

Hezbollah drags Lebanon to the brink of war

Fri, 2021-08-06 23:51

BEIRUT: Hezbollah militants fired rockets toward Israel on Friday, drawing retaliatory fire from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) into southern Lebanon in a third day of cross-border exchanges.

The Iran-backed group said it had targeted open ground near IDF positions in retaliation for Israeli airstrikes that had also struck open areas, in an effort, it claimed, to defuse tensions.

The Lebanese Armed Forces said Israel retaliated by firing 40 rounds of artillery into Lebanese territory, 10 of which fell on the outskirts of the town of Al-Sadana, while the rest fell on the outskirts of Bastra and Kfarshouba, causing a number of fires in the area.

The UN Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) said the situation is “very dangerous in light of the escalation from both sides witnessed in the past two days.”

Hezbollah’s rockets were launched towards an area known as Shebaa Farms, outside the Blue Line established by the UN in 2000 and in violation of UN Resolution 1701. The UN Security Council has called on “both Israel and Lebanon to respect the Blue Line drawn in May 2000.”

The Islamic Resistance, the military branch of Hezbollah, took responsibility for the launches, saying “the shelling was in reaction to Israeli air raids on Thursday night on the open ground in Al-Jarmaq and Al-Shawakir areas.”

The IDF said it “counted 19 rockets fired, three of which fell inside Lebanon, 10 were intercepted, while six fell in open areas.”

It added: “Hezbollah deliberately launched rockets on open uninhabited areas which is a sign that it does not want war. Hezbollah is using the Lebanese (people) as human shields, putting its rockets amidst their houses.

“We are considering how to respond to shelling from south Lebanon, but we will not revert to escalation.”

Video footage circulated on social media, meanwhile, showed a crowd of people in the village of Chouya protesting against vehicles allegedly carrying rockets passing between their houses, saying it would provoke the IDF “to come and hit us.”

In the footage, the villagers surrounded the vehicles, capturing a truck, a car and those inside, saying they were members of Hezbollah. The confiscated launcher on the truck allegedly had 11 rockets, with some empty shells also recovered.

The Lebanese Army Command said it had arrested four suspects in Chouya suspected of firing rockets, and seized the launcher used in the operation.

Hezbollah responded by saying that "citizens were obstructing the resistant militants upon returning from duty." It added that the group "would not expose people to any harm during its resistance work."

Israel has been locked in rising tensions with Iran for several months, with Hezbollah in Lebanon considered a key proxy for Tehran by the Israeli government.

Former Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri said: "The situation is very dangerous and is an unprecedented threat to UN Resolution 1701."

Hariri warned against "using the south as a platform for regional conflicts which might result in incalculable results and repercussions.

"Lebanon is not part of the Iranian-Israeli clash in the Sea of Oman, and the state is the only entity responsible for protecting its citizens and providing the foundations of sovereignty," he said.

The president of the Lebanese Forces party, Samir Geagea, called the escalation "very dangerous in light of the rising tension in the region."

He added that playing with fire, in reference to the exchanges, could have disastrous consequences for the Lebanese people.

Samy Gemayel, head of the Lebanese Kataeb Party, said: "We reject the practices of Hezbollah, which implements ideological and regional agendas that have nothing to do with Lebanon.

"We want a country that has the decision (to make) war and peace, in which arms are confined to the hands of the army, and that respects the decisions of international legitimacy."

The Arab League rejected "dragging Lebanon into the conflict between Iran and Israel," but the Gaza-based militant group Hamas declared its "full support" for Hezbollah's actions.

Lebanon is grappling with an economic crisis that the World Bank says is one of the world's worst in over a century.

Despite global pressure, the country's politicians have so far failed to form a government since the outgoing Cabinet resigned following a deadly blast a year ago at the Port of Beirut.



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Lebanon condemns Israeli airstrikes along border Israel launches airstrikes on

[Proven false 100 years ago, antisemitic 'Protocols' document is still being exploited](#)

Fri, 2021-08-06 21:08

WASHINGTON, D.C.: This summer marks the 100th anniversary of a journalistic triumph against hate. In 1921, The Times of London definitively demonstrated that the infamous "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" was nothing but a crudely plagiarized forgery. Yet despite that, the "Protocols" went on to fuel a century of hate, violence and even genocide against the Jewish people.

