



THE CHANGING FORMS OF INCITEMENT TO TERROR AND VIOLENCE: The Need for a New International Response

INCITEMENT, HATE LANGUAGE, AND TERROR: AN EPIDEMIOLOGIC PERSPECTIVE*

Elihu D. Richter and Yael Stein

Death and life are in the power of the tongue....

Proverbs 18:21

Wars are not fought for territory, but for words. Man's deadliest weapon is language. He is susceptible to being hypnotized by slogans as he is to infectious diseases. And where there is an epidemic, the group mind takes over.

Arthur Koestler

In epidemiology, if something is predictable, it is preventable. If smoking predicts lung cancer, we can reduce lung cancer by curbing smoking. If hate language and incitement predict and promote terror, genocidal terror, atrocity crimes, and genocide, can we prevent these horrific outcomes by stopping the hate language and incitement?

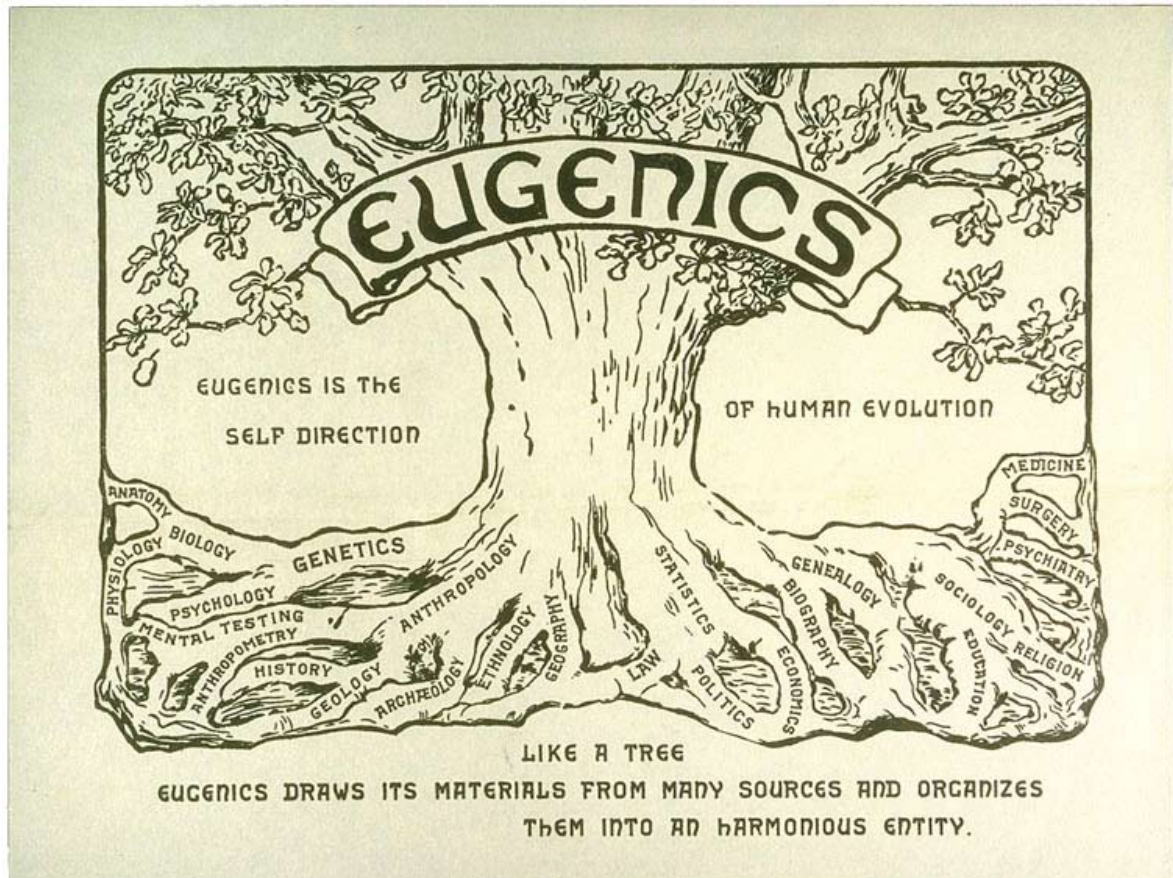
The case for action is based on core values. Respect for individual life and human dignity is the most basic of all rights. Without individual life there are no other human rights. It follows that genocide, mass atrocity crimes, and genocidal terror are the most extreme assaults on human rights. When incitement justifies or sanctions killing of individuals or groups, incitement itself is an assault on life and a violation of human rights.

