



THE GAZA WAKE-UP CALL

Dr. Boaz Ganor (Founder & Executive Director, ICT)
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ABSTRACT

Israel is not free from mistakes. Just as in previous wars and military operations, the IDF and Israel will investigate their actions after the current battle in Gaza comes to an end. Israel will draw operational conclusions, including those with moral implications. However, you my friends, Israel critics, should also do well to examine yourselves; you should avoid falling into the manipulative trap of terrorist organizations and their supporters once again in the future; you should internalize the fact that Israel's battle against the hybrid terrorist organization, Hamas (as well as its big brother in Lebanon – Hezbollah), is nothing more than a microcosm of the global international battle taking place in recent years between Islamist-jihadist terrorist organizations, and the culture of the West and of the democratic-liberal world. Israel once again finds itself the vanguard of the Western world as it is forced to cope with new methods of terrorism that will eventually threaten other Western countries. This happened during the 1960's and 1970's when Israel was forced to cope with hijackings after which the entire world faced this type of terrorist act; in the 1980's and 1990's when Israel was forced to cope with suicide attacks, a method that became widespread throughout the world in the years that followed; and again today as Israel faces a hybrid terrorism that exploits and abuses liberal democratic values and will pose a challenge to many other countries in the future.

* The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT).

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This article was written as a **wake-up call to the Western world** - the world that believes in the values of democracy, liberalism and humanity; the world that believes in human rights, civil society, minority rights and, above all, the right of all civilians **to live in security and peace** regardless of religion, race or gender. Despite the fact that the number of people who hold this liberal worldview is decreasing around the world, many of us, especially in the Western world, still share these fundamental values. This article was written for Western liberals those wonderful people imbued with values and brotherly love who find themselves shocked and full of criticism for Israel when they see photos of destruction and injuries from the Gaza Strip broadcast on their television screens. These people are exposed to **one-sided anti-Israel messages and commentaries** by different media networks operating in the Gaza Strip that face threats, censorship and biased editing by Hamas, or that receive permission to broadcast from the Gaza Strip only after proving their sympathy and loyalty to the terrorist organization.

Israel's harshest critics - those who go out into the street and hold protests, which are often violent and full of extreme hatred for Israel, can be divided into **two groups: conscious Israel haters and terrorism supporters, and naive westerners**. The first group constitutes the hard-core and violent basis of the anti-Israel demonstrations and is composed of two secondary groups: **modern anti-Semites**, who are essentially no different than the classic anti-Semitic individuals and groups that hated, persecuted and murdered Jews throughout history while blaming them for all of the world's injustice. These modern anti-Semites added to their racist hatred of Jews an extreme hatred of the Jewish State and, therefore, it does not matter to them who they support – be it dictators who carry out crimes against humanity or terrorist organizations – as long as they seek the destruction of the Jewish State. The other secondary group of Israel haters is composed of **Islamic fundamentalists** who are fundamentally opposed to the very existence of a Jewish State and, in a consistent manner, support Palestinian and Shi'ite terrorist organizations that are dedicated to Israel's destruction. These two groups seek out any opportunity to attack Israel and decry its standing in the Western world as the only **liberal democracy in the Middle East**. With the generous assistance of petrodollars that flow, both openly and secretly, into the coffers of these terrorists they

are able to operate in an organized and networked manner in order to denounce Israel at every possible opportunity, routinely and during crisis situations.

As an Israeli and a Zionist who believes in one's right to live and raise children in security and peace in this region, where my ancestors and I were born, I have no discourse with this group of Israel haters. Anything that Israel says or does, any fact presented to these Israel haters, will not shake their blind faith according to which **the Jews are guilty** and have no right to exist, neither as an ethnic national group in a Jewish State nor as individuals. Therefore, this article is not intended for modern anti-Semites and Islamic fundamentalists. Rather, it was written for members of the second group, the naive westerners that criticize Israel harshly for its operation in Gaza. These people are my contemporaries and my **peer group**. Had fate led me to be born not in Tel Aviv, but rather in Palo Alto (California), Montreal, Oslo or another Western city, I am certain that I would have found myself part of this group since **I too believe in the values of humanity, liberalism and democracy**. Members of this group, who adhere to an admirable and respectable value system, deserve **to hear the facts** beyond Hamas's propaganda and the distorted accounts of various media outlets. The fact is that for the past month **Israel has found itself under continued attack by a terrorist organization that is targeting the Israeli civilian population**.

This terrorist organization, Hamas, was **established in 1987** as the military wing of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, with the stated goal of the **destruction of the State of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in its place**. In this regard, Hamas is no different than ISIS, Al-Qaeda or other Islamic fundamentalist organizations in the Middle East who, through the use of terrorist attacks and the systematic and cruel murder of civilians, seek to overthrow existing regimes and replace them with Islamic caliphates to be ruled according to Islamic law. The goal of the destruction of Israel is not a disregarded law in Hamas's charter, which was written approximately thirty years ago. On the contrary, this goal constitutes a supreme value and the guiding force behind Hamas's current battle being waged from Gaza against Israel and its civilians. Thus, in an interview with the leader of Hamas, Khaled Mashal, that was conducted this month in Qatar by CBS's Charlie Rose, Mashal reiterated Hamas's refusal to recognize Israel's right to exist even if a Palestinian state were to be established in the future. In response to the question of whether he would be willing to co-exist alongside the State of Israel and recognize Israel as a Jewish State, Mashal answered simply – "No".

Hamas is a hybrid terrorist organization – an organization that carries out terrorist attacks against civilians under the pseudo-legitimate guise of a political organization and welfare movement. The hybrid terrorist organization **cynically and dangerously exploits the fundamental values of the democratic-liberal world** and, despite the fact that it is actively opposed to this value system, such an organization seeks to integrate into the political system and participate in elections. Without abandoning terrorism, the organization's leaders and supporters demand that the democratic-liberal world treat the terrorist organization as a legitimate political movement. (Hamas and Hezbollah are clear examples of hybrid terrorist organizations that have managed to deceive the Western world. For instance, the European Union made an absurd decision that created an artificial separation and defined Hezbollah's military wing, which carries out terrorist attacks on European soil, as a terrorist organization but exempted the organization's other wings and leadership from this definition. This decision was contrary to the uncompromising and justified position of the British government, which was not willing to provide legitimacy to the IRA until it ended its involvement in terrorist attacks).

During the current operation in Gaza, Israel was once again forced to **defend itself from another round of violence imposed upon it** by this terrorist organization that seeks its destruction and receives enormous financial support to that end from various countries, including Iran and Qatar, as well as support from media outlets at its disposal, such as Al-Jazeera. Hamas, which operated in the 1990's as an agent of Iran to topple the Oslo Accords that were signed between Israel and the Palestinians by carrying out dozens of suicide attacks in Israel, was forced to find a new method of terrorist attacks after Israel successfully thwarted suicide attacks from the Gaza Strip. Hamas found the solution in the **development of a vast array of thousands of rockets and missiles** that were either smuggled to the Gaza Strip or manufactured in Gaza with Iranian supervision and assistance. In this way, while Hamas struggled to carry out suicide attacks by sending out young brainwashed Palestinians strapped with explosives belts to murder civilians in Israel, it sought to use high-trajectory fire to create explosions on Israeli soil. Thousands of Hamas missiles and rockets were aimed at the Israeli heartland with the intention of harming many Israeli civilians. Hamas did not take pains to achieve precision in its rocket striking capability. On the contrary, the rocket hits were meant to be random. Nevertheless, Hamas – aided by Iran and Hezbollah - invested in the development of a relatively primitive rocket system but one larger than those of most countries in the world. In addition to the increase in the amount of rockets at its disposal, Hamas spent recent years working on **increasing the range** of their rockets as well. Therefore, on the

eve of the current battle in the Gaza Strip, Hamas had approximately 10,000 rockets and missiles at its disposal that covered most of Israel's territory. This arsenal forced approximately 5 million Israeli civilians (out of a population of approximately 7 million) to live under the immediate and tangible danger of rocket attacks and conduct their lives at a distance that enables them to reach bomb shelters in a span of time ranging from several seconds (in the south of Israel) to two minutes (in the north of Israel) from the moment the rocket is launched in Gaza.

Let us refer to history for a moment. In 2005 the Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, decided on the **Gaza Disengagement Plan** during which Israel unilaterally evacuated its military forces as well as Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip. Hamas, which won the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in January 2006, **quickly took control of the Gaza Strip and used extreme violence against members of Fatah**, some of whom were imprisoned, tortured and killed by Hamas militants. For the first time in Palestinian history, Hamas had the opportunity to improve conditions for the residents of the Gaza Strip with the hundreds of millions of dollars that it received from Qatar, Iran and other countries in order to build a prosperous political entity in Gaza. However, blind hatred of Israel coupled with Hamas leaders' Islamist religious fervor and hunger for power, led them to direct most of the economic resources to the **unprecedented construction of offensive and defensive military systems throughout the Gaza Strip**. These military systems included, among other things: thousands of rockets and missiles and hundreds of launchers, the development of an underground system interconnecting most of the Gaza Strip and specifically located under densely populated areas (the construction of tunnels dozens of meters underground to enable the secure movement of Hamas militants and allow the organization's leadership to hide, as well as dozens of attack tunnels to enable Hamas militants to penetrate Israeli territory and carry out terrorist attacks on Israel's home front), as well as hundreds of deep launch pits for shooting rockets and missiles from within and near civilian structures, hospitals, mosques, schools and UNRWA shelters. Instead of investing the aid money that it received to establish civilian infrastructure for health, education, transportation and communication, these petrodollars were invested in military systems on an unprecedented scale. Hamas, which pretends to represent the interests of the Palestinian people, not only wasted a huge amount of money that could have helped improve the welfare of the Palestinians and transform the Gaza Strip into a prosperous political entity, it did so in a cynical and deliberate manner that enabled it to drag Israel into a military confrontation and **forced it to cause collateral damage to Palestinian civilians living above, within and adjacent to Hamas's**

launchers and military targets in its attempt to stop the rocket fire into Israeli territory. As if that was not enough, Hamas, which also imposed terror and fear among the Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip, executed suspected "collaborators" with Israel, and adopted a **strategy of using Palestinian civilians as human shields, whether voluntarily or by force.**

Hamas misused the Palestinian civilian population in its attempt to protect its launch systems, military headquarters, weapons depots, command and leadership. Hamas is well aware of the values and moral inhibitions that Israel imposes upon itself in its military operations in the densely populated civilian territories, and this is precisely the reason why **Hamas developed its entire combat strategy in an attempt to neutralize Israel's military and intelligence superiority,** even if in doing so it commits **war crimes against its own people.** Hamas's strategy changed an asymmetric war between a terrorist organization and a country to a war of **reverse asymmetry;** a war in which the Israeli "Goliath", in possession of tremendous military capabilities and resources, is fighting with its bound hands and feet against a terrorist organization that pretends to be "David" while exploiting the rules of war and Israel's moral inhibitions, and hides behind the Palestinian civilian population.

In its attempt to defend itself from the unprecedented threat of thousands of rockets and missiles from Hamas and other terrorist organizations, Israel developed the most advanced anti-missile technology – the "Iron Dome". The Iron Dome does the seemingly impossible, and manages to neutralize the vast majority of rockets and missiles fired from the Gaza Strip that endanger the Israeli home front. So **while Israel invested large sums of money in the development of a missile system to protect its civilian population, Hamas invested in the development of underground systems so the Palestinian civilian population would protect its missiles.**

In general, terrorist organizations view civilians (both enemy civilians as well as their own civilians) as nothing more than a means to achieve their goals. As the Iraqi ISIS enjoys significant military achievements recently while committing the mass slaughter of Iraqi and Syrian civilians, including beheading of civilians who do not accept its authority, raping women and maiming children, Hamas execute Palestinians and forbids **others from evacuating buildings adjacent to the rocket launchers.** Hamas **wires civilian structures with explosive devices even while Palestinian civilians are still inhabiting them,** it positions **ammunition depots and missile bases in civilian structures,** and carries out **ambushes against IDF forces while firing from within or**

next to UNRWA facilities in order to draw counter fire that will harm civilians. Hamas knows that it cannot defeat Israel militarily and, therefore, its terrorist strategy is aimed at **bringing about Israel's diplomatic submission under international pressure**. In this respect, the suffering of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip only serves Hamas's ultimate goal.

Hamas did not hesitate to publish **exaggerated casualty figures** and lie about the number of civilian casualties, refer to military clashes and ambushes as a massacre, or conceal the identity and military role of terrorists who were injured and killed in battle, claiming that they were Palestinian civilians. In addition, Hamas **refused to maintain ceasefires and violated humanitarian breaks in fighting** that were unilaterally initiated by Israel - ceasefires intended to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian population. From Hamas's perspective, what their rockets and missiles are unable to achieve can be accomplished by the horrific images of dead Palestinian children. When there is a shortage of such photos, **horrific images from other areas of conflict, such as the civil war in Syria, can be recycled and attributed to Gaza**.

While Hamas tries to drag Israel into a situation in which it causes unintentional harm to Palestinian civilians, the IDF is waging a complex battle in combat zones located in booby-trapped and fortified civilian areas while making **unprecedented efforts to evacuate Palestinian citizens before attacking Hamas targets** and missile launchers adjacent to civilian buildings. To that end, Israel carries out various procedures to provide early warning, including scattering leaflets from the air, sending text messages, making phone calls and even sending warning shots just before the attack.

Despite Israel's efforts, it seems that **Hamas's propaganda war is working**. Any moral person in the Western world (including those in Israel) is horrified by the photos of Palestinian civilians, especially children, who have been injured and killed in the fighting. Very few people in the world understand that when a modern army like the IDF mounts a justified defensive war in crowded civilian territory, which Hamas spent years fortifying with booby-traps, and when the terrorist organization cynically exploits its civilians as human shields, **Palestinian civilian casualties are impossible to avoid**.

When presented with photos of injured civilians, it is difficult to explain the **real significance of the number of Palestinian casualties** – after a month of fighting in one of the most densely populated regions in the world, when the enemy exploits civilian areas to shoot over 3,500 rockets at Israel and the IDF carries out approximately 5,000

attacks against Hamas targets, the deaths of 1,800 Palestinians (at least half of whom were known terrorists) does not indicate a lack of proportionality, as many people believe, despite the regret over any loss of innocent life. On the contrary, **the number of Palestinian casualties actually reflects Israel's selectivity and restraint.** The fact that the number of Palestinian casualties over the past month of fighting under the above-described conditions is approximately the number of casualties in one day of fighting in the Syrian civil war or Iraq reveals the hypocrisy and double standards of the civilized western world. While Israel wages another round in the ongoing existential war in Gaza, against a terrorist organization supported by hundreds of millions of Islamic fundamentalists who seek its destruction, the civilized world has no problem criticizing and railing against Israel in the United Nations and other international organizations while **ignoring the crimes against humanity being committed by Israel's fundamentalist enemies every other day.**

Every soldier who ever took part in urban warfare understands all too well the challenges and dilemmas faced by IDF soldiers in the battle against Hamas in Gaza. He also knows that any other army in the world fighting under the same conditions would cause a much higher number of casualties among the Palestinian civilian population. However, instead of praising the restraint and selectivity taken by Israel under difficult fighting conditions, many people around the world accuse Israel of **disproportionate action** in Gaza. In most cases critics do not accuse Israel of intentionally harming civilians but they justify their claims against Israel by asserting that “only” 67 Israelis were killed in the latest war in Gaza versus approximately 1,800 Palestinians. Of course, this argument has no basis in reality. According to the rules of war and international conventions, **proportionality is not measured by comparing the total number of casualties on both sides during a war, but rather by comparing the operational advantage of a certain military action versus the collateral damage that it is liable to cause.** The injustice in accusing Israel of disproportionate action can be illustrated in the following example – if Israel conducted itself in exactly the same manner as it has for the past month in the latest war in Gaza, but if the Iron Dome defense system that it developed did not exist or was not as effective and the 3,500 rockets and missiles that were fired at Israel led to 2,000 Israeli civilian deaths, would those critics who claim disproportionate action still make this false accusation against Israel?

Israel is forced to pay a high price for its selectivity and restraint in the war in Gaza. In the rules of combat dictated by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Israel's policy of restraint **doesn't deter Hamas from continuing its war against Israel and doesn't prevent the**

renewal of fighting after a ceasefire is ended. While the Hamas leadership has been almost entirely unharmed during the month-long battle as they hide deep underground, underneath hospitals and civilian structures, the damage that Israel is capable of causing to Hamas is, at best, tactical or operational but not strategic and not a deterrent. **Paradoxically, Israel's restraint is prolonging the state of war in Gaza as well as the suffering of the Palestinian and Israeli populations.**

In conclusion, Israel is not free from mistakes. Just as in previous wars and military operations, **the IDF and Israel will investigate their actions after the current battle in Gaza comes to an end.** Israel will draw operational conclusions, including those with moral implications. However, you my friends, Israel criticizers, should also do well to examine yourselves; you should avoid falling into the manipulative trap of terrorist organizations and their supporters again in the future; you should internalize the fact that Israel's battle against the hybrid terrorist organization, Hamas (as well as its big brother in Lebanon – Hezbollah), is nothing more than a **microcosm of the global international battle taking place in recent years between Islamist-jihadist terrorist organizations, and the culture of the West and of the democratic-liberal world.** Israel once again finds itself the vanguard of the Western world as it is forced to cope with new methods of terrorism that will eventually threaten other Western countries. This happened during the 1960's and 1970's when Israel was forced to cope with hijackings after which the entire world faced this type of terrorist act; in the 1980's and 1990's when Israel was forced to cope with suicide attacks, a method that became widespread throughout the world in the years that followed; and again today as Israel faces a hybrid terrorism that exploits and abuses liberal democratic values and will pose a challenge to many other countries in the future.

My friends, you would do well to internalize the fact that **Israel is the projectile blocking layer against which waves of fundamental Islamist terrorism crash on their way to attack the liberal-democratic world. As such, Israel is protecting you.**