

### Palestinians have logical right to their homeland

I am writing with regard to Elizabeth Cannon's letter (Daily Nebraskan, April 24) titled "Reagan met Khadafy on Desert Terms."

My main concern is the misleading arguments about the Palestinian problem. Cannon wrote that the Palestinians have not been given "a home in the countries to which they fled and the responsibility for this must be laid squarely at the feet of their Arab brethren." She added that those Arabs "have made no significant efforts to assimilate them."

It is a historical fact that for many centuries the Palestinians, until 1948 when they were forced out to leave their homes and to live in refugee camps in the neighboring Arab countries,

were the settlers of the land of Palestine. Actually, the Palestinians were there before prophet Moses led the Israelites to Palestine. Logically, then, the Palestinians do have the right to own the land of Palestine.

Also, logically, instead of blaming the Arabs, who, indeed, have been generous hosts, for not assimilating (assimilation means forgetting the homeland — Israel's wishful thinking) the Palestinians, one must turn to Israel to blame and try for its crimes of driving the Palestinians out from their homeland and, later, massacring them in the refugee camps.

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### Waldheim: 'obscene opportunist'

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Legally, there will never be a case against Waldheim. He is what he appears to be: an obscene opportunist. Now, running for the presidency of Austria, he sees yet another opportunity. By admitting nothing, he rejects the past. By not even acknowledging that he knew of atrocities, he denies any complicity and responsibility. By stating that he did not even learn of the atrocities until accused of them, he displays his indifference. If his standing in the polls proves anything, it is that this pose is tremendously popular with the people of his country.

Of course, it is easy to condemn from the United States events that occurred 45 years ago in Europe. Readers reminded me of that, when last I wrote about Waldheim. They said you had to be there. They told of the terror, the horror — the inability of a single person to stop it, to even make a difference. A letter told of the good people who did nothing — how Jewish families disappeared and every one pretended that nothing had happened.

But Waldheim is a world leader. His dossier proclaims it. He is running for the presidency of a European country — a mostly empty office, ceremonial at best, but an elected post nonetheless. It is a country, though, with a Nazi past. A German-speaking cousin, it rejoined the family with the Anschluss. Austrians greeted German tanks with flowers, and Austrians like Waldheim served in the German army. To many, Germany did not conquer Austria; it liberated it. Hitler, after all, was an Austrian himself.

The Austrians who will vote in the presidential elections know that the issue is not whether Waldheim can legally be prosecuted. The question is not whether there is a hard and fast legal case against him — witnesses, documents and, of course, the awful tales of survivors. No. The issue is Waldheim's refusal to acknowledge his role in what may be history's greatest crime, to say that he was there and he is sorry.


Probably Austria, like Germany, is tired of guilt. That's understandable. Probably Austria, like Germany, is tired of being told it was a criminal, a beast, cruel, awful and collectively responsible for the atrocities of the war. Probably many Germans and Austrians think it is time the world acknowledged or at least conceded that Germans and Austrians are no different than other people: What would you have done? How would you have been different? Would you have risked your life for someone else? And can a nation that fears a European vacation because of terrorism fault others for a lack of courage?

These are all good questions, but Kurt Waldheim does not pose them. Instead, he ducks them. With repellent agility, he leaps from lie to lie, knowing that a legal case can not be brought for the moral crime of omission. With every exoneration, the case against him grows harder and harder, but Waldheim knows only the voters of Austria can convict. With confidence, he awaits the election. With dread, so do we.

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