

WHAT IRANIAN LEADERS REALLY SAY ABOUT DOING AWAY WITH ISRAEL

**A REFUTATION OF THE CAMPAIGN TO EXCUSE
AHMADINEJAD'S INCITEMENT TO GENOCIDE**

Joshua Teitelbaum



Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs
המרכז הירושלמי לענייני ציבור ומדינה (ע"ר)

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Back cover: Ahmadinejad speaks during a conference on Oct. 26, 2005, entitled “The World without Zionism.” He stated that Israel should be “wiped off the map,” the official IRNA news agency reported.
(AP Photos)

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What Iranian Leaders Really Say about Doing Away with Israel: A Refutation of the Campaign to Excuse Ahmadinejad's Incitement to Genocide

Joshua Teitelbaum

- Over the past several years, Iranian leaders – most prominently, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad – have made numerous statements calling for the destruction of Israel and the Jewish people. While certain experts have interpreted these statements to be simple expressions of dissatisfaction with the current Israeli government and its policies, in reality, the intent behind Ahmadinejad's language and that of others is clear.
- What emerges from a comprehensive analysis of what Ahmadinejad actually said – and how it has been interpreted in Iran – is that the Iranian president was not just calling for “regime change” in Jerusalem, but rather the *actual physical destruction of the State of Israel*. When Ahmadinejad punctuates his speech with “Death to Israel” (*marg bar Esraail*), this is no longer open to various interpretations.
- A common motif of genocide incitement is the dehumanization of the target population. The Nazi weekly *Der Stürmer* portrayed Jews as parasites and locusts. Ahmadinejad said in a speech on February 20, 2008: “In the Middle East, they [the global powers] have created a *black and filthy microbe* called the Zionist regime.”
- Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who succeeded Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, has made statements about Israel similar to Ahmadinejad. On December 15, 2000, he declared on Iranian TV: “Iran's position, which was first expressed by the Imam [Khomeini] and stated several times by those responsible, is that the cancerous tumor called Israel must be uprooted from the region.”
- Michael Axworthy, who served as the Head of the Iran Section of Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, notes that when the slogan “Israel must be wiped off the map” appeared “draped over missiles in military parades, that meaning was pretty clear.”
- There is an ample legal basis for the prosecution of Ahmadinejad in the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court for direct and public incitement to commit genocide and crimes against humanity.

Over the past several years, Iranian leaders – most prominently, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad – have made numerous statements calling for the destruction of Israel and the Jewish people. Some of these statements have been interpreted by certain journalists and experts on Iran to be simple expressions of dissatisfaction with the Israeli presence in the West Bank or eastern Jerusalem, or with the current Israeli government and its policies.

Juan Cole of the University of Michigan argues that Ahmadinejad was not calling for the destruction of Israel, saying, “Ahmadinejad did not say he was going to wipe Israel off the map because no such idiom exists in Persian.” The British *Guardian’s* Jonathan Steele argued that Ahmadinejad was simply remarking that “this regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time.” Steele continues: “He was not making a military threat. He was calling for an end to the occupation of Jerusalem at some point in the future. The ‘page of time’ phrase suggests he did not expect it to happen soon.”¹

Scholars continue to soft-pedal the Iranian President’s words. Professor Stephen Walt, who previously served as academic dean of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government and co-authored *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* along with Professor John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago, told a Jerusalem audience during a joint appearance in early June 2008, “I don’t think he is inciting to genocide,” when asked about Ahmadinejad’s call to wipe Israel off the map.²

In reality, the intent behind Ahmadinejad’s language is clear. Those who seek to excuse Iranian leaders should not remain unchallenged when they use the tools of scholarship as a smokescreen to obfuscate these extreme and deliberate calls for the destruction of Israel. *Language entails meaning.* These statements have been interpreted by leading Iranian blogs and news outlets – some official – to mean the destruction of Israel.

U.S. Congress Debate on Translating Ahmadinejad

Translating Ahmadinejad’s statements is not purely an academic matter. When in 2007 the U.S. House of Representatives debated a resolution calling on the UN Security Council to charge Ahmadinejad with violating the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the United Nations Charter because of his repeated calls for the destruction of Israel (H. Con. Res. 21), the issue of the accuracy of the translation of his remarks came up in the House debate.

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) requested that alternative translations of Ahmadinejad’s language – like that of South African political scientist Virginia Tilley – be introduced into the *Congressional Record*. These versions assert the Iranian president was only seeking a change of regime in Israel and not the physical elimination of the country.³ H. Con. Res. 21 was adopted by a majority of 411 to 2, with Rep. Kucinich and Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas) voting against.

Examining Ahmadinejad's Language

What emerges from a comprehensive analysis of what Ahmadinejad actually said – and how it has been interpreted in Iran – is that the Iranian president was not just calling for “regime change” in Jerusalem, but rather the *actual physical destruction of the State of Israel*. After all, it is hard to wipe a country off the map without destroying its population as well.

