

The IDF has got its act together

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 03.11.2023

The foray into Jabalia is a successful model for continuing the offensive against Hamas. Israel must maintain a complete siege on Gaza.

Israel must make it clear: The era of surgical strikes is over

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 03.11.2023

Beyond the heavy cost in lives, the surprise offensive by Hamas has dealt a severe blow to Israel's image and deterrence. A comparison can be made to the damage inflicted by Al-Qaid on the United States in the September 11 terror attacks in which almost 3,000 people were killed.

The attack carried out by Hamas has also fractured the trust of Israel's citizens in the defense establishment. That is one of the goals of terrorism. The time for hard questions, debriefings, and drawing conclusions will come, but right now we need to devote all our attention and efforts to the battle against Hamas and to give our unreserved support to the commanders and soldiers, who, as they struggle to digest what has happened, will need to march bravely into battle and to determine the outcome. They face many and complex challenges. The dimension of time does not have an equal effect on everyone, and therefore operations against them should be prioritized and operations should be conducted in a cool and calculated manner.

First, Israel needs to clear out any Hamas terrorists still left inside Israel (an analytical reconstruction of the information and images we possess should be conducted to check the numbers and make sure no terrorists are left). At the same time, we need to re-establish control of the entire length of the border, formulate a complete and reliable picture of the missing and those held hostage, and prepare for the possibility that additional Iranian proxies will join the

fighting. We can assume that Hamas will attack Israel not just from the West Bank but from Lebanon and other arenas.

The political echelon should instruct the IDF to immediately create a 300-meter wide (900-foot) security zone on the Gazan side running the length of the border and declare that any Palestinian that enters this zone is placing his life at risk. The rules of engagement should be changed to reflect this. Supervision of this security zone and the use of lethal fire can be conducted from the air and will not necessarily require a physical military presence. With regard to the operation in Gaza, according to the statement put out by the Prime Minister's Office, the aim of the operational decisions taken is to bring about the destruction of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's military and political power in a way that will negate their ability and desire to threaten and harm the citizens of Israel for many years to come. Without getting into complex analyses, the first goal Israel must achieve in the Gaza campaign is to reduce the harm caused to its deterrence by exacting a very high price from Hamas. Unfortunately, in our neighborhood, the price is determined primarily by the extent of casualties.

The current circumstances not only justify but necessitate a departure from the policy of surgical strikes. While they provide precision and show Israel's special capabilities, they require long protracted, and complex preparations and in any event cannot constitute a sufficient price tag for the severe attack carried out by Hamas.

In place of this policy, Israel should warn the civilian population in the Gaza Strip that Israel's intentions are to launch a massive assault following the expiry of the ultimatum. Israel should destroy everything connected to Hamas: the homes of Hamas operatives, government offices, and offices belonging to the organization, institutions, banks, vehicles, generators, boats, warehouses, and workshops. The practice of "knock on the roof" (dropping low-yield devices to warn of an imminent full-scale bombing) should be suspended as it slows down the pace of operations, and the liaison office with Gaza should be closed. Israel should see itself as freed from any responsibility for the economy of the Gaza Strip and the welfare of its residents. All border crossings with Israel should be shut down, including the fuel and goods crossing and Kerem Shalom, the electricity supply should be reduced to a minimum and the strip's internet and communications should be disrupted.

At the present time, Israel should refrain from dialogue with Egypt, which could be seen by Hamas as “putting an end to the event.” Moreover, Israel should impose a complete closure on the Palestinians in the West Bank, prevent the possibility of copycat terrorist operations there, and focus military operations on Gaza

It is also the right time to examine proposals to change the conditions of incarceration of security prisoners in Israel. The scale of the attack by Hamas provides legitimacy for Israel to take extraordinary measures. It would be wrong to operate with a timer running in the background or fearful of how the United States and the international community will react.

The important plans concerning Saudi Arabia should not be a restraining factor when it comes to Gaza. The Saudi street won't react positively to Israel's operations, but they too will respect a powerful response to such a barbarian assault.

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Ten myths which need to be busted about Israel's war

written by David M. Weinberg | 03.11.2023

Bad policy thinking and faulty paradigms of the past still dominate in many capitals around the world, and too many people fall prey to the enemy's propaganda.

Hamas enjoys widespread support in Gaza

written by Yishay Armoni | 03.11.2023

Despite claims now being made that the majority of Gaza's population desires peace and is being held captive by Hamas, data and evidence collected over the past two decades consistently demonstrates the opposite. Hamas enjoys widespread support among Gaza's civilian population, which voted Hamas into power and would likely do so again. This support finds expression not only in public opinion polls, but in active participation in Hamas attacks.