THE TAXONOMY OF INCITEMENT

Hate language refers to terms used to dehumanize, demonize, stigmatize, delegitimize, or slander groups defined by their national, ethnic, religious, racial, or political identity.

Dehumanization includes terms and metaphors—usually of epidemic disease, cancer, or physical decay originating from public health and medicine—that induce disgust, revulsion, fear, and hate for the other. **Demonization** implies danger, threat, and evil intent. The origins of both are deeply rooted in religious hatreds, but since the nineteenth century both have received pseudoscientific rationales from the merging of the flawed theories of eugenics and social Darwinism. These flawed theories provided the intellectual underpinnings for Nazi medicine and racial hygiene, and its demonic anti-Semitism.

Figure 1. A Poster from the Late Nineteenth Century Promoting Eugenics and Its Multiple Scientific Sources



Delegitimization denies the identity and political, national, ethnic, or religious status of a group. Ignoring the existence of the other is invisible delegitimization. **Double standards** are used to judge a group by norms not applied to all other groups, so as to cast the group or members of the group in an unfavorable light. **Defamation** and **disinformation** spread lies, “rewriting” history in a way the inciter prefers. **Denial of past genocides** can lay the groundwork for future genocides.

Incitement refers to words that stimulate to action. These can be cast in the form of *threats, predictions and prophecies*, religious decrees, praising perpetrators of genocidal terror, or *elevating them to hero status*.

EPIDEMIOLOGY: IF INCITEMENT PREDICTS VIOLENT CONFLICT, THEN...?

The methods, tools, and models of epidemiology—the study of the distribution and determinants of disease—can be used to predict and prevent unintentional injury, intentional injury, crime, community violence, and terror.

We propose looking at all forms of incitement and hate language as hazardous exposures that are predictive for atrocity crimes. Historical case studies and research in the behavioral and social sciences show that hate language and incitement recruit, motivate, instruct, direct, coerce, and intimidate individuals, groups, communities, and entire peoples to commit hate

crimes, and desensitize bystanders—both internal and external—from protesting against these crimes. Repeated aggressive propagation of messages and motifs of virulent hate results in their becoming embedded as accepted or acceptable norms. Indoctrination of the young, those most vulnerable, leads to intergenerational transmission of the motifs. Table 1 presents some examples of the use of dehumanizing hate language and incitement as early warning signs (EWS), predictors, catalysts, and promoters of genocide and mass murder of populations defined by their national, ethnic, religious, racial, or political status.

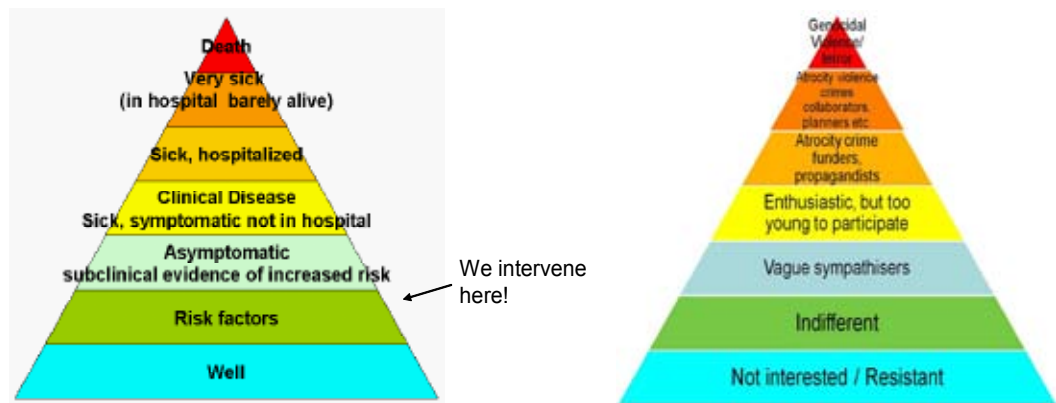
Table 1. Dehumanizing and Demonizing Hate Language and Incitement as Early Warning Signs of Genocide and Estimated Death Tolls

