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happening again?

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FOR A BETTER WORLD

EDITOR'S NOTE

This AIR edition looks at the causes and outcomes of the 11-day Israel-Hamas war in mid-May, the fourth such conflict since 2008.

Amotz Asa-El explains what happened, why, and how the violence affected Israel's ongoing political stalemate, while Haviv Rettig Gur explains the fundamental flaw in the Hamas strategy that led it to launch the conflict. Plus, Yaakov Lappin consults Israeli experts about how Hamas' re-armament can be limited, while top US scholar Robert Satloff offers a playbook for the Biden Administration for dealing with the war's fallout. And former US Marine Corps commander Lt. Gen. Richard Natonski, writing with Jonathan Ruhe, warns that this war was only a pale shadow of a potential future Israeli war with Hezbollah.

Also featured this month is US columnist Ben Cohen analysing the explosion of antisemitism that accompanied this war, including the appearance of gangs of pro-Palestinian thugs attacking random Jews in Western cities. Meanwhile, Yaakov Katz explains the amazing history of Israel's "knock on the roof" technique for minimising civilian casualties in asymmetrical wars like the recent one.

And don't miss Palestinian human rights activist Bassem Eid's plea to his people not to be led astray by Hamas, and Australian academic Ran Porat's further revelations about the Australian arm of Iran's international propaganda apparatus.

Please give us your feedback on any aspect of this edition at editorial@aijac.org.au.

Tzvi Fleischer

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ON THE COVER

The immediate aftermath of a Palestinian rocket hitting a passenger bus in Holon, Israel, on May 11, 2021.

(Credit: Roman Yanushevsky/Shutterstock)

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Print Post Approved – 100007869www.aijac.org.au**FROM THE
EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN****COLIN RUBENSTEIN**

GAZA REVEALS IRAN SANCTIONS RELIEF DANGER

The massive barrage of some 4,350 rockets launched between May 10 and May 21 by Hamas and other Iranian-sponsored terror groups from Gaza toward Israeli cities should serve as a wake-up call to Western negotiators in Vienna. The talks there to bring the US and Iran back into compliance with the 2015 JCPOA nuclear deal are very relevant to what happened in Israel and Gaza.

Back in 2019, even under crippling sanctions, Iran reportedly increased its funding to Hamas to US\$30 million a month. That funding would surely be vastly increased should Iran be rewarded with large-scale sanctions relief, as the Vienna negotiators are reportedly preparing to do.

Iran's Gaza funding is not intended to address the humanitarian needs of Palestinians but rather to assist Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to develop as many military grade rockets, drones, incendiary balloons and other military assets as possible, including fortified bunkers, rocket launchers and tunnels, all deliberately placed in civilian urban areas. This emboldens these terror organisations and callously and cruelly places innocent Gazans in danger as human shields.

Neither Hamas nor Iran make any effort to hide this military and strategic partnership. Rather, they celebrate it. On May 21, senior Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh offered his "thanks and gratitude to those who gave money and weapons to the valiant Resistance, the Islamic Republic of Iran, who were generous and provided the Resistance with money, weapons and technology."

Once, Iran primarily smuggled rockets to Gaza by sea or through tunnels from Sinai. Stymied by countermeasures taken by Egypt and Israel, in recent years it has shifted its focus to training Gazans in missile construction, while providing blueprints and parts.

Haniyeh also revealed the widespread Western presumption that Hamas merely reacted to supposed Israeli provocations in Jerusalem to be a complete fallacy. "This battle has destroyed the project of 'coexistence' with the Israeli occupation, of the project 'normalisation' with Israel," he said, revealing Hamas' real motives – to undermine the Abraham Accords between Israel and Arab states and to drive a wedge between Israel's Jewish and Arab populations.

Furthermore, two weeks before the escalation, Palestinian Media Watch reported a major surge in incitement to violence by both Fatah and Hamas as part of an attempt to burnish their credentials as "defenders of Jerusalem" ahead of an election for the Palestinian Authority that was ultimately cancelled.

As in previous rounds of violence, Hamas attacked Israel after apparently calculating that whatever price it would pay militarily would be offset by the vilification of Israel in the global media and online. Too many supposedly sophisticated journalists and commentators fail to grasp the cynical way asymmetric terror warfare makes the imbalance of power work to the advantage of those who employ it. Instead, they default to a morally bankrupt assumption that the "weaker" party must be the innocent victim, the "stronger", the criminal aggressor. Iran and its clients, including Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis, are masters of exploiting this lazy belief.

