

Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY





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FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Dear Friend,

There's no excuse for silence.

And as JBI celebrates our 40th anniversary of global advocacy, it is our commitment to breaking the silence that we celebrate.

For four decades—as you'll see in the pages that follow—we've made our voice heard. For four decades, we've spoken out forthrightly on behalf of human rights, human dignity, and human solidarity.

Indeed, in the past forty years, the concept and reality of human rights has made impressive progress in the world arena. I'm glad to report to you that at every turn, JBI has been part of that progress—often, right in the very thick of it.

It's been said that American Jews who care passionately about human rights must assume a difficult task: dancing at three weddings at the same time. That is, they need to simultaneously stand up for American, Jewish, and universal concerns.

As JBI Chair, I can tell you that at JBI, we'd simply have it no other way. For us to cease “dancing” at any one of these weddings would be to betray the vision we hold most dear.

In the pages that follow, you will read brief sketches describing a small portion of the work we've done and continue to do.

I believe that as you read, you'll see clearly how all our efforts reflect our profound, unceasing dedication—to the moral ideals of Judaism, and to the universal standards and abiding values of humanity.

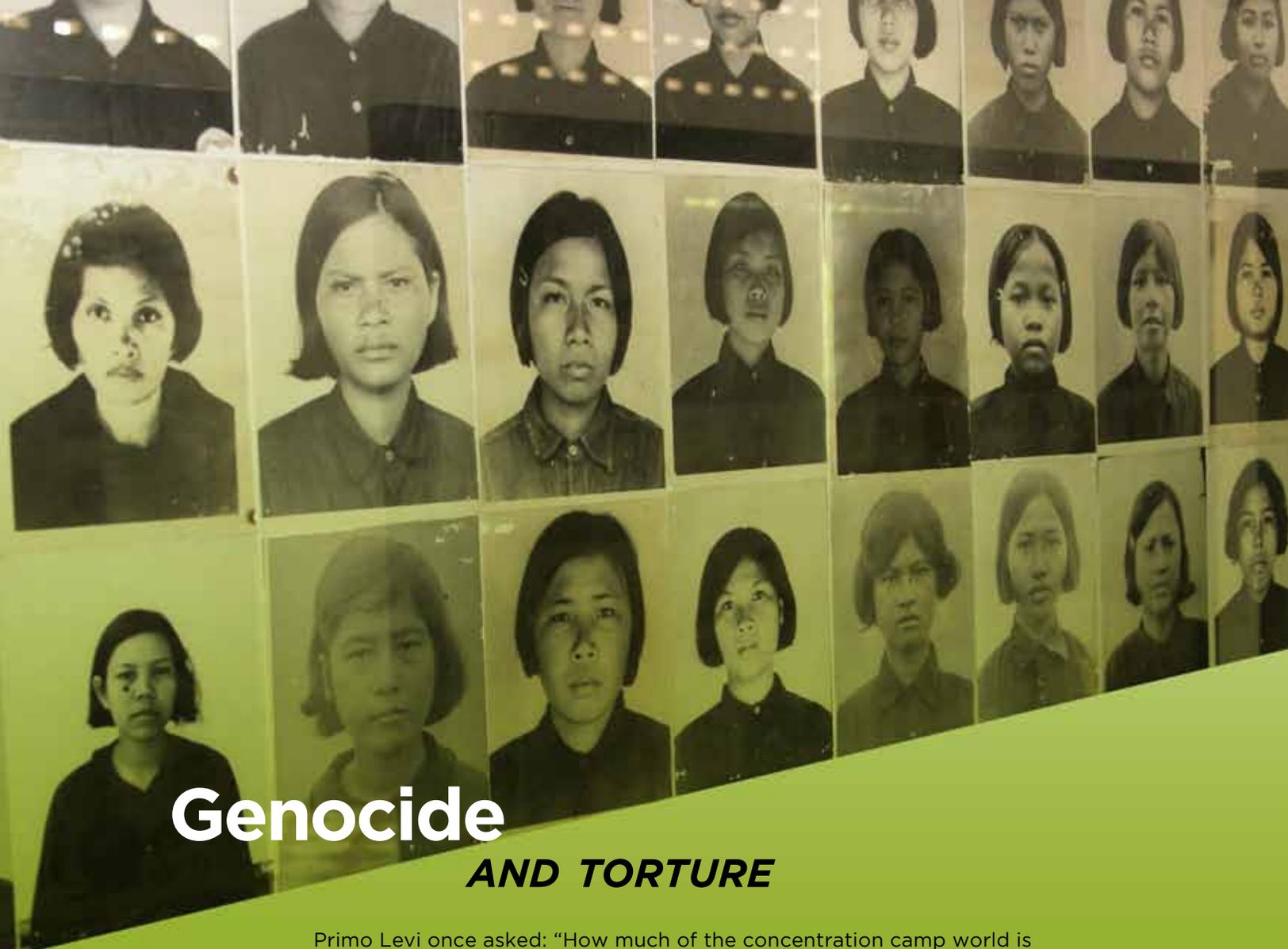
Let's make sure that in the years to come, whenever justice and freedom are under attack, JBI's voice continues boldly to break the silence.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "E. Robert Goodkind". The signature is fluid and cursive.