- » **Young Turks:** Genocide of Armenians is “eradication of dangerous microbes” in the body politic
1.2 million dead
- » **Lenin and Stalin:** Bourgeoisie are “parasites, insects, leeches, bloodsuckers”—“purges”
Tens of millions killed in “ethnic purges”
- » **Hitler:** Jews are “parasites, plague, cancer, tumor, bacillus, bloodsuckers, blood poisoners, lice, vermin, bedbugs, fleas, racial tuberculosis” on German body that would be killed with the “Jewish disease”
Six million dead
- » **Khmer Rouge:** “Microbes, parasites, worms, cancer”
Three million dead
- » **Serbs (Karavic):** “Bosniaks [originate] from a specific gene of the Ottoman army”
104,000 dead
- » **Kosovars:** Roma are *majupi*, or lower than garbage
Thousands killed?
- » **Rwandan Hutu radio:** Tutsi are “cockroaches [*inyenzi*]”
800,000 dead
- » **Darfur Janjaweed:** Racial epithets
300-400,000 dead
- » **Islamic, Islamist, jihadist incitement (Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Palestinian Authority, Iran, Hamas, Hizbullah, Saudi Arabia):** “Zionist are sons of monkeys and pigs”
24,526 dead Israelis (so far) and more than 90,000 Arabs killed

Epidemiologic models sharpen perspectives on the distribution and determinants of mass outbreaks, viral propagation of messages, and source-exposure-effect pathways and relationships. The iceberg model of disease is useful for examining the ecology of terror, group violence, genocidal terror, and genocide.

This model suggests that eliminating populationwide exposure to incitement would be equivalent to melting the base of the iceberg.

Figure 2. Epidemiology: The Ecology of Disease (also known as the “iceberg of disease”)



In epidemiology we track and measure air pollutants and their health effects on exposed populations. In tracking and measuring messages of hate on the airwaves, we should be able to monitor the intensity and frequency of the hate messages and their effects on attitudes and actions. We can also track incubation periods, that is, how much time elapses between the onset of incitement and the outbreak of violence. Groups that have been “primed” by prolonged repeated low-level exposure can take to the streets and pillage, destroy, rape, and kill within minutes of being incited by inflammatory hate language—as occurred in Kenya in the 2007 postelection violence and more recently in Nigeria, or within weeks following the broadcasting of hate messages on the radio in Rwanda. (See Figure 3 and Table 2.)

Hate language and incitement broadcast by Hutu Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTL) in Rwanda used ethnic stereotyping and repeated media calls for the extermination of Tutsis. Tutsis were called cockroaches (*inyenzi*) and snakes. In the late 1990s, the International Criminal Court convicted radio journalists for inciting Hutus to murder Tutsis and opponents of the Hutu regime. In Rwanda, it was words that killed.

