

# MID-EAST e-NEWS

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Issue No. 92 North Africa

June 30th, 2007

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## Contexts

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## Welcome

I am completing this issue of e-News as I watch news reports on BBC World on the freeing of Alan Johnston, the BBC journalist held in Gaza since March 12. Appropriately enough, he is freed on Independence Day – perhaps folks in the UK won't appreciate that quite so much.

For thorough coverage of Gaza & Lebanon, see the e-News web page – but I've not been able to update it for a week, so please be patient a while longer.

Write me at [pkclark@pmbx.net](mailto:pkclark@pmbx.net) & let me know what you think.

## *Christian Zionism: Support a) How do we know?*

Our discussion in the previous issue introduced the question of support given to the actions of the state of Israel. I included statements that might be taken to be at opposite ends of the spectrum of support, both of them from Rabbis - which immediately begs the question, 'Which Israel do we support?' One of them, the Sephardic Chief Rabbi, advocated the "indiscriminate killing of civilians," and claimed a Biblical/Rabbinical mandate for his decision. The other, a Christian Jew, protested the indiscriminate nature of Israel's actions against the Arab population generally, and on the topic of house demolition in particular.

For myself, the disturbing feature of Rabbi Eliyahu's comments was the number of readers who wrote emails approving strongly of his words, and asking, in effect, 'Isn't that the obvious action?'

Last week, (June 17) Israel Today quoted reports in Britain's Sunday Times that Ehud Barak, - past Prime Minister, newly appointed Defence Minister and Israel's most highly decorated soldier - is readying a force of 20,000 troops with the intention of invading Gaza and restoring Israeli control over the territory that Sharon withdrew from in 2005 ([http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle\\_east/article1942918.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article1942918.ece))

Israel Today describes itself as "a Jerusalem-based news agency providing a biblical and objective perspective on local news." Two responses that the journal received illustrate the variety of opinion among Christians. First, this, from David, in Nigeria:

*"[I hope the] DM takes it easy with these mad people..just prepare your plans please do not put into operation..this will cause more deaths.We are tired of deaths...peace what we desire now...most."*

and this, from Rick:

*"Contrary to David's opinion, there will not be any peace until Israel defeats her enemies whose only aim is the complete annihilation of Israel and all Jews. Whether the IAF carpet bombs the Gaza or the IDF re-enters, it must be a strong force of the best soldiers Israel has to offer. Hamas and any other organization like it must be completely destroyed regardless of the numbers of*

*Muslims killed. Israel must not make any difference between a man, woman, or child. Wipe them out and there will be peace."*

(<http://www.israeltoday.co.il/default.aspx?tabid=178&nid=13134>)

Christians have a mandate for peace (in the last issue I quoted Jesus' words to those who would defend him: "Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword." Matt.26:52). Whilst a Bible study discussion, or seminar on personal relationships, would be expected to emphasize verses such as "bless those who persecute you," and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you," frequently it seems that the context for our discussion on political issues is more Jewish than Christian, without meaning any offense whatsoever, in that it relies on Old Testament arguments and examples rather than New Testament principles. In times of conflict, Christians have always found it a challenge to stand apart from the crowd, but there have always been those who do so. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is one who spoke out against Hitler during WW2, personally financing the escape of many Jews from the country. He was arrested in 1943 for doing so, and executed in 1945.

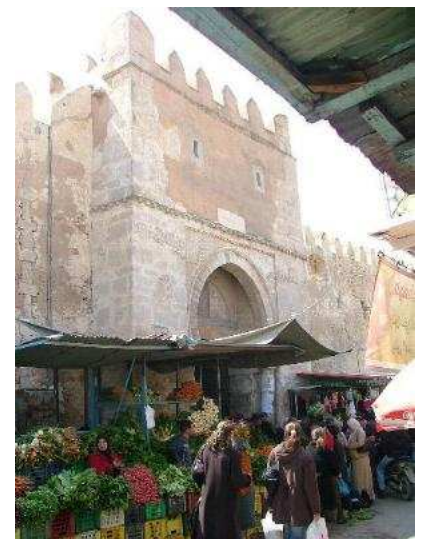
A Christian view of such issues must respond to the challenge of how we reconcile warfare with the example of the Prince of Peace. Perhaps this is done through reference to the Divine institution of Government, ordained by God in the Old Testament, and reiterated, not repudiated, in the New. But perhaps, sometimes, our eagerness to go into battle - to send our children into battle - is a consequence not of our New Nature, but our old self, that seeks vengeance, rather than resolution. Conflict may be the consequence of our unwillingness to put off the old nature, and one that is its own punishment.

"God does not command us to fight; he condemns us to fight." said Charles Clayton Morrison (editor of Century Magazine during WW2) as he struggled with this issue.

