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View Rate : 8384 # News Code : TTime- 220611 Print Date :
Wednesday, June 2, 2010

Does Israel rule the world? By Linda S. Heard

On Monday, the Israeli military attacked and boarded one of the Turkish aid ships sailing to Gaza as part of a flotilla, killing 19 and injuring many more. As this occurred in international waters, it is not only an act of piracy but could also be construed as an 'act of war'. This attack on unarmed civilian men and women illustrates the moral depths to which Israel has sunk. An Al Jazeera reporter on board the vessel says the Israelis fired live bullets even after a white flag was hoisted. This atrocity and the potential fall-out should merit loud condemnation from the international community ... but don't hold your breath! We have yet to witness the extent of Turkey's response.

Why are so many nations bending to Israel's will or staying silent on its crimes? What is it about this minuscule country that enables it to have so much control on decisions made by larger and more powerful nations? It refuses to abide by international laws and treaties. It illegally occupies great swathes of Palestinian land and it's imposing an illegal blockade on Gaza. Moreover, it is the only country that could get away with assassinating its enemies on foreign soil.

If any other country or territory with a smaller population than New York behaved as outrageously as Israel, it would be isolated, boycotted and, perhaps, even invaded. Yet, Israel gets away with ignoring a long list of UN Security Council resolutions -- as opposed to Saddam's Iraq, which was invaded, plundered and occupied on those same grounds.

Israel has a stockpile of undeclared nuclear weapons and, as documentation recently released by Pretoria confirms, was prepared to sell nuclear warheads and technology to South Africa during apartheid; a reality that counters U.S. claims that Israel is a responsible democracy that would never supply weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to rogue states.

Iran, on the other hand, which does not have nuclear weapons — and, unlike Israel, is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) — is being subjected to UN sanctions.

Last Friday, all 189 signatories to the NPT — including the U.S. — agreed to hold a conference during 2012 "on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons ..." Sounds good! President Barack Obama has espoused the idea of a nuclear-free Middle East. The entire Arab world has been pushing for a nuclear-free Middle East and Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has long called for a nuclear-free region.

But wait! The usual suspect, Israel, is none too pleased because it believes it is being singled out. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has described the call as "deeply flawed and hypocritical", while his office has issued a statement that reads: "As a non-signatory state of the NPT, Israel is not obligated by the decisions of this conference, which has no authority over Israel".

No surprise there! But then Obama promptly does an about-turn, saying, "We strongly oppose efforts to single-out Israel and will oppose actions that jeopardize Israel's security". His message begs the question, how on earth can the region ever be free of nuclear weapons if Israel is kept out of the equation when it is the only nuclear



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country in the area?

Change of heart

Now here's a turn of events that makes me wonder whether America's capital city is actually Tel Aviv. When the proposed uranium swap between Iran and Brazil that is slated to take place on Turkish soil was recently announced, the White House dismissed it as a delaying tactic on the part of Tehran and began to pressurize UN Security Council members to agree to a new round of anti-Iranian sanctions. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says a proposal that buys time for Iran "makes the world more dangerous, not less".

In response, the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused the U.S. and its allies of "lacking a fair and sincere approach". He is absolutely right and it appears that the Brazilian president agrees with him.

In a break from protocol, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has leaked a letter he received from his U.S. counterpart in April this year in which Obama warmly supported the uranium swap, provided Iran were to agree to Turkey holding its low-enriched uranium "in escrow" for up to a year.

"Iran has never pursued the 'escrow' compromise and has provided no credible explanation for its rejection," Obama wrote. Now that Tehran has rubber-stamped the very procedure Obama advocated in the missive, it seems that he is unable to take 'yes' for an answer. Could it be because Netanyahu has denounced the fuel deal as "trickery" intended to avoid international sanctions?

The U.S. is far from being the only country allowing Israel to call the tune. Greek Cypriot authorities attempted to prevent a group that included 17 Irish, Bulgarian and Swedish members of parliament from traveling on small ferry boats to join the aid flotilla attempting to break the siege of Gaza in order to protect the island's "vital interests".

When much of the western world bows and scrapes in front of the Israeli standard, those aboard ships in the Flotilla should be applauded for risking their lives to do what is right. It's beyond time that the international community grew a backbone and followed suit!

(Source: Gulf News)

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