Figure 3. Timeline for Genocide in Rwanda

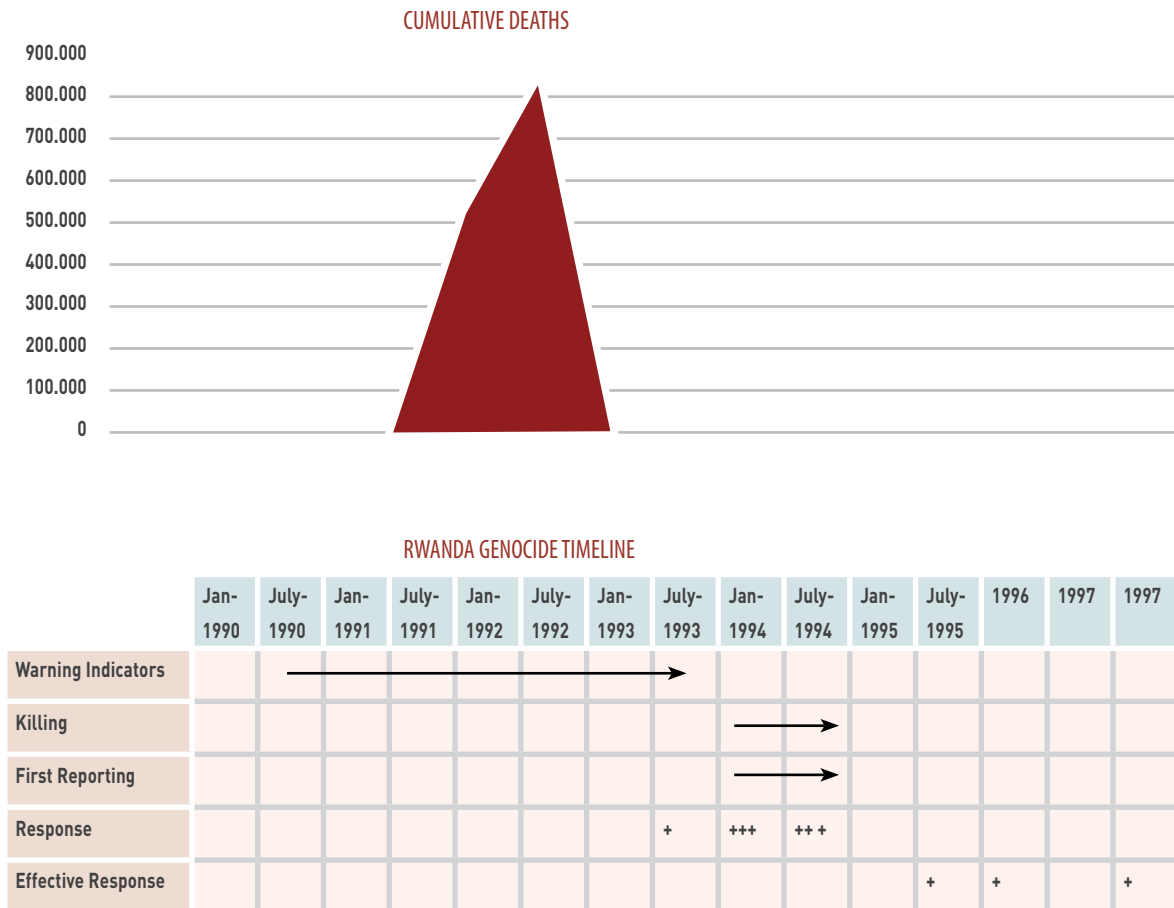


Table 2. Genocide Timeline: Warning Signs in Rwanda

1990	Rwanda
Dec	Hutu paper publishes “Ten Commandments of Hutu” “we consider a traitor any Hutu who marries a Tsotsi women” Rwandan Patriotic Front gains ground against Hutu government forces
Nov 1993	Senior member Rwandan President’s party: “Wipe them all out!”
Dec 1994	High ranking Hutu offices send UN commander letter warning of massacres UN NYC fails to respond
Feb	Rise in political assassinations
April	Hutu radio names Tutsi “cockroaches” as target Hutu gunmen murder politicians, Prime Minister, UN peacekeepers

Hutu militia slaughtered
800,000 Tutsi men, women, and children in 100 days,
beginning April 6th 1994

The recognition that there is a cause-effect relationship between hate language and incitement and violence, notably genocide, dates back to the Nuremberg Trials after World War II, when Julius Streicher was convicted and executed for propagating virulent anti-Semitic incitement before and during the Holocaust. Hitler in *Mein Kampf* called the Jews “parasites, plague, cancer, tumor, bacillus, bloodsuckers, blood poisoners, lice, vermin, bedbugs, fleas, racial tuberculosis” on the German body that would supposedly be killed with the “Jewish disease.” Nazi propaganda used scenes of rats juxtaposed with stereotypes of Jews, depicted as carriers and purveyors of filth and disease, to induce disgust and revulsion. Dr. Joseph Goebbels, using mass propaganda methods pioneered by Edward Bernays to market cigarettes, used radio and film to mass-market these motifs. (See Figures 4, 5.)

Figure 4. From Bernays's Propaganda for Smoking to Dr. Goebbels



Figure 5. From Dr. Goebbels to Nazi Propaganda



Few know that the same Nazi doctors, notably Dr. Karl Astel, himself a concentration-camp commander, who were leaders in promoting campaigns of mass extermination were also pioneers in promoting antismoking campaigns—during 1940-1944. The goal of both was the same: protecting the health and purity of the master race.

Figure 6. Genocide, Racial Hygiene, and Preventive Medicine: Dr Karl Astel: Antismoking Campaigner and Concentration-Camp Commander

	Germany	US
1930	490	1.4858
1935	510	1.564
1940	14022	1.976
1944	743	3.039



In Figure 6 there is an inset comparing the drop in sales of millions of packs of cigarettes in Nazi Germany—by approximately one-fourth, resulting from the energetic campaigns sponsored by Dr. Astel, to the 33 percent increase in the United States during the same period.

