

My friends, this past week a watershed event took place in Egypt, the trial of former president Hosni Mubarak on charges of corruption and plotting to kill the protestors who were demanding that he resign. Hundreds of Egyptians filled the streets around the former police academy that had been named for Mubarak in which a makeshift courtroom had been prepared. Mubarak was wheeled in and placed in a steel defendant's cage, where he lay in a hospital bed during this first hearing.

As you would expect, many of the Egyptians in the crowd were anti-Mubarak protestors. One was a man who had been shot by police during the eighteen days of protests. His foot wound was serious and he had been instructed to remain in bed until it healed, but he could not stop himself from coming. "I came here to see Mubarak in that cage," he said. "I am happy and waiting to see him sentenced to death. . . . I am in pain, I disobeyed my doctor's orders, but I couldn't bear to miss such a satisfying scene."

On the other side of a police barricade were the supporters of Mubarak, his sons, and the other officials on trial. One of them was Mohamed Saadawi, a forty-five year old business owner. He arrived at 5:00 am, carrying a poster of Mubarak. Before beginning to throw rocks at the anti-Mubarak protestors, he said to a reporter, “This revolution destroyed all the heroes of Egypt: Mubarak, Hussein Salem, [former intelligence chief] Omar Suleiman.” And then he asked the reporter a chilling question: “Who is going to fight against Israel now?”

“Who is going to fight against Israel now?” Here is why I find that question so chilling:

1. It is not a rhetorical question. Saadawi is genuinely worried about who will lead the fight against Israel.
2. It does not come from Hamas or Hezbollah, nor from Syria, Iran, or any of Israel’s enemies. It comes from a seemingly mainstream Egyptian businessman who

lives in one of the only two Arab countries to sign a peace treaty with Israel.

3. I believe it is not an anomaly, but that it is representative of the thinking of the majority of both Arabs and Muslims in the Middle East.

I read about Saadawi in Thursday's Philadelphia Inquirer. Today, the Inquirer (and for the record, I do subscribe to The Star as well) had an Op-Ed piece titled *The Top Obstacle to Middle East Peace*, by Raslan Abu Rukun. As soon as I saw the title and the name of the author, I thought to myself, "Let's see what red herring accusation he's going to make against Israel and claim it's the real reason there is no peace in the Middle East." And then I read the first few words of the article: "A recent CNN documentary..." CNN? *Oy, gevalt!* Who can read such drivel before breakfast? But I pressed on, and I was rewarded with the following. One of the foci of the CNN documentary was "*an educated Egyptian woman named*

*Gigi Ibrahim. As with the other featured activists, Twitter helps her mobilize thousands at a moment's notice. About halfway into the documentary, the screen flash images of her tweets, including "Israel will fall" and "Israel must end for Palestinians to live." From there the reporter doesn't miss a beat. She simply moves on. It's as if denying Israel's right to exist is not really a big deal, barely worth a brief mention. Al Jazeera, the biggest satellite channel in the Arab world, assumes a similar posture: Those who deny Israel's right to exist are never questioned."*

What? This was written by an Arab? Indeed it was. And not by just any Arab. Raslan Abu Rukun is deputy consul general for the Consulate General of Israel in Philadelphia. Strange for an allegedly anti-Arab nation to have Arabs in the Knesset and representing Israel around the world.

I wish I could take Rukun as representative of the Arab on the street, if not of their leadership, but that would be a

pipe dream. Poll after poll shows most Middle East Arabs and Muslims, including Palestinians, do not want a two state solution in the Middle East. Most of them want the destruction of Israel—not the leaders of Hamas, Hezbollah, et al, those whom we already know care only to destroy Israel, not coexist with Israel—but the majority of average citizens want the same. And so Mohamed Saadawi worries not over what Egypt's future will hold, but that Israel will still exist.

My friends, I believe it is the sacred obligation of every Jew to support the State of Israel. Not all of us agree on how to do that, and that is fine. I have friends who embrace J-Street, and a very dear friend from rabbinical school is a major figure in Jewish Voice for Peace. I do not question their love for Israel nor their commitment to Israel nor their belief that they are helping Israel, but I do think they are wrong. It is my belief that both J-Street and Jewish Voice for Peace simply underestimate the depth

and breadth of the hatred of Israel among the average citizens in Arab lands.

My main way of supporting Israel is through the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, aka AIPAC. AIPAC's statewide Indiana event will be held this Wednesday, here at Shaarey Tefilla. No matter if you are an AIPAC, J-Street, or Voice for Peace supporter, I hope we can all take pride in the largest pro-Israel lobby in America making Shaarey Tefilla their home for such events. And whether you are a supporter of AIPAC, J-Street, or Jewish Voice for Peace supporter, I urge you to attend this Wednesday's event. You are guaranteed to leave knowing more than when you came in. And simply by attending this sort of event, you'll be making a statement: "I may agree or disagree with AIPAC's approach, but I am not indifferent when it comes to Israel, and I am willing to hear what various pro-Israel groups have to say so I can decide which is the best fit for me."

My friends, Mohamed Saadawi worries who will fight against Israel. Sadly, there is no shortage of candidates to fill that role, with or without Mubarak. But we ask a different question. Our question is “who will stand up for Israel?” May we all have the same answer: “I will.”