guy, or closure today, or closure tomorrow, or money here, or money there—talking big, Arafat is our asset. If he is in a situation that two months ago he was offered 97% and now he is offered 42%, he is a lunatic. And these people, more and more of these people know it. And he's much weaker today than he was when he started this wave of violence. And I think that what Phil said, that the big picture is that he was offered the territories and he didn't take it. And by the wave of violence, he is committing economic suicide. And I think these are the big things.

MARTIN RAFFEL: Okay now we're going to take five comments or questions.

ALLEN GALE: Allen Gale, Detroit Jewish Community Council. I think American Jews can work effectively in places where they are present, where they are comfortable. Places like the media, business, labor, the campus,

government circles. One place that Jews are not comfortable is in church. And I wonder how we can respond to Palestinian Christians, Arab Christians, other non-Arab Christians, who claim that Israeli oppression contributes to the dwindling numbers of Christians in the Holy Land.

CHUCK BROCHE: I'm Chuck Broche from Seattle. And I guess my concern is that this has all been a very nice theoretical and conceptual discussion of current events in the Middle East. What I'd like to know is what two or three things you think we should be doing on the ground in our home towns, because we are the people on the grounds in our home towns.

DARREN SCHNEIDER: Darren Schneider, University of Maryland, College Park. College campuses are a breeding ground for anti-Zionism, anti-Semitic rhetoric, especially on campuses where the Jewish community is significantly outnumbered by Palestinian sympathizers who often successfully prevent any attempts by the Jewish community from doing Hasbara. What should students do to promote Israel and to respond to anti-Zionism on college campuses, especially where they can't even make themselves heard?

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MICHAEL REGENBERG: Michael Regenberg from Boston. In the past 10 years, 20 years, when there was an incident or issues that would happen with Israel, we could depend on the Israeli Ambassador to the United States to help in Hasbara, to speak for Israel. One of the advantages that I think the Palestinians have had in the past is that there is someone that the media can go to.

BOB HORNSTEIN: Bob Hornstein. I'm the CRC Director in Portland. Just indulge me for just a moment, a comment really. When our Israeli Consul General from San Francisco, came to us in November, he made a comment that the brutal lynchings in Ramallah, "that was a good PR day for Israel." That was a direct quote. And I'm not trying to criticize him; I understand the reality. He's right. But it only reinforces this commonly held supposition that victims make for good PR. And you know what, we all know that the world doesn't see Israel as the victim here.

So what about thinking outside the box a little bit. Because Hasbara is to explain, and usually explaining something that's not very pleasant. We're all in a very defensive mood right here. What about marketing the best

side of Israel, in addition to the explanations which are important. For example, joint Israeli-Arab economic projects, water cooperation. The fact that when there's a catastrophe elsewhere in the world, India, Turkey, that Israel is often the first one to send medical and rescue crews. What about those things?

MARTIN RAFFEL: I hope that we'll be able to focus on the younger generation. I thought the question about what to do on the campuses is particularly important. The younger generation doesn't know '48, doesn't know '67, '73. Are they really equipped to deal with the kind of challenges they are confronting. And what is our responsibility as the American Jewish community? So I hope that some of you will focus on that question. Malcolm and Shula I know wanted to get back in on this.

SHULA BAHAT: If you don't mind, I will respond to more than just what I heard here because I think this is an important opportunity to reach through you communities throughout the country. First of all, I agree with Phil Baum, and I think most of us do, that we, the Jewish community, have to be a step behind the Israeli government.

As long as it's a legitimate, democratically elected government of Israel, we have to interpret their policies. This is how I see it.

Which, by the way, puts on us a very difficult challenge, because right now Israel, unfortunately, begins to look like Italy with a new government every six months. And you really don't know what is the message. And the message is very, very critical for this kind of information, activity that we are involved in.

I am a veteran of almost three decades of Hasbara activity, at times that were as difficult as today, when the New Left was on campuses. And we did not have on our side everyone that we think today is no longer on our side. And I would say to you, my own sense is that we need to go back to basics. The crisis here and the crisis there is very important. I think we can respond to it. But my concern is that some of Israel's own historical narrative is being taken away from it, is being confiscated by the Palestinians, and rather successfully. And we are falling victims to that confiscation. And I think we need to go back to basics and explain. And I believe we can.