The Iranian government itself reinforced this understanding with its own rendition of his slogans on posters and billboards during official parades. Those who try to make Ahmadinejad's statements excusable by narrowing their meaning to a change of Israel's ruling coalition are misleading their readers. The plain meaning of what Ahmadinejad has declared constitutes a call for *genocide* – the destruction of the Jewish state and its residents.

A contextual examination of these statements demonstrates beyond a doubt that when Iranian leaders use the euphemism “Zionist regime” or “the Jerusalem-occupying regime,” they are most definitely referring to the State of Israel and not to the present regime. Iranian leaders are simply following the time-worn practice in the Arab world of referring to the “Zionist regime” in an attempt to avoid dignifying Israel by recognizing its name.

Iranian leaders are also not talking about a non-directed, natural historical process that will end with Israel's demise. Rather, they are actively advocating Israel's destruction and have made it clear that they have the will and the means to effect it.

Ahmadinejad's “Wipe Israel Off the Map” Speech

In an address to the “World without Zionism” Conference held in Tehran on October 26, 2005, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said:⁴

ORIGINAL	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION
و امام عزیز ما فرمودند که این رژیم اشغالگر قدس باید از صفحه روزگار محو شود. این جمله بسیار حکیمانه است.	<i>Va Imam-e aziz-e ma farmudand ke in rezhim-e eshghalgar-e Qods bayad az safhe-ye ruzegar mahv shaved. In jomle besyar hakimane ast.</i>	Our dear Imam [Khomeini] ordered that this Jerusalem-occupying regime [Israel] must be erased from the page of time. This was a very wise statement.

The *New York Times* translated the statement as Israel “must be wiped off the map,” a *non-literal translation* which nevertheless *conveyed the meaning of the original* – the destruction of Israel.⁵ Despite the international controversy that Ahmadinejad's language generated, a report on his October 2005 speech was still available on his presidential website as of May 2008.

“Jerusalem-Occupying Regime” – Another Name for the State of Israel

Soft-pedaling Ahmadinejad’s call for the destruction of Israel, Prof. Cole told the *New York Times* that all Ahmadinejad had said was that “he hoped its regime, i.e., a Jewish-Zionist state occupying Jerusalem, would collapse.”⁶

Official Iranian spokespersons and organs have since based their slogans on Ahmadinejad’s statement, and have loosely translated the statement as “Israel should be wiped off the face of the world.” This is evident in pictures showing banners and signs in parades and ceremonies. Even the Iranian newscaster that introduced the report on the “World without Zionism” Conference used the word “Israel” (instead of the “Jerusalem-occupying regime”) and also the word “world” (instead of the “page of time”), and thus referred to Ahmadinejad’s statement as “erasing Israel, this disgraceful stain, from the world” (clip available from the Jerusalem Center upon request).

While Iranian leaders are well aware that they are watched by the international media and occasionally soften the wording of their statements accordingly, they are less careful in internal forums and events. When Ahmadinejad punctuates his speech before a large crowd with “Death to Israel” (*marg bar Esraail*), this is no longer open to various interpretations.⁷ He is openly calling for the destruction of a country – and not a regime.

Dehumanization as Prelude to Genocide: Israel as an Infection

In the same speech of October 26, 2005,⁸ Ahmadinejad returned to the theme of Israel as dirty vermin which needed to be eradicated:

ORIGINAL	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION
به زودي اين لکه ننگ را از دامان دنياي اسلام پاک خواهد کرد و اين شذني است .	<i>Be-zudi in lake-ye nang ra az damane donya-ye Islam pak khahad kard, va in shodani'st.</i>	Soon this stain of disgrace will be cleaned from the garment of the world of Islam, and this is attainable.

In order to remove any doubt in the mind of the Persian reader that Ahmadinejad is referring to Israel, the Iranian president’s official site, www.president.ir, interpolates the word “Esraail” (اسرائيل) in its report on the speech to explain the expression “stain of disgrace.”⁹

A common motif of genocide incitement is the dehumanization of the target population. The Nazi weekly *Der Stürmer* portrayed Jews as parasites and locusts. In the early 1990s, Hutu propaganda in Rwanda against the Tutsis described them as “cockroaches.”¹⁰ Prior to Saddam Hussein’s operations against the Iraqi Shiite population in 1991, his Baath Party newspaper characterized them as “monkey-faced people.”¹¹ Similarly, President Ahmadinejad has called Israeli Jews “cattle,” “blood thirsty barbarians,” and “criminals.”¹² Dehumanization has also appeared in other forms, like demonization, by which the target population is described as “Satanic” – a theme specifically used by Ahmadinejad.¹³

The theme of the Israeli germ or microbe is also a common one with the Iranian president. In his speech before a crowd in Bandar Abbas on February 20, 2008, Ahmadinejad said:¹⁴