This disconnect highlights one of the greatest challenges faced by the press and international community today: Disproving something slanderous is not sufficient to prevent those who are unaware from believing it, especially if extremists have an incentive to keep promoting the slander.

In recent weeks, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) broke the news when our CEO exposed in Newsweek that Iran's President-Elect Ebrahim Raisi chaired a foundation while it produced a horrifying 50-episode documentary to promote the "Protocols."



Iran's newly elected President Ebrahim Raisi speaks during his swearing in ceremony at the Iranian parliament in Tehran on August 5, 2021. (AFP)

Even worse, under Raisi's tenure, the foundation distributed the documentary to some of the millions of pilgrims that visit the Imam Reza Shrine in Mashhad under its control. The documentary, titled "The Devil's Plan," aired on some public television stations in Iran, and was even the subject of a quiz about the "Protocols" that pilgrims were urged to participate in at the shrine.

Raisi's willingness to commit horrible crimes on behalf of Iran's regime is already well-known. It therefore makes obvious sense that he would have willingly overseen the exploitation of holy sites and modern media to amplify the "Protocols" in service to Tehran's worldview.

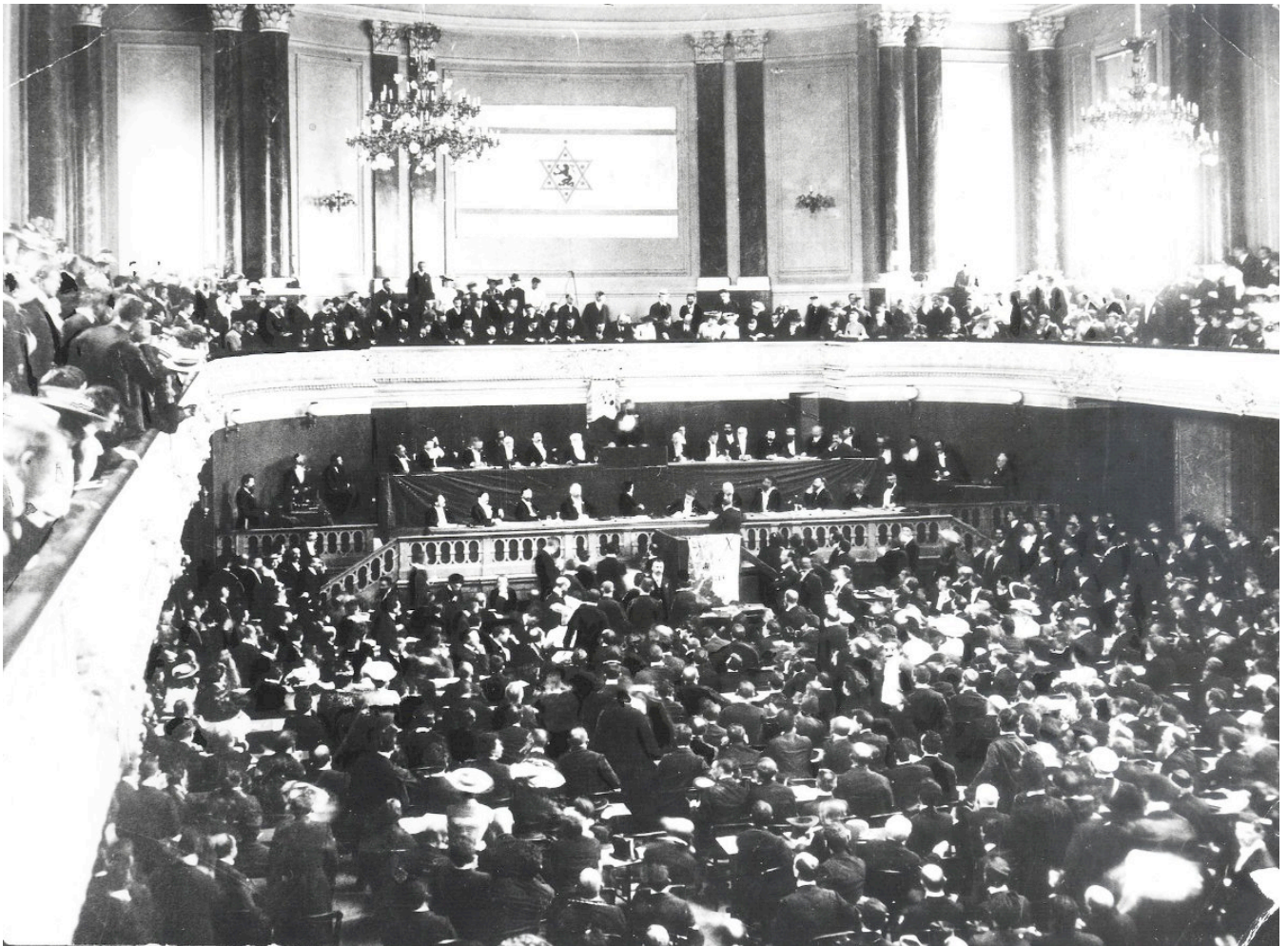
What is more surprising is the widespread ongoing use of the "Protocols" themselves, a full century now after they were proven to be false. Understanding that story can help all of us today as we grapple with the challenges posed by disinformation, including from Iran.

