

THE JEWISH ADVOCATE®

Founded in 1902

Highlighting achievements

"And you shall teach them to your children and speak of them," the Torah tells us, referring to our mitvot, our commandments. Jews have been known throughout history as a people who value education. The importance of Jewish learning and its institutions for our young has always been one of our highest priorities.

In our own community, the Maimonides School is held in high esteem and in the wider community too – and rightly so. The core values of our Torah, as espoused by the school's late founder Rabbi Soloveitchik are practiced in its corridors daily.

There are no "community service points" at the school, as chesed – kindness or compassion – is an integral part of school in the classrooms and beyond, as the children raise money, visit the elderly and the sick and put into practice what they learn.

There's no ceiling on financial aid for those whose families cannot afford tuition fees. In the non-Jewish world, Maimonides was ranked by Worth magazine in 2002 as the 25th best school in the country, out of 32,000 public and private schools. The accomplishments of the alumni prove the strength of the school: Since 1953, 10 percent have made aliyah and, quite apart from the usual array of professional success stories, North America and the rest of the world has benefited from a high representation of rabbis, cantors, federation executives, day school principles, teachers, Jewish community and social workers who were educated at Maimonides. The list is endless.

Of course, no one likes financial restructuring – words like redundancies and closures send chills down the spines of every institution, not least schools. But it's the job of the governors to govern, and the individual merits of this or that job or role is a personal matter between employer and employee. It is rarely of benefit to anyone to see dirty linen being washed in public.

Most of us will have seen a Boston Globe article on Maimonides last week. The school has decided to show the dignity of difference in not replying to its accusations. We note as journalists the litany of innuendo and subjective claim, anonymous quotes and the ready use of words like "apparently" and "claimed."

We are proud to stand by Maimonides. No institution is perfect, but it ill behooves our community to condemn a great Jewish institution on the basis of implication and a handful of subjective individual cases.

We wish our readers a Chag Sameach and an enjoyable Succot.

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Letters to the Editor

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'Fair' reporting appreciated

I just wanted to write a note to express my appreciation of a piece in the *Advocate* on September 29, 2006, on the pope's recent comments about Islam. The story entitled "Boston leaders boost dialogue efforts following expressions of outrage," by Kristin is a culmination of her interviews with a sample of religious leaders in the area from various faiths. In my judgment, Kristin has done an excellent job in providing a balanced coverage of various points of view and expressions of the respondents. Fair and unbiased reporting is a great journalistic quality and a public service which we often find missing in the mass media today. In particular, much of the credit for a twisted image of Islam created in the public minds goes to an unrelenting stereotyping and slandering of this religion by the media.

Kristin in her piece has demonstrated that a reporter can write a good story objectively that people would like to read without compromising journalistic ethics and fairness, as evidenced in her coverage of my interview. Thank you for publishing this timely article in the *Advocate*.

M. RIAZ KHAN
Professor of Management
University of Massachusetts Lowell

Membership should be fair

I read Julie Masis' article on High Holiday ticket prices (Sept. 22). Here's a math problem with regard to paying for synagogue

membership dues:

If a synagogue advertises in its news-letter \$200 for Single Membership and \$400 for Family Membership, how much does a married person pay when he wants to buy a single membership just for himself?

According to the treasurer for Congregation Ahabat Sholom in Lynn, the person would still have to pay double because he is married. This sounds to me a lot like deceptive advertising pricing. Aren't there laws against that? The Bible teaches, "distance thyself from a false thing ..." (Exodus: 23:7).

HERSH GOLDMAN
Swampscott

Changing accountability

As Natan Sharansky declared, organizations claiming to promote human rights, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have lost their way. After leading campaigns to free political prisoners during the Cold War, they now exploit human rights for gratuitous attacks on Israel. But for many years, the "halo effect" protected Amnesty and HRW officials from independent examination or accountability.

NGO Monitor is changing this by exposing the lack of credibility and inconsistency, other than in the NGO's biased political agendas. The research began following the 2001 Durban Conference that revived the slogan branding Zionism as apartheid, and declared political war on Israel through the ex-

ploitation of human rights rhetoric. Amnesty and HRW were active participants.

Since then, NGO Monitor has tracked the Durban NGO network's false claims of Israeli "war crimes," and its relative neglect of suicide bombings – core human rights violations, by any definition. NGO Monitor's detailed reports also expose Amnesty and HRW reliance on carefully selected "evidence" and "eyewitnesses." Occasional press releases aside, Israel bashing receives far more attention than the genocide in Darfur or the mass violence in Sri Lanka.

In response to Charles Jacobs' exposure of the dirty details (Sept. 8 and 15 columns), Amnesty spokesman Joshua Rubenstein provided snide put-downs and isolated anecdotes (Letters, Sept. 22). Amnesty will have to do more to restore its reputation and credibility to universal human rights.

GERALD STEINBERG
Jerusalem

Professor Gerald Steinberg directs the Program on Conflict Management at Bar Ilan University and is the editor of www.ngo-monitor.org.

Khatami articles well balanced

Thank you for your recent articles on Khatami's visit to Boston. The articles are clear and do not flip-flop between what is obvious and what is politically correct. Very refreshing from the *Advocate*.

ALEX KOIFMAN
Newton

Please include your name, address and telephone number. The Jewish Advocate reserves the right to edit letters.