ORIGINAL	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION
<p>در منطقه خاورمیانه نیز جرثومه سیاه و کثیفی به نام رژیم صهیونیستی درست کرده اند تا به جان مردم منطقه بیندازند و به بهانه آن سیاست های خود را در خاورمیانه پیش ببرند.</p>	<p><i>Dar mantaqe-ye Khavar-e Miyane niz jarsum-e siyah va kasifi be-nam-e rezhim-e sahyonisti dorost karde-and ta be-jan-e mardom-e mantaqe biandazand va be-behane-ye an siyasatha-ye khod-ra dar Khavar-e Miyane pish bebarand.</i></p>	<p>In the Middle East, they [the global powers] have created a black and filthy microbe called the Zionist regime, so they could use it to attack the peoples of the region, and by using this excuse, they want to advance their schemes for the Middle East.</p>

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Israel’s founding, the President of Iran stated that “global arrogance established the Zionist regime 60 years ago.” The Islamic Republic News Agency reported: “President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Thursday labeled the Zionist regime as a ‘stinking corpse’ and said those who think they can revive the corpse of this fabricated and usurper regime are mistaken.”¹⁵

The Destruction of Israel is Achievable and Imminent – Not a Long-Term Historical Process

According to President Ahmadinejad, ridding the world of the germ Israel is possible and imminent. On April 14, 2006, Ahmadinejad insisted that Israel was “heading towards annihilation.” He added that Israel was:¹⁶

ORIGINAL	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION
درخت خشکیده و پوسیده‌ای است که بایک طوفان درهم خواهد شکست	<i>Derakht-e khoshkide va puside'i ast ke ba yek tufan dar ham khahad shekast.</i>	A dried, rotten tree that will collapse with a single storm.

The President of Iran told a press conference on March 14, 2008, held during a meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Senegal:¹⁷

ORIGINAL	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION
رژیم صهیونیستی از بین رفتنی است	<i>rezhim-e sahyonisti az bayn raftani'st.</i>	The Zionist regime is on its way out [destructible].

Referring to the U.S. (the “Great Satan”) and Israel (the “Little Satan”), Ahmadinejad said at a military parade on April 17, 2008:¹⁸

ORIGINAL	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION
منطقه و جهان آماده تحولات بزرگ و پاک شدن از دشمنان اهریمنی است	<i>Mantaqe- va jehan amade- ye tahavolat-e bozorg va pak shodan az doshmanan-e ahrimani'st.</i>	The region and the world are prepared for great changes and for being cleansed of Satanic enemies.

For Ahmadinejad, Iran’s support for the Palestinians will help them destroy the State of Israel. He told a press conference on May 13, 2008: “This terrorist and criminal state is backed by foreign powers, but this regime would soon be swept away by the Palestinians.”¹⁹ A day later, Ahmadinejad spoke in Gorgan, in northern Iran, declaring, “Israel’s days are numbered,” adding that “the peoples of the region would not miss the narrowest opportunity to annihilate this false regime.”²⁰ In a public address shown on the Iranian news channel on June 2, 2008, Ahmadinejad again reiterated: “Thanks to God, your wish will soon be realized, and this germ of corruption will be wiped off the face of the world.”²¹ Clearly, Ahmadinejad’s call for the imminent destruction of Israel was not a one-time event in 2005, but rather publicly declared on multiple occasions.

Israelis as a “Falsified People”

Ahmadinejad was fully prepared to make his assertions about Jews and Israel in the Western press, as well. In an interview that appeared in the French daily *Le Monde* on February 5, 2008, he said the Jews of Israel are: “a people falsified, invented, [the people of Israel] will not last; they must leave the territory.”

From the interview it is clear he believes that Israelis will not endure and will not continue to stay on the territory on which they are living. This is not a call for a change of government or new policies alone, but rather for the removal of Israel’s Jewish population from the country, either by ethnic cleansing or physical destruction.

How the Statements Are Understood in Iran

Blogs and Forums

While certain Western commentators on Iran seek to whitewash Ahmadinejad’s statements on Israel, pro- and anti-regime Iranians (and others in the region) have no doubt that the Iranian president is referring to the destruction of Israel, according to Iranian blogs and forums. There are close to 180,000 Persian-language blogs, and Iranians constitute 53 percent of Internet users in the Middle East.

Mr. Ahmadinejad, Isn’t that Enough?

“In every Internet site that I visit today (for example, BBC or Radio-Farda) or the satellite radio and television news stations that I listen to, the first news item is the pearls of wisdom issued by Mr. Ahmadinejad regarding the countdown to the destruction of Israel.”²²

What Have We Done to Erase Israel?

