

It is time to #BringBackOurBoys

• By KAREN BASS

I am a member of Congress from Los Angeles and the highest ranking Democrat on the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations. As I look around the world I grow more concerned by the day. We stand by as the bloody civil war in Syria reaches all new levels of brutality, and we bemoan the kidnapping of over 200 Nigerian girls by religious extremists. I see a world seemingly divided into one of three camps: victimizer, victim and bystander.

And what I fear most is that we have lost our ability to be outraged.

For four long weeks, over 200 sets of parents and millions of their countrymen have been immobilized by anguish, waiting for any bit of information about their young daughters who have been snatched by Boko Haram. And then last week, we heard about the kidnapping of three Israeli boys. Their crime? They too were at the wrong place at the wrong time, preyed

on by terrorists looking to steal Israeli children. Although no one has taken credit yet for the crime, Hamas has publicly celebrated the kidnapping of these children. And although details of these recent incidents still remain unclear, there is something that should be clear to all of us: the world must rise up to snuff out the aspirations of those who use children to further their political or religious agenda.

I look at the faces of all these kidnapped children; in them I see everyone's child and everyone's hope, and now every mother's worst nightmare.

My heart breaks for those mothers and for all children left so terrified, brutalized and alone.

I want those 200 girls back. And I want those three boys back as well – no excuses and no justifications.

It is time for all religions and nationalities to agree that our children are our treasures – not our targets.

The author is a US Congresswoman from California.



CONGRESSWOMAN KAREN BASS (center) sits with staff members at her office. (Courtesy)

Physician-assisted suicide and the struggle for the soul of the State of Israel

• By SHIMSHON HAKOHEN NADEL

On June 8, a bill proposed by Yesh Atid MK Ofer Shelah legalizing physician-assisted suicide passed the Knesset's Ministerial Committee for Legislative Affairs in a vote of 8-2. If passed, the new law would allow doctors to administer a lethal injection to terminally ill patients who have six months or less to live. And while there has been some opposition from lawmakers and the Chief Rabbinate, what is surprising is the overwhelming support for the new bill – by Knesset Members and the Israeli public.

Advocates of such a law question the quality of life for patients in the last stages of a terminal illness. They speak about freedom of choice, a patient's right to autonomy, dying with dignity, and compassion. Even the late "Dr. Death," Jack Kevorkian, called the device he used in the deaths of some of the 130 people he helped euthanize the "Mercitron," evoking mercy and compassion.

But according to Jewish Law, euthanasia is not compassion – it is murder (See Rambam, Hil. Rotze'ah 2:2-3). A patient has no right to take his own life, and, as Chief Rabbi David Lau already commented, a doctor's sole responsibility is to heal – not to end life (see Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 336:1).

While some of the greatest legal authorities of the 20th century such as Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein ruled that in some cases introducing treatment and taking measures in

order to extend life are no longer required, all agree that doing anything to hasten the death of a terminally ill patient is akin to murder. Even in the case of a *goses*, who according to most authorities has less than 72 hours left to live, it is forbidden to take any action that may hasten his death – even touching the patient is prohibited! (Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 339:1)

The Talmud (Avodah Zara 18a) relates that when Rabbi Chanina ben Tradion was being burned alive by the Romans, his students begged him to end his suffering by opening his mouth and allowing the flames to enter. Rabbi Chanina replied, "It is better for He who gave [me my soul] to take it, rather than cause injury to myself."

This account illustrates that even the dying patient, suffering in pain, is prohibited from taking any action to hasten his death. R. Avraham Danzig rules that one must abstain from doing anything even if the patient's pain is severe and his family is suffering severe emotional pain (Hokhmat Adam 151:14).

This should not be mistaken for cruelty or a lack of compassion. Instead, it expresses Judaism's emphasis on life. Concerning the Torah's laws, we are instructed to "Live by them" (Leviticus 18:5). The Talmud (Yoma 85b) adds, "And not die by them," requiring the violation of all but three Torah laws in order to preserve life. For in the Jewish tradition, life is of infinite worth. A famous Talmudic passage teaches, "If any person has caused a single soul to perish, Scripture regards him as if he had caused an entire world to perish. And if any

human being saves a single soul, Scripture regards him as if he has saved an entire world" (Sanhedrin 37a).

