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by Alex Safian, PhD

Professor Rashid Khalidi, "A Palestinian Who Wouldn't Harm the Cause"

Rashid Khalidi's impressive résumé – he's the Edward Said Professor of Middle East Studies at Columbia University and the director of Columbia's Middle East Institute – suggests a disinterested and objective scholar, who goes where the facts take him. A more realistic assessment of Khalidi comes from the Palestine Liberation Organization, which, according to press reports, regards the professor as a reliable partisan who "wouldn't harm the cause": Khalidi enjoys the confidence of the PLO and has access to its leaders that stems from the ties he forged while teaching in Beirut from 1974 to 1985, when the PLO maintained its headquarters there.

"He became close to the leadership and gained their confidence," said Suhail Miari, executive director of the United Holy Land Fund.

For Khalidi's book, *Under Siege: PLO Decisionmaking During the 1982 War*, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat made the organizations archives available to him, for the first time.

He was given access because he's a serious scholar and a *Palestinian who wouldn't harm the cause*," said Hassan Abdul Rahman, director of the Palestine Affairs Center in Washington ...(*Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 31, 1991; emphasis added.)

Not harming the cause, in Khalidi's case, means using his academic credentials to give credibility to the most extreme anti-Israel canards, such as the fabrication that non-Jews are barred from most land in Israel:

... non-Jews are barred by law from purchasing or leasing most properties (Jewish National Fund property, "state land," and land under control of the Custodian of "Absentee" Property – ie., stolen Arab land) and are barred from renting in segregated Jewish-only neighborhoods. Where is the racism in this picture? (*Washington Post*, Oct. 1, 1997)

In fact, half the land used by Israeli-Arab farmers is state land leased from the Israeli government, and the only segregated towns in Israel are Arab localities such as Nazareth and Umm al-Fahm, where no Jews are allowed to live. In contrast, the

“Jewish” town of Upper Nazareth is now more than 17 percent Arab.

Khalidi also served as president of the so-called American Committee on Jerusalem (now known as the American Task Force on Palestine), a Washington-based non-profit that regularly disseminates crude anti-Israel propaganda. Khalidi, for example, more than once signed fund-raising letters for the ACJ claiming that Israel engages in "ethnic cleansing" in Jerusalem:

... forcing out its Muslim and Christian Arab population, and making Jerusalem an exclusively Israeli city. Israel is attempting to reach its stated goal of a 70% Jewish majority in all of Jerusalem by the year 2020. (ACJ fund raising letter, dated December 1998 and signed by Dr. Rashid Khalidi)

Khalidi’s claim is arrant nonsense. The fact is that Jerusalem’s population in 1967, after reunification, was 74.2 percent Jewish and 25.8 percent Arab, and since then the Jewish proportion has declined and the Arab proportion grown, so that today Jerusalem’s population is 32 percent Arab. That is, the city has become less Jewish and more Arab! Some ethnic cleansing.

Perhaps Khalidi’s most shocking fabrication, however, was his "Remembrance" for the PLO terrorist mastermind known as Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf). Khalaf was notorious for his plots to assassinate King Hussein, and for his leadership of the so-called "Black September" organization, the PLO group that slaughtered Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics, and in 1973 murdered US diplomats in Khartoum. The assassination of the US Ambassador to Lebanon in 1976 was also carried out under Khalaf’s orders. (For details on Khalaf see entry in *An Historical Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Greenwood Press.)

Incredibly, Khalidi remembers not one word about any of these bloody terrorist attacks in his “Remembrance.” Instead he credits Khalaf with pioneering the PLO’s “diplomatic strategy” in 1988, with his “eloquent speeches and his back room political skills.”

According to Khalidi, “Abu Iyad will be sorely missed by the Palestinian people to whom he devoted his life” (*Middle East Report*, March-April 1991).

No wonder the PLO places so much trust in Khalidi.