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**Author's Response to H-Diplo Article Review by Craig Daigle of Paul Thomas Chamberlin.**  
**"Schönau and the Eagles of the Palestinian Revolution: Refugees, Guerillas, and Human Rights."**  
*Cold War History* 12:4 (November 2012): 595-614. DOI: 10.1080/14682745.2012.665368.  
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Author's Response by **Paul Thomas Chamberlin**, University of Kentucky

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I would like to thank Craig Daigle for his thoughtful review of my recent article in *Cold War History* on human rights, Palestinian guerrillas, and Jewish refugees.

Daigle's review is all the more timely given the fascinating discussion on the challenges of understanding human rights in the context of U.S. foreign policy that occurred during SHAFR's recent meeting in Arlington.<sup>1</sup> I would like to briefly respond.

Daigle correctly identifies one of my core arguments in the article regarding the fundamentally conflicted nature of human rights discourse in the international community. As he explains: "Palestinians used the language of human rights when it suited their purposes, but they also adopted tactics that made such claims ludicrous."

The same can and indeed must be said for many of the states and aspiring state-groups that chose to lay claim to the cause of human rights. As I argue in the article – and Daigle notes – Israeli leaders castigated Palestinians for restricting the flow of refugees to Israel at the same time that they rejected the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes in the West Bank. The obvious double standard – Jewish refugees are entitled to human rights, Arab refugees are not – highlights the hypocrisy of such

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Bradley, "The United States and the Global Human Rights Imagination," SHAFR Presidential Address; and the panel, "Human Rights in the Long 1960s," William Hitchcock (Chair), Barbara Keys (Comment), Sarah Snyder, Steven Jensen, and Ryan Irwin (Papers).

appeals.

Similar examples abound: the United States blasted the human rights record of Castro's regime in Cuba but channeled aid to Nicaraguan Contras and the oppressive regime in El Salvador; Ronald Reagan's praise for so-called freedom fighters in Afghanistan and Angola; etc.

Thus, the case of the 1973 Schönau attack is so striking, not because it represented a decisive victory in the Palestinian liberation struggle – it ultimately did not – but because it illuminates the fundamentally conflicting nature of Israeli and Palestinian appeals to human rights and, ultimately, the ongoing failure of the international community to reconcile the two.

Viewed in a wider perspective, such stories also serve as a reminder of the pressing need to integrate non-Western voices into the discussion of human rights in the global community. Such rights appeared quite differently to Russian Jews hoping to reach Israel than to Palestinian Arabs hoping to return to their homes in the West Bank.

By ignoring the Palestinian perspective, as nearly all accounts of the incident do, we miss the larger complexities of the issues at stake. Thus, the 1973 attack serves as a reminder that, if we truly wish to understand the issue of human rights in a global context we must be careful to take non-Western perspectives into account.

This is all the more important considering that states are so prone to using the discourse of human rights in a self-serving manner. All too often, it seems to carry the same weight as the cause of 'freedom.' It appears as a platitude used by states to legitimate their policies when it suits them and ignored when it does not.

Certainly, this is just one dimension of the enormously complicated human rights question, but it strikes me as a critical one. Incidents such as Schönau represent one of any number of chinks in the armor of legitimacy in which states seek to cover themselves when they lay claim to the cause of human rights. In the end, however, such chinks are one of the things that make the problem so fascinating to historians.

Thanks very much to Craig Daigle for his review and for H-Diplo for allowing me to respond.

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