

Emailed to National Public Radio in response to  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7555508>  
which was broadcast on 22 February, 2007.

Dear ATC [All Things Considered],

I was very disappointed by the utterly one-sided interview with Ambassador Sallai Meridor. I'd like to highlight a few points and make some suggestions for future interviews which I encourage you to arrange.

Robert Siegal opens the interview noting that the "quartet" has "reminded" the Palestinians that they "must renounce violence, recognize Israel, and accept previous agreements and obligations. The Palestinian Islamist group, Hamas, which won the last parliamentary election, does not meet those requirements."

In making this statement, Mr. Siegal immediately lays blame for the stalemated "peace process" on the Palestinians!

His first question is then whether Hamas can do anything to be a "partner for peace". A better question is whether the government the Ambassador represents can be considered a "partner for peace". Framing questions around Hamas is to ignore the causes of the conflict and to focus on the effects.

Why was there not a single question about settlements? One of the key requirements of the "roadmap" was that the Israelis would cease settlement construction. Instead construction continues unabated with the population growth of settlements exceeding that of the rest of Israel (<http://www.peacenow.org/briefs.asp?rid=&cid=3465>). Further, almost 40% of land that Israeli settlements occupy has been shown to be private land that was confiscated from its Arab owners (<http://www.peacenow.org/hot.asp?cid=3187>).

Shouldn't the Ambassador have to explain why his government has not abided by the commitments that it made under the roadmap? The American media in general and NPR in particular is too shy to ask why there are ANY Jewish settlements beyond the 1967 borders when no other government, not even the US, recognizes their legitimacy under international law.

The Ambassador says that to move forward, they need a Palestinian government "that recognizes the right of Israel to exist, that renounces terrorism and violence". In passing, I'd note that only under the previous Sharon government, over a half-century since Israel's founding, was there any recognition of the right of a Palestinian state to exist - the 2-state solution. As for violence, your listeners as well as the Ambassador should be reminded that the Israeli security forces have killed roughly FOUR TIMES as many Palestinians as there have been deaths on the Israeli side (<http://www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/Casualties.asp>). For instance, why wasn't the Ambassador asked to explain why the the IDF fires artillery into densely populated Palestinian areas? YYou'll recall that a family of 7 sharing a picnic on a Gaza beach was killed last year (<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/06/13/isrlpa13544.htm>).

There were no questions about the security barrier and why it sweeps deep into Palestinian territory, or the checkpoints within the West Bank that make daily life nearly impossible. ([http://www.economist.com/world/africa/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=8571800](http://www.economist.com/world/africa/displaystory.cfm?story_id=8571800)). There were

no questions that pick up from Jimmy Carter's book "*Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*" asking the Ambassador to explain some of the clearly discriminatory practices Israel uses to oppress the Palestinian population - building permits, water rights, settler-only roads and so on.

Only when America, the principle backer of Israel, learns that the occupation is the central issue, will there be progress. I had hoped that NPR would do better. Instead of helping us understand the issue better, the "interview" was merely a forum for the Ambassador to further Israeli propaganda. When Palestinian dispossession - most notably in 1948 and 1967 but continuing now - is understood, there can be no surprise that groups such as Hamas have formed in response in a desperate attempt to mount a defense. The insult the Israelis and America have added Palestinian injury is to label them terrorists. As the bombing of the *King David Hotel* and the *Deir Yassin* massacre remind us, Israel's very foundation is owed in part to terrorism. I think NPR owes it to its listeners to show that "one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter" and that it applies to both sides in the conflict.

Hamas needs to be understood as the equivalent of the French Resistance - except that the French didn't have the problem of massive population transfers of "settlers" from Germany. Their call for the destruction of Israel would have much less relevance if the Arabs driven from their land and livelihood were treated with respect and compensated for the losses they have suffered since 1948 and a viable Palestinian state allowed to form.

If you won't ask hard questions, in the interest of balance, perhaps you could find a Palestinian spokesman or an Arab academic and give him or her equal time to respond this week.

-----

Just quickly on the other issue of the interview, Iran's nuclear program, I do give you credit for raising the issue of Israel's own nuclear program but Mr. Siegal allowed the Ambassador brush it off as unimportant. It is important as it shows Western hypocrisy on the nuclear proliferation and plays to assertions that the West is against the Muslim world.

You might have asked the Ambassador to place himself in the Iranian position for a moment. Would his government want a nuclear deterrent given that they lost over a half-million people during the Iran-Iraq war when they were attacked and in which the US backed their enemy. Now there is instability to Iran's east in Afghanistan and to its west in Iraq with US troops in both. Could the Ambassador understand why the Iranians might feel threatened?