

A POLITICALLY INCORRECT REPORT

The Jerusalem Post has reported some interesting statistics from a survey carried out by the University of Haifa about violent crime in Israel. Turns out our rate of murder is actually quite low. In fact, among the lowest in the world.

True, the number of incidents of violent crime is going up all the time, and we tend to think we're in a jungle. But when compared to the growth of population, our rate per 100,000 inhabitants—which is the way you're supposed to measure these things—is less than half of that of the Americans and less than a fifth of that of the Russians. And these percentages have not only not risen in the past quarter of a century, but actually gone down!

The rate for murder in Israel was 2.29 per 100,000 people in 2006, the year of the survey. That rate is actually less than the figure for 1980, which was 2.35 per 100,000. Which we, reading all the time about violent crime in the streets, are really surprised to learn. And even more surprised (or maybe not) to compare that with the Americans, whose figure for 2004 was 7.5 per 100,000 people, or (good grief!) the Russians, whose reported figure for 2004 was 18.

So far, that's the good news. The bad news is that in absolute numbers the incidents of violent crime rose by 12% between 1997 and 2006, while the number of attempted murders rose by 32%. Still more alarming; the number of cases of assault and aggravated assault has risen by an astounding 100% since 1980. So percentages or not, we still have a problem.

Do we know whose fault the violent crime is? Popular opinion does; it's the Russians! All those crooks, swindlers, goons and mafiosi. But that prejudice is not born out by the figures. In 1996 immigrants from the former Soviet Union made up some 20% of Israel's population. But they were always fewer than 20% of the country's violent criminals according to this university survey. Lower indeed than their percent of the general population.¹

So we have a problem and that's big-time bad news, everybody. We know we have it but can't talk about it because it is politically incorrect to do so. I have no idea how to solve our problem but am certain

¹ The numbers are different for teenagers (12-18 years old), however. Teen age immigrants from the FSU constituted 11% of the population in 2001 but committed 18% of the violent crimes. Immigrants from Ethiopia constituted only 1.3% of the population but they committed 4.4% of the violent crimes.

that we can't begin to solve it unless we can think about it and we can't think about it unless we can talk about it. Because the problem is the Arabs of Israel.

That issue is certainly in the news these days. Another tractor driver, a resident of East Jerusalem and holder of an Israeli identity card, has just gone on a rampage and attacked cars and busses with his front-loader shovel blade. This took place yesterday on the streets of Jerusalem right outside the King David Hotel. Nobody was killed but 2 dozen people were wounded. Which follows right on the heels of an identical incident at the beginning of July where the driver who went on a rampage did the same thing, and killed 3 and wounded others before he too was killed by passers-by. Which followed an attack on Purim, the third week of March, in which still another Arab resident of Jerusalem killed 8 people in a shooting attack on a Jerusalem yeshiva before passers-by got him. Bad news indeed!

Can't be helped; the dirty secret is out. The adult (over 19) Arab population of Israel (we're not talking about the Palestinian Territories) is about 15% of that population in Israel but their participation rate in violent crime stands at 42.76%. Same with teens (ages 12-18); they have accounted for 22.8% of the population in that age group but made up 33.13% of those involved in violent crimes. The sad bad fact is that the Arabs of Israel are killing the Jews, as well as killing each other.

This is really awful, but it gets worse. I have read and heard that the Arabs, who make up about 20% of the general population, are involved in more than 50% of the traffic accidents that happen in Israel. No way I can think of to verify this statistic; nobody in the Police or anywhere will answer a question like that. My only claim to verification is what comes from 35 years as a volunteer in the Police: you can usually guess what you are going to find when you get to an accident.

So now comes the \$64 question, what (if anything) are we to do about this alarming trend? And I don't have any intelligent suggestion. But I still say that we will never solve the problem until we can talk about it, and that doesn't look like it'll happen any time soon. It is not politically correct to do so. ■