E. Robert Goodkind

Chairman, JBI



Genocide

AND TORTURE

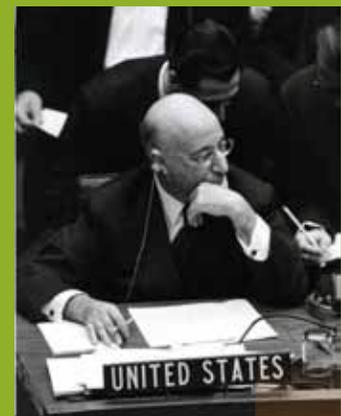
Primo Levi once asked: “How much of the concentration camp world is dead and will not return?”

Striving to avert the return of such a monstrosity, Jacob Blaustein (1892-1970), in the Holocaust’s aftermath, launched a successful campaign for fundamental human rights protections in the new UN Charter.

In *NGOs and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, William Korey tells the tale of the central role Blaustein played. But, of course, the Universal Declaration was just a start.

For four decades, JBI has carried the work forward on every front. And, indeed, despite terrible challenges, we have seen vital growth. In both the mainstreaming of human rights and the prevention and punishment of genocide.

Jacob Blaustein, serving as a member of the U.S. Delegation to the UN. JBI is named in honor of this pioneering human rights leader.



To Aid Humanity's Cause

"I salute JBI for your leadership on holding the perpetrators of war crimes accountable, and for all you have done to aid humanity's cause," proclaimed Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

War crimes in Bosnia, mass killings in Kosovo, ethnic slaughter in Rwanda, atrocities in the Congo, the range of threats emanating from Iran—in all these cases and so many more, JBI has made our voice clearly heard.

We've also made a unique effort to study and identify the risk factors and strengthen the legal means of preventing genocide. In fact, a JBI-produced compilation on exactly these themes earned the admiration of Frances Deng, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on the Prevention of Genocide.

"I consider your publication an invaluable contribution to my office's efforts to address the legal ambiguities in the Genocide Convention," remarked Deng.

The Question of Waterboarding

In opposing torture, JBI has never flinched. We have actively sought to alert the world to state-sponsored torture in China, Cambodia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, among other nations.

Our range of efforts on the issue include cosponsoring a major *New York City Law Review* symposium and subsequent publication on preventing torture. And we assisted efforts by CUNY Law School's Women's Rights Clinic to lodge cases against torturers—including the only successful case against Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic.

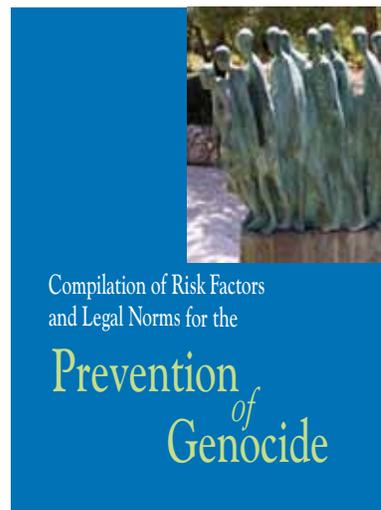
Closer to home, JBI's early, vociferous rejection of military tribunals and the use of torture at Guantanamo won wide praise. As president of the American Jewish Committee and, later, as JBI chair, E. Robert Goodkind has proved an ardent opponent of torture and inhumanity.

In 2005, for example, he spearheaded AJC's support of legislation banning the use, by U.S. personnel, of degrading treatment of detainees. And, in 2007, when the question of waterboarding came to the fore, Goodkind declared, and AJC's Board affirmed, that "waterboarding is unquestionably torture."

One Group that Stood Firmly

"JBI is one group that stood firmly and never considered justifying violations of international law in the name of national security," declared Phillippe Sands, Professor of Law at University College London and author of *Torture Team: Rumsfeld's Memo and the Betrayal of American Values*.

The election of our director, Felice Gaer—as the first American on the UN Committee Against Torture—points also to our tenacious struggle against cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment.



A JBI publication on genocide prevention.

Human Rights

DEFENDERS

“The grammar of totalitarianism has only two persons: us and them,” writes Tzvetan Todorov in *Hope and Memory: Lessons From the Twentieth Century*. And for them, of course, what too often awaits is a world of torture, forced confessions, secret detentions, or worse.