HATE LANGUAGE AND INCITEMENT TO GENOCIDE: FROM NUREMBERG AND RWANDA TO IRAN

Hate language and incitement have been defined as crimes against humanity in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, based on the evidence amassed during the Nuremberg and Rwandan trials on the cause-effect relationship between hate language and incitement and hate crimes and mass atrocities.

The fact that Iran’s leaders today recycle the same motifs used by Hitler and Streicher has prompted calls to indict them for incitement to genocide, based on the Nuremberg and Rwandan precedents. Iran’s incitement to genocide, using these motifs, dates back to the 1980s and has lasted more than thirty years, or more than twice as long as that of the Nazis, and has resulted in intergenerational transmission of the messages and motifs.

Figure 7. Iran's Jihadist Genocidal Threats against Israel: Incitement and Hate Language: 1979-2009

Ahmadinejad: Israel...a “filthy germ” and “savage beast” established by Western states...

Mohamed Ali Jafari: top commander in Iran's Revolutionary Guard called Israel a “cancerous germ”...[to be] wiped out by Hezbollah.

(Far News Agency) Iranian television



“In the near future, we will witness the destruction of the cancerous germ of Israel by powerful and competent hands of the Hezbollah combatants.”

Today the Internet is flooded with dehumanizing jihadist rhetoric describing Jews and Zionists as “sons of apes and pigs.” This rhetoric is aimed at inciting the jihadists’ followers to commit genocidal terror and genocide.

APPLYING EPIDEMIOLOGIC MONITORING: AN INCITEMENT AND CULTURE OF PEACE INDEX

Can epidemiologic methods be applied to track and monitor incitement from various sources over time? An Incitement and Culture of Peace Index developed by researchers in Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs provides evidence that in the Palestinian Authority, substantial segments of the population are regularly exposed to bigotry, hate, dehumanization, demonization, delegitimization, and defamation against Israelis, the Zionist movement, and Israel. But, occasionally, there are positive statements promoting peace and tolerance. The database for the index is compiled from statements by the chairman of the PA, PA and Fatah officials, official core documents of the PA, educational materials, religious messages, media sources, and Internet and other cultural sources. (See Table 3, Figures 8 and 9.)

Table 3. Examples of PA Statements and How They Are Scored*

	Explicit incitement to violence and terror	Encouragement of an atmosphere of violence and terror	Incitement to hatred and demonization	Non preparation of the public for peace
Chairman of the PA	Explicit (1+)			
10th Report, January-March 2012	<p><i>Interview with President Mahmoud Abbas:</i></p> <p>Die Zeit: "Why are you continuing with negotiations?"</p> <p>Abbas: "We have no choice. We will never return to the armed struggle! Never! There will be only peaceful resistance to the occupation.... Such a thing [the intifada] must never be repeated. We want peace; therefore we must take responsibility for Israel's security: five years without a single unfortunate incident! Why does the other side not understand this?..."</p> <p>[Palestinian News and Info Agency (WAFA), January 31, 2012]</p>			
Religious messages	Explicit (-2)			
10th Report, January-March 2012	<p>"PA mufti Muhammad Hussein comes to the podium and says: 'The Hour [of Resurrection] will not come until you fight the Jews. The Jew will hide behind stones or trees. Then the stones or trees will call:</p> <p>"Oh Muslim, servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him."</p> <p>Except the <i>gharqad</i> tree [which will keep silent].' Therefore it is no wonder that you see <i>gharqad</i> [trees] surrounding the [Israeli] settlements and colonies."</p> <p>[PA TV, January 9, 2012]</p> <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_ embedded&v=kDoV8ZL9Xkc</p>			
Official core documents of the PA	Explicit (-7)			
10th Report, January-March 2012	<p>Palestine National Charter</p> <p>Article 9:</p> <p>"Armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine. This is the overall strategy, not merely a tactical phase...."</p> <p>[Note: The Palestine National Charter appears on the following websites:</p> <p>PLO—Refugee Affairs Department: http://plord.ps/ar/index.php?act=Show&id=500</p> <p>PLO Executive Committee— National Office for Defense of the Land and for Resistance to the Settlements: http://www.nbprs.ps/page.php?do=show&action=pl04</p>			

