No, Walid Shoebat, more violence and killing is not the way to bring peace to the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

On Thursday, Hillel brought Walid Shoebat to USF to speak about his experiences as a former Palestinian Liberation Organization terrorist who now speaks out in defense of Israel. Instead, Shoebat's was a message of intolerance and, to the revulsion of several people in attendance, of violence and murder.

Shoebat angered leaders in Tampa's Muslim community with his outrageous claim that, "Islam is not a religion. It's like saying capitalistic communism. Is there such an oxymoron?" While many can empathize with his personal resentment toward Islam because of his family's struggle to escape the suffocating blanket of its fundamentalist wings, there is no purpose in denying that it is a religion except to inflame passion and hatred, which seems to be Shoebat's true mission.

Shoebat grew up as a Palestinian and Muslim under the Israeli occupation. He said in the late 1970s, he placed a bomb that exploded on the roof of an Israeli bank in Bethlehem. But since then, he has rejected Islam and has become what he calls a "fundamentalist Christian." But he said there is a difference between Islamic and Christian fundamentalists: "I know I'm a Christian fundamentalist, and I give people a headache because I proselytize. I admit that. (We) fundamentalists give the world a headache. But the Muslim fundamentalist will take the whole head off." Given the tens of thousands of victims of the Bush administration's war, Shoebat's characterization that violent Christian fundamentalists are more benign than violent Muslim fundamentalists is one that is easily challenged.

Since the recent election of Hamas by the Palestinians, many countries have threatened to sever humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter thinks aid should not be cut off to Palestine simply because it had democratic elections. But Shoebat disagrees, saying of Carter, "He should be selling peanuts; the guy is crazy."

But Shoebat did not mention what else Carter has written lately. In March, Carter wrote on TomPaine.com, "For more than a quarter century, Israeli policy has been in conflict with that of the United States," and, "The pre-eminent obstacle to peace is Israel's colonization of Palestine."

A student in the audience asked Shoebat for the advice he would give young people on creating a world of peace. Shoebat replied, "Sometimes we have to shoot brother wolf until he promises to stop eating sister sheep." I was not alone in my shock at this evidently contradictory answer, so I asked him if he really thought more violence was the way to attain peace. He replied that yes, essentially, extrajudicial assassinations were acceptable. Regarding Sheik Yassin, who was assassinated on orders from Ariel Sharon (an exploit the Bush White House called "deeply troubling"), Shoebat said, "Yes, I think it's right to kill Sheik Yassin."

Today is the 38th anniversary of another assassination, that of Martin Luther King Jr. It is also the 39th anniversary of King's most moving speech, Beyond Vietnam, in which he eloquently spoke out against violence, materialism, racism and militarism. King said, "We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or bow before the altar of retaliation." What a shame it is for Hillel to bring to USF someone who advocates hateful assassinations and retaliatory violence.

Since Sept. 29, 2000, 1,084 Israelis and 3,837 Palestinians have been killed. Enough is enough; it's time for peace.

If true peace is ever to come, it will be because moderate voices on both sides of this conflict reject those who advocate violence. We must reject calls by Shoebat for assassinations, reject Palestinian suicide bombings, reject the use of violence against Palestinians by the Israeli Defense Forces, reject U.S. military aid to either side and reject all other forms of state and non-state terrorism.