“Didn’t Imam Khomeini decree that Israel should be erased from the scene of time? Well, I ask you – what have we done in order to erase this Israel from the scene of time?”²³

Ahmadinejad’s Statements and the Qur’an

An Iranian blogger asks: Why did Ahmadinejad talk about the destruction of Israel? Are his statements supported by religious laws and decrees? The blogger then presents the research he did regarding the religious writings in the Qur’an that can be seen to support Ahmadinejad’s statements.²⁴

First Fix Your Own Country – Then Destroy Israel

In the Ham-Mihan Forum, the question was raised about Ahmadinejad's declaration that the countdown towards Israel's destruction had begun. Among the 71 responses:

“My opinion is that first you [Ahmadinejad] should fix up your own country, and then you can say that Israel should be destroyed. The people in Iran don't have bread and we are concerned with Palestine.”

“I wish that all of this energy that is devoted to the destruction of Israel would be directed towards the destruction of drug addiction, poverty, corruption and prostitution.”²⁵

Take the First Steps towards Obliterating Israel

Bloggers at Imam Sadegh University called for boycotting Israeli products, with the following message: “Dear bloggers: If you would like to do so, you can take the first steps towards obliterating Israel from the map of the world.”²⁶

The Iranian blogs reflect a wide range of views regarding statements by Iranian leaders – primarily Ahmadinejad – on the destruction of Israel. His statement at the “World without Zionism” Conference is widely quoted in blogs – by those supporting the statement, those critical of the statement, and those who support the statement but question the wisdom of the timing. One fact cannot be disputed – Ahmadinejad's statement that “the Jerusalem-occupying regime must be erased from the page of time” was interpreted by Persian-language bloggers – without exception – as meaning *the physical destruction of the State of Israel*.

Resalat Daily Reflects on an Ahmadinejad Speech: “The Great War Is Ahead of Us”

Resalat, a conservative Iranian daily, published an editorial on October 22, 2006, entitled “Preparations for the Great War,” in which it reflected on a speech given by Ahmadinejad two days earlier. It stated: “It must not be forgotten that the great war is ahead of us, perhaps tomorrow, or in a few months, or even a few years. *The nation of Muslims must prepare for the great war, so as to completely wipe out the Zionist regime, and remove this cancerous growth* (emphasis added).²⁷

Calls for the Destruction of Israel Are Echoed Throughout Iran at Military Parades, Billboards, and Demonstrations

Even before Ahmadinejad himself spoke about wiping Israel off the map, the Iranian regime used such expressions but did not leave any doubt about what stood behind this phraseology. By juxtaposing its call for Israel's elimination with a Shahab 3 missile during a military parade, the Iranian regime itself has clarified that these expressions about Israel's future do not describe a long-term historical process, in which the Israeli state collapses by itself like the former Soviet Union, but rather the actual physical destruction of Israel as a result of a military strike. The Shahab 3 missile has a range of 1,300 kilometers and can reach Israel from launch points in Iranian territory. Once Iran has completed the production of sufficient quantities of highly enriched uranium – or weapons-grade plutonium – there is no reason why Iran cannot deploy a future Iranian nuclear weapon on a Shahab 3 missile in order to carry out Ahmadinejad's threat to wipe Israel off the map.



“Israel must be uprooted and wiped off [the pages of] history” - the inscription on a Shahab 3 missile in a military parade in Tehran, September 22, 2003

This banner appears on the building which houses the Center for the *Basij* Resistance in the Judicial Branch, which is part of the *Basij* Resistance in Government Ministries and Departments.²⁸ The *Basij* are “mobilization forces” used as reserves for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) or *Pasdaran*, which was created to defend the Iranian revolutionary regime in 1979. The English translation on the banner reflects how an official organ of the Iranian government understood Ahmadinejad's words. It is noteworthy that variations on the expression “wipe out of the face of the world” have been used before in a specifically *military* context. In a Friday sermon, former Iranian President Rafsanjani made the statement: “If one day, a very important day of course, the Islamic world will also be equipped with the weapons available to Israel now, the imperialist strategy will reach an impasse, because *the employment of even one atomic bomb inside Israel will wipe it off the face of the earth*, but would only do damage to the Islamic world (emphasis added).”²⁹





The banner appears as well on a bus at a military rally in Iran in November 2006. The banner reads in English, “Israel should be wiped out of the face of the world.”³⁰