Media	Encouragement (-7)
11th Report, April-June 2012	<p>PA TV broadcast a documentary about terrorist Abu Jihad to commemorate the anniversary of his death. The documentary included footage of Abu Jihad planning large-scale terror attacks against Israel:</p> <p>“When we get there, Allah willing, we will begin to fire, to fire on our enemy. We will dig in his throat and heart with the massacres that we spoke about. We want to turn the Tel Aviv day black....”</p> <p>Narrator: “[Abu Jihad] was the mastermind of the armed struggle against Israel. He is a symbol of Palestinian armed struggle....”</p> <p>[PA TV, April 16, 2012]</p> <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aPG4MkhhZs</p>
PA and Fatah Officials	Demonization (-5)
11th Report, April-June 2012	<p><i>Live broadcast: Opening of the first Forum for Arab Women Sports Journalists, in the presence of PA prime minister Salam Fayyad and PA chairman of the Palestinian Olympic Committee Jibril Rajoub:</i></p> <p>Rajoub: “I say also—and on behalf of Palestine: something that has no place in the dictionary of Palestinian sportsmen is the subject of normalization with the occupation. Impossible, impossible, impossible....</p> <p>I understand by normalization that the relationship between me and you will be normal, that we’ll play [sports] together and there’ll be a joint program.</p> <p>I say to you: under no circumstances will there be normalization. Next time we are prepared to bring the Executive Committee in helicopters...so they will see no Jews, no Satans, no Zionist sons of bitches. Come by helicopter and go back by helicopter.”</p> <p>[PA TV (Fatah), May 17, 2012]</p> <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PyliMiuokaU&feature=player_embedded</p>
Education	Demonization (-7)
11th Report, April-June 2012	<p>“By your life! How is it that snakes invade us and we still observe a protection covenant [<i>dhimma</i>] that respects commitments?”</p> <p><i>Arabic Language, Grade 12 (2010), p. 61</i></p>
Internet	Preparing (-1)

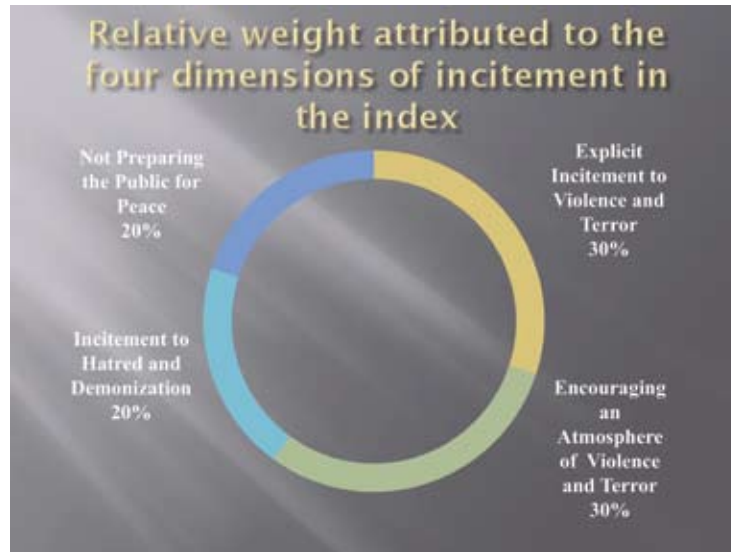
<p>11th Report, April-June 2012</p>	<p><i>The PLO Refugee Affairs Department and the Higher National Committee for Reinvigorating the Commemoration of the Nakba published an action plan for Nakba Day and related events:</i></p> <p>“1. On the educational and propaganda levels:... To contend with the Israeli people and to reveal their imperialist and terrorist plans and aims that they achieve through killing, destruction, immigration, arrests, appropriation of land, the Judaization of Jerusalem, and attempts to erase the Arab-Palestinian existence within the land occupied since 1948, the settlements, and the racist separation wall and particularly the celebration of their fabricated state that arose on the lands and properties of our Palestinian people...”</p> <p>[The document can be found on the committee’s website “Right of Return”]</p>
<p>Culture and other</p>	<p>Preparing (-6)</p>
<p>11th Report, April-June 2012</p>	<p><i>Music video on PA TV: Jaffa, Acre, Haifa, and Nazareth are ours</i></p> <p>Jaffa, Acre, Haifa, and Nazareth are ours. Muhammad, sing about the Galilee and the Golan. Jaffa, Acre, Haifa, and Nazareth are ours. Kabha, sing about the Galilee and the Golan. From Bethlehem to Jenin is Palestinian, Ramle, Lod, and Sakhnin are Palestinian. Nowhere is more beautiful than Jerusalem; no matter how much we travel from Safed to Al-Badhan is Palestinian; Tiberias and Ashkelon are Palestinian.</p> <p><i>[This song originally aired on May 13, 2011, and was rebroadcast on June 24, July 14, July 15 (twice), August 20, September 2, 2011, and again on January 5, 8, February 25, March 19, and April 6, 2012]</i></p> <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PyliMiuokaU&feature=player_embedded</p>