What the 'Protocols' allege

The "Protocols" emerged in the Russian Empire around the turn of the 19th century. They purport to be a series of secret meeting minutes from a summit of unnamed Jewish leaders to plot the imposition of a single world government under a dictatorial Jewish king.

Each of the document's 24 so-called "protocols" is a chapter that focuses on a different aspect of this supposed Jewish plot, such as controlling all the

world's gold, governments, media, education systems, and Freemason societies. Other themes include anti-Jewish stereotypes such as greed, disloyalty, bloodthirstiness, supremacy, and moral corruption.



Theodor Herzl at the Second Zionist Congress in Basel in 1898. (Wikimedia Commons)

Some claim that the "Protocols" are the proceedings of the 1897 summit known as the First Zionist Congress that Theodor Herzl organized in Basel, Switzerland. Yet this ignores that the "Protocols" themselves actually pay little heed to Zionism, which was the entire focus of Herzl's summit, held under scrutiny of the press corps and for which the minutes are publicly accessible in detail.

As the "Protocols" began to circulate outside Russia, the ADL's forerunner organization and other Jewish-American groups issued a joint statement in 1920 rejecting them as "a base forgery." The following year, The Times found definitive proof to that effect, in what the paper reflects could be "perhaps the greatest scoop by The Times" in its history.

What The Times found

In August 1921, The Times published a series of articles revealing how they discovered that enormous swaths of the "Protocols" were actually plagiarized from a much older work of fiction that had nothing to do with Jews.

Whereas several other passages in the "Protocols" were already known to be stolen from other works of political fiction, The Times found "the main basis of the forgery on which it was hung, or into which was incorporated, material from other sources."

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Сергѣй Нилусъ.

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АНТИХРИСТЪ,

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ЗАПИСКИ ПРАВОСЛАВНАГО.

(ИЗДАНИЕ ВТОРОЕ. ИСПРАВЛЕННОЕ И ДОПОЛНЕННОЕ).

ЦАРСКОЕ СЕЛО.

Типография Царскосельскаго Комитета Краснаго Креста.

1905.



Title Page of the antisemitic work Serge Nilus, Great within the Small, The Protocols of Zion, 1905, Russia, an antisemitic hoax purporting to describe a Jewish plan for global domination. (Wikimedia Commons)

That book was Maurice Joly's "Dialogues in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu," a work of French political propaganda published in 1864. Joly sought to mobilize opposition at the time to Emperor Napoleon III by condemning and even demonizing powerful rulers in vague terms. The "Protocols" merely swapped in a shadowy council of unnamed Jews as its main villain.

The Times was given Joly's book by a Russian expat in Turkey and verified a second in the British Museum. It seemed the "Protocols" were shoddily written "with the intention of furthering antisemitic propaganda in Russia, and at the same time with the idea of enhancing the autocratic power of the Tsar, as the one man who could save the world from the 'Jewish Peril'."