While advocates for physician-assisted suicide argue that a life of pain and suffering is not worth living, our tradition teaches that even the last few moments of life are of immeasurable worth.

And while even secular ethicists agree that euthanasia presents serious ethical, moral and legal questions, in some countries like Belgium and the Netherlands physician-assisted suicide is legal. Even in the United States, physician-assisted suicide has been legal in the State of Oregon since 1994. Oregon's Death with Dignity Act allows for a physician to prescribe a lethal dose of medication for the purpose of ending the patient's life. In fact, MK Ofer Shelah's bill was designed based on Oregon law.

But Israel is not Belgium, the Netherlands, or the State of Oregon. The State of Israel is the Jewish state, and religious affiliations aside, Judaism values life above all. In Judaism, life has sanctity. A law legalizing physician-assisted suicide threatens to undermine the Jewish character of the Jewish state.

It's high time we embrace our status as a "light unto the nations." As the Shelah bill proceeds to a preliminary reading and is assigned to a committee, the State of Israel, as the Jewish state, has an obligation to articulate a clear message to the world that life has value and sanctity, and must be protected and preserved.

The author lives and teaches in Jerusalem.

Spinning the West

• By DOUG LAMBORN

'You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time,' President Lincoln famously quipped.

This wise adage comes to mind as nuclear talks between Iran and the six world powers, led by the US, are set to resume in Vienna, with the hopes of reaching a comprehensive agreement over Iran's nuclear program ahead of a July 20 deadline.

But we in Congress will not be fooled. Just a few weeks ago, I offered amendments to the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act to make sure that a final deal won't whitewash Iran's nuclear weapons program. My amendments also make sure that those companies doing business with Iran won't do business with our Department of Defense. In this spring of subterfuge, we are seeing troubling signs that current negotiations may lead to a nuclear-armed Iran, rather than prevent one.

Troublingly, we have already agreed in advance to the right of Iran to enrich uranium by forgetting a dozen UN resolutions. This is the opposite of nonproliferation.

Not a single one of Iran's nearly 20,000 centrifuges – about half of them producing uranium enriched to reactor fuel-grade level – have been dismantled. And Iran's leaders are talking not of dismantling their country's nuclear infrastructure, but of increasing it – to as many as 50,000 centrifuges.

"Our nuclear technology is not up for negotiation," Iran's President Hassan Rouhani recently declared.

Moreover, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who described Western expectation for his country to curb missile development as "stupid and idiotic," called on Iran's Revolutionary Guards to "mass produce" missiles. We in Congress refuse to be blindsided by hopes of any such dangerous deal.

We welcome an agreement that brings Iran back into the family of peaceful nations, but we will fight any emerging deal that will lead to a nuclear-armed Iran.

To this end, the amendment I offered stated that Iran must stop uranium enrichment, production of weapons of mass destruction and sponsorship of international terrorism before any final deal is made between the US and Iran. And even as we speak out against the wave of international trade delegations flocking to Iran since the interim accord was reached last year, it appears we have our own accounting to do to prevent Department of Defense contractors from doing business with Iran.

To redress this duplicity, another amendment I have authored and that is now in the bill requires the Secretary of Defense to report to Congress on DOD contractors that have done business with Iran. If companies want to do business with the DOD, they need to think twice about doing business with Iran.

In the immortal words of Lincoln, we, the people's representatives, refuse to be fooled.

The author, a Member of Congress from Colorado, is a member of the House Armed Services Committee and co-chairs the bipartisan Congressional Israel Allies Caucus.

Rescuing FDR, abandoning the 'St. Louis'

• By RAFAEL MEDOFF

Seventy-five years ago this week, the 930 German Jewish refugees aboard the *St. Louis*, having been turned away by Cuba and the United States, were forced to return to Europe. Within a year, the majority found themselves under Nazi rule, and within five years, nearly of those who were trapped in Hitler's inferno were murdered. Incredibly, several new revisionist accounts of the infamous "Voyage of the Damned" are claiming that President Franklin D. Roosevelt actually rescued the passengers of the *St. Louis*. This fairy-tale version seeks to rescue FDR's public image, while leaving the historical record in tatters.

