

Ambassador Haim Davon  
Embassy of Israel  
Buitenhof 47  
2513 AH The Hague

The Hague, August 11 2014

Subject: Return of medal of honour

Excellency,

It is with great sorrow that I am herewith returning the medal I received as an honour and a token of appreciation from the State of Israel for the efforts and risks taken by my mother and her family in saving the life of a Jewish boy during the German occupation of The Netherlands.

My mother and her nuclear family risked their lives fighting the German occupation. My mother lost her husband who was deported to Dachau as early as 1941 because of his open and outspoken opposition to the German occupation. He eventually perished in Mauthausen Concentration Camp. My sister lost her husband who was executed in the dunes of The Hague for his involvement in the resistance. In addition to this my brother lost his Jewish fiancée who was deported, never to return.

My steadfast and heroic mother nevertheless continued the struggle, amongst others, by taking in an 11 year old Jewish boy in her home risking both her own life and that of her children. This boy survived the war under the wings of my mother and eventually moved to Israel.

Against this background it is particularly shocking and tragic that today, four generations on, our family is faced with the murder of our kin in Gaza. Murder carried out by the State of Israel.

The great- great grandchildren of my mother have lost their grandmother, three uncles, an aunt and a cousin at the hands of the Israeli army. Their family apartment building in Bureij Refugee Camp in Gaza was bombed on July 20 from an Israeli F16, turning the four storey building to rubble, leaving every single family member inside it dead.

I understand that in your professional role, in which I am addressing you here, you may not be able to express understanding for my decision. However, I am convinced that at both a personal and human level you will have a profound understanding of the fact that for me to hold on to the honour granted by the State of Israel, under these circumstances, will be both an insult to the memory of my courageous mother who risked her life and that of her children fighting against suppression and for the preservation of human life as well as an insult to those in my family, four generations on, who lost no less than six of their relatives in Gaza at the hands of the State of Israel.

On a more general note the following. After the horror of the holocaust my family strongly supported the Jewish people also with regard to their aspirations to build a national home. Over more than six decades I have however slowly come to realize that the Zionist project had from its beginning a racist element in it in aspiring to build a state *exclusively* for Jews. As a consequence, ethnic cleansing took place at the time of the establishment of your state and your state continues to suppress the Palestinian people on the West Bank and in Gaza who live under Israeli occupation since 1967.

The actions of your state in Gaza these days have already resulted in serious accusations of war crimes and crimes against humanity. As a retired lawyer it would be no surprise to me that these accusations could lead to possible convictions if true and unpoliticized justice is able to have its course. What happened to our kin in Gaza will no doubt be brought to the table at such a time as well.

The only way out of the quagmire the Jewish people of Israel have gotten themselves into is by granting all living under the control of the State of Israel the same political rights and social and economic rights and opportunities. Although this will result in a state no longer exclusively Jewish it will be a state with a level of righteousness on the basis of which I could accept the title of 'Righteous among the Nations' you awarded to my mother and me together with the medal.

Today I am a 91 year old man who does not expect radical change with regard to the current sad reality within my, most likely, still limited lifetime. If your state would be willing and able to transform itself along the lines set out above and there would still be an interest at that time in granting an honour to my family for the actions of my mother during the second world war, be sure to contact me or my descendants.

Sincerely,

H.A. Zanolli