Subsequent refutations

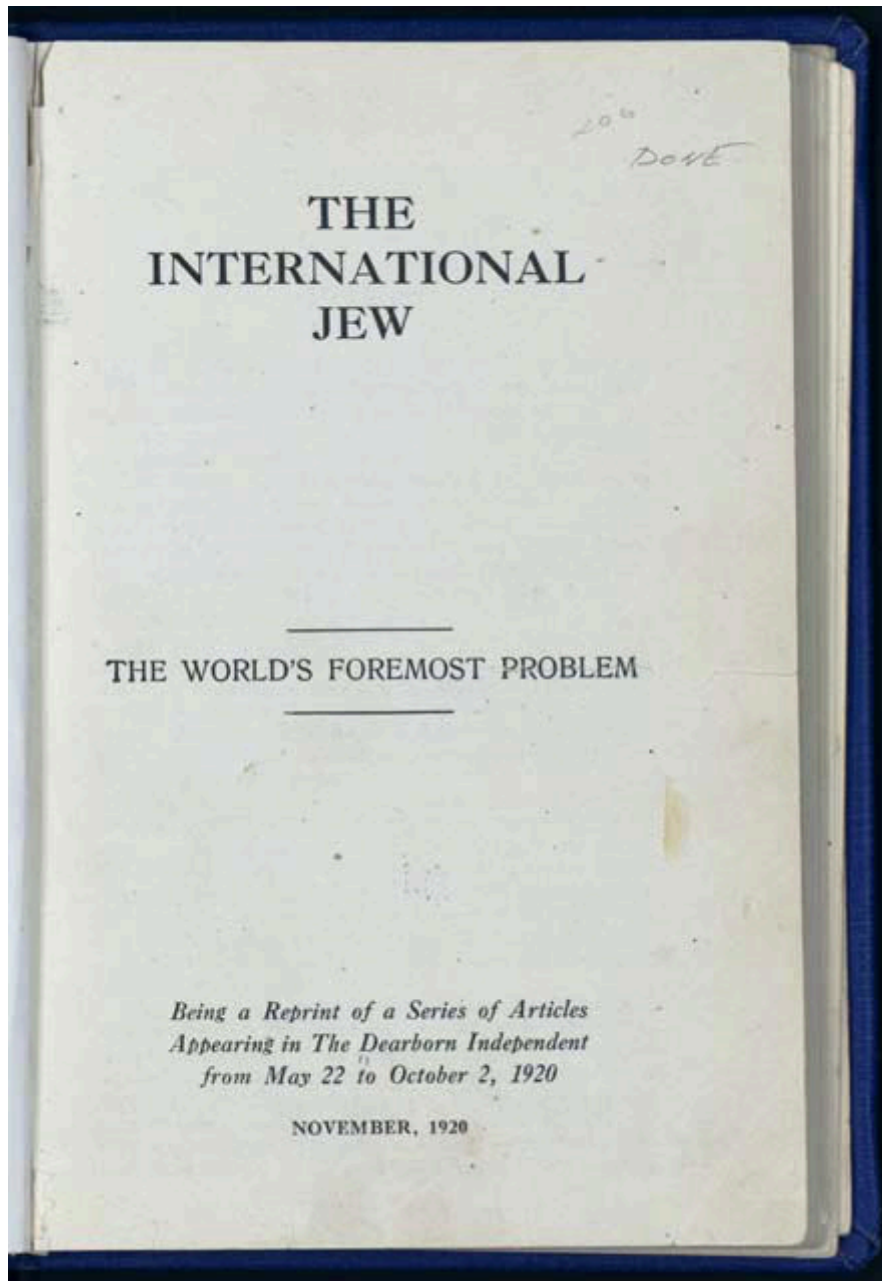
More information about how and why the "Protocols" were forged in this manner emerged over time. In 1934-35, two Swiss Jewish groups took local Nazi agitators to court in Bern on defamation charges for publishing the "Protocols."

The groups brought witnesses who debunked the claims about the 1897 Basel conference and a supposed Jewish-Masonic alliance, while the defense failed to bolster even its most basic claims.

Witnesses for the prosecution even included Russia experts who identified the Russian secret police agents by name involved in forging the "Protocols" in the hope of influencing Tsar Nicholas II while weakening reformists and scapegoating Jews for Russia's hardships.