In the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections, the last to be held in the Gaza Strip as well, Hamas won 76 of 132 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council. Of the 24 seats assigned to the Gaza Strip, Hamas won 15 (62%). Following Fatah's refusal to recognize the results of these elections, Hamas violently took control of the Strip in 2007, and no general elections have been held in Gaza since. However, public opinion polls conducted in recent years indicate the Gazan public's continued support of Hamas.

According to an average of polls conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) during 2022, approximately 60% of the Strip's residents on average supported the "armed struggle" (i.e. terrorist attacks) against Israel, compared to approximately 40%-50% of West Bank residents. In March 2023, support for armed struggle among Gaza residents rose to 68%.

According to the same poll, in a hypothetical election between Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, 61% of Gazans would back Haniyeh while only 35% would vote for Abbas. In a hypothetical parliamentary election, 45% said they would vote for Hamas, compared to 32% who would vote for Abbas's Fatah, while the rest would vote for other parties.

In a June 2023 PCPSR poll, support for Haniyeh rose to 65%, compared to 30% for Abbas, whereas support for armed struggle was at 64%. In this poll, 38% of the Strip's residents felt that the rise of armed Islamic movements such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and their armed struggle against Israel, were the best thing to have happened to the Palestinian people in the last 75 years

(compared to 16% in the West Bank, over twice as many).

Following the Oct. 7 massacre, waves of Gazan civilians entered Israel and took part in the pogrom. Footage from a security camera at Kibbutz Be'eri shows a mob of Gazan civilians invading the kibbutz to pillage it. Gazan civilians also participated in the second wave of kidnappings of Israeli civilians to Gaza. Hamas senior leader Saleh al-Arouri, in an Oct. 12 interview on *Al Jazeera*, claimed that the people who abducted women and children to Gaza were not Hamas operatives but rather “ordinary Gazan civilians.”

Local journalists in Gaza have described widespread public support for the massacres committed by Hamas. Gazan journalist Hind Khoudary told the *Christian Science Monitor*, “It may not be aligned with international law, but, for the first time, Palestinians here in Gaza do not feel helpless.” Journalist Ahmed Dremly also described a “feeling of euphoria” following the events.

All available evidence indicates that approximately 60% of the Gaza Strip's population supports Hamas and its armed struggle against Israel. This support is expressed both in polls and in their active participation in the organization's terrorist acts. This leads to the conclusion that claims regarding the existence of a clear ideological or political demarcation between the majority of Gaza's residents and Hamas are entirely unfounded.

None of the above is intended to conflate uninvolved Gazan civilians with Hamas terrorists, whether or not those civilians support Hamas, in the context of Israel's ongoing war against the terror group. International law makes a clear distinction between uninvolved civilians and those taking part in military activities. However, both with regard to decisions related to the military campaign, and to post-war arrangements in the Gaza Strip, it is important to present an accurate picture regarding the widespread support in Gaza for Hamas.

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Israel can go all out against Hamas - with the world's backing

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 03.11.2023

“People do not choose war; they are forced into it. Those who do not know how to submit and subordinate everything to the needs of the war, when there is no other option, are doomed. War is the ultimate test not only of strength but of the will to live.” These words, by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, were spoken a few months before the declaration of the state in 1948. They still resonate strongly, 75 years later.

Israel is at the beginning of a difficult and protracted war, in many respects a continuation of the War of Independence. The terrible price Israel paid upon entering the war is sufficient to provide it with the essential thing it needs to rebuild its deterrence and effect a fundamental change in Gaza: legitimacy at home and abroad for aggressive and protracted action, the justification to mobilize all willpower, the readiness for sacrifice, and unwavering resolve over time.

The Israeli society, in its entirety, has proved its mettle on both the front and rear. Everyone shares the over-arching goal: We must win.

The time that has passed, the actions already taken, and the numerous discussions on the many details related to the challenges of the war should not divert us from the proper goals that have been set: the elimination of Hamas' rule, the destruction of its military capabilities, and maximum effort to bring back the Israeli captives held in the Gaza Strip.

It's a process; not an event

Achieving the goals that Israel has defined will take a long time. The elimination of Hamas' rule and the destruction of its military capabilities will not be achieved in a single defined and limited operation. They will be the results of a process that will involve many prolonged and continuous actions. It is important to formulate plans and manage expectations accordingly.

