

Stein, Kenneth W. "Egregious Quote," January 12, 2007.

Kenneth W. Stein, Emory professor of Middle Eastern history and political science and director of Emory's Institute for the Study of Modern Israel, responds to the inaccuracies in former President Jimmy Carter's *Palestine: Peace not Apartheid* each week.

This week's issue: Is Carter, with his use of diction/syntax, condoning Palestinian violence and the killing of Israelis?

What Carter says: "It is imperative that the general Arab community and all significant Palestinian groups make it clear that they will end the suicide bombings and other acts of terrorism when international laws and the ultimate goals of the Roadmap for Peace are accepted by Israel." (Page 213, italics added)

Implications: Carter's diction/syntax in this sentence produces the following problems:

1. Because of his use of "when," Carter seems to advise that it is legitimate for anyone to engage in terrorism and suicide bombings against Israelis until international laws and the ultimate goals of the "road map" are accepted by Israel. Only then would violence be impermissible?
2. What constitutes "acceptance" by Israel? Which international laws does Carter believe that Israel has not accepted? Does he mean to imply that Israel must accept any or some or all U.N. resolutions dealing with the Palestinian question, and/or any or all other international rulings, such as those of the International Court of Justice at The Hague or the Geneva Conventions? If he means U.N. Resolutions 181, 194 and 465, then he is demanding that Israel return to the pre-June 1967 boundaries.
3. What constitutes a "significant group"? Are less "significant" groups justified in committing acts of terrorism? Is a group like Islamic Jihad, which is not significant in number, considered significant, according to Carter's definition? How about Fatah, now less significant as a result of Hamas' domination in the Palestinian Legislative Council?
4. If Carter's words are taken to legitimize violence by those bent on using violence, then all Carter has done is instigate and condone violence by suggesting it continue until Israel meets certain criteria, themselves imprecisely delivered.

Conclusion: Ambiguity in diplomatic documents (and Carter professes that he means for this book to open dialogue between the two sides) causes at least anxiety. Throughout the aforementioned sentence, Carter offers either amorphous definitions or intentional ambiguities. In each of the unclear phrases, he leaves open for interpretation the best or worst scenarios. At worst, he is advocating continued violence against Israel (Israeli Arabs and Jews alike) and a return to the 1949 armistice lines as a precondition for peace negotiations. If that is what he is advocating, how does he envision the map of Israel and any future Palestinian state? Does it look

like the 1947 partition plan or the 1949 armistice lines, Israel's borders until June 1967?

Finally, Carter's syntax suggests that he sanctions violence against Israelis — the killing of Jews. I have never heard Carter utter an anti-Semitic epithet, and I never encountered any anti-Semitism in the workplace during my years at the Carter Center. However, from virtually the day he left the White House in 1981, Carter vigorously opposed Israeli policy toward the Palestinians as well as Israeli settlement policy.

The published record is replete with his angry verbal assaults against Israeli policies. He was frequently criticized in the United States and in Israel for not being evenhanded in his assignment of blame for the stagnation of negotiations; Israelis as politically apart as Yossi Beilin and Eli Rubenstein admonished Carter, in person and in my presence, for his one-sided attacks against Israeli policy.

Carter's sanctioning of violence against Jews, particularly when he has emphatically asserted in numerous interviews that "everything in the book is accurate," marks a significant shift in his views. Angrily, Carter crossed a line. He is endorsing the killing of Israelis. That is overtly anti-Semitic. If that is not what he intended, then he should not have included such a sentence in his book.

I wrote in my resignation letter from the Carter Center that those in "academic settings and those in positions of influence must teach and not preach." If Carter is preaching violence and the killing of Israelis until some point in the future, then he must be sanctioned.