The court ruled for the prosecution, concluding "now it has been proven with the utmost clarity" that the texts "had been copied" from Joly's work, most likely "to gain influence at the Tsar's court."

In the US, automaker Henry Ford published an adaptation of the "Protocols" as a series of articles in a local newspaper from 1920 to 1922 and in the form of a book called "The International Jew" that sold half a million copies.



The Ford publication *The International Jew, the World's Foremost Problem*. Articles from *The Dearborn Independent*, 1920. (Wikimedia Commons)

But facing possible legal penalties for spreading a forgery, Ford disavowed the "Protocols" in 1927 and apologized to the ADL. And in Russia itself, a Moscow court case in 1992 ruled in favor of a Jewish newspaper being sued for libel when it called an ultranationalist group antisemitic for serializing the "Protocols."

Three Russian academics, agreed to by both the defense and the prosecution, uniformly gave testimony concluding that the "Protocols" were fake. And in 1999, a historian identified records from Russia's archives proving what had been alleged by two expert witnesses at the 1934-35 trial in Switzerland: That the "Protocols" were crafted by an operative of Russia's secret police named Matthieu Golovinski to demonize Jews and marginalize Russian reformers.

How a proven forgery spread

In spite of such refutations, the "Protocols" continued to spread, perhaps

because they merely confirmed what many people already believed.

For example, in his 1925 manifesto “Mein Kampf,” Adolf Hitler displayed an awareness that the “Protocols” were identified by mainstream media as a forgery. Yet he was so convinced that his hatred toward Jews was warranted that he described such refutations as “the best proof that they are authentic.”

And he referred to the “Protocols” as a means to achieve his political ends, writing that once the public can be convinced to believe in them, “the Jewish menace may be considered as broken.”



Placards are held up at a counter-demonstration to an anti-Jewish rally, held by a group of far-right protesters on Whitehall in central London on July 4, 2015. (AFP)

His Nazi Party began their campaign against Germany’s Jews in 1933 with a boycott of Jewish-owned shops, calling it a defense against the “Basel Plan,” an allusion to the “Protocols.” Ultimately Nazi Germany published and distributed more than twenty editions, and the book was even used to teach children in some German schools.

By legitimating the myth of a Jewish conspiracy aimed at world domination, the “Protocols” contributed to the Nazi genocide of six million Jewish men, women and children. Yet it was after Hitler’s defeat that the “Protocols” reached their widest audience, gaining a global footprint in the second half of the 20th century.

Controversies over the “Protocols” were reported in 1968 not just in Poland

but also Lebanon, where 200,000 copies were reportedly set to be published for distribution to Francophone Africa. And in 1972, they were the subject of stories not just involving the education minister in Greece, but also Libya's former leader Muammar Qaddafi, who kept a stack on his desk and told visitors "you must read it."

The ADL noted that by the 1970s the "Protocols" were documented in Latin American countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Panama, and also published by then in both India and Pakistan. Other editions emerged in Japan in 1987, in Mexico in 1992, and in Indonesia in 2003.

The 'Protocols' in the Middle East

No one region has a monopoly on the "Protocols" today. For example, a June 28 opinion poll of US adults found that, out of those respondents who believe in the far-right conspiracy theory QAnon, 49 percent of that subgroup believe the "Protocols," too. Yet because of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the "Protocols" have also been particularly appealing to some audiences in the Middle East.

Scholars documented 102 different instances of the "Protocols" published as a book or newspaper series in Turkey between 1946 and 2008, versus only three times before that.

The ADL documented in a pamphlet called "The Protocols: Myth and History" that from 1965 to 1967 "about 50 books on political subjects published in Arabic were either based on the 'Protocols' or quoted from them."

Extremists have had the greatest interest in the "Protocols" because it validates their position. Hamas's 1988 charter declared: "Today it is Palestine, tomorrow it will be one country or another. The Zionist plan is limitless ... when they have digested the region they overtook, they will aspire to further expansion, and so on. Their plan is embodied in the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion'."

Likewise, Iran's fundamentalist regime has been propagating the "Protocols" since its earliest years. The Iranian leader's Islamic Propaganda Organization has been publishing and distributing the "Protocols" since the 1980s.

The foundation that President-Elect Raisi ran until several years ago, and that produced its 50-episode film series on the "Protocols" under his tenure has also been publishing its own hardcopy editions since the 1990s.

