

Father bears scars of terror

PETER KOHN

AT 15, Arnold Roth's mother begged for the life of her father at the feet of a German soldier in Poland; at 15, Roth himself followed the course of the Six-Day War from his boyhood home in Elwood; and at 15, Roth's daughter Malki lost her life to terrorism in Israel.

Malki's age when she died in a suicide bombing at the Sbarro restaurant in Jerusalem on August 9, 2001, is etched painfully into Arnold Roth's psyche, and his recounting of those generational milestones set the scene for his remarks to a forum on global terrorism organised by the Friends of Keren Malki, a foundation set up in her memory.

In a wide-ranging address last Saturday night, Roth spoke of the suicide bomber at Sbarro as "a young man, his head filled with ideas of 72 virgins" who "stole Malki's future". He spoke of the hard reality that "60 per cent of Palestinians value the rightness of terrorism as long as it is aimed against me and my people". And he spoke of the futility of forging a "road map" with a Palestinian Authority that refuses to rein in Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

"As we sit here tonight, dozens of families in Jerusalem are sitting shivah or pacing the waiting rooms of hospitals," he said. "Our neighbours [in Australia and other western countries] don't feel the same visceral response when a bus blows up."

He slammed what he described as "an excess of tolerance and fairness" in the Australian media, where he said a preoccupation with "balance" was replacing the need to think. It was this attention to "balance", he said, that caused ABC's Radio National to cancel a



Arnold Roth (right) with Dr Gerard Henderson at last Saturday night's forum.

Photo: Peter Haskin

scheduled interview with him during his current visit to Australia, fearing its focus on Roth might be seen as one-sided.

"Watching Keren Malki grow helps me to get up every day. It helps me to counter the image of the people who danced in the streets when the Sbarro went up in flames."

Roth told the *AJN* he had received news just before leaving for Australia that the Jerusalem municipality had reconsidered its opposition to a memorial at the site of the Sbarro bombing after a media campaign by his wife Frimet. In an article that appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* and the *AJN*, Frimet said the council had been reluctant to erect plaques for terror victims because "the need to erect more than 30 memorial plaques would interfere with the city's character and appeal".

Dr Gerard Henderson, newspaper commentator and head of the Sydney Institute think tank, said the Jakarta attack on the Marriott Hotel "is not even the end of the beginning, but at least it is the end of confusion. We know

who are the protagonists ... Islamist fanatics who despise the West, not for anything it has done but for who we are.

"The conflict with global terrorism is, from all the available evidence, likely to be a long war," Dr Henderson said, alluding to half-a-century of conflict. "Yet there is evidence to suggest that by widening the flanks of the battle, the perpetrators of militant Islamism are demonstrating the inherent evil of both their actions and their cause. This may have the unintended consequence of increasing opposition to militant Islamism within Muslim societies."

Federal MP for Melbourne Ports Michael Danby, the forum's moderator, said that at first he balked at the prospect of a forum that called the war on terrorism "a new world war" but the events in Baghdad, Jakarta and the most recent bus bombing in Jerusalem had convinced him that the title was warranted.

The Malki Foundation:
www.kerenmalki.org