Disable the centers of power of the Hamas government

Among the objectives, it appears that the elimination of Hamas' rule is the least difficult to achieve. The centers of power of the government include government ministries, communication facilities, police stations, the internal security mechanism, municipal authorities, and other command and control centers.

Eliminating these, through physical attacks or other means, will severely impact Hamas' ability to manage the situation and control the population. This will indeed increase the chaos in the strip and also the pressure on the humanitarian front, but it is an essential step towards the defined goal.

Qatar - Hast thou murdered and also inherited?

The tweet from National Security Council head Tzachi Hanegbi on the importance of Qatar's efforts to promote "humanitarian solutions" provides a glimpse into some of the dilemmas that the political echelon faces.

Israel, rightly, seeks to maximize the chances of the quick release of the captives. The path to this passes through Qatar, the sheikhdom that hosts the leaders of the murderous terrorist organization supports them and allows *Al-Jazeera* to influence the Arab street in their favor.

Qatar identifies a dual opportunity in the reality that has arisen - to save Hamas from Israel's hands and to upgrade its diplomatic status while gaining points for its humanitarian activity. While it is part of the problem, it places itself as part of the solution.

This is not just a symbolic matter: Hamas will try to exploit Qatar's involvement to buy time, create difficulties, and disrupt Israel's operational moves. It can be assumed that the political echelon and the security establishment are aware of these risks and have accordingly determined the nature of the cooperation with Qatar.

Humanitarian assistance: The bare minimum

The humanitarian aid that Israel allows for the population is intended to alleviate the political pressures on this matter. The benefit that Hamas derives from this is clear. First and foremost, from its perspective, it relieves it of concern for the population - "the world takes care of the civilians, and I take care of myself."

Moreover, it can provide a source for supplies and provisioning.

For these reasons, and to avoid compromising the effectiveness of the siege on Hamas, it is advisable to allow humanitarian assistance to a very limited extent and under scrutiny to ensure what goes in, how much, and where.

This goes against the basic generosity we have all been brought up on, but in this war, we must view a siege as one of the means of warfare. No less than that.

Do not belittle the enemy; do not make it look stronger than it is

The Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) has done a good job in disseminating the interrogation videos of Hamas terrorists who participated in attacks on Israel and survived. Beyond the authentic descriptions of the heinous acts they committed, one could be struck by the terrorists' despicable nature, their lust for blood, and their financial greed, which served as an additional incentive for their actions. They also had difficulty justifying the disparity between their actions and Islamic religious precepts, especially since their superiors, who did not put themselves at risk, were giving the orders. In no way should we underestimate this enemy, but their conduct should have us disabused of the notion that Hamas has managed to create deterrence through its horrific slaughter.

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America Needs a Decisive Israeli Victory

written by Dr. Raphael BenLevi | 03.11.2023

The outcome of the Gaza war will determine who dominates the Middle East in America's great power competition with China and Russia. A decisive Israeli victory will pave the way for a strengthened pro-American alliance of the Jewish state and the Gulf Arab monarchies. Anything less will spell the loss of American

influence in this key region. For America to prevail, Israel's victory must be overwhelmingly decisive, impressive if not shocking, and leave the region permanently changed.

On October 7, Israel suffered a devastating and unprecedented attack, resulting in a catastrophic loss of civilian life. Israel's image as a strong country, as a reliable military power, and as an intelligence leader, have endured an equally shocking blow—one with far-reaching and unavoidable consequences. The eyes of the entire region, friends and foes alike, are now on Israel to see what its response will be, and the nature of that response will determine their approach to the Jewish state for years to come. Will Israel prove itself to be a powerhouse that was momentarily caught with its guard down, or a country too hesitant and lacking in determination to survive in the jungle that is the Middle East.

It's not only Israel's image which has been badly damaged by the shocking intelligence and operational failures of October 7. Allies and friends of America, no less than its enemies, are waiting to see what the United States will do now that its closest partner in the region has been brutally attacked and humiliated. America is being tested no less than Israel; the outcome will determine whether regional states will ally with America or with China and Russia. In other words, the Gaza war will determine whether the American-led order in the Middle East is still sustainable, or rather a relic of a historical period whose time has passed.

Since the end of World War II, the American-led order has rested, fundamentally, on the credibility of the claim that the United States will use its power to underwrite the security of its formal treaty allies in Western Europe and East Asia and its informal allies in the Middle East. And even though Israel has never and does not seek American forces to fight on its behalf, nor does it seek formal security guarantees from the U.S., the credibility of American security commitments around the world is currently on the line.