And in 2003, Hezbollah's Al-Manar broadcast a 29-part series based on the "Protocols" called "Al-Shatat." The film's production was facilitated by the Assad regime, but diplomatic pressure led Syrian state TV to drop it, and French officials forced Al-Manar off Eutelsat over the film.



Supporters of Lebanon's Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah listen to him via a screen during a rally in Khiam, Lebanon, on August 13, 2017. (Reuters file photo)

Yet moderate forces have sometimes raised up the "Protocols" in regrettable ways as well, such as in 2002 when Egyptian state TV and a private station broadcast "Horseman Without a Horse," another multi-episode documentary based partly on the "Protocols."

In response to complaints, state TV cut parts of the film and added a disclaimer, but it was rebroadcast both in Egypt and abroad. The film's star brags it inspired the sale of two million copies of the "Protocols."

Arab News published an op-ed noting that the "Protocols" were "long since shown to be a fake" and that even if only one percent of "Horseman Without a Horse" is based on the book, "that's 1 percent too many."

Asharq Al-Awsat published an interview with a Palestinian academic criticizing the film and calling the text "a fictitious book" that harms Palestinian advocacy. In 2008, Egypt's Grand Mufti called the "Protocols" a "fictitious book which has no basis in fact."

Both in the Middle East and in other regions too, the myth of a Jewish cabal controlling the world is still quite common in some circles today, even if the "Protocols" are not explicitly mentioned.

And in my own work, I do encounter copies of the "Protocols" sold by private exhibitors at state-run book fairs in parts of the region, including one taking place in Egypt this past month. I have also found them in some state textbooks, yet thanks to education reformers this has become far less common today.

Defending against disinformation today

On June 22, the US Department of Justice seized 36 websites linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its proxies, many of which had a record of spewing blatantly hateful and untrue propaganda targeting Saudi Arabia, America, Israel, and the Jewish people. And some of them have routinely invoked the "Protocols" for propaganda purposes.



Iranian Revolutionary Guard celebrate after launching a missile in an undisclosed location in Iran on July 3, 2012. (AP file/IRNA, Mostafa Qotbi)

Such disinformation can be dangerous. Another IRGC-run site disrupted by the Justice Department in 2020 was AWD News, once the number one web domain promoted by Iranian trolls on Twitter.

