

Letter to World Citizens

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Rabin's Death Could Mark a Birth

How should a World Citizen assess the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin?

Viewed globally, Rabin was the top political official of a nation-state slightly smaller than Massachusetts with a population (5.2 million) smaller than New York City's. Its military budget for 1994 was \$7.2 billion. According to military analysts, Israel possesses up to 300 nuclear weapons. Founded in 1948, it has no written constitution but it does have a republican form of government. Its tortured history includes six wars with its Arab neighbors.

Given this overall perspective, the shock of the assassination, along with a sense of personal loss, has served to unify public sentiment that Rabin's "peace legacy" should be fulfilled. The premise of the assassin—that a peace process begins and ends with one man—was (and is) an illusion. Rabin's martyrdom has actually the effect of reinforcing the Israeli public's and government's determination to continue the process.

But what exactly is this nebulous "peace process"? Does it involve a common law for Jews and Arabs living on a common land and forming a common citizenry? No. It is exactly the opposite: two states with separate citizenries are to be perpetually divided.

But a lasting peace cannot be established without a common law binding a common citizenry. The notion that states can "make peace" among themselves is a deadly fallacy—and can readily be seen as such through even a cursory examination of human history.

Adding to the self-delusion is the marriage of religion and politics. When God is invoked as providing a mandate over a certain piece of world territory, the result is predictable: human conflict over whose god is to be recognized and obeyed. On May 6, 1967, Lt. Gen. Yitzhak Rabin's Israeli soldiers reached the Western Wall of the Temple Mount, the most sacred place in Israel. The Six-Day War was over. In tears, Rabbi Zvi Yehudi Kook, who had laid down the ideological framework of religious Zionism, declared that "We are living in the middle of redemption. The kingdom of Israel is being rebuilt. The entire Israel army is holy. It symbolizes the rule of the people on the land." His rulings that the present was a messianic age broke the traditional barrier between religion and the state. Thus was created the basis for the settlements on the West Bank, or biblical Judea and Samaria.

Then under the doctrine of "din rodef - doctrine of the pursuer," formulated by Maimonides, a 12th century Jewish scholar, one could violate the commandment against killing in order to prevent a pursuer from murdering the intended victim. But this doctrine begs the ultimate question: Is there no alternative to violence? Modern states justify "pre-emptive war" and "preventive detention" based on this "violence begets violence" theory.

Ultimately, this leads to “mutual assured destruction” of “MAD,” the ultimate fate of a bewildered humanity.

According to Prof Gerald Kromer of Bar-Ilan University’s criminality department where Yigal Amir studied, “Yigal Amir acted in light of the conflict with which every man who is a religious Zionist has been dealing with since the beginning of the state of Israel...” the “moral absolutism” in religious schools, and the uses of violence in the Israeli army. The nation had become the surrogate of religion, the “Golden Calf” of the 20th century.

Killing in the name of the deity thus became justified.

It is time, especially when tragedy unites us, for clear thinking on a final vital point—and here I may offend certain sensitivities.

However our feelings may interpret, there is no law against killing a “Jew,” a “Christian,” a “Muslim,” or a “Hindu.” The law, both moral and civil, forbids the killing of a fellow human. Civil law, in every society, prohibits murder of any person. And moral, or God’s, law has been spelled out in all religions by such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha and Baha’u’llah: “Thou shalt not kill (a fellow human).”

Yitzhak Rabin was murdered by a fellow human, who happened to be an orthodox Jew.

And so the crisis of identity now confronts us all full blast in this assassination. This crisis does not pertain to the identity of Jews, Arabs, Christians, or members of any other denomination. These limited, sectarian identities have all long since been firmly established. Instead, the real crisis of identity concerns what it means to be human. By finding the answer to this perennial question, we can at last ensure peaceful relations among all of us humans.

After all, what do we really mourn in Rabin’s sudden passing? A leader of his people? A father and grandfather? A warrior turned peacemaker? Those definitions apply to many of us.

The naked truth is, we are mourning for ourselves, for our bewildered and threatened humanity.

Let’s face it, viewed globally and historically, heads of state—Lincoln, Kennedy, Sadat, Ataturk, Gandhi—are dispensable; humanity is not.