Somebody talked earlier about the lack of enthusiasm and the lack of passion. Maybe you cannot bring passion to conflict management or to crisis management. I do think we can. But we certainly can bring a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of passion if we can to explain again what Israel is all about. And people have forgotten it. The media have forgotten it. We have forgotten it. And that's our responsibility.

Some Israelis have forgotten it. I actually came here, and I'm going back to a conference on historical revisionism in Israel. And frankly that does not help us. That small minority of Israeli academicians that begin to speak about the establishment of Israel as a sin, that does not help us. So we have to go back to basics. And yes, there have been sins here and there. But overall I am totally convinced that the truth and the justice is on Israel's side even if Israel here and there have engaged in policies that are not correct. But let's not focus on those. Let's focus on what is right.

And going back to the whole issue with the Christian community. It is a major problem for us because they tend

to sympathize with the underdog. And we have to explain to them, and there are many Christian friends, by the way, who can help us explain what Israel is all about. And I would urge to engage in that kind of back to basics information.

For example, we should not use the word "intifada." Intifada means uprising. Now we all know that most of the territories are no longer in Israeli hands; they are in Palestinian hands. So who are the—what is the uprising about? Is it against the Palestinians? The Israelis are not there; the Israelis are in the outskirts of the towns where Palestinians live. So it's your responsibility, it's our responsibility as leaders in the Jewish community, to learn these facts, to impart it to your children, to go to campuses, to speak there, and to go back to basics.

MARTIN RAFFEL: Okay, Malcolm, you wanted to get in there.

MALCOLM HOENLEIN: I just came back Friday from Israel, where we had our annual Presidents Conference mission. We heard 68 speakers in 57 hours. And the one thing you learn is that the more you know, the less you know. So it's very

hard, in bullet form, to deal with questions of such complexity and such seriousness.

All of us agree, Phil, and all of us have acted throughout all five organizations represented here on the basis that we support the democratically elected government of Israel. And that it is up to the people and the elected government to make the decisions that affect the life and security of the people of Israel. That has been our standard operating procedure.

That does not necessarily translate, though, into the leap that you made in regard to Jerusalem. Because the question that was asked was what do we do now on Jerusalem. All of us are going to wait and if the government negotiates a position, we will accept the position.

But there are more fundamental things here that have taken place. The question that has been raised by Arafat is not, as you pointed out, a war against occupation, because 97% live under Palestinian occupation. It's not for territory because it was offered 97% of the territory.

What is unique about this uprising, or revolution, or effort on the part of the Palestinians, what we have seen

Arafat introduce is a war against Jewish history. That the denial of the fact that the Temple existed, the attempt to remove every vestige of the Jewish connection to Jerusalem is the challenge to us, that we have to reassert a very fundamental basic point, which is the Jewish connection to Jerusalem. This is 3,000 years old, 2,000 years before Islam even came into being. People do not know. They all talk about equal claim. And now I sat in the UN and heard 53 speakers, every one of them asserting the Palestinian claim to the Temple Mount and not one understanding even the Jewish claim to the Temple Mount. And I'm not sure how many people in the Jewish community understand this.

So we do have a fundamental responsibility now to reverse this consistent attack that Mubarak can go into Paris and say the temples never existed. I mean it's an attack on Christianity, too. And I can tell you, it has great resonance in the Christian community when we say, I mean, if Jesus was up there going after the money changers and there were no temples, what was he doing up there? And the answer is that they existed. And in fact you can find many Islamic references to the existence of the temples.

So we are dealing at this time with something much more fundamental, which goes back to the basics that we have taken too often for granted. On the campuses, they do not know how to answer because we've taken for granted that everybody understands. The world does not understand. And the world doesn't care any more about it than we do about Northern Ireland and understand all the complexities and all the difficulties, Pakistan/India and every other conflict. In Cypress, how many people can explain the geographic and all the other historical implications of the conflict in Cypress? To us, this is very critical. To the rest of the world, they want it over with.

