

A Palestinian right of return would annihilate the Jewish state. It's unjust, immoral and potentially lethal to Israel.

BETWEEN ISRAELI CHICKEN AND PALESTINIAN KNIFE – TIMES DEMANDS EVEN-HANDEDNESS BY Don Feder

The New York Times was outraged – yes, outraged -- by the outcome of the George Bush - Ariel Sharon meeting on Wednesday.

The president of the United States expressed support for Sharon's plan to keep some of the settlements. Furthermore, Bush said that if the so-called refugees return anywhere, it should be to a Palestinian state.

When asked Monday if Jewish communities in the territories were an obstacle to peace, Bush sensibly observed, "The problem is... there's terrorists who will kill people in order to stop the process" (or exploit the process, as the case may be). Perhaps the president also was thinking of the young Americans dying in Iraq -- at the hands of the same murderous fanaticism that drives Palestinian suicide bombers.

Logic intruding on US foreign policy, what is going on here, the Times wondered in one of its classic, editorial pouts?

The administration's modest recognition of reality constitutes "a costly blow...to America's credibility as an honest broker for a Middle East peace" the Times sulked.

For the liberal media, it makes perfect sense that as between a loyal ally (Israel) and an enemy that has murdered Americans for more than 30 years and invariably sides with our foes – from the Soviets to Saddam -- (the PLO), America take an even-handed approach.

When news of 911 reached the Middle East, Palestinians shouted for joy, danced in the streets and threw candy to children (a traditional symbol of celebration in the Arab world). Israel declared a day of mourning. But, hey, between those who cry with us and those who laugh at us when tragedy strikes, we must be scrupulously impartial, right?

Horrors, the president is preempting the sacred peace process (by which Israel is being processed like meat through a grinder), the Times exclaimed. Issues like the right of return should be negotiated by Israel and the Palestinians, the good, gray lady declared.

Except, according to the media's tortured logic, it's fine for the administration to endorse a Palestinian state, to call for the dismantling of settlements, even to suggest that Arafat and his thugs get East Jerusalem – even though all are supposed to be settled by negotiations.

The president's current posture might be an election-year maneuver to placate his evangelical supporters, who are more staunchly pro-Israel than the average Hadassah lady.

Bush's observation that it might be all right for Jerusalem to keep some of the Jewish communities in Biblical Israel was scant recompense for Sharon's announced unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and the eviction of more than 7,500 Jews. It also came coupled with the standard endorsement of a Palestinian state – which would be a delightful synthesis of the Taliban, Saddam's Iraq and an al-Qaeda training camp.

But at least the president reflected realism in his observation that inundating Israel with millions of Palestinian refugees ain't a gonna happen – as they say in the Lone Star state.

Israel is fragmented politically. Many on the right would give the Palestinians *bupkis* (that which is located in the middle of a bagel). Many on the left would give them part of Tel Aviv, in a desperate attempt to buy peace. But wherever they are on the political spectrum – from hard-core Likud-nik to dogmatic peacenik – overwhelmingly, Israelis are united in their opposition to a Palestinian right of return. Even the Israeli left isn't quite that suicidal.

The why is obvious.

But first, let's put the matter in perspective. The media, which cultivate historical amnesia, rarely tell us how Palestinian refugees became refugees.

The very hour that the Jews declared statehood in 1948, they were invaded by five neighboring Arab states. The stated goal was to drive the Jews into the sea. Their would-be liberators told local Arabs to evacuate so they wouldn't be caught in the crossfire. Later, they were assured, they could return to their homes, as well as those of the Jews – who by then would be floating in the Mediterranean.

Roughly 600,000 Arabs followed that advice. Another 200,000, responding to the entreaties of Ben Gurion and other Zionist leaders, stayed and became full citizens of the new state.

At the same time, 800,000 Jews were driven from Arab countries, some from homes their families had known for millennia. The choice: Stay and be killed by rampaging mobs or emigrate. No one – repeat no one – is suggesting that the Jews whose families fled Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, etc. be repatriated.

Nor, for that matter, is there a claimed right of return for any of the other political refugees (numbered in the tens of millions) who trudged or were shoved across national borders throughout the 20th century.

The Germans pushed out of Poland and Czechoslovakia at the end of World War II, the Hindus and Moslems who ended up in India or Pakistan respectively, the Greeks and Armenians ejected from Turkey, the Holocaust survivors who weren't allowed to return to their homes in Eastern Europe, the pied noir (French settlers) forced out of Algeria at the time of its independence – are but a few examples of mass migrations caused by war, revolution or politics.

The solicitous attitude toward the Palestinians is a prime example of that most entrenched of international double standards -- one rule for Israel, another for everyone else. Not only the Arabs who left what became Israel, but their children and grandchildren have been granted refugee status in perpetuity by the United Nations. Clearly, most of the five million Arafat wants to foist on Israel have never set eyes on their “homeland.”

It's equally clear that the Jewish state would be swamped by this proposed inundation. There are currently 6.6 million Israelis, including one million Arabs. Add an estimated five million Palestinian “returnees” (almost all of them descendants of the refugees of 1948) and – well, even The New

York Times should be able to do the math. Also, bear in mind that the Arabs have one of the highest birthrates in the world.

Now, here's where the real irony comes in. While Palestinians who've never set eyes on their "homes," are to be repatriated, the Jews currently living in Judea and Samaria (AKA, the West Bank) are to be driven from theirs -- turned into refugees.

Palestine's founding fathers have a dual agenda – flood Israel with millions of ersatz refugees, while engaging in ethnic cleansing, making their state *judenrein*, in the words of another anti-Semitic movement, while their neighbor is poised for another future partition.

Some observers wonder why Arafat turned down the sweetheart deal offered by then-President Clinton and then- Prime Minister Ehud Barak in 2000 – 97 percent of the West Bank and Gaza for a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital and \$30 billion compensation for the Palestinian refugees. Simple: It didn't also include a right of return.

Not that Arafat, the PLO, Hamas and the rest of the international jihad can't destroy Israel with a militarized Palestinian state in league with Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia and other exemplars of the religion of peace.

But a right of return will make it so much easier. From a Palestinian perspective, what's even better than stationing a few divisions on Israel's borders? Stationing them inside the Jewish state.

No wonder The New York Times is perturbed. As between the chicken and the knife about to descend on its neck, America should – nay, America must – serve as *an honest broker*.