### Safaqis (Sfax), Tunisia

When the French occupied Tunisia in 1881 they renamed some of the towns in their new colony: Binzerte became Bizerte; Soussa, became Sousse; and Safaqis became Sfax. (Even the the country, Tunisia, is known in the west by a different name than by its residents; to them, both the country and the capital city are *Tunis*.) At the core of the city of Sfax is its *Medina*. In the wider Arab world 'medina' simply means 'city' but in North Africa the term refers to the old walled towns with their complicated mesh of interlocking streets, some too narrow to walk side by side.

Built on the site of the Roman town of *Taparura*, the city of *Safaqis*, the medina, was established by the Aghlabids in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. In those days the shoreline was less than 100m away, and



there was only one gate, Bab Djebli, (*Bab* means 'gate') which faced away from the sea. The city's orientation is not north/south but a few degrees off this alignment. This is due to the traditional alignment of mosques so that the prayer niche, *qibla*, is on the side facing Mecca. In the case of Safaqis, the whole city has this alignment.

For more pictures of Sfax, go to our partner web site: [www.ecfi-t.com](http://www.ecfi-t.com) and use the maps to explore the city.





**Pictures, clockwise, from top**  
The **Grand Mosque**, always with vendors alongside.

**Bab Djebli**, (outer face of the gate) the original gate of the city. The **Souk** of traditional Tunisian clothes, mostly frequented by Sfaxiens themselves.

**Dar Jellouli**, a restored room (inset), and the courtyard. The Jellouli family were governors of Sfax, and grew rich from supplying the military.

A **Roman mosaic** (inset) from the City Hall museum, one of many dating from that time that depict aquatic scenes of boats and fish.

A view of one of the **narrow city streets**.

A view of **Centreville** from the walls of the Kasbah.

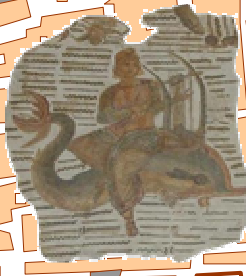
The **Bourj An Nar** ('Fort of the fire') was used to guide vessels arriving at Sfax after nightfall.

**Bab Diwan** (this is the inner gateway), built in 1306, was damaged by the French barrage of 1881, and again by the Allied bombing of 1943.

The four gates of **Bab Diwan** today, the large vehicle entrances were opened in the 1970s.

The **Kasbah**, now an excellent museum, was a garrison fort and one of the reasons Sfax was able to resist various invaders after the rest of the country had collapsed.

The **western wall** of the city, facing south towards Bab Gharbi, the west gate.



