

ONE OF ISRAEL'S GREAT PROBLEMS

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This article was published in the online edition of the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, one of the main newspapers in Brazil, on August 24, 2025, but with the title "Um grande problema..." ("A great problem..."); the following original article address may not be available to non-subscribers:

<https://www.estadao.com.br/opinioao/espaco-aberto/o-grande-problema-de-israel/>

In this version (see its [original in Portuguese](#)), I made some additions, noted as such in brackets [...]. As I had submitted the article to the Opinion section of the newspaper's print edition, I had to limit myself to just over 5,000 text entries, which does not apply here. As always, criticism and comments are very welcome and will be responded to. My email address is at the top of my home page at the address above. I propose adding relevant comments at the end of the article, possibly with my responses; to that end, if anyone writes to me, please let me know if I can include his/her name and/or email address.

On May 28, 2025, I received the following message from a dear friend, who has lived in Israel for over 60 years, referring to other friends of ours in that country: "I and we all feel like victims of a catastrophic government that is causing this situation. What is happening here and in the neighborhood will never be forgiven in history!!!"

This friend is right to criticize the Israeli government, embodied in Prime Minister Netanyahu, causing atrocious suffering in Israel itself, in the occupied zones, and, horribly, in Gaza. But he is not the cause, he is the consequence of a huge mistake made by Israel and many other democracies like our beloved Brazil: the existence of religious parties. They are an aberration because, if they participate in parliaments, they fail to preserve isonomy, that is, the absolutely equal treatment of all citizens. Parliaments make laws, and from a legal standpoint, citizens must be treated equally. Laws must apply to all. If parliaments, or the state, are influenced by a religious party, the followers of that religion will not be treated equally with those of other

religions, and materialists without religion. Therefore, religious parties, or openly materialist parties (as was the case with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union), should be banned in all countries.

In particular, Israel's religious parties are the ones supporting Netanyahu. And what do these parties want? They dream of a Greater Israel, based on biblical boundaries. It happens that what was valid in a certain past era (in this case, a very distant one) cannot be transposed to the present, as human beings are constantly changing. It is interesting to note that the Bible contains many images and symbols that are not accounts of physical realities. This is made clear in Genesis 1:14-19, where the sun is "created" on the 4th "day,". Clearly, the "days" of Genesis are not our 24-hour days. They are symbols of great spiritual events.

Israeli religious parties also dream of a country where only Jews live. Israel declares itself a "Jewish country." Once again, an aberration: a country of a certain religion does not treat citizens of that and other religions equally.

In the case of Israel, reality surpasses theory: as long as there is antisemitism in the world, Jews have the right to a last refuge. Who can say that the antisemitism promoted by the current Brazilian government won't result in persecution of Jews here?

[It's interesting to mention Valentin Wember's book, *Tragödie und Befreiung: Geistige und politische Hintergründe des 100-jährigen Krieges in Palästina* ("Tragedy and Liberation: Spiritual and Political Foundations of the Hundred-Year War in Palestine," in free translation), which contains a history of Zionism, recounting how the first major inaugurators of the Zionist movement in the late 19th century (who saw no other solution to the global problem of antisemitism than the creation of a Jewish country) opposed Orthodox Judaism, saying that it no longer corresponded to modern humanity.

[Addendum from August 30, 2025, not published by the newspaper:

In this book, Wember cites excerpts from two interviews about Israel, which I found very interesting, including statements that touch on the issue of the occupied areas in the West Bank (pp. 174 and 177). The two interviews, from before the Gaza war, which are worth listening to, are at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdPdsIOTwJU&t=105s

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWwMa1t0aNY

The second was with Gideon Levy, a journalist for the Israeli newspaper Haaretz ("the country," loosely translated), who has visited the occupied zones many times. He says that Israelis generally don't visit them, don't talk to the Palestinians there (I know that soldiers are forbidden to talk about the sad things they witness there), and says that there is no longer any possibility of a two-state solution. I had been in favor of this solution, understanding, however, the danger of a Palestinian state being taken over by terrorists, as happened in Gaza. Gideon says that at the time of the interview, there were 750,000 Israeli settlers in the occupied zone, and it would be impossible to expel them, as happened in Gaza in 2005. He favors a single country, with full equality of rights for all, as is the case in Israel, with regard to Jews, Muslims, and Arabs, at least legally. Unfortunately, I have heard from my friends there that in Israel there is some personal discrimination against Muslims and Arabs. But I believe this is understandable, as any strong young man with Arab features can be, even unconsciously, assumed to be a terrorist.

I'll take this opportunity to report what a friend who was in Israel a few years ago told me. Talking to a Palestinian taxi driver, she asked him what he thought of the two-state solution. His answer was that he didn't want two states, he wanted one, Israel, because the Palestinians were much better off there than in Arab countries. In fact, there haven't been any Palestinian uprisings in Israel (apparently there are 2 million of them there) due to the terrible war in Gaza. It's also worth listening to a recent interview with none other than Yuval Harari, who draws attention to the fact that the current war and the treatment of Palestinians in the occupied zone have undermined ancient Jewish spirituality:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=pB5UI3GHFxA

Only the first three minutes, about Israel and Judaism (the rest is about artificial "intelligence"):

www.youtube.com/watch?v=pp-g8dpOrP4

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When the war in Gaza began, I wrote to my friends in Israel: "Israel will not win this war," and I justified it: the news was that there were

40,000 Hamas terrorists at the time. It would be impossible for Israel to kill or expel them all. Perhaps the situation has worsened.

Imagine the outrage of young people who saw the homes their parents had built with their hard work destroyed, saw their brothers and relatives killed or mutilated. These young people, if they have heart and courage, must have all become terrorists. It should also be taken into account that since 2006, Hamas has established a bloody dictatorship in Gaza – the barbaric acts it committed on October 7, 2023, clearly demonstrated how it treats human beings, even babies. In other words, it's impossible for the Gaza population to revolt, even recognizing that the origin of the war and its continuation were and are Hamas' actions (including the previous missiles and attacks).

Speaking of "here" (São Paulo, Brazil), I conclude by mentioning a reality: the Einstein Israelite Hospital ("Einstein Hospital Israelita"). On June 2, 2025, the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* published a double-page article highlighting what Einstein Hospital has done and continues to do for Brazilian society in general. It is ranked the best 22nd in the world, the best in Latin America, with several units in underserved communities and an extensive health education system, including medical and nursing faculties.

I mention that hospital for two reasons. First, it is a testament to what the Jewish community is capable of doing for society and the country where it lives, with one essential condition: if that community is left in peace. Second, Einstein Hospital shows that if the Jewish community does something for society in general (and, here in Brazil, it's not just that hospital), it does so with excellence, with the best scientific and educational resources available. This is the result of the ancient Jewish culture (3,000 years ago, all young people were already literate...). It's no wonder Jews are called the "people of the book." Jewish parents always told their children: "You can take everything from us Jews, except knowledge, and you will acquire a lot of knowledge!" Perhaps that's why the proportion of Jewish Nobel laureates far exceeds the proportion of non-Jews.

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