Source: Kobi Michael, *Incitement and Peace Culture Index*. Cited in Yael Stein, Elihu D. Richter, and Rony Blum, “Incitement and Hate Language, Hate Education, and Their Role in Promotion of Violent Conflict and Atrocity Crimes: An Epidemiologic Perspective,” monograph in press, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

This incitement recycles centuries-old stereotypes that predate the Arab-Israeli conflict, and were reinforced by both Nazi and Soviet anti-Semitic propaganda.

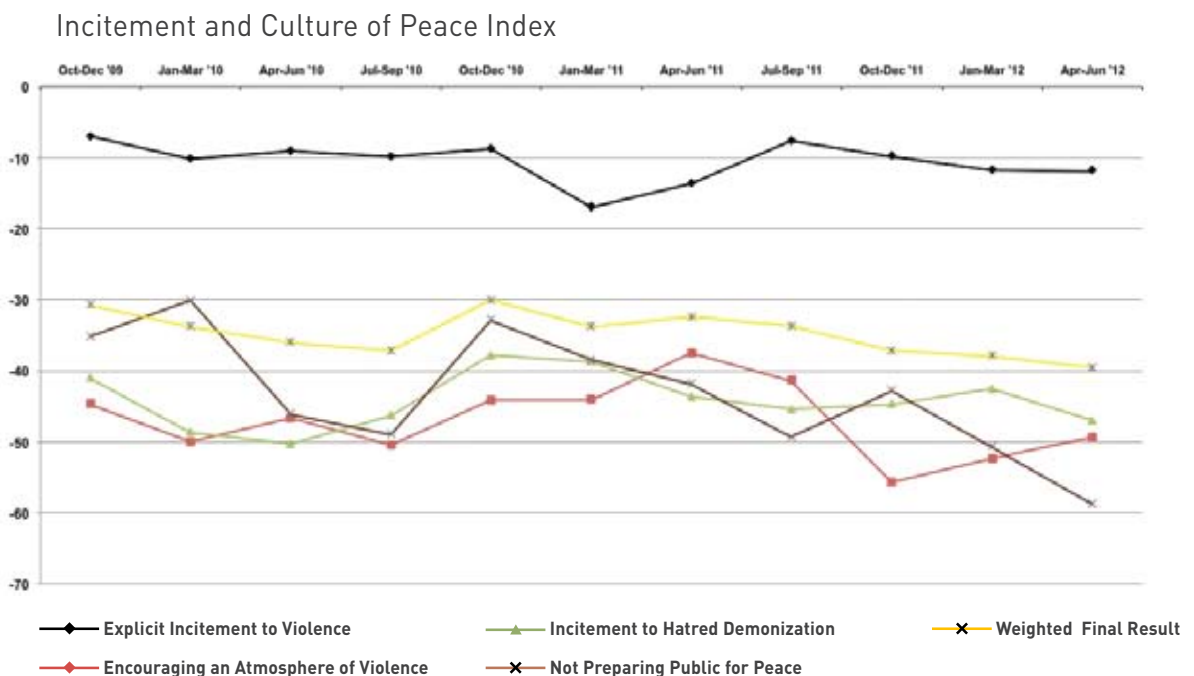
Populationwide exposure in Palestinian society begins with messages many young children may hear from their parents at home and in kindergartens, as well as subtle messages of hatred and stereotypes embedded in elementary and high school textbooks, in poetry and popular songs. More exposure occurs in informal educational settings such as summer camps, youth movements, and places of worship. The exposures continue in colleges and universities, and are prevalent in the written and broadcast mainstream media (radio and TV), on the Internet, in social media, and in the general cultural environment of the PA. The situation is, of course, much worse in Hamas-ruled Gaza.