As Hamas' representative in Iran, Khaled al-Qaddumi, told Iranian TV on May 24, "It is not the matter of who is the victor. It's the matter of how much the resistance fighters managed to... convey the message of the Palestinian people to the international community."

Meanwhile, the IDF knows that every Gazan civilian killed, regardless of circumstances, increases international pressure on Israel to stop defending itself against Hamas attacks. That's just one more reason why Israel takes every reasonable measure within its control to limit risk to innocent Palestinian lives through the use of warnings, intelligence gathering and precision targeting.

This was conceded even by Matthias Schmale, Gaza Director for the UN's Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA, who told Israeli television, "I think the precision [of Israeli air strikes] was there."

The IDF struck 1,500 targets, yet it limited to 248 the number of Palestinians killed – and it's becoming increasingly clear that most were likely fighters from Hamas and other terror groups. It is simply unreasonable to expect collateral damage in any defensive warfare to be zero, yet media attributions of all the women and children killed on the Palestinian side to "Israeli air strikes" were simply wrong. It is known that many casualties were caused by the more than 650 rockets that fell short and landed inside Gaza. In addition, some buildings collapsed, not from direct Israeli hits, but from being undermined when Hamas tunnels nearby imploded.

And Gaza was riddled with these tunnels – used as hideouts, missile factories, ambush traps, guerilla pathways and attack routes extending toward Israeli territory

– to an extent that is difficult to comprehend. The IDF reportedly destroyed more than 100 kilometres of them.


Of course, moral responsibility for the tragic loss of civilian lives rests on the cynical and brutal shoulders of terrorist Hamas.

Moreover, Gaza's rockets and tunnels were, by any reckoning, a mind-boggling expense for an area with a population so heavily dependent on humanitarian aid.

Which brings us back to Vienna, where Iran is not only expecting, but demanding to be given a blank cheque – not just financially, but politically and militarily – to ramp up all of its problematic activities,

including sponsorship of terror groups like Hamas and Hezbollah.

It is not too late to change tack. On May 12, 43 Republican senators signed a letter to US President Biden urging the suspension of negotiations with Iran, warning the rush to a deal risks "potentially providing billions of dollars in sanctions relief [that] will no doubt contribute to Iran's support of Hamas and other terrorist organisations."

It's a well-founded concern and one that should give pause, not only across the political aisle in Washington, but also here in Australia and amongst anyone in the global community who values peace and stability, especially across the Middle East, in these troubled times. 

WORD FOR WORD

"Let's get something straight here: Until the region says, unequivocally, they acknowledge the right of Israel to exist as an independent Jewish state, there will be no peace."

US President Joe Biden at a media conference (Whitehouse.gov, May 21).

"Today we are witnessing the birth of a new Palestine... fighting with missiles. A new Israel has also emerged, one that is broken, frustrated, downcast, that has lost confidence in itself."

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps chief Hossein Salami at a pro-Palestinian rally during the recent conflict (Times of Israel, May 19).

"The United States and Israel are absolutely united in the proposition that Iran must never be allowed to acquire a nuclear weapon. We share exactly the same goal. It's no secret that sometimes we have differences about the best way to achieve that goal."

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, at a media conference during

his post-Gaza conflict visit to Israel (Times of Israel, May 25).

"I very much appreciate our friend the United States, which has been standing by our side for many years. That's an integral part of our national security. But there could be a situation in which our highest goal – to guarantee that the ayatollahs don't end the thousands of years of existence of the Jewish people – will require us to take brave and independent decisions."

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu (Times of Israel, May 24).

"The military succeeded in the tasks it was given, [but] the government failed... [Prime Minister Binyamin] Netanyahu's failures extend from Meron to Gaza, from the Temple Mount to Lod. It's time to go."

Yesh Atid leader Yair Lapid, currently tasked with forming a new government (Times of Israel, May 21).

"The recent attacks on the Jewish community are despicable, and they must stop. I condemn this hateful behaviour at home and abroad – it's up to all of us to give hate no safe harbor."

US President Joe Biden on Twitter responding to the recent outbreak of antisemitic attacks in the US and elsewhere (Jerusalem Post, May 24).



SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

THE “ETHNIC CLEANSING SOLUTION” ON PARADE

Regular readers of this column will know that I have repeatedly shown evidence that substantial portions of the Palestinian national movement are seeking something I call the “ethnic cleansing solution”. This is not a two-state solution – Israeli and Palestinian states coexisting – or even a one-state solution – a single state encompassing both Palestinians and Jews – but quite simply a “solution” calling for all the Jews to leave the area between the “river and the sea” or else be killed.

Recent events have provided ample evidence of this aspiration. In this edition (p. 14), Haviv Rettig Gur quotes Hamas deputy head Abu Marzouk saying the war against Israel will go on until the Jews negotiate “their leaving of Palestine.”

And even before the recent conflict, on May 7, senior Hamas official Fathi Hamad called on Palestinians to “cut off the heads of the Jews with knives,” adding, “The Jews have spread corruption and acted with arrogance... The moment of destruction at your hands has arrived.”

This perhaps echoes the Hamas Covenant which, alongside other blatant examples of antisemitism, includes a religious tradition predicting that Muslims will ultimately murder all Jews.

Meanwhile, Hamas’ allies have also been getting in on the ethnic cleansing fun. On May 24, Hezbollah released a cartoon infomercial urging Jews to leave Israel and offering supposed tips on how to do so. It added, “Your displacement around the world is your gift from God.”

Meanwhile, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also suggested the Jews would be forced to leave Israel in tweets that accompanied his Al-Quds Day speech on May 7. After going on about Israel’s imminent destruction, he touted Iran’s “plan” to settle the situation in Palestine: “Palestine’s original residents will vote. The referendum will determine the political system.” After that, he said, “That political system... will bring back to their own country all of those who have been displaced and it will decide about the foreign settlers.”

In case it is not clear enough, the “foreign settlers” are Israel’s Jews. He doesn’t say they will be expelled by the “original residents” but he clearly is implying that they have a right to expel these “foreigners” if they want to.

As Rettig Gur notes, Israel’s Jews have nowhere else to go and are not going anywhere. The delusional belief by Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran, as well as other Palestinian actors, that they can ultimately cleanse “Palestine” of its

nearly seven million Jewish inhabitants is not only abhorrent, but a major barrier to peace.

THE ANTISEMITIC GOVERNMENTS CLUB GROWS

As Ben Cohen reports in this edition (p. 24), there has been a surge in antisemitism around the world during the recent Gaza conflict, including some truly frightening incidents, such as the public call in London to rape Jewish girls and the completely unprovoked attack on Jewish diners at an LA restaurant. Commentators have noted how antisemitism seems to be losing its stigma in many circles. This trend appears particularly worrying if we look at the representatives of national governments making openly antisemitic remarks in recent weeks.

Iran is no surprise – its leaders, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, have been consistent purveyors of Holocaust denial over many years, as well as other antisemitic claims, amidst their constant calls for Israel to be destroyed. On May 7, before the recent violence, official Iranian TV published a video titled “The Big Lie”, featuring lots of blatant antisemitism. Its narrator claimed, “the fabricated story about the massacre of six million Jews in World War II” was actually the result of a plan whereby “against the backdrop of the World War, the first phase of the Zionists’ project of taking over the world began.”

Another not very surprising purveyor of antisemitic rhetoric has been Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan – though he took his long history of antisemitic remarks to a new level by apparently invoking “blood libel”, the racist claim that Jews kill non-Jewish children to drink their blood. He said of Israel, they are “terrorists”, “it is in their nature,” and “they kill children who are five or six years old. They only are satisfied by sucking their blood.” Not surprisingly these comments led to condemnation from the US Government.

But there are also some new members of the antisemitic governments club. Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, in an interview with CNN on May 20, said that Israel is losing “the media war” in its battle against Hamas, “despite their connections.” The interviewer replied “What are their connections?” Qureshi laughed, and said “Deep pockets.” Asked what he meant, Qureshi answered: “Well they’re very influential people, they control media.”

And even China has dived in, with May 17 comments by a host on the overseas channel of the official state broadcaster CCTV that “some people believe that US pro-Israeli policy is traceable to the influence of wealthy Jews in the US and the Jewish lobby on US foreign policy makers” before adding, “Jews dominate finance and internet sectors.” This incident followed several Chinese embassies tweeting a cartoon featuring an image of the Grim Reaper

carrying a scythe with the Israeli flag leaving a bloody trail behind him. It's an image frequently shared by Holocaust deniers and white supremacists.

Antisemitism is obviously becoming far less fringe, as major world governments increasingly embrace and amplify it.

A MATTER OF PROPