

Israel must crush Hamas

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 11.10.2023

It wasn't supposed to happen. The surprise attack by Hamas is an extremely severe blow to Israel's image of deterrence, beyond the direct, very heavy price it exacted from us physically and emotionally.

This attack also severely damages Israelis' trust in the security forces. The time will come for the hard questions, investigations and drawing conclusions. Right now it is only right to focus all attention and efforts on the success of the fighting and to strengthen the hands of the commanders and fighters from all the security forces, who, while suffering the painful price of failure, are required to gather their strength and lead the hard fighting against Hamas.

How do you prevent Hezbollah from joining the fighting ?

We are in a situation that will have historical repercussions. Not only Hezbollah but also Iran and other organizations are looking to see what happens. The more powerful and tougher our response against Hamas will be, then this will convey to Hezbollah that it is not worth its while joining the fighting against Israel. Israel's actions must turn the surprise attack by Hamas against Israel into Gaza's *nakba* (tragedy).

The IDF must crush Hamas, kill everybody that belongs to the organization and destroy everything connected to it. The pattern of surgical strikes must be abandoned and practices such as "knocking on the roof" (warning with non-explosive devices that a building is about to be razed) must end. The warnings to the residents have been given, and now the time has come for guns and not just planes.

With all due respect, reports on the number of attacks or the weight of bombs dropped or the number of targets blown up are not interesting. The only figure of interest right now is the number of terrorists killed in Gaza. Unfortunately, in the tough neighborhood where we live, this is the only deterrent.

Israel has no reason to rush the offensive. The only considerations that should guide it are security and operational matters. There is no need to fear international political pressure and "the legitimacy clock running out of time." As

long as 130 Israelis - children and the elderly - are held in Gaza, the international community will be forced to recognize Israel's right to continue fighting.

Beyond that, the IDF must immediately create a "security perimeter" - an area of approximately 300 meters east of the border, along its entire length, and announce that any Palestinian who enters this area risks his life, and accordingly set instructions for opening fire.

In the civil sphere: Israel should see itself freed from any civil-economic consideration. Israel's Gaza District Coordination and Liaison office should be abolished, and a total siege should be imposed on Gaza, with the crossings between Israel and Gaza completely closed. This includes passage of fuel and goods from Kerem Shalom, electricity supply should be reduced and the communication and internet connections in the entire Strip should be disrupted.

How to deal with world reaction to the steps now necessary ?

The world understands the situation very well. The countries of the world do not want to return to the era of ISIS. Hamas has brought them back to it. The monstrous attack provides full justification for unconventional measures on Israel's part. It is wrong to act under a stopwatch or out of fear of the reaction of the international community.

What about the expected impact on Judea and Samaria?

The events have contradictory effects. On the one hand, they raise morale in the Palestinian camp and provide inspiration for more attacks. On the other hand, the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria understand that Israel is currently in great pain and will not show tolerance towards provocations. I believe that a complete closure should also be imposed on the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria. At this time, military efforts should be focused on Gaza, while no risks should be taken regarding terrorist attacks that might be inspired in Judea and Samaria.

Is there a connection between the Hamas attack and the rapprochement between Israel and Saudi Arabia?

I find it hard to believe that moving closer to Saudi Arabia had a real impact. In the eyes of Hamas, this could amount to another possible gain, but not a major consideration.

It is also too early to assess what the consequences of the situation are for normalization with Saudi Arabia, and whether this puts everything in jeopardy.

In any case, I suggest not to see our ambitions regarding Saudi Arabia as a consideration that should restrain our activities in Gaza. Even in Saudi Arabia, the similarities between the barbarism of Hamas and that of ISIS are recognized. Not everyone there will understand Israel's actions, but no one will doubt the justification.

Moreover, in the Kingdom, as in the entire Middle East, those who react strongly to such a criminal attack will be respected. At the end of the day, peace is made with the strong.

Published in Globes, October 11, 2023.