In the Middle East, the Saudis are already flirting with China as an alternative superpower with strategic influence. If the U.S. fails to support Israel and instead tries to restrain it, why should Saudi Arabia, a country that enjoys far less support among the American people or in Congress than Israel does, expect any significant U.S. assistance in a future confrontation with Iran and its proxies?

The power equation of the current conflict in Gaza is therefore the same for both

Israel and the United States: Israel needs a decisive victory, and the U.S. needs a decisive Israeli victory. But what does decisive mean? Israel is currently deep in the red. In order to rehabilitate itself, Israel's response must go well beyond merely responding to the Hamas attack. It must demonstrate its power to eliminate its foes and ensure the physical security of its people by creating new realities on the ground that will resonate throughout the region.

The strategic concept by which Israel has related to Gaza since Hamas took over the Strip in 2007 and began waging war against Israel has obviously failed. The total destruction of the Hamas regime in Gaza is obviously necessary. And make no mistake, achieving any version of this goal will come at a devastating cost to the Gazan population.

Contrary to often well-meaning protests in the West, there is no easy line between Hamas and the population of Gaza. In reality, Hamas was elected by Gazans in 2006; if elections were held today, it would win again by even larger margins. The death and destruction that is about to be unleashed on Gaza is necessary to defeat the regime, and only Hamas and its Gazan supporters are to blame.

But if Israel's response is limited to simply devastating Hamas and the territory in which it has firmly implanted itself, the stain of the successful surprise attack will continue to haunt us. The whole world saw the extent of Israel's vulnerability on October 7. The governments and peoples of the region who hate us will be eager to repeat the large-scale atrocities they have been witnessing on television and social media for weeks—this time, on an even greater scale.

If Israel has learned anything from the events of the past two weeks, it must be that it is absolutely unacceptable to allow a terror-state that calls for your destruction to establish itself on your border. Period. The idea that the monster at the door can be endlessly deterred through occasional skirmishing and superior weaponry has been tried and found sorely wanting. Israel must therefore take this moment to fundamentally change the situation in which it is held hostage by not one but two genocidal terror states, Hamas and Hezbollah—the sole purpose for whose existence is to destroy Israel.

Israel's conflict with Hezbollah is inevitable. This Iranian proxy has been preparing itself to commit mass murder inside our country since Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, and in a more sophisticated way since the

Second Lebanon War in 2006. Its vast missile arsenal has been built for one reason only, and that is to kill thousands or tens of thousands of Israelis. It waits only for the right moment.

What Hamas was able to do last week is mild compared to what Hezbollah has been preparing to do since 2006. The question is not whether this conflict happens. It is simply whether we will allow Hezbollah to initiate the conflict on its terms and on its timeline, or if we will make the decision that this current war will not end without the destruction of the Hezbollah threat, on Israel's terms and on Israel's timeline.

But make no mistake, our fight is finally not only with Hamas or Hezbollah. It is with Iran. The Persians play chess, and in the regional power game, Hamas is a pawn, Hezbollah is a rook, and Iran is queen. Iran is the regional actor calling the shots, and Iran is the actor who must finish this war having suffered a clear strategic loss to its regional position and assets. Otherwise, Iran and its patrons and allies win, and the U.S. and Israel lose.

The strategic goal of the Islamic Republic is to establish itself as the dominant power from Tehran to Tel Aviv, and from Mashhad to Mecca; to establish the "Shiite crescent" and ultimately to wrest the holy cities of Islam from Saudi-Sunni control. Israel has been the central force standing in the way of this vision, and Israel's very existence has been the target of Iran's genocidal ambitions since the 1979 revolution.

In the broader regional context, an Iranian-dominated Middle East means a Russian-and-Chinese-dominated Middle East. Iran has had complex relations with both Russia and China for many years. However, in the past few years, complexity has given way to clarity. Despite Chinese and Russian hesitations over Iran's Islamist worldview, both countries have strengthened their strategic ties with the Islamic Republic. A win for Tehran in the Middle East is therefore a win for Moscow and Beijing on the global chess board.

It is therefore a strategic imperative for both Washington and Jerusalem that the Gaza war ends with a blow to Iran's positions. Hezbollah is the Iranian front line, but the IRGC forces in Syria and Iraq are the most obvious direct targets. An attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, so long planned for, should be on the table as soon as Hezbollah has been neutralized. Devastating Hamas and Hezbollah and

exacting a major price from Iran for the behavior of its proxies will come at a tremendous cost to Israel, but an even greater cost to its enemies. It is the only sufficient end to this war that can turn around what is currently a strategic disaster that threatens both America and Israel.