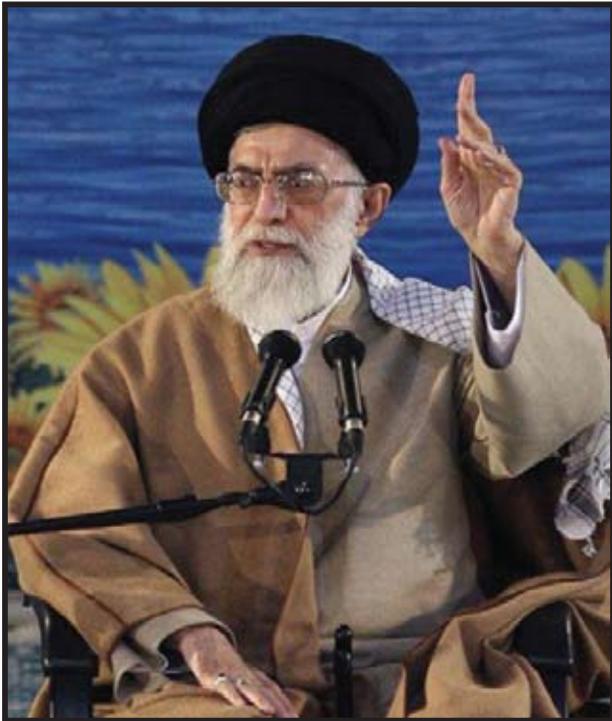


In English: “Down with Israel”
In Persian: “Death to Israel”

While the captions of the posters in English read “Down with Esrail [Israel]” and “Down with USA,” the captions in Arabic read “Death to Israel” and “Death to America.”



The Statements of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei



In the Iranian system, the highest ranking political authority is the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who succeeded Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989. Khamenei has made statements about Israel similar to Ahmadinejad. In a Friday sermon on December 15, 2000 (shown on Iranian TV), he declared: “Iran’s position, which was first expressed by the Imam [Khomeini] and stated several times by those responsible, is that the cancerous tumor called Israel must be uprooted from the region.”³¹

A month later on January 15, 2001, at a meeting with organizers of the International Conference for Support of the Intifada, he stated: “The foundation of the Islamic regime is opposition to Israel and the perpetual subject of Iran is the elimination of Israel from the region.”³² Iranian journalist Kasra Naji translated this sentence from the original Farsi as follows: “It is the mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to erase Israel from the map of the region.”³³ The difference between

international reaction to Khamenei’s statements on Israel and those of Ahmadinejad in 2005 comes from the fact that Ahmadinejad’s declarations were made *after* the disclosure of Iran’s clandestine nuclear weapons program in 2002-3, and the breakdown of EU-Iranian talks on halting the Iranian uranium enrichment program. By 2005, Khamenei began a concerted effort to limit the damage done to Iran by Ahmadinejad’s rhetoric, by insisting that Iran did not seek the military destruction of Israel.³⁴ Yet Hossein Shariatmadari, a close confidant of Khamenei who serves as one of his major mouthpieces, wrote an editorial in the Iranian daily *Kayhan* on October 30, 2005, in which he argued, “We declare explicitly that we will not be satisfied with anything less than the complete obliteration of the Zionist regime from the political map of the world.”³⁵ It may be that Khamenei has toned down his own rhetoric, but nonetheless has allowed his handpicked editor-in-chief of *Kayhan* to maintain his original ideological position on destroying Israel to the Iranian public.

In a speech on October 4, 2007, Shariatmadari stated: “‘Death to America’ and ‘Death to Israel’ are not only words written on paper but rather a symbolic approach that reflects the desire of all the Muslim nations.”³⁶

Following Ahmadinejad's Lead – Other Prominent Figures Call for the Destruction of Israel



Ayatollah Janati:

The People Wish the Death of America and Israel

Ayatollah Ahmad Janati, 82, is a member of President Ahmadinejad's inner circle, and is Chairman of the Guardian Council of the Constitution. According to the Fars News Agency, he told reporters during the 22 of Bahman parade (marking the anniversary of the Islamic revolution) that every year there is a bigger crowd, the slogans are more enthusiastic, and the Islamic regime's situation is getting better and better. He added: *"The blind enemies should see that the wish of these people is the death of America and Israel."*³⁷



General Safavi:

Death for the Zionist Regime

Yahya Rahim Safavi, 55, one of the "hard-core" founders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and its former commander, is now senior advisor to Supreme Leader Khamenei. In a speech in February 2008, he said: *"With God's help the time has come for the Zionist regime's death sentence."*³⁸

Safavi is also fond of referring to Israel as impure, unhygienic and contaminated. In remarks at a memorial ceremony for assassinated terrorist Imad Mughniyeh held in the city of Hamadan on February 23, 2008, he stated that the *"death of this unclean regime (مرگ این رژیم ناپاک) [Israel] will arrive soon following the revolt of Muslims."*³⁹



Mohammad-Ali Ramin:

The Jews Are Very Filthy People

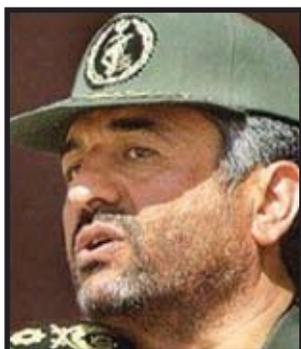
Mohammad-Ali Ramin refers to himself, as does the press, as an adviser to Ahmadinejad. He is a well-known Holocaust denier and is believed to be behind the president's statements on this issue. He is secretary of the political committee of the Rayeheh Khosh-Khedmat party which supports the president. On June 9, 2006, according to the reformist Internet daily *Rooz*, Ramin told a group of students in Rasht: *"Among the Jews there have always been those who killed God's prophets and who opposed justice and righteousness. Historically, there are many accusations against the Jews. For example, it was said that they were the source for such deadly diseases as the plague and typhus. This is because the Jews are very filthy people. For a time people also said that they poisoned water wells belonging to Christians and thus killed them."*⁴⁰ Ramin does not even bother to cover up his anti-Semitism by using "Zionists" instead of "Jews."