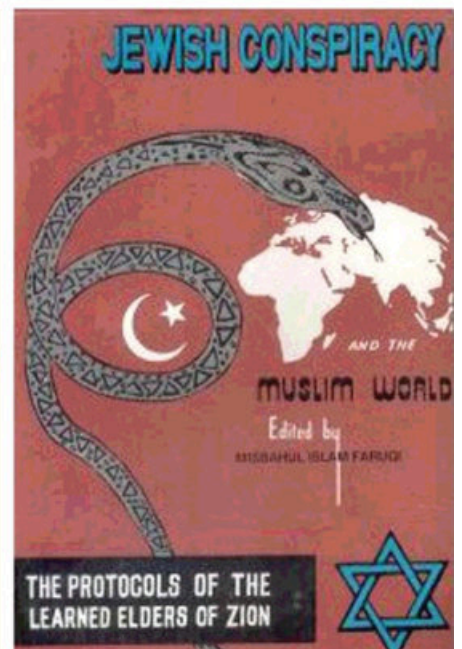
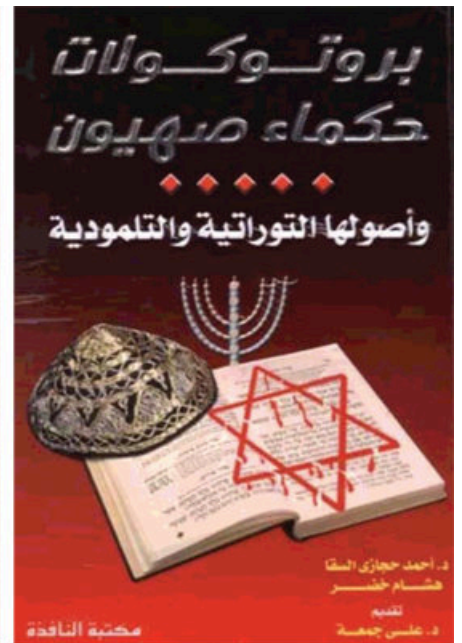
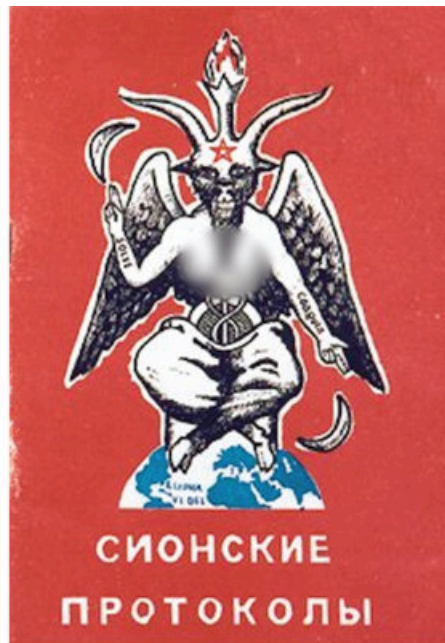
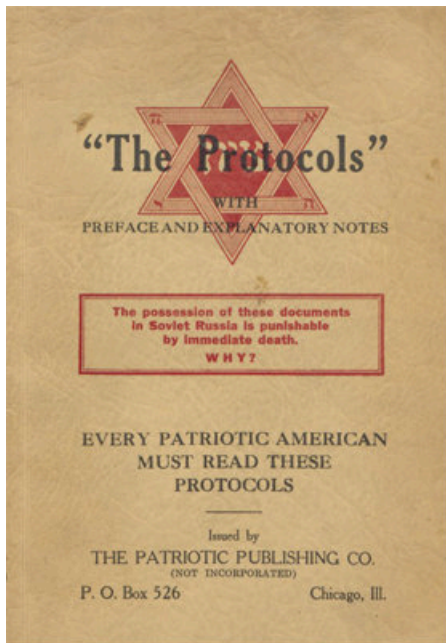
In 2016, AWD News baselessly reported Israel had threatened Pakistan with nuclear weapons if it entered Syria, and in reaction an account for Pakistan's defense minister actually tweeted, and then deleted, a warning that "Israel forgets Pakistan is a Nuclear state too."

Thankfully, the internet and social media also offer new tools for countering disinformation. There are good primers on how to identify fake news, for example. Social media platforms and governments are being encouraged to take an array of actions to help push hate and extremism back to the Internet's fringes.

Where defamation is legally actionable, brave litigants may also be able to ask courts to stop the publication of treatises like the "Protocols."

But most of all, the digital world provides vast new spaces for all people of good conscience to speak out. To debate such controversial ideas, and to spread accurately grounded messages of intercommunal and interfaith tolerance, countering hateful myths such as the “Protocols” and explaining how we have known for a full century that they are simply without basis.

- David Andrew Weinberg is the Anti-Defamation League’s Washington Director for International Affairs.









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All against Zionism Turkish premier's Zionism remarks tick off US, Israel

[UN chief names Swedish diplomat as new Yemen envoy](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Fri, 2021-08-06 17:07

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday named Swedish diplomat Hans Grundberg as his new Yemen envoy after a delay of several weeks as China considered whether to approve the appointment, which needed consensus Security Council agreement.

The 15-member council approved Grundberg this week as a replacement for Martin Griffiths, who became the UN aid chief last month after trying to mediate an end to the conflict in Yemen for the past three years.

The war has killed tens of thousands of people and caused a dire humanitarian crisis, pushing Yemen to the brink of famine.

Grundberg has been the European Union ambassador to Yemen since September 2019. UN officials informally floated his name to council members to solicit views by mid-July and 14 members said they would agree to the appointment, diplomats said.

But China said it needed more time. An official with China's UN mission in New York declined to comment on why Beijing's approval had been delayed.

The United States welcomed the appointment of Grundberg as the new UN Special Envoy for Yemen.

"Grundberg brings considerable expertise on Yemen and the region, and we look forward to working closely with him to advance a durable resolution to the conflict in Yemen," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

"Now is the time for peace. Seven years of war and instability have devastated Yemen's economy and eroded even the most basic services, leading to one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world," Blinken said.