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Shattered

written by David M. Weinberg | 03.11.2023

Shattered by Hamas atrocities are decades of faulty strategy.

The Red Cross Must Be Given Immediate Access to the Israeli Hostages Held By Hamas

written by Dr. Adi Schwartz | 03.11.2023

Key Messages:

Hamas carried out a heinous war crime under international law when it took numerous Israeli children, women and men captive during its October 7, 2023 terrorist assault on Israel. The international community must demand that they be released immediately.

At the very least, the International Committee of the Red Cross must be given immediate access to the Israeli captives for humanitarian purposes.

Hamas must provide Israel with precise information regarding the identities of all

the Israeli citizens it is holding hostage. It must also promptly release or facilitate the transfer to a neutral country, for individuals who are seriously wounded or afflicted by specified medical conditions.

All countries, international organizations and institutions, must demand that Hamas uphold these basic humanitarian obligations.

Introduction

A large number of Israelis, including many unarmed civilians, were taken hostage during Hamas' unprovoked barbaric attack on Israel on October 7th, 2023. Media reports suggest that more than a hundred Israelis, including children, women and the elderly, were forcibly taken from their homes at gunpoint and are presently held captive by Hamas[1].

Such actions go against the principles of International Humanitarian Law, which explicitly and consistently prohibits the act of taking hostages, categorizing it as a heinous war crime[1]. Additionally, this body of law governs the treatment of prisoners of war (POWs). In accordance with universally accepted international norms, civilian hostages must be released immediately. At the very least, they should be accorded the rights granted to POWs, as elaborated in this paper.

Rights of Prisoners of Wars

[1] International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, adopted by the UN General Assembly, Res. 34/146, 17 December 1979, Article 1; Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted by the UN Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, Rome, 17 July 1998, UN Doc. A/CONF.183/9, Article 8(2)(a)(viii) and (c)(iii).

The Third Geneva Convention laid out the legal framework for the protection of POWs[1]. Every country in the world is a party to the Third Geneva Convention, which also confers a special mandate on the International Committee of the Red Cross, entrusting it with a central role in the protection of the dignity and well-being of POWs.

In accordance with universally recognized international standards, notably the Geneva Conventions, POWs are entitled to fundamental and immediate rights, which include

[1] Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949:

The detaining power must notify the authorities on which the prisoners depend of the capture.

The International Red Cross must be granted regular access to visit prisoners of war in order to verify the conditions of their detention and to restore contacts between them and their families.

Prisoners of war who are seriously wounded or suffer from specified diseases must be repatriated directly back to their own country or to a hospital in a neutral State.

1. Those whose diseases or wounds warrant a direct repatriation are:

- the incurably wounded or sick whose mental or physical fitness seems to have been gravely diminished.
- the wounded or sick who have recovered but whose mental or physical fitness seems to have been gravely and permanently diminished.
- the wounded or sick who, according to medical opinion, are not likely to recover within one year.

▪ 2. Those who may be accommodated in a neutral State are:

- the wounded and sick whose recovery may be expected within one year, or sooner if treated in a neutral country;
- prisoners of war whose mental or physical health, according to medical opinion, is seriously threatened by continued captivity, but whose accommodation in a neutral country might remove such a threat.

Any form of torture or cruelty are forbidden. The following acts are grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions: wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health.

Prisoners of war are entitled in all circumstances to respect for their person. Women must be treated with due regard to their specific needs.

Prisoners of war must be evacuated, as soon as possible, away from the combat zones.

Prisoners of war must be given sufficient food and water. They shall receive medical attention.

Prisoners of war must be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities.

Conclusion

International Humanitarian Law mandates that Hamas must promptly provide Israel with precise information regarding the number and identities of all Israeli citizens held within Palestinian custody. Moreover, it obliges Hamas to grant unrestricted access to the Red Cross for humanitarian purposes.

Additionally, the organization is expected to either promptly release or facilitate the transfer to a neutral country, such as Egypt, for individuals who are seriously wounded or afflicted by specified medical conditions, such as elderly individuals with mental disabilities, among others.

All countries, international organizations and institutions, must demand that Hamas uphold its obligations under international law. The International Committee of the Red Cross must demand immediate access to each and every one of the Israeli hostages.