Ayatollah Nuri Hamadani:
Fight the Jews and Vanquish Them

Ayatollah Hussein Nuri Hamadani (b. 1925), a leading religious authority associated with the regime, told a meeting with the Mahdaviyat (messianic) Studies Institute in April 2005: *“One should fight the Jews and vanquish them so that the conditions for the advent of the Hidden Imam will be met.”* He has also stated that *“at present the Jews’ policies threaten us. One should explain in the clearest terms the danger the Jews pose to the [Iranian] people and to the Muslims....Already from the beginning the Jews wanted to hoard*

*the world’s goods in [their] greed and voracity. They always worked in important professions and now they have hoarded all of the wealth in one place. And all of the world, especially America and Europe, are their slaves.”*⁴¹



General Mohammad-Ali Jafari:
“Cancerous Microbe Israel”

In a February 2008 message to Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hizbullah, the Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, General Mohammad-Ali Jafari, wrote: *“In the near future, we will witness the destruction of the cancerous microbe Israel (جرثومه سرطاني اسرائیل) by the strong and capable hands of the nation of Hizbullah.”*⁴²



Foreign Minister Mottaki:
Israel Has No Legitimacy

In a speech reported by the Iranian Students News Agency on February 18, 2008, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said, *“The West has tried to impose a fabricated regime on the Middle East, but even after sixty years, the Zionist regime (Israel) has neither gained any legitimacy nor played any role in this region.”*⁴³



Majles Speaker Adel:
Destruction of the Zionist Regime

The speaker of Iran’s parliament, Gholam Ali Haddad-Adel, in a February 2008 speech at Tehran University’s mosque, said: *“The countdown has begun for the destruction of the Zionist regime.”*⁴⁴

Hizbullah Statements

The positions of Hizbullah are also an indicator of Iranian intentions towards Israel. Hizbullah was founded in 1982 with the deployment of Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards in Lebanon's Biqa' Valley and the training of its first Shiite cadre. Hizbullah's first governing council was established by the Iranian ambassador to Damascus, Ali Akbar Mohtashemi.⁴⁵ In its founding political platform, Hizbullah makes it clear that it takes its orders from Tehran: "We abide by the orders of one single wise and just leadership, represented by *"Wali al-Faqih"* and personified by Khomeini."⁴⁶

In this context, it is important to take note of the statements of Hassan Nasrallah, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah. In 2002, he disclosed his own organization's genocidal intent when he declared:

"Islamic prophecies and not only Jewish prophecies declare that this state [Israel] will come into being, and all the Jews of the world will gather from all corners of the world in occupied Palestine. But this will not be so their false messiah [*al-Dajjal*] can rule in the world, but so that God can save you the trouble of running them down all over the world. And then the battle will be decisive and crushing."⁴⁷

This theme also arose during the 2006 Second Lebanon War when Nasrallah called on the Arab residents of Haifa to leave the city, so that no Arab blood would be spilled during Hizbullah's rocket attacks on Haifa, but only Jewish blood.⁴⁸ It should come as no surprise that Nasrallah has echoed Ahmadinejad's repeated theme of Israel's termination as well.⁴⁹ Hizbullah takes its lead from Iran.

Incitement to Genocide

Ahmadinejad's statements have also been reviewed by experts on the Middle East and the Persian language. Michael Axworthy served as the Head of the Iran Section of Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1998-2000 and then subsequently as a lecturer at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter. He clearly rejects the notion that Ahmadinejad has been mistranslated and misinterpreted: "The formula had been used before by Khomeini and others, and had been translated by representatives of the Iranian regime as 'wiped off the map.' Some of the dispute that has arisen over what exactly Ahmadinejad meant by it has been rather bogus. When the slogan appeared draped over missiles in military parades, that meaning was pretty clear."⁵⁰

Viewed in context, the statements of Iran's leaders and, in particular, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad constitute incitement to genocide of the people of Israel. They are alarmingly similar to the coded statements of incitement that preceded the Rwandan genocide of the Tutsis in 1994,⁵¹ and should therefore alarm all peace-loving peoples.