In terms of Hasbara, we have the organizations here working with the foreign ministry, have begun over three months ago when we all recognized what all of you see, which is the very devastating position we all found ourselves in, the defenseless position. We initiated now a nationwide survey, the most extensive ever done, polling of Jews, non-Jews, campus, blacks, foreign policy, Christians and others. It will be completed this week. We're going to be meeting later this week to be dealing with the

analysis of it. We've done focus groups in five parts and regions of the country to begin to understand on a more factual basis exactly what are the issues.

And you know what we're going to find out? We're going to find out that the positive arguments about concessions, as you rightly pointed out, have very little resonance. When you make the case about what the Arabs have done and what the violence really means, all of a sudden you see the numbers shoot up. Four to one, Americans support Israel over the Palestinians. CNN showed it and our polls will show it as well. Four to one after all the negative publicity.

The question now is how we go back to the basics and get the American people to understand. And we can not rely on Arafat. He may be an asset, but he's proved how unreliable and asset he can be. So I think we have to follow, as she said-

ALON LIEL: On this he's reliable.

MALCOLM HOENLEIN: It's reliable that he's unreliable. That's right. He's consistent in his inconsistency. And about the campus. Eighteen years ago, the campus opinions

were formed by the war in Lebanon. 18 years from now we're going to look back to the young people whose opinions are going to be formed by the images they saw on television now. And that is what we have to look at.

We have to be proactive and we have to look not just at campuses, but at high schools, where kids today are formulating their views. So that when they come to campus, they already have fixed views and perceptions. If Netanyahu can't speak at Berkeley but Hanan Ashrawi gets 1,500 at the University of Pennsylvania, that's a challenge. It is the primary battleground for us now.

And I hope that our study, which Hillel and Richard Joel will be involved in with us, will help address this. We all ought to remember, when we saw the abuse of children, what Golda said, when they love their children more than they hate us, we'll have peace. The American people can understand it if we give them the information.

MARTIN RAFFEL: Kenny, before you speak, I was just shown a news flash. The Labor Party has just voted overwhelmingly to join Prime Minister Sharon's coalition.

KEN JACOBSON: I just want to reiterate what Malcolm and Shula focused on. Those polls that have been taken during the struggle—the first poll by CNN and Gallup were taken shortly after that most horrible visual image of the 12 year old boy. And they showed that the American people, first of all, about half of the people didn't have an opinion, which may be bad, also may be good that they're not paying attention to foreign affairs.

Of those that had an opinion, 41% sympathized with Israel. 11% sympathized with the Palestinians. About 10 days ago, shortly after the Sharon election, the figures were 51 Israel, 16 Palestinians. Now that doesn't mean that we don't have problems with Hasbara in the media. But we at least have to ask ourselves, with all these visual images, how come the American people still see Israel the way it sees Israel and the Palestinians?

And I think it really goes down to the fact that it's very simple to talk about the media simply in negative terms. But the fact is what most people pay attention to are not specific events, but a broad sense of what they feel about the parties involved. And the truth is, the

media have played, in a strange way, over three, four decades, a role in showing the American people that Israel is very much like us. Israel is a democratic society; Israel has always used Judeo-Christian culture; Israel is a party that wants to live in peace; Israel is a party that wants to negotiate without violence. These are broad terms that override any specific things.

Now obviously when the specifics coincide with the broad images, that's the best kind of situation. But I think in terms of what we want to do for future Hasbara, we obviously have to respond to all the specific things. We have to be thinking about those broad cultural and other values that make Americans think more and more that Israel is like us. And we don't have to condescend or take a negative view on the Palestinians necessarily.

The fact is, you look at some of the things that we think are Hasbara losses for us from the Palestinians, I'm not sure. For example, when a Palestinian has died during this conflict, people walk around the city carrying the body of a Palestinian. Now I'm not sure how that plays with the average American in terms of cultural values and

what they talk about. When you're showing the blood and guts of people, is that the kind of things Americans care about?

So I think we have to keep our eye not only on the specifics, and I agree with everything that's been said. That we have to respond to every challenge. But also we have to keep in mind the broader kinds of values that ultimately will make the difference. The simple fact is most Americans do not pay attention to foreign affairs. If they basically see Israel as a democratic society that wants peace, that is good enough.

When it comes to the elite, that's where what Phil was talking about is so critical. The simple fact is we had a moment which was able to focus on the fundamental difference between the way Israelis handle a peace process and the Palestinians. The Israelis are ready to compromise; the Israelis are ready to negotiate without violence; the Israelis are ready to educate their young people about living in peace.

And I think one of the big mistakes in the Barak government was de-emphasizing this point about educating

the young people. I think the average American can truly understand when you talk about what's in the textbooks and what's on the television within the country itself. So I think we have an opportunity to combine the very specific issues that are on the table with the broader issues that will ultimately make the difference. And I think we can do that on campus; we can do that at media sessions; and we can do it within our own Jewish community.

ROBERT COHEN: Robert Cohen in Tulsa. I want to build on what Margo asked, the gentleman on the other side. For those of us who are communications professionals on the community level, we understand that you are going to be looking to us to take the Hasbara program and implement it on a local basis. I still haven't heard, what is it that you're going to do, what are you going to be sending us? What can we do? What can we expect from you so that we can help you and you can help us?

MARTIN RAFFEL: This question is directed to the program that Malcolm mentioned, a national Hasbara effort to examine the themes and messages that will resonate with certain target groups. And then what's the next step?

Assuming that we've identified the effective messages for these groups, what's step two of this process?

MALCOLM HOENLEIN: The next stage of this project, once we analyze it, and all of us will be taking responsibility. For instance, AIPAC will be able to give us direction in terms of the Congressional interpretation, etc. We are looking to establish in phase two the rapid response network, which will involve every community, to be able to have an office out of which every day will come the information, the message of the day. We'll be able to do it by email, which is the super message system that we have failed to take full advantage of. We have a group of people working in California on an Internet system, executives, many of them Israelis who are self-funding this effort. We are looking to media training-

ALON LIEL: --Also monitoring.

MALCOLM HOENLEIN: --I'm going to come to that--to do media training for speakers--Americans and Israelis. And we're working with the Foreign Ministry on all of this. I don't want to differentiate the responsibilities. To have a group focusing on Christians and how we can get specific

messages to the Christian community. To media monitoring. And we have sent out a questionnaire through—JCPA sent it out, asking all of you to tell us what you are doing, what's in place, so that we don't replicate, but we complement what you are doing and tie you in to the network.

What we want to be able to do is to do what they do. And that is that every morning a message goes out. And every Palestinian spokesman who appears on CNN, on BBC, or everybody else, has the right message, is on target, sticks to that message. We want to be able to get out the information on a daily basis. We have many ideas and directions that people are looking at, trying to build on what exists, not replicate it. To use the resources to the maximum effect.

MARTIN RAFFEL: Okay. It goes without saying, by the way, that the JCPA has been a part of this group and obviously will be working with its community member agencies as this process plays out. And as far as the timetable is concerned, obviously this week the data is being collected and analyzed. And this is something that

will be out in the next weeks and months; it's not going to be a matter of a long period of time.

SULA BAHAT: But we have materials now. And I think that's very important to know. We already have lots of messages, very important messages, that any one of you can have easy access to. Just go to the website. In this particular case, of the American Jewish Committee. There is a wealth of material there about issues that are not going to go away. And issues that are pertinent every minute. By the way, it's www.AJC.org. And every other organization here has the same service. You can copy—by the way, other organizations have copied. We have ads that you can take and do whatever you want with them. Letters to the editors; op eds in your local papers; use it in a radio talk show. It's there; it's available. The Israeli government has it as well.

MARTIN RAFFEL: You're absolutely right. It's not that this new program is going to come in and fill a vacuum. That's not the case. This is intended to enhance what already has been going on around the country which, in some respects, I think has been quite an impressive effort

by the Jewish community. We have another question back here.