[1] The Times of Israel. (2023). *Israel confirms civilians and soldiers abducted by Hamas into Gaza*. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-claims-to-capture-soldiers-civilians-in-deadly-assault-on-gaza-border-towns/>

[2] International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, adopted by the UN General Assembly, Res. 34/146, 17 December 1979, Article 1; Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted by the UN Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, Rome, 17 July 1998, UN Doc. A/CONF.183/9, Article 8(2)(a)(viii) and (c)(iii).

[3] Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949.

[4] Medecins Sans Frontieres. (2023). *Prisoners of War*. <https://guide-humanitarian-law.org/content/article/3/prisoners-of-war/>

Lessons for Israel's Fight Against Hamas from the West's Fight Against ISIS

written by Dr. Adi Schwartz | 03.11.2023

Key Messages:

- World leaders, including US President Joe Biden, have compared Hamas to ISIS.
- A Western-led coalition has been fighting ISIS in Syria and Iraq since 2014. **American Secretary of Defense, James Mattis, characterized the fight against ISIS in their stronghold of Mosul as “a war of annihilation.”**
- The fight against ISIS for Mosul, Iraq in 2016-2017 was the heaviest urban combat since World War II; **the destruction resembled that wrought by the Allied Forces in World War II on the German city of Dresden.** The UN calculated that more than 80% of Mosul was estimated to be uninhabitable as a result of the destruction.
- The city of Raqqa in Syria, another stronghold of ISIS attacked by the US military, was considered “unfit for human habitation,” following the attacks.
- While Israel will continue to take steps to avoid civilian casualties, it is likely that in its fight against ‘ISIS in Gaza’ - e.g. Hamas - it will need to adopt similar strategies and standards as those actually used in some cases by Western governments in their fight against ISIS.

Background

In the wake of the barbaric atrocities perpetrated by Hamas against Israeli civilians on October 7, 2023, numerous world leaders have unequivocally denounced the actions of this radical Islamist extremist group. Some have drawn explicit parallels between these actions and the gravest atrocities committed by the Islamic State (ISIS). For example, on October 10, United States President Joe

Biden declared: “The brutality of Hamas — this bloodthirstiness — brings to mind the worst — the worst rampages of ISIS.”[1]

The War against ISIS

In reaction to ISIS’s swift territorial expansion in Iraq and Syria, several Western nations, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, initiated interventions to counter the threat from the radical Jihadist group. Among the most significant military operations were those conducted in Mosul, located in Iraq, and Raqqa, situated in Syria, which both served as key strongholds of ISIS in the region.

According to Time magazine, senior American military commanders reached back into history for parallels and precedents as to the scope and ferocity of these battles[1]. PBS’ Frontline program cited military commanders describing the fight for Mosul as the largest military operation in the world since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the heaviest urban combat since World War II[2]. Michael Butt, Emergency Response Coordinator for International Medical Corps Iraq, said that the destruction resembled that of the Germany city of Dresden in WWII[3]. Then US Secretary of Defense James Mattis characterized the fight as “a war of annihilation.”[4]

In an interview with CBS’ Face the Nation program on May 28, 2017, Mattis said that ISIS was “a threat to all civilized nations. And the bottom line is we are going to move in an accelerated and reinforced manner, throw them on their back foot. Our intention is that the foreign fighters do not survive the fight to return home to North Africa, to Europe, to America, to Asia, to Africa. We’re not going to allow them to do so. We’re going to stop them there and take apart the caliphate.”[5]

The destruction in both Mosul and Raqqa was near total. The United Nations calculated that more than 80% of Mosul was estimated to be uninhabitable as a result of the destruction.[6] The fighting left behind eight million tons of debris.[7] Raqqa was considered “unfit for human habitation,” with around 80 percent of the city damaged or destroyed[8]. Army Command Sergeant Major, John Wayne Troxell, the senior enlisted advisor to the U.S. military’s top officer, said in November 2017 that Americans “fired more rounds in Raqqa in five months than any other Marine artillery battalion since the Vietnam War”.[9]

Collateral Damage

Since 9/11, the United States has been involved in the war against radical Islamic terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda and ISIS, with many of the battles taking place in densely populated urban areas. Under the law of armed conflict, military forces are required to apply a principle of discrimination — using deadly force against hostile forces, but not against civilian noncombatants. As applied with respect to civilian population centers, the requirement has two elements: there must be a legitimate military target, and the damage to civilians must be “proportionate.” The question of course is how many innocent civilian deaths make a strike against a legitimate military target “disproportionate”.