There is an ample legal basis for the prosecution of Ahmadinejad in the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court for direct and public incitement to commit genocide and crimes against humanity.⁵²

APPENDIX

The European Union Condemns Adel, Mottaki and Jafari

Declaration by the Presidency on Behalf of the EU on Recent Anti-Israeli Statements

February 25, 2008

The EU condemns in the strongest terms the statements made by the Iranian President Ahmadinejad, the Speaker of the Iranian Majlis Haddad Adel, the Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki, and the Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Jafari. Their comments pointed against Israel are unacceptable, damaging and uncivilized. The EU calls on Iran to stop hostile rhetoric and refrain from all threats towards other states, members of the international community.⁵³

Notes

1. See Ethan Bronner, “Just How Far Did They Go, Those Words Against Israel?,” *New York Times*, June 10, 2006. See also Arash Norouzi, “‘Wiped off the Map’ – The Rumor of the Century,” www.mohammadmossadegh.com/news/rumor-of-the-century. Jonathan Steele, “Lost in Translation,” *The Guardian*, June 14, 2006; Virginia Tilley, “Putting Words in Ahmadinejad’s Mouth,” *Counterpunch*, August 28, 2006.
2. ‘Israel Lobby’ Authors in Jerusalem: Ahmadinejad Not Inciting to Genocide,” AP, *Ha’aretz* (English edition), June 13, 2008.
3. <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/record.xpd?id=110-h20070618-25&person=400346>.
4. To link directly to a report on the speech, see Iranian Students News Agency, October 26, 2005, <http://www.isna.ir/Main/NewsView.aspx?ID=News-603209>. To view a similar report on Ahmadinejad’s website (<http://www.president.ir/fa/>), it is necessary to enter the archive of presidential speeches according to the Persian date, 4 Aban (8th month), 1384. Of the five items listed for that day, the “World without Zionism” speech is first.
5. The *New York Times* non-literal translation of Ahmadinejad’s call to destroy Israel, as “the occupying regime must be wiped off the map,” was picked up by many world leaders opposed to the current regime. See Nazila Fathi’s translation, *New York Times*, October 30, 2005. Fathi works at the *Times*’ Tehran bureau. She translated Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi’s book, *The History and Documentation of Human Rights in Iran*, from Persian into English. As this analysis went to press, President Ahmadinejad made a similar statement in a speech honoring Ayatollah Khomeini on June 2, 2008. See the clip and translation as monitored by MEMRI TV at <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/1784.htm>, and the wire stories by IRNA, AFP, AP, Reuters, June 2, 2008.
6. Ethan Bronner, “Just How Far Did They Go.” But as Bronner notes: “All official translations of Mr. Ahmadinejad’s statement, including a description of it on his Web site (www.president.ir/eng/), refer to wiping Israel away. Further confusing matters was that Ahmadinejad managed to misquote Khomeini, who had used the noun *sahneh* (arena/field/stage in Persian), and not *safheh* (page in Persian).” See also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahmoud_Ahmadinejad_and_Israel.
7. Excerpt from speech by Ahmadinejad, aired on Iranian News Channel (IRINN) on August 2, 2006, monitored by MEMRI TV, <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/1222.htm>. Transcript at http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/1222.htm.
8. Iranian Students News Agency, October 26, 2005, <http://www.isna.ir/Main/NewsView.aspx?ID=News-603209>.
9. <http://www.president.ir/fa/>, archive of President’s speeches, 4 Aban (8th month) 1384. Iranian TV did the same, as can be seen in a clip which reports on the speech (clip available upon request from JCPA).
10. Gregory S. Gordon, “From Incitement to Indictment? Prosecuting Iran’s President for Advocating Israel’s Destruction and Piecing Together Incitement Law’s Emerging Analytical Framework,” forthcoming in *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology*, Vol. 98 (2008), draft online at http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=gregory_gordon.
11. Document 103, “Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Iraq Prepared by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights,” February 18, 1992, in Department of Public Information, *The United Nations and the Iraq-Kuwait Conflict, 1990-1996* (New York: United Nations, 1996), pp. 407-408.
12. Gordon, *op. cit.*
13. For example, on March 1, 2007, the official Islamic Republic News Agency quoted Ahmadinejad stating, “Zionists are the true manifestation of Satan.” <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-20/0703015352005938.htm>.
14. President’s official site, <http://www.president.ir/fa/?ArtID=8444>; a clip is at <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/1694.htm>, and a slightly different translation is at http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/1694.htm.
15. Islamic Republic News Agency (in English), May 8, 2008, <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-16/0805083448175250.htm>.
16. President’s official site, <http://www.president.ir/fa/print.php?ArtID=1544>; see also report at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/04/14/world/main1499824.shtml>, and Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of the Neoconservatives* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), p. 14.
17. President’s official site, <http://www.president.ir/fa/?ArtID=10>.
18. Fars News Agency, <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8701290026>; AFP, April 17, 2008.
19. DPA, May 13, 2008.
20. MEMRI Inquiry and Analysis Series, No. 447, June 6, 2008, http://www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=IA44708#_edn8.
21. MEMRI TV, June 2, 2008, http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/1784.htm.
22. <http://soroosh-p.blogfa.com/post-66.aspx>, June 3, 2007. This blog is critical of the regime.