According to divorce lawyer and author Robert Rosen (*Jerusalem Post* op-ed, June 17), "the passengers could not come to the United States as the draconian 1924 Immigrant Act forbade it." The annual quota for German immigrants was indeed full in the spring of 1939, when the *St. Louis* arrived. (Ironically, that was the only year in President Roosevelt's 12 years in office that he permitted the full quota to be used.)

But that did not mean there was nothing the president could do. Treasury secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr. proposed allowing the *St. Louis* refugees to stay temporarily as tourists in the Virgin Islands, a US territory where the quotas did not apply. In fact, the previous November, in the wake of the Kristallnacht pogrom, the governor and legislative assembly of the islands publicly offered to open their doors to Jews fleeing Hitler.

But the State Department objected on a technicality – it argued that the *St. Louis* passengers did not have valid return addresses, something required of tourists. President Roosevelt personally blocked suggestions to let refugees stay in the Virgin Islands, on the grounds that Nazi spies disguised as refugees might infiltrate the mainland US – even though no such spies were ever discovered among the Jewish refugees that entered the country.

As the *St. Louis* approached the coast of Florida, it was trailed by a US Coast Guard cutter. The role of the Coast Guard was widely reported at the time, including on the front page of *The Washington Post* and in a *New York Times* editorial. Yet historian Richard Breitman claimed last year that "There is no truth to the notion... that American officials ordered

the Coast Guard to prevent any passengers from reaching American shores."

St. Louis survivor Renate (Ronnie) Breslow, speaking at the national conference of the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies earlier this month, recalled how, as a child, she was standing on the ship's deck as the Coast Guard cutter drew near.

"I waved to the captain," she said. "I was naive – I thought they were coming to help us."

Does Prof. Breitman believe Mrs. Breslow and the many other eyewitnesses were all hallucinating?

Rosen, for his part, admits the Coast Guard was there, but claims "Morgenthau secretly sent the Coast Guard to follow the *St. Louis* to keep track of its whereabouts."

Not so, according to the transcript of Morgenthau's conversation with Coast Guard Commander Earl G. Rose (found at the Roosevelt President Library in Hyde Park, New York).

It begins with Morgenthau saying, "I've seen in the papers that out of Fort Lauderdale you've been trailing the German ship, the *St. Louis*." Rose replies: "Yes, sir."

In other words, Morgenthau knew that the Coast Guard was already "trailing the ship" by the time he called, a fact that the commander confirmed.

As the *St. Louis* made its way back across the Atlantic, England, France, Belgium and the Netherlands each agreed to accept a portion of the refugees. Thus when the passengers disembarked in Europe, "they were all safe," Rosen claimed in his *Jerusalem Post* op-ed. But when researchers from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interviewed all the surviving passengers (for a 2006 study), they found again and again that the supposedly "safe" passengers immediately began looking for ways to get out of Europe.

Passenger Manfred Fink, for example, who was sent to the Netherlands, repeatedly tried to get permits for himself, his wife, and their child to become construction workers in Chile. A passenger named Bela, who was sent to France, quickly left France for Hungary because, as he later explained, "After all, people knew the Nazis could invade France at any time."

Eighty-seven of the passengers managed to escape Europe before the Nazis overran France, Belgium and Holland the following spring. Of those who could not get out, nearly half were murdered.



SNOW FALLS on a bust of Franklin Roosevelt in Washington. (Reuters)

What motivates these attempts to revise the history of the *St. Louis*? Diehard FDR supporters such as Rosen and Breitman are understandably uncomfortable over scholars' recent findings concerning President Roosevelt and the Jews. It must have been discouraging for them to learn that FDR privately claimed Jewish control of Poland's economy was the cause of Polish anti-Semitism; helped bring about a quota on Jewish students admitted to Harvard; believed that German resentment of Jews was "understandable" in view of the presence of many Jews in German professions; and advocated "spread-

ing the Jews thin all over the world" so they would not dominate any country.

But instead of acknowledging FDR's troubling views, the say-it-ain't-so crowd is trying to rescue Roosevelt's public image by taking aim at the *St. Louis*. It won't work. No amount of revisionism can change the fact that the voyage of the *St. Louis* remains, as former President Bill Clinton has called it, "one of the darkest chapters" in America's history.

The writer is founding director of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, and author of 15 books about the Holocaust and Jewish history.