In an article in July 2007, Salon’s Mark Benjamin learned that “the magic number was 30,” according to Marc Garlasco, who was the US Pentagon’s chief of high-value targeting at the start of the War on Terror. “That means that if you hit 30 as the anticipated number of civilians killed, the airstrike had to go to [then Defense Secretary Donald] Rumsfeld or [then President] Bush personally to sign off.”[1] If it was anticipated that a lower number of civilian casualties would be caused by a strike on a high-value military target, the strike could be approved at less senior levels.

Conclusion

Following the heinous acts committed by Hamas on October 7, both Israel and its Western allies have declared that Hamas shares similarities with ISIS, and consequently, they advocate for a comparable approach: the complete dismantling of the organization.

To implement this strategy, Israel may consider drawing lessons from the practices of its Western counterparts in combating ISIS, particularly in urban regions akin to those in the Gaza Strip. While Israel will continue to take steps to avoid civilian casualties, it is likely that in its fight against ‘ISIS in Gaza’ - i.e., Hamas - it will need to adopt similar strategies and standards as those actually used in some cases by Western governments in their fight against ISIS.

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[3] PBS. (2017). *Frontline Mosul*. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/mosul/>

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[7] OCHA. (2017). *Syria crisis: Northeast Syria situation report no. 16 (1-30 September 2017)*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-crisis-northeast-syria-situation-report-no-16-1-30-september-2017>

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Amnesty International. (2019). *War in Raqqa: Briefing*. <https://raqqa.amnesty.org/briefing.html>

Neutrality is complicity

written by David M. Weinberg | 03.11.2023

After the Nazi-era-like rape, mutilation, and pillaging of 1,400 Israeli Jews in one day by Hamas, two weeks ago, this is what Cambridge University had to say: Breathe easy, we're "always available to provide emotional support."

Professor Kamal Munir, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for University Community and Engagement of that venerated, celebrated, beacon of integrity and intellectual status - the University of Cambridge! - wrote to "all staff" that "Our thoughts are with everyone affected by the recent events in Israel, Gaza and the Middle East."

"We understand this is a hugely difficult and distressing time, particularly for students and colleagues with connections to the region. If you need support or someone to talk to, we urge you to speak to your line manager. The Staff Counselling Centre is always available to provide emotional support...."

Not a word about the mass slaughter of Jews by Palestinian Islamic extremists. Not one murmur of discomfort. Just "thoughts" of emotional cuddling for "everyone affected" by the unnamed "recent events" in the Middle East.

At the no-less-famous bastion of highbrow thinking in America, Harvard University, President Claudine Gay along with 17 Harvard administrators called themselves "heartbroken by the death and destruction." Oy vey. Their poor hearts took such a beating. But death and destruction perpetrated by whom, and why?

Even *The New York Times* (which played an ugly role this week in pumping Hamas lies about the explosion near that Gaza hospital) found the statement tepid. Only infuriated Harvard alumni triggered a second try, eventually forcing the university's leaders to condemn "the terrorist atrocities perpetrated by Hamas."

Even then Gay felt compelled, by her oversize intellect no doubt, to add that: "Such inhumanity is abhorrent, whatever one's individual views of the origins of longstanding conflicts in the region." Why add that last conniving clause? Because Prof. Gay wouldn't want anybody to think, G-d forbid, that she placed any responsibility on her holy Palestinians for 100 years of genocidal conflict against Israel.

There has been no further reflection by the scholarly giants of Harvard, that academic powerhouse fueled by billions of dollars in Jewish philanthropy, about the implications of the Iranian-backed Hamas massacres for Western society and civilization, never mind any additional words of support for – say it! – the State of Israel.

McGill University's flabby first response also took refuge in therapeutic gobbledygook. "Yesterday's news of violent conflict in Israel and Gaza has caused many of us to feel shaken. We care deeply about your wellness and recognize that the tumultuous times in which we live can at times feel overwhelming. Below, you will find resources available to you for support."

I am so sorry that McGill profs and students are shaken! Might they also be stirred to support Israel, or even to condemn by name – yes, by name – Palestinians who beheaded babies in front of their mothers before dragging the women into slavery in Gaza and have held them incommunicado ever since?

But no, all these academics are too deeply embedded in toxic ideologies like critical race theory and woke paradigms about oppressors and dispossessors to rouse themselves against the evils of Hamas. They long have mainstreamed anti-Israel attitudes that posit moral equivalence between those whose cheerily slaughter Jews and those bad Jews who fight back.

Their neutral and anodyne sentiments about broken hearts, heartfelt feelings, sympathy for "all victims" of conflict, and other such mushy musings – even as Israeli Jews are being brutalized by heartless barbarians (– Islamist hordes that are next coming for them in the West) – is but cover for profound moral failure; grand collapse of Western spine and principle.

