

LETTERS

Jama has lost my trust

Regarding "NDP MPP Sarah Jama has 'doubled down'" (Oct. 18). I find it unacceptable and disrespectful that Sarah Jama continues to double down and not retract her post on social media despite requests from her leader, Marit Stiles. It would seem Jama continues to use her elected position as a platform to further her personal agenda. She needs to decide whether she wants to be an activist or a politician. I consider her apology insincere as she has not taken down her post. You cannot pursue two goals that contradict each other. In the end, I do not have any trust or confidence she is able to genuinely represent me.

Joanne Verzon, Hamilton

Double standard from NDP

You can bet the farm if Sarah Jama had been a member of the Progressive Conservative, Liberal or Green parties, the NDP, under Marit Stiles, would be all over her, demanding her resignation for her recent comments. But the leader of the NDP chooses not to censure her even though she recently defied a direct order from Stiles — her boss. Double standard, I guess.

Rick Allen, Hamilton

Personal views not welcome

It is unfortunate people vote for individuals who have no experience in politics, just on the name alone. Sports players, TV personalities, radio announcers and others; then find out they are useless at the job. When will the masses figure out a famous name does not always fit a job in politics? MPP Sarah Jama has the right to have her own personal views, but she does not have the right to use her position in politics to express them.

Peter Colley, Hamilton

Take the post down

Yes, we do have freedom of speech; however, freedom has limits. For instance, we are not free to make racist or antisemitic comments. We do have the right to our own opinion, but not necessarily to speak it. Unfortunately, civility has been thrown out the door. Jama should make a proper public apology and take down the post. Tweeting an apology, but leaving the objectionable post up, negates the apology. Everybody's goal should be the pursuit of peace in the Middle East. Incendiary posts are not helpful.

Sharon McKibbin, Hamilton

MPPs should support Jama

Dear members of Provincial Parliament, I urge you to speak in support of MPP Sarah Jama, Hamilton Centre, for courageously calling for an immediate ceasefire and de-escalation in the Israeli-Hamas war. I have read her statement many times. Jama writes of UN-recognized historic injustices. She speaks of unimaginable suffering of innocent Gazan civilians trapped under the Israeli government's immoral siege and bombardment. She expresses her heartfelt concern for "all those impacted by this ongoing violence." Premier Doug Ford's plan to censure Jama for recognizing the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza is unconscionable. Do Ontario residents prefer war over a negotiated settlement? Nothing but an immediate ceasefire and de-escalation can hope to prevent this war becoming a horrific global conflict ... with no winners. Time is fast running out. Stand up, Ontario! Stand up for peace and justice.

D. Scott McNie, Hamilton

Trying to keep an open mind

Regarding "Diversity brings complexity" (Oct. 14). I agree with the letter writer about the complex nature of the Israeli-Hamas conflict. As a high school ESL teacher, I interact with students whose views are very different from my own regarding the relationship between Israel and Palestine. As a result, I often must remind myself to remain objective and to keep an open mind. Although this is very difficult to do on such an emotionally charged subject, I try to "look at the big picture" and understand opposing viewpoints. It is only by doing so individually, as a society as well as globally, that peace in the Middle East can ever be achieved.

Andrea Rado, Hamilton

What will it take to find peace?

With his recent bestseller, "Land: How The Hunger For Ownership Shaped The Modern World," Simon Winchester once again brings his insatiable curiosity for all things geographical to the study of how land shapes geopolitical events. What is happening in the Middle East today is not only tragic, it is predictable. Two separate identities (collectively speaking) claim ancestral rights to a piece of land that neither is prepared to share. Add to that all the religious and cultural differences that go along with those identities and you have a recipe for never-ending conflict. Winchester, who usually writes studiously as only an observer, is quite sanguine about any hope for peace in Israel/Palestine. He says some historical struggles are too long and some collective identities run too deep and this is the case in the so-called "Holy Land." If peace ever comes to this region of the world, it will probably only be when the threat of planetary catastrophe and the need to take action outweighs the historical divisions between the warring partners. But maybe not.

David McInnis, Ancaster



A tourist in the Palestinian city of Bethlehem takes a photo of "Flower Thrower" by Banksy. Columnist Thomas Froese notes it's a good image to consider now during the war in Gaza. "Think of the war in Gaza and think of flowers," he writes, while commenting on the conflict.

THOMAS FROESE PHOTO

Peace is hard, but peace is possible



THOMAS FROESE OPINION

Think of the war in Gaza and think of flowers.

This, with a nod to Banksy: He's the street artist who moves anonymously at night to paint public spaces. Often powerful images — you'll see them from Paris to Detroit — they pull at our collective consciences.

"The Flower Thrower," painted on a nondescript building in Bethlehem, in Palestine's West Bank, shows a balaclava-clad youth throwing no Molotov cocktail, but a bouquet of flowers. I passed it one day while there. Later, I saw a skirmish involving Palestinian youth and Israeli soldiers and stones and tear gas life imitating art, without the flowers.

Now you and I are close enough to see other things, horrible things, on one screen or another. We're all in it together, like it or not, psychologically. And this war won't be over in a day.

