Re-Killing the Dead: Another Tragedy in Yemen

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The Arab states are known for their sweeping and brutal violations of human rights. It is no wonder that where human life is given little value, the dead too are accorded no dignity. This phenomenon is now being demonstrated in Aden, where the main burial place of Yemeni Jewish dead is being systematically destroyed.

The Jewish (and English) cemetery in the Yemenite city of Aden is being systematically destroyed. This action is in keeping with the long tradition of imperial Islamic conquest, when Arab/Muslim occupiers rushed to construct mosques above churches and synagogues in order to obliterate all evidence of a non-Islamic past.

The current desecration of the cemetery in Aden is being done in the service of a huge construction project in a much-sought-after neighborhood in the city, not far from the sea. The buildings are to be erected on top of the ruins of the cemetery.

This is contrary not only to the accepted values and ethics of the Western world, but to Islamic values and Muslim law as well.

This does not appear to be a limiting factor in the minds of the "Transitional Council" in Yemen, established in 2017 under the leadership of Gen. Aidarus Zubeidi. The Council views its control over Aden as a springboard for the establishment of an independent state in southern Yemen, and it does not intend to be thwarted by ethical or religious reservations.

The construction project will bring about the final erasure of the last remnants of the Jewish community in Aden, whose roots are considerably older than Islam itself.

In the 20th century, the community, which numbered over 7,000 in the mid-1940s, lived under British control, but the UN Partition Resolution resulted in widespread riots. On December 2, 1947, 82 Jews were murdered and dozens wounded and most

of the Jewish businesses in Aden were looted. Synagogues were burned and hundreds of Jewish homes were looted and torched. The murdered Jews were most likely buried in the Jewish cemetery in the city center that is now being destroyed.

By 1965, the community had dwindled to about 450, but two years later, after the Six Day War and on the eve of the British evacuation a few months later, not a single Jew remained. Those who left had no choice but to leave their property behind.

Who will stop this act of profound disrespect to the dead? In Lebanon, attempts were made to build on the Jewish cemetery in Sidon, but they failed due to public pressure. Muslim clerics can issue a *fatwa* preventing the destruction of the Aden cemetery. Recently, members of the World Islamic Union visited Auschwitz in an effort to unite Jews and Muslims. Muslim condemnation of the Aden destruction, which is contrary to the provisions of Islam, would strengthen that newfound unity. In addition, the "Temporary Council" in Yemen has good relations with the UAE, which is known for its efforts to promote religious tolerance.

It is time for someone to act so the Jews of Aden can continue to rest in peace.

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