23. <http://yahood.mihanblog.com/>, two weeks after the outbreak of the Israeli-Hizbullah war in July 2006. This is an anti-Israel blog.
24. <http://naan.o.panir.googlepages.com/Naan-Site-Form-Ahmadi.htm>. This blog concentrates on human rights in Iran and the country's pre-Islamic past.
25. <http://forum.hammihan.com/showthread.php?t=6830&page=7>. This is an Iranian forum that covers a wide range of subjects.
26. <http://isu.blogfa.com/post-6.aspx>.
27. MEMRI Special Dispatch Series, No. 1357, November 15, 2006, <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=iran&ID=SP135706>.
28. <http://sheikyermami.com/2007/09/page/3/>.
29. "Iran Calls for the Destruction of Israel," Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Center for Special Studies, Special Information Bulletin, November 2003, citing Khabar TV, December 14, 2000. http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/ENGLISH/IRAN/PDF/NOV_03.PDF.
30. AP.
31. "Iran Calls for the Destruction of Israel." See also "Iran Leader Urges Destruction of 'Cancerous' Israel," CNN, December 15, 2000, <http://archives.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/meast/12/15/mideast.iran.reut/>. A similar quotation in Persian is at <http://www.kheimeh.org/kheimeh/index.php?po=fulltext&op=1&pg=1&id=455>.
32. "Iran Calls for the Destruction of Israel."
33. Kasra Naji, Ahmadinejad: The Secret History of Iran's Radical Leader (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), p. 144.
34. Karim Sadjadpour, Reading Khamenei: The World View of Iran's Most Powerful Leader (Washington: Carnegie Endowment, 2008), p. 20, available at http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/sadjadpour_iran_final2.pdf.
35. "Wiping Israel Off the Map Is Iran's Official Policy," Iran Focus, October 30, 2005, <http://www.iranfocus.com/en/special-wire/wiping-israel-off-world-map-is-iran-s-official-policy-key-official.html>.
36. http://www.aftab.ir/news/2007/oct/04/c1c1191492912_politics_iran_hossein_shariyat_madari.php, October 4, 2007.
37. http://www.aftab.ir/news/2008/feb/12/c1c1202811597_politics_iran_jannati.php, February 12, 2008.
38. <http://www1.irna.com/fa/news/view/line-5/8612021449121206.htm>, http://www.taghribnews.com/tmain_fa.aspx?lng=fa&mode=art&artid=20992.
39. <http://sepahnews.com/nEWS/uNew.aspx?id=8584&pid=0>.
40. <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=iran&ID=SP118606>.
41. <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP89705>; http://web.peykeiran.com/net_iran/irnewsbody.aspx?ID=23105; <http://www.asylum-norway.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=182>.
42. <http://sepahnews.com/nEWS/uNew.aspx?id=8482&pid=0>, February 18, 2008.
43. ISNA, February 18, 2008, cited in <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=955417>.
44. <http://www.bornanews.ir/NSite/FullStory/?Id=121547>.
45. Martin Kramer, "Hizbullah in Lebanon," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, Vol. 2, 1995), pp. 130-133.
46. Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Center for Special Studies, Hezbollah (Part 1) (Tel Aviv: Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, June 2003), p. 53. Wali al-Faqih is the "Rule of the Jurisconsult." Nasrallah referred again to Hizbullah as the party of the Rule of the Jurisconsult in a May 26, 2008, speech. For the clip, see MEMRI TV, <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/1779.htm>.
47. For a recording of the speech in Arabic, go to <http://audio.hizbollah.tv/details.php?cid=1&linkid=189>. The Beirut *Daily Star* reported on the speech and quoted Nasrallah: "If they (Jews) all gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide." "Nasrallah Alleges 'Christian Zionist' Plot," *Daily Star* (Beirut), October 23, 2002, citing Nasrallah speech in the village of Haret Hreik on October 22. The interpolation "Jews" is in the original *Daily Star* text.
48. *Times* (London), August 12, 2006.
49. For how Hizbullah Secretary-General Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah views this and other statements, see Michael Young, "The Islamists Really Are True Believers," *Daily Star* (Beirut), March 27, 2008, www.middleeasttransparent.com/article.php3?id_article=3604. Young is the opinion editor of the Beirut daily.
50. Michael Axworthy, *A History of Iran: Empire of the Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), p. 313.
51. Gordon, *op. cit.*
52. *Ibid.*
53. http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/February/0225MZZ_Iran_Izrael.html.

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