"A Morally Confused World"

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By Dennis Prager

LOS ANGELES, Calif.—The moral confusion of our time is therefore not new.

Almost 3,000 years ago, the Prophet Isaiah lamented, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."

But, at the start of the 20th century, a new form of moral confusion was introduced. While there were always those who called good evil and evil good, shortly after Einstein discovered relativity in the natural order, Western civilization applied relativity to the moral order. As the late historian Paul Johnson wrote in *Modern Times:* "At the beginning of the 1920s the belief began to circulate, for the first time at a popular level, that there were no longer any absolutes: of time and space, *of good and evil*, of knowledge, above all of value" (italics added).

Until then, though often poorly applied or simply ignored, there was the belief in the West that moral truths exist. Then, as Johnson writes, "Mistakenly but perhaps inevitably, relativity became confused with relativism."

Everything became relative—you have your values, I have mine; what I think (or more accurately, what I feel) is good *is* good, and what I think/feel is bad *is* bad. This is even true with regard to truth: As the increasingly popular saying goes, I have "my truth" and you have "your truth."

Instead of good and evil, we now have a set of other "moral" categories: rich and poor, white and black, colonizers and colonized, strong and weak, oppressors and oppressed. Those in the latter groups—the poor, people of color, the colonized, the weak and the oppressed (real or alleged)—are, by definition, good, while those in the former categories are, by definition, bad. To cite one widely held example, blacks cannot be racist. I was taught that nonsense in graduate school in the 1970s, and it has become a truism among the well-educated.

This explains the widespread sympathy for the Palestinians and antipathy toward Israel.

In a morality-based world, Israel would be universally supported. But we don't live in such a world; we live in the world of substitute categories, and Israel falls into every one of the "bad" categories. Israel is perceived as rich, strong, white, a colonizer and an oppressor.

This is morally backward.

Israel is a modern liberal democracy. It has a robust free press, vibrant opposition and an independent judiciary. Two million Israelis—a fifth of the country's population—are Arabs, who, in the words of the Council on Foreign Relations, "have the same legal rights as Jewish Israelis have." They have their own political parties, with 10 seats in Israel's parliament. Arabic, as any tourist to Israel sees, is, alongside Hebrew, Israel's official language. There have even been Arab supreme court justices.

In fact, Arabs in Israel are, even now, considerably more pro-Israel than *The New York Times,* most Democrats and, of course, the United Nations. Reuters, which leans left, reported in November that "The Gaza war has dramatically increased the sense of solidarity with Israel among its 21 percent Arab minority." And *The Economist* reported in mid-January, "Even as war rages in Gaza, Israel's Arabs are feeling more Israeli . . . Two thirds of Israeli Palestinians say they identified with their state, up from half before the war."

Israel treats a vast number of Palestinians in its hospitals. During 2005 alone, approximately 123,000 Palestinians were treated at just one institution, Hadassah Hospital, in Jerusalem. Israel treated more than 4,000 victims of the Syrian Civil War in civilian hospitals at Israeli government expense.

Two weeks ago, the chair of Urban Warfare Studies at West Point, John Spencer, wrote in *Newsweek* that, during Israel's war on Hamas, the country "has implemented more measures to prevent civilian casualties than any other military in history . . . As someone who has served two tours in Iraq and studied urban warfare for over a decade, Israel has taken precautionary measures even the United States did not do during its recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Israel provided days and then weeks of warnings, as well as time for civilians to evacuate multiple cities in northern Gaza before starting the main air-ground attack of urban areas. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) employed their practice of calling and texting ahead of an air strike as well as roof-knocking, where they drop small munitions on the roof of a building notifying everyone to evacuate the building before a strike.

"No military has ever implemented any of these practices in war before," Spencer concluded.

In contrast to decent, humane, democratic and moral Israel, Hamas, which is supported by the majority of Palestinians, is the moral equivalent of the Nazis. It routinely tortures Palestinian opponents of its tyrannical regime and is dedicated to the annihilation of Israel and its Jews. It takes pride in burning Jewish families alive and the sexual torture, rape and mutilation of Jewish women.

Regarding Hamas' cruelty, Amnesty International reported in 2015 the case of Atta Najjar, a former police officer under the Palestinian Authority:

"[Najjar] was serving a 15-year prison term imposed by a military court after he was arrested in 2009 and subsequently convicted of 'collaborating' with Israel. On 22 August 2014, he was taken out from the prison and executed.

"There were marks of torture and bullet shots on his body. His arms and legs were broken . . . his body was as if you'd put it in a bag and smashed it . . . His body was riddled with about 30 bullets. He had slaughter marks around his neck, marks of knives . . . And from behind the head, there was no brain. Empty . . . It was difficult for us to carry him . . . He was heavy, like when you put meat in a bag; no bones. His bones were smashed. They broke him in the prison,' said his brother, who retrieved the body from al-Shifa hospital morgue on 22 August 2014."

But Israel's decency and Hamas' cruelty mean nothing to much of the world, especially the Left, the universities and the media. Because who is good and who is evil doesn't matter. Only who's rich and who's poor, who's white and who's black, who's strong and who's weak, who colonizes and who's colonized, and who oppresses and who is oppressed.