Indeed, among the bravest heroes of our time are human rights defenders. These are men and women who put themselves at grave personal risk by promoting, protecting, and defending human rights—in places where these rights are trampled.





A publication of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center

JBI takes great pride in our across-the-board participation in the drafting and adoption of the UN’s 1998 Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. We were deeply involved, in fact, in the very conception of this historic declaration. And we later convened the first-ever NGO meeting with the UN’s Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders.

We strive to take action on every level. When the Chinese delegation came before the UN Committee Against Torture, for instance, committee member and JBI director Felice Gaer repeatedly

raised the names of individual Chinese human rights defenders. These champions of freedom had faced harassment, intimidation, and sometimes brutal violence at the hands of the government or its agents.

Taken by Surprise

Gaer’s specificity took the delegation members by surprise. They were furious, and leveled a host of charges against the defenders cited. They no doubt disliked the pointed departure from their usual UN experience—an all-too-comfortable conversation about human rights concepts and generalities.

Without question, calling persecutors to account is an indispensable aspect of defending human rights defenders.

And JBI consistently extends its own efforts in this arena by assisting others. For example, JBI has worked to strengthen Human Rights in China (hric.org), a highly respected advocacy group dedicated to Chinese human rights issues.

The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (iranhrdc.org), also assisted by JBI, does similar groundbreaking work exposing the appalling human rights abuses and persecution of human rights defenders, taking place in Iran.

The Promise of “Never Again”

Roya Hakakian, human rights activist and author of *Journey from the Land of No*, said of JBI: “You stand as a pillar—for all people everywhere—in making sure that ‘Never Again’ is not an empty promise.”

Our work on behalf of human rights defenders—including our efforts in Russia today—reflects a long tradition.

“In the early 70’s, JBI was unique in its deep concern not only with Jewish dissidents and Jewish emigration, but with the general state of human rights in the Soviet Union,” explained Elena Bonner, wife of famed Soviet physicist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Andrei Sakharov.

“Your endeavors,” she added, “lent authority to the Soviet movement for democratic change.”

Famed Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov receives a Russian version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from JBI Director Felice Gaer.



Religious

FREEDOM

It seems pulled from the pages of George Orwell's *1984*.

The movement at the UN—introduced by the Organization of the Islamic Conference—to ban the “defamation of religions” seeks to transform international human rights law into a tool for attacking religious freedom.

It would turn on its head a basic human rights idea: that it is people—and not abstract concepts or belief systems—that warrant special rights and privileges.

A series of General Assembly “defamation” resolutions has already met success. While discrimination against Muslims is a problem, the “defamation” movement takes an entirely wrong-headed approach, concluded a JBI expert panel.

“A Dangerous Precedent”

No doubt, these resolutions “set a dangerous precedent,” asserts a JBI petition on the issue prepared by attorney Christen Broecker, JBI’s International Human Rights Officer. JBI lodged the petition to the UN Committee monitoring compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Nazila Ghanea, Oxford University professor and editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Religion and Human Rights*, chaired two recent JBI seminars—one in New York and one in Geneva—on current threats to religious freedom. Each drew more than twenty key UN diplomats.

The Last Utopia

In his acclaimed *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, Columbia University professor Samuel Moyn discusses the WW-II era “entry of human rights into the ideological and rhetorical arsenal of world politics.”

Moyn recently commented: “The various freedoms that crystallized in the broad anti-totalitarian movement of that time—including religious freedom—have had a responsible, reliable, and relentless defender in JBI.”

Indeed, our longtime efforts led to JBI Director Felice Gaer’s appointment to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, and to her service, three times, as Commission chair.



Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton meets with JBI Director Felice Gaer, in Gaer’s capacity as Chair, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

Ringling the Alarm Bell

The Jewish *Forward*, praising her work on religious freedom, named Gaer one of the 50 most influential Jewish leaders in America. She’s “the American Jewish community’s in-house international human rights expert,” the *Forward* noted.

“She delves into human rights issues long before they bubble to the surface.” It was Gaer, for instance, who “started alarm bells ringing” regarding the troubling character of Afghanistan’s constitution.

“Women’s rights are human rights.” The statement may seem obvious today.

And yet, it was a bold conceptual breakthrough when declared in Beijing at the 1995 UN World Conference on Women.

JBI’s longstanding quest to put women’s rights into the framework of human rights led, no doubt, to the appointment of our director, Felice Gaer, to the official U.S. government delegation to Beijing.

Gaer additionally served as staff director of an AJC/JBI delegation accredited both to the official Beijing conference and the parallel NGO forum.



“Ms. Gaer’s work in Beijing made a real difference,” declared Melanne Verveer, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues. “Under her leadership, JBI continues to contribute in significant ways to advancing women’s rights and international law.”