This Month

| June  | 1  | 2 | 3 | 4   | 5 | 6 | 7   | 8 | 9 | 10   | 11                                    | 12 | 13   | 14                                   | 15 | 16  | 17                             | 18 | 19  | 20  | 21 | 22                                 | 23 | 24 | 25                                       | 26 | 27                    | 28 | 29 | 30  |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---------------------------------------|----|--|--------------------------------------|----|---|--------------------------------|----|---|---|----|------------------------------------|----|----|--|----|-----------------------|----|----|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
|   | F  | S | S | M   | T | W | T   | F | S | S  | M                                     | T  | W  | T                                    |    | S   | S                              | M  | T   | W   | T  | F                                  | S  | S  | M  | T  | W                     | T  | F  | S   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Far East</b>   |  |   |   | Pastor & family attacked in Java                  |   |   |   |   |   |  | Indonesia: Islamist leader captured   |    |  |                                      |    |   |                                |    |   |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    | Thai militants kill 4 |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Sudan</b>  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | South Sudan militia integrates into SPLA, S Sudan's army     |                                       |    |  |                                      |    | Sudan accepts 20,000 UN force                             |                                |    | China to provide troops                               |   |    | Violent attacks in Darfur continue |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>N Africa</b>   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |                                       |    |  |                                      |    |   |                                |    |   |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    | Libyan agent gets appeal, doubts about Libyan involvement in Lockerbie bomb |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Somalia</b>  |  |   |   | US air strikes in Puntland target Al Qaeda        |   |   |   |   |   |  | 2 Kenyan police abducted into Somalia |    |  | Grenade thrown at bank kills child   |    |   | Indian ship released           |    |   | 5 killed by police during food distribution |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Refugees begin return. Puntland assists US in targeting Al Qaeda</b>   |  |   |   | Danish cargo ship seized                          |   |   |   |   |   |  |                                       |    |  |                                      |    |   |                                |    | Car bomb kills 2                                      |   |    | Militant attacks kill 8            |    |    | Assassination attempts on govt ministers |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Pakistan</b><br><i>Violence increases in Kashmir</i>   |  |   |   | Sacked judge greeted by cheering supporters       |   |   |   |   |   | Bomb in Baluchistan kills 3                                  |                                       |    | Ambush in Queshta, 9 killed                                |                                      |    | Strike on Taliban camp kills 32                           |                                |    | Govt. launches measles campaign                       |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |   |   | 3 police, 12 militants killed in Kashmir violence |   |   |   |   |   |  |                                       |    |  | Bus crash kills 13 near town of Tank |    |   | Flash floods kill 17           |    |   |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Afghan.</b>  | Taliban use human shields to attract criticism of NATO attacks                               |   |   | Hostage killed by Taliban                         |   |   |   |   |   |  | UK, Canadian soldiers killed          |    |  | Kabul S- kills 3                     |    |   | 4 NATO troops killed in 2 days |    |   | Flash floods kill dozens                    |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |   |   | Woman journalist shot dead                        |   |   |   |   |   |  | US troop fire kills 7 police          |    |  | S- kills 24 in police bus            |    |   | 25 civilians killed            |    |   | Clashes in Helmand, Taliban fatalities      |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Iran</b>   |  |   |   | 4 US/Iranians charged w/ spying                   |   |   |   |   |   | Cyclone Gonu kills 23  |                                       |    | Russia delivers nuclear fuel to Iran                       |                                      |    |   |                                |    | Jundollah base raided                                 |   |    | Riots after gas rationing imposed  |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Arabia</b>   |  |   |   | Cyclone Gonu hits Oman                            |   |   |   |   |   | Saudi detains 11 militants after Feb. attack on oil terminal |                                       |    |  |                                      |    | Saudi prince warns clerics to restrain would-be militants |                                |    |   |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Iraq</b>   | S- nr Kirkuk kills 5   |   |   | Sistani aide killed outside home                  |   |   |   |   |   | Mosul bank director killed                                   |                                       |    | US F-16 fighter crashes                                    |                                      |    | S- kills 13 in NE Iraq                                    |                                |    | R-S- kills 5 US in Baghdad                            |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>US Deaths:</b><br>3/30/06: 2,317<br>12/31: 3,000<br>3/31/07: 3,237<br>4/30: 3,337<br>5/15: 3,387<br>5/31: 3,473<br>6/15: 3,509<br>6/30: 3,563<br><b>Iraq Civilians</b><br>Feb: 1,645<br>Mar: 1,861<br>Apr: 1,506<br>May: 1,944 | Mortars kill 10 in SW Baghdad  |   |   | Priest, 5 believers kidnapped in Baghdad          |   |   |   |   |   | Ramadi S- kills 3 police                                     |                                       |    | US raid captures top militants                             |                                      |    | China cancels Iraq's debt                                 |                                |    | Fuel pipeline bombed in Hawsa                         |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | S- destroys bridge in N Iraq   |   |   | US/Iraq raid kills 19 insurgents                  |   |   |   |   |   | 24 insurgents held in Baghdad, 15 in Mosul                   |                                       |    | 4-day Baghdad curfew lifted                                |                                      |    | 17 gunmen killed during US raid nr Baquba                 |                                |    | US raid in Sadr City, 26 militants killed             |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | Car S- kills 5 in Shirqat  |   |   | S- kills 9 (5 UK) nr Syria                        |   |   |   |   |   | Qaeda leader held w/ 4 others                                |                                       |    | S- kills 4 Ramadi police                                   |                                      |    | US troops kill 20 militia after attack                    |                                |    | Bomb at hotel during tribal meeting, 6 sheikhs dead   |   |    | 2 US soldiers held for murder      |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | Mortars kill 10 in Baghdad   |   |   | Qaeda leader held w/ 4 others                     |   |   |   |   |   | S- destroys Samarra mosque                                   |                                       |    | 2 S- s kill 9 in Baghdad                                   |                                      |    | 7 US killed by bombs                                      |                                |    | Suicide truck kills 27 in Baiji                       |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | US raids rocket base, kills 4  |   |   | Car kills 19 in Dakok                             |   |   |   |   |   | S- destroys Kirkuk-Tikrit bridge                             |                                       |    | Attack on police convoy kills 8                            |                                      |    | 2 S- s kill 9 in S Baghdad                                |                                |    | 43 insurgents detained during raids                   |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | 12 US killed in 3 days   |   |   | Police official home attacked, 14 killed          |   |   |   |   |   | Car S- kills 3 US  |                                       |    | Mortars hit Green Zone                                     |                                      |    | 3 Sunni mosques attacked                                  |                                |    | Chaldean priest released                              |   |    | College Dean assassinated          |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | US raid truck bomb factory, kill 7, 8 held   |   |   | S- in ambulance kills 1                           |   |   |   |   |   | Mortars kill 6 prisoners in S Iraq                           |                                       |    | R-S- kills 4 police in Mussayib                            |                                      |    | 5 Kurdish soldiers killed                                 |                                |    | 6 insurgents die as hideout bombed                    |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | Priest, 3 workers killed in Mosul  |   |   | Truck kills 12 soldiers                           |   |   |   |   |   | 4 US killed in action  |                                       |    | Mahdi militia clash w/ police, 35 dead                     |                                      |    | Shia mosque kills 87                                      |                                |    | Truck explodes as insurgents assemble bomb, 14 killed |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | Iran is training fighters for Iraq. Militias work with US troops to drive Al Qaeda from area |   |   | Car S- kills 19 in Fallujah                       |   |   |   |   |   | Truck nr Tikrit kills 14 police                              |                                       |    | Sunni mosque nr Basra attacked & destroyed                 |                                      |    | 30 killed in US Baquba raid                               |                                |    | 2 Baghdad car S- s kill 30                            |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | 2 Baghdad car S- s kill 5  |   |   | Bridge bombed in Diyala prov.                     |   |   |   |   |   | 8 Christian students abducted                                |                                       |    | W-S- kills 3 UK soldiers                                   |                                      |    |   |                                |    |   |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Turkey</b>   | Turkey shells PKK in N Iraq  |   |   |   |   |   | Istanbul bomb injures 14  |   |   |  |                                       |    | Soldier, 3 PKK killed                                      |                                      |    | PKK suicide bomb in east                                  |                                |    | 8 PKK killed nr Iraq border                           |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Syria</b>  | PKK attack kills 8 police in Tunceli   |   |   |   |   |   | 14 soldiers die in 3 days of campaign against PKK   |   |   |  |                                       |    | 23 Al Qaeda arrested                                       |                                      |    |   |                                |    | 2 police killed by PKK mines                          |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Lebanon</b>  | Syria & Iran confer on military topics   |   |   |   |   |   | 9 arrested entering from Syria  |   |   |  |                                       |    | Beirut bomb kills 10, inc Walid Eido                       |                                      |    |   |                                |    | 6 UN peacekeepers killed by bomb                      |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | 3 Qaeda held smuggling arms in east Lebanon  |   |   |   |   |   | Rockets fired into Israel   |   |   |  |                                       |    | UN team criticizes arms smuggling from Syria               |                                      |    |   |                                |    |   |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Egypt</b>  | Explosives seized in Sinai   |   |   |   |   |   | Egypt moves Pal. ambassador to West Bank  |   |   |  |                                       |    |  |                                      |    |   |                                |    |   |   |    |                                    |    |    |  |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Israel</b>   | Israeli general resigns after Hezbollah war  |   |   |   |   |   | Israel offers land for peace to Syria   |   |   |  |                                       |    | Perez elected president by Knesset                         |                                      |    |   |                                |    | Hamas leader held in Ramallah                         |   |    |                                    |    |    | Raid in Khan Younis, 12 killed           |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Behind-the-scenes communications with Syria are begun</b>  | IDF destroy Nablus barricades  |   |   |   |   |   | 1 killed in Nablus arrest raid  |   |   |  |                                       |    | New Ofek 7 spy satellite launched                          |                                      |    |   |                                |    | Barak appointed Foreign Minister                      |   |    |                                    |    |    | Food aid allowed to Gaza                 |    |                       |    |    |   | 12 PPF militants arrested in Nablus raid, 1 killed on Fri |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | Militant killed by IDF in Jenin camp   |   |   |   |   |   | Jewish worshipers desecrate Muslim graves in Nablus   |   |   |  |                                       |    | Olmert calls for international force on Gaza/Egypt border  |                                      |    |   |                                |    | Some Fateh evacuated to Israel through Erez crossing  |   |    |                                    |    |    | Raid into Gaza nr Kissufim, 2 killed     |    |                       |    |    |   | Abbas Olmert meet in Egypt                                |  |  |  |  |  | Pres. Katsav resigns        |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | 3 Hamas politicians held   |   |   |   |   |   | Anniversary of 1967 war   |   |   |  |                                       |    | Barak wins Labour party poll, sworn in as defense minister |                                      |    |   |                                |    | Strike on rocket launchers                            |   |    |                                    |    |    | Bedouin homes demolished in Negev        |    |                       |    |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |                             |  |  |  |  |  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>WB &amp; Gaza</b>  | Hammas chooses own Interior Minister   |   |   |   |   |   | 616 killed in factional fighting since Hamas govt. formed in 2006; 659 killed by Israeli action |   |   |  |                                       |    | IDF kill gunman in Qalqilya                                |                                      |    |   |                                |    | 3 Hamas shot at Ramallah mosque                       |   |    |                                    |    |    | Hammas attack Church & school            |    |                       |    |    |   | Abbass: 'No dialogue with those killers                   |  |  |  |  |  | 1 dies in Jenin arrest raid |  |  |  |  |  | Qassam rockets fired into Israel |  |  |  |  |  |