Figure 8. Relative Weight Attributed to the Four Dimensions of Incitement in the Index



Currently, many Palestinian children are still taught that Israel is an illegal colonialist regime stealing their land, and that they must stand firm for the “right of return” to pre-1948 villages their families lived in. The Palestinian curriculum does not offer children a positive narrative depicting Israel as a nation or Jews as individuals. Schoolbook maps and formal PA symbols delegitimize by showing a region with no Israel. These messages have to be regarded as explicit incitement to violence and genocidal terror when linked to messages characterizing terrorists killed in terror attacks with the specific aim of killing Israeli civilians as heroes (*shahids*—martyrs) to be emulated.

Figure 9. Incitement Trends in the Palestinian Authority



We suggest that what is called “economic peace” cannot be expected to override the negative impacts of such populationwide incitement and of intergenerational transmission of these messages. Furthermore, we suggest that no peace agreement can be sustainable without an end to such incitement.

REDEFINING THE UNACCEPTABLE

If societywide incitement and hate language predict violence and conflict, then epidemiologic models suggest that their prevention, together with the promotion of models of what is called positive deviance, can eventually reverse the incitement→violence relationship. These epidemiologic models presuppose systems for surveillance modeled after the grid shown here.

The ultimate test of the hypothesis that stopping incitement will stop violence is—to test it. Table 4 presents a grid for regionwide tracking of incitement and hate language, based on surveillance models for other hazards and exposures from public health and environmental medicine.

Table 4. Incitement Kills: Grid for Surveillance and Matrix

	Political statements	Diplomacy	Media	Texts/ Educational milieu	Places of worship	Other
PA (sec., relig.)						
Gaza						
Syria						
Saudi Arabia						
Iraq						
Iran						
Egypt						
Jordan						
Turkey						
IL and EU						

The industrialist Geoffrey Vickers used the term “redefining the unacceptable” to define tipping points in the history of public health, in which society abruptly decided to no longer accept conditions present for centuries that were sources of filth and disease. He first applied the term to the Sanitary Revolution in mid-nineteenth-century Great Britain, which aimed to provide potable drinking water along with public sewerage systems. In our view, hate language and incitement are the most hazardous populationwide exposures in the Middle East.

In light of their horrific effects throughout the Middle East and elsewhere, especially on the young, it is essential to redefine endemic, societywide hate language and incitement as unacceptable.

THE CASE FOR ACTION

The adage that “sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me” ignores the role of names—that is, words, in motivating others to use machetes, rifles, machineguns, rockets, and missiles.

Words kill. If incitement predicts terror and violence, then their prevention requires preventing incitement—that is, a policy of **Zero Tolerance for Incitement** (ZT4I). Epidemiologic models of the cause-effect relationships between incitement and genocide and genocidal terror indicate that bystanders to such incitement share responsibility for the violence it engenders. There is, then, a need for surveillance and action against hate language and incitement everywhere.

Now is the time to take the necessary educational, legal, and administrative measures to eradicate official hate language and incitement. If not now, when?

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ENDNOTES

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Helpful sources for this article include: R. Blum, G. H. Stanton, S. Sagi, and E. D. Richter, “‘Ethnic Cleansing’ Bleaches the Atrocities of Genocide,” *European Journal of Public Health* 18, 2 (2008): 204-209; Hebrew University-Hadassah Genocide Prevention Program, “Recommendations to the UN, other major international organizations and governments: Indict Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, president of Iran, for Incitement to Commit Genocide—a Crime against Humanity; and impose immediate sanctions against the government of Iran to prevent Iranian development of nuclear weapons,” January 5, 2006, <http://spme.net/cgi-bin/articles.cgi?ID=359>; E. D. Richter, “Commentary: Genocide: Can We Predict, Prevent, and Protect?” *Journal of Public Health Policy* 29, 3 (2008): 265-274; Elihu D. Richter, Yael Stein, and Alex Barnea Burnley, “Can We Prevent Genocide by Preventing Incitement?,” Kelvin Smith Library, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH, 2009, <http://hdl.handle.net/2186/ksl:riccan00/riccan00.pdf>.