No Room for Retreat

Certainly, there’s no room for retreat in the urgent work of defending women’s equality and security. A major JBI focus right now: the effort to win U.S. ratification of CEDAW—the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Sadly, in not yet joining this vital international treaty—so far ratified by 186 out of 193 countries—the U.S. stands together with some unsavory company in terms of human rights: the likes of Iran, Somalia, and Sudan.

In addition to CEDAW, there’s another key front in JBI’s pioneering work on women’s issues. And that is the inclusion, in international law, of rape and sexual violence as a crime against humanity, when used as a weapon of war.

The Rights of Women and Girls

Equality Now (equalitynow.org)—an advocacy group aided by JBI—contributes in extraordinary ways to the worldwide struggle for the human rights of women and girls.

Rape, domestic violence, reproductive rights, trafficking, female genital mutilation, political participation, and gender discrimination—these are the urgent concerns that occupy Equality Now every day.

In its entry on Gaer, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* describes her as “the architect of many initiatives linking women’s rights to human rights.”

“We count on JBI’s Felice Gaer,” said Susan Rice, U.S. Ambassador to the UN, “to speak out on behalf of the vulnerable and oppressed, who need our help.”

Women’s RIGHTS

It's a fact so often forgotten: there's no country in the world with origins more deeply embedded in international law than the State of Israel.

On the 60th anniversary of UN Resolution 181, partitioning Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab, JBI published *Mandate of Destiny*.

Produced in honor of Bob Rifkind's JBI chairmanship, the book extensively documents the development and emergence of the UN partition plan.

And it leaves no doubt about the seriousness with which the newly-created UN worked to reach a fair and equitable solution. Quoted in the book is Trygve Lie, the first UN Secretary General, who described the May 1948 invasion of Israel as "armed defiance of the UN."

Israel's Place Among the Nations

In the face of mounting delegitimization campaigns against Israel, *Mandate of Destiny* underscores Israel's uncommonly legitimate place among the nations.

Indeed, time and again, JBI stands up for international law and for the human rights of all, including the Jewish people. As told in Michael Galchinsky's *Jews and Human Rights*, JBI helped launch Israel's most respected human rights organization, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (acri.org.il/en).

Rebuking Antisemitism

JBI has worked to free Soviet Jewry, overturn the UN's "Zionism=Racism" resolution, and gain passage of the UN's first explicit rebuke of antisemitism. Similarly, we played a pioneering role—as only JBI could have—in ensuring that the 56 member states in the OSCE commit to combating antisemitism.

And we demanded, in countless influential forums, that the two UN Durban conferences turn away from the demonization of Israel and toward the issues they were called to address—racism, discrimination, and intolerance.

"Inside the Game"

While playing fully "inside the game," JBI has never stood outside the most vital struggles confronting the Jewish people today.

Praising Gaer for her historic work on the 1998 UN resolution condemning antisemitism, Dore Gold, Israel's Ambassador to the UN, pointed with clarity to JBI's enduring uniqueness:

"While all too many despaired over the treatment of Jewish issues at the UN, you rose to action. Your work," he continued, "amounts to a monumental step in the direction of fairness and justice for Israel."



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon (r.) discusses issues with JBI leaders. On left (l. to r.): Former JBI Chair Bob Rifkind; JBI Chair E. Robert Goodkind; and JBI Director Felice Gaer.

IF WE WISH FOR A LIFE OF FREEDOM . . .

The greatest achievement of the Hebrew prophets? In his 1951 classic on Jewish social ethics, *Judaism and Modern Man*, Will Herberg explained that they “vindicated the uniqueness and significance of the individual.”

As we launch our fifth decade of global advocacy, the earth-shaking insights of the ancient Jewish prophets stand at the core of JBI’s work. Upon the joyful celebration of our anniversary, we affirm yet again our core mission:

In Herberg’s terms, it is, indeed, to vindicate—that is to clear of any blame, fear, or suspicion—the notion that every man and woman, everywhere on earth, deserves a life of freedom and dignity.

And it is likewise to encourage perceptive scholarship, build coalitions, support effective projects and programs, and press for laws and actions, nationally and internationally, that will bridge the gap between human rights ideals and human rights realities.

At JBI, we feel keenly obliged. We know that if we ourselves wish for a life of freedom, then we have no choice but to take action.

We must stand up for those who face down their oppressors. And we must chart a course of progress for those who are beaten, battered, trapped, tortured, or forgotten.

As you have read in these pages, JBI has contributed meaningfully to the great advances made in the post-war world. But the work, of course, goes on.

And we are pledged to carry forward into the future our determined battle—against abuse and persecution and for the fundamental freedoms of the individual and the solidarity of all humankind.



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