I'm no expert on psychological war. I did fear for my life after an Islamic extremist killed some friends, gunning them down in a hospital in Yemen while I lived there during the Gulf War. But when it comes to war, I find it hard to imagine anyone's really an ex-

pert, except maybe, in a strange way, the dead.

It's clear, though, that Gaza's two million people, before this hellish war, suffered as impoverished victims of their own, of Hamas. The terror organization fronted as government, but by its founding constitution, was always more interested in simply destroying Israel. Palestinians in the West Bank, governed by the moderate Palestinian Authority, have fared better in their daily lives because the P.A. moderated over time, realizing the old "us versus them" thinking simply doesn't work; that, in truth, there is no "us" and "them." There's just "us" and "us." Anywhere.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the dissident Russian writer, put it this way: "If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being." He continues, "But who's willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

That's any heart. Your heart. Mine. Some Poliburo heart. Solzhenitsyn's heart. But this is especially true for Jews and Arab-Palestinians sharing the same story, the same promise, really, of a blessing through their common forefather, Abraham. Historically, the Arab-Jewish conflict is family kill family. So flowers.

The other thought is that as a

community we need to hold each other accountable. So, thanks to McMaster University for deploring comments by CUPE Local 3906 — "Palestine is rising, long live the resistance" — after Hamas murdered and kidnapped and raped innocent Jewish civilians by the hundreds. Thank you, Air Canada for firing pilot Mustafa Ezzo after his outrageous antisemitic postings.

If we've learned anything by now, even as antisemitism rises, Israel, a tiny state in a sea of Arab nations, has the right to exist. The free world recognizes this. Did you notice, for example, Berlin's iconic Brandenburg Gate recently bathed in colours of Israel's flag, highlighting the Star of David?

Imagine. Germany. You know the history. Imagine a German Canadian like myself, born in Berlin just 20 years after the Nazis surrendered, even walking in a modern state of Israel. Imagine, considering Jews, before 1948, had no homeland for 2,000 years; and considering the Nazis killed so many that 80 years later, worldwide, their numbers still haven't fully recovered.

War is easy, of course. Peace is hard. But peace is possible.

A two-state Palestinian-Israeli model was the UN's original intent in 1948. It remains the path to peace. When enough death piles up, when the radical Hamas becomes irrelevant, it's a case to present, again. Something new will come of this. The question is, what will be imagined? And reasoned?

Even so, when you want to change someone's mind, you don't give an argument. You give a picture. You show what's possible. You imagine peace that's built on a new, just image. Even now we need to imagine it together.

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Those who rushed to condemn Israel should now apologize

HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION

Ample evidence has now been shared by Israeli authorities demonstrating a misfired Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket was responsible for striking the Gaza hospital on Tuesday. US President Joe Biden as well as the US intelligence community have reviewed both the Israeli evidence and their own and agree the source of the damage to the hospital was a misfired rocket, not an Israeli strike.

This evidence includes video footage of the misfired rocket from various angles, analysis of the impact site of the rocket, which shows not a large crater that would be seen from a deliberate Israeli strike but a small hole, and a recording of two Hamas terrorists discussing the incident as being the result of a Islamic Jihad rocket. Added to this are images of the impact site, showing it was the parking lot that was damaged and the hospital itself remains intact, which bring into question the entire claim the hospital was struck and 500 individuals killed.

All those who rushed to condemn Israel, without any evidence, have a responsibility to correct the record and apologize. They also have a responsibility to condemn Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which is responsible for committing a double war crime: indiscriminately targeting Israeli civilians with rockets and launching them from Palestinian civilian communities in Gaza. The



The site of the explosion Wednesday at al-Ahli hospital in Gaza City. At least 500 people were killed in the blast.

ABED KHALED THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

result of this double war crime is either to murder or injure Israeli civilians or to do the same to Palestinians when rockets are misfired, as occurred in this instance.

Islamic Jihad is an Iranian proxy and a listed-terrorist entity according to Canadian law. In August 2022, it was reported that misfired Palestinian Islamic Jihad rockets resulted in a third of all casualties in Gaza.

It is imperative to remember that the health ministry in Gaza is run by Hamas, a listed terrorist entity according to Canadian law. Any information published by them, and other Gaza-based "government" sources should, at the very least, be thoroughly vetted before being shared publicly, particularly given efforts by these groups to delegitimize Israel.

Canadian media promoted the Hamas narrative that Israel targeted the hospital, several "emergency" rallies were organized across the country. We can speak from first-hand experience that such rallies, which claim to be protests against Israel, in fact target Canadian Jews. According to the organizers, more than 1,000 individuals gathered outside our antisemitism conference, where calls for violence against Jews were made.

Canadian elected officials, the media, and other influencers have a responsibility to verify facts before commenting, particularly during times of war. By promoting this Hamas lie, the lives of Canadian Jews were put at risk. We also mourn the senseless loss of Palestinian life from this misfired rocket and expect all those who claim to stand with the Palestinian people to condemn Palestinian Islamic Jihad for these tragic deaths.