Speaking about the Houthi offensive on Marib, the secretary of state said there is unprecedented international and regional consensus on the need to end the military campaign and other fighting.

He placed renewed emphasis on political talks to bring relief to the Yemeni people and allow them to determine a brighter future for their country.



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Saudi air defenses intercept Houthi drone launched from Yemen
Saudi and UAE chiefs of staff discuss Arab coalition's efforts in Yemen

[G7 foreign ministers condemn Iran for Mercer Street attack](#)

Fri, 2021-08-06 17:55

TOKYO: Foreign ministers from the Group of Seven economies said Iran was threatening international peace and security and that all available evidence showed it was behind an attack on the a merchant vessel off the Omani coast last week.

During a meeting in Tokyo, they condemned the “unlawful attack committed by Iran,” which killed a British and a Romanian national. They also confirmed

their unified position in their commitment to maritime security and the protection of commercial shipping.

“This was a deliberate and targeted attack and a clear violation of international law. All available evidence clearly points to Iran. There is no justification for this attack,” the foreign ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK and the US and the High Representative of the European Union said in a statement on Friday evening.

“Iran’s behavior, alongside its support to proxy forces and non-state armed actors, threatens international peace and security. We call on Iran to stop all activities inconsistent with relevant UN Security Council resolutions and call on all parties to play a constructive role in fostering regional stability and peace,” they said.

Meanwhile, Britain called on Iran to cease activities that go against UN Security Council resolutions.

“All available evidence clearly points to Iran. There is no justification for this attack,” the G7 chair Britain said in their statement.

“Iran’s behaviour, alongside its support to proxy forces and non-state armed actors, threatens international peace and security.

“We call on Iran to stop all activities inconsistent with relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and call on all parties to play a constructive role in fostering regional stability and peace.”



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UK foreign minister Dominic Raab says door is 'ajar' for talks with Iran
Israel: Iran could acquire material to build nuclear warheads in 10 weeks

[Tunisian activists say they will keep up pressure on president](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1628259379208529800

Fri, 2021-08-06 17:29

TUNIS: Sitting on her rooftop in Tunis, political activist Fatma Jgham said she and her comrades backed the Tunisian president's seizure of governing powers but would maintain pressure on him if their demands were not met. "We must hold a referendum on the constitution, and the demands of the people must not be turned around...not by you (the president) or anyone else," said Jgham, a 48-year old art teacher.

She was one of the people who organized the wave of protests across Tunisian cities on July 25 that were cited by President Kais Saied later that day as he dismissed the prime minister and froze parliament. His opponents have called the moves a coup.

Saied's actions have proved mostly popular, with thousands of people crowding the streets immediately afterwards to celebrate, but he has not given any details of how he plans to handle the crisis or Tunisia's future.

The demonstrations represented a wave of anger that had built over years of economic stagnation and politically dysfunction, sharpened by a COVID-19 surge.

Though the protests were not very big, with hundreds rather than thousands of people braving the sweltering weather in each of the handful of cities where they took place, they also involved several attacks on offices of a major political party.

The moderate Islamist Ennahda, the most consistently successful party since the 2011 revolution that introduced democracy, has played a role in successive coalition governments and is blamed by many Tunisians for their economic problems.

"The demands were the overthrow of the entire failed system of government, especially the parliament, led by the gangs of the Ennahda Party and its

coalitions,” Jgham said.

Some Ennahda officials have questioned whether the attacks on their offices were planned by Saied supporters as a pretext for his sudden intervention. Jgham denies this. “People were angry and marginalized. It wasn’t planned but it was spontaneous,” she said.

The protests that day had not been backed by political parties but were organized by activists like Jgham on social media, she said.

Female activists, like Jgham, have played a prominent role throughout, reflecting Tunisia’s reputation as a leading center of women’s rights in Arab states.

Another activist, Emna Sahli, says that the role of women in protests has fundamentally changed. They are no longer led by men, she said.

“Today those who bear ideas are females and this is really great,” said the 35-year-old, who also took part in the July 25 protests.



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[kais Saied](#)

Tunisia puts Ennahda official under house arrest, colleague says
Tunisia’s president says there is ‘no turning back’