Prof. Gil Troy has called this the "silence of the tenured lambs." That is too soft an accusation. It's more like the "roaring rank antisemitism of the intellectuals."

These elevated minds can never sympathize with Israelis, no matter what abominations Israelis endure. After all, Jews/Israelis have brought this all down upon themselves by "occupying" their ancient homeland – which really, according to the corrupted academics, is indigenous Palestinian land (sic.). And those darn Jews are too powerful anyway.

In other situations of recent global and national conflict, say the Russian invasion

of Ukraine, or the demonstrations led by Black Lives Matter following the murder of George Floyd, or a US Supreme Court decision against abortion-on-demand, these same academics had no hesitations about issuing thunderous statements of support or condemnation. No compunctions whatsoever of speaking out decisively.

They were quick to virtue-signal their politically correct stance on the side of “truth and justice.” They festooned the august halls and headquarters of universities with the colors of Ukraine or the BLM logo. They railed against the dark backwardness of conservative justices.

None of these academics took cover under an analgesic blanket of “heartfelt concern.”

The disappointing and infuriating surrender to Hamas of the intellectuals is mirrored in diplomacy too. For decades, the rotten standard statement of UN and EU leaders in response to every Palestinian-Israeli conflagration has been to condemn the “continuing cycle of violence.” As if Israel and the Palestinians each were cavalierly engaging in murder just for fun or out of comparable burning hatred; as if “both sides,” alas, were “suffering casualties” and equally responsible for the “cycle” of violence.

What is missing from the above comments, and the usual glib reporting of international media too, is any reference to the political and moral implications of Palestinian terrorism. Nobody has the guts to remark upon the death-glorifying political culture of Palestinians that repeatedly chooses violence over negotiations.

Few are prepared to recognize the distinction between kid-killing Palestinian terrorists and Israeli soldiers conducting anti-terrorist operations who must arrest or eliminate Palestinian combatants and occasionally hit a bystander too.

Few have the rectitude to acknowledge that Palestinian society celebrates the kidnapping and mass murder of Israeli men, women, and children, while the IDF does its utmost to avoid civilian casualties.

Instead, too many Western diplomats who should know better, and Western journalists who pretend not to know better, outrageously plug symmetry, and in doing so, present the public with a horrifyingly distorted snapshot of the

Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This keeps the storyline in a neat and supposedly non-judgmental comfort zone. Except that ultimately it is very, very judgmental - against Israel.

Apparently, it is necessary to re-state the obvious: There is no moral equivalence between Israelis and Palestinians in the current struggle. Especially after the recent Hamas massacres, it should be clear that neutrality is complicity.

Reticence to condemn Hamas and to act resolutely against its monster-master Iran amounts to collusion against Israel. Hesitancy to express explicit support for Israel at this time, which also will mean unequivocally backing Israel in the many months ahead of tough fighting to crush Hamas, is tantamount to siding with the enemy.

For Israeli society, moral standards are clear. Israelis value life, not death. Israel seeks peace with all its Arab neighbors. Israel desires conflict resolution, not annihilation, of Palestinians.

By my count, Israel has put eight far-reaching compromise proposals for peace on the diplomatic table over the past 20 years - all spurned by the Palestinians. It also has fed for decades the Palestinians of Gaza with tens of thousands of tons of fuel, electricity, water, and food; and allowed tens of thousands of Gazans to work in Israel. The Palestinian response: slaughter.

The rejectionism of Palestinian leadership is clear, repeatedly laid bare by atrocious terrorism, the glorification of terrorists by the Palestinian leadership, and the financial support for terrorism of Palestinian governments including that of Palestinian Authority dictator Mahmoud Abbas, and by repeated rejection of all peace compromise proposals.

This is the time for friends of Israel around the world to speak out loudly and unambiguously in support of Israel. To demonstrate moral backbone and address good and evil, not emote limp feelings of concern. To show understanding of the grand strategic challenges posed to Israel and the entire democratic world by this latest genocidal Islamist onslaught. Just as US President Joe Biden magnificently did this week.

Now is the time for all those congressmen and global parliamentarians who have visited Israel, and all those academics and artists who have worked with their

Israeli counterparts, to rally to Israel's side.

In this regard, it is wonderful to see the initiative of a bipartisan group of 69 former US senators and representatives, forming "Former Members of Congress for Israel," meant to build and maintain support for Israel during its long war with Hamas. Such steadfast support for Israel projects must be replicated in other sister democracies.

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