ALAN RESPLER: Alan Respler, Southern New Jersey. In New Jersey, the Muslim associations, and I believe in other parts of the country, are developing very effective media campaigns, advertisements. Are the national agencies able to help local communities in developing responses? Do you feel it appropriate that we take out corresponding ads on that? For example, the ad that was just recently showing two pictures: an Israeli soldier pointing a rifle. And it looks by the picture next to it that he's pointing at a 10 year old who was just killed. And then the kinds of information underneath it were very damaging.

SHULA BAHAT: The American Jewish community, as you may have noticed, has taken lots of ads. And since the middle of August, even before the violence began, we have already sensed that Arafat is not going to accept what similarly was offered to him at Camp David and we have begun with an ad missing opportunities.

What I would like to suggest is that you do not necessarily respond to the ads. That you develop your own strategy. That is what we have done. Basically develop our own strategy, our own themes. And not necessarily respond ad per ad, but develop those things that you feel are important for the American public to know. And in the case of the communities, develop what is important for your particular community to be aware of.

It has been quite successful. Our last ad, the other refugees, about Jews from Arab lands, is now going to appear in many communities around the country. And it responds to certain issues; it responds to certain questions, not necessarily to a particular ad that appears here or there.

KEN JACOBSON: That specific ad that you referred to. We checked with The New York Times—about the ad where the Israeli soldier was supposedly shooting? It looked phony to us. And we communicated with the Times about it and they contacted the group that placed the ad and they have never heard back from the group. And we raised real questions about them because, to us—and we also checked

with the Israeli Foreign Ministry to see, in fact, whether such a thing was put together in two separate shots or whatever.

The answer is, I don't have a simple answer. I agree with Shula. Ultimately, first of all, ads are very expensive. You have to make choices. And I think you have to try to control the situation as best you can. But there are other ways to respond to ads.

MARTIN RAFFEL: But Ken, Alan's question is really if they have the money for an ad, for a counter-ad, can they turn to the national agencies for assistance in developing a counter-ad?

KEN JACOBSON: I'm sorry. We have an advertising task force of people from the ad agencies who do pro bono work in developing ads. And the answer is definitely yes.

ALON LIEL: I want to say several things. First, to refer to what Shula said about going back to the basics. I think it's a very important word here. And it's one of our conclusions, too. And when I say basics, it's not necessarily to explain to the American public every day what happened in '48 or '67 or '73, although this is also

important. But usually this doesn't make news. When I mean basic is to describe Israel as it is, and especially the PA as it is. And we can supply you with a lot of material.

And I think the most important document that we can give you now is the report Israel prepared to the Mitchell Committee. We didn't release it until two weeks ago because we didn't want to do it while we were in the midst of negotiations with the Palestinians. I think that's the most thorough, precise and important Hasbara document that Israel has produced for many, many years. It's a long one; it's about 150 pages. But we also have a short version. It was prepared by legal experts. It has all the agreements we signed with the Palestinians and all the Palestinian incitement and the full picture on the violence. So you can have it.

As you know, we had other documents, too, that we hesitated about using. But there is no lack of material. And I think especially today, when Arafat feels so close to Saddam Hussein, and the demonstrations in the West Bank when Saddam Hussein is being attacked, to show the real face of

Arafat and the PA is what I call basics. And the corruption there. I want to tell you only one story. Several European countries—you must hear it—several European countries have come to us and asked us if they should give Arafat cash. And we told them, don't give him cash; he is buying ammunitions. Give him medical equipment and medicines and food. So they sent several hundreds of containers of sugar and flour, and all kinds of food. And Arafat stole it and sold it to his people and took the money. So this is the kind of guy that we are dealing with. And you should know these stories and spread them in the United States.

MARTIN RAFFEL: One more comment, and then we're going to let each of the panelists make any final comments that he or she would like to make about the Hasbara effort in the future.

ESTHER BECK: I'm Esther Beck from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. I just want, as far as the public relations is concerned we do have a few journalists, especially in the Washington Post, who have been very favorable—published editorials very favorable to Israel. What are we doing as

Jewish agencies to thank them and to continue to court them so that they—they are impressive people, especially George Will, who challenged Hanan Ashrawi right on a public Sunday news show? What are we doing to keep them in our court?

MARTIN RAFFEL: Positive reinforcement. Okay, why don't we at this point go down the line? Let's end with Alon for the final comments.

PHIL BAUM: Well let me tell you, I sympathize with your frustration. I think you probably all have it. I very much sympathize with the question put by the gentleman before that says it's all very well this high flown theorizing and so on, but what are you going to do about it. How do you handle it when the event occurs in your back yard and how do you respond to it and how do you respond more positive attitudes.

It's very hard in an assembly of this kind to offer that kind of universally applicable solutions. It doesn't exist. This is necessarily a custom tailored business. You have to respond to events as they occur. There's no alternative to it. Let me just add a caveat—I'm a little bit leery of PR specialists. I think it's very hard to

reduce everything to the magnitude of promoting the sizzle in the hamburger and all of that. Now I think that we should do what they recommend. You should have a message of the day; and you should have the most sophisticated analysis of how the public has reacted through focus groups. And I think we should follow the dictates of all of those specialists.

At the same time, that does not relieve you of your obligation on a daily basis to respond to these events as they occur in your town, with the resources that you have and with the resources that we can help provide for you. There's no easy answer. You've got to reply to things that happen in your local college. If someone, if a professor makes an outrageous statement, somebody, another faculty member should reply in the local paper.

There are all kinds of devices. It's impossible to prescribe an omnibus remedy. But let me tell you, it's a difficult and frustrating task. It's a task from which none of us can relieve ourselves; can abdicate. And if it's any sense of solace or support or reassurance at all, please know that all of us here, the whole Jewish community

is ready to support each and every one of the communities in this organization. We stand ready to help you. Let us know what your needs are as to particular events, so that we can custom tailor our response to suit your needs.

KEN JACOBSON: My one point would be, don't be negative and pessimistic about it. We have tremendous resources, both in terms of the rightness of our cause and the fact that all of us are so involved over many, many years. We shouldn't think that the sky is falling down on us. Sure, we have a lot of problems; there are a lot of tough issues to explain.

But if we enter this with a sense, as we've noted, that the American people are basically with us, that Israel's cause is right and just, I think we come in there with an enthusiasm about what the message is, instead of just simply being apologetic. Be positive; approach the media in a positive way; deal with the problems; but feel confident in what the cause is.

And I think we have so much going for us, both in terms of the reality on the ground and our ability—you know, the Arab world, the American Arab community, as far

as they've come, they look at us with such envy. And we could simply say, well they don't understand the problems, the situation. But the truth is, our resources are tremendous. And they understand that the American people really basically understand Israel. And we have so much to build on. So just—I don't feel comfortable when we're constantly talking in negative terms about how terrible it is when you have these kind of public opinion polls showing the American people are so with us.

MALCOLM HOENLEIN: The problem with this panel is that we all agree. And whatever—all the questions that are raised are legitimate. But believe me, we have many more questions than even you do about the things that we're talking about. There are no panaceas. The media campaign and all the things that we're talking about, as Phil rightly said, you have to tailor them, you have to customize the responses to them.

But I think that the kishka factor is usually the best guide of all. We know in our kishkas what the right answers are, what the problems are, what the challenge is. The fact is, the Arab and Muslim communities are much more

sophisticated today than they have been and are going to pose even greater challenges to us on a political level. George Bush went to Michigan three times, not to see the Jews, but to court the Arab vote. We have to take that into account and understand that we just have to do it better. That we take too much for granted; that we've lost that passion and enthusiasm.

And I think one of the issues that gets passion is Jerusalem. I never said Jerusalem was an existential issue. But Jerusalem is the reason for the existence of the Jewish state. It's not for the beaches of Elat, and we have to go back to the fundamentals to remind people—what is the Jewish state about; what is the history; things that we all take for granted that they are not arguing and rewriting history. That they've turned our history into myths, and other's myths into history. That we have to go back and tell the people the facts. That's where the American people can be attracted and will be with us.

We have real challenges and issues, like right of return. And Shula made reference to the exchange of population in that very excellent ad. We have to remind

people what the right of return—because it sounds so haughty, so wonderful, so appealing. But when you dissect it, you find out that this is suicide for the Jewish state. And it's not a right, when we met with Joschka Fischer, German Foreign Minister and Len Cole asked what would the right of return mean in Europe, he said, "It would be a prescription for war." I'm just trying to talk faster than the guy from the University of Maryland. And he did the same with Chancellor Schroeder when we were in Germany. And both said it was an impossible concept; you could never do it; you'd rip apart Europe. Well we have to remind people what this "haughty and wonderful" term really means.

We are going to face challenges with reconvening the Geneva Convention. The State Department report today, the Mitchell Commission, the UN Human Rights Commission report, all of these are going to be attacking us on a different level—not political, but on a human rights level. Now is the time we have to prepare our communities and the media and get them to understand what the real issues are and how they're being distorted even by our own government, which draws this moral equivalent and fails to put into context

the realities of what Israel faces when they have to have these assassinations of the people who engage in the murders and the attacks.

And also, very importantly, we have to thank those who take positive stands and remember not only to kvetch. Because then when you kvetch they accept it better if you've also complimented them when they did the right thing.

You are the front line. All of us are only effective if you are effective. Our voices will only be heard if your voices are heard. So everything we do is meant to support and to help you. And you have to let us know more what it is that you need.

SHULA BAHAT: You think we have it difficult, you have to go to Europe and see what the French Jews and the Italian Jews and British Jews and Jews in other Western societies are facing. So in many ways, we have an easier task than they do. Let me just leave you with two thoughts, because my colleagues really said I think very important things.

One, it's not only the PA. I think we have to remind the American public that Israel lives in a very difficult neighborhood. Remember Iraq. And the United States has some very strategic interests that relate to Iraq. Iraq, Iran, so many other countries—not just the PA. And I think it's a very important message to impart.

The other thing that I would leave with you is that we have to combat ignorance and indifference. That's what we are facing. I, just the other day, joined a project interchange, which is an institute of the American Jewish Committee trip of radio talk show hosts in Israel. Folks, these are the gatekeepers of information. They knew nothing. And at the end of the trip, they admitted that they did not know anything. And they were embarrassed by the fact that they, day in and day out, were interpreting what is going on in the Middle East, without any knowledge. So not only reinforce those who write well about us, go and meet in your communities. There are many outlets, many media outlets, of people who impart information to the community. Go and meet with them; find out what they know

and share what you know, which is much more considerable, with them. That's very important.

The other thing is to emphasize what Malcolm has said, indifference in our own community. Without our patience, and without our enthusiasm, we would not be able to do this work. Thank you.

ALON LIEL: I think that the best news to you as Hasbara people today is the fact that we have a unity government in Israel. Because the fact that we will have a unity government will make our life in Israel, as the people are deciding on the guidelines, the Hasbara guidelines, our diplomats abroad, much easier, at least until they start calling inside the government. But even when they start calling, always pay attention to the government decisions.

If we have a government, and it looks like we'll have a government based on the support of about 90 or maybe even more of the 120 members of Parliament, I think it's a golden opportunity to, first of all, strengthen the Israeli and society, strengthen the Israeli economy, but also

strengthen the morale in increasing the amount of
enthusiasm we see behind the voice of Israel.

I think it's an opportunity for all of us, including
you in the field, to use our people. I'm telling you, it
will be easier for them. It will be easier for them from
now on regarding at least the issues. But as you heard
from Malcolm we are working together on the issues of the
logistics. We will not neglect it. And approach the
people in New York that will be dealing with it. You will
get all the information.

But approach also our diplomats. And I was
disappointed to hear that some of you do not know who the
diplomats are and where the consulates are. Please, update
yourself and use our people. And regarding Malcolm's
advice to show them the kishkas, I support it
wholeheartedly. But don't forget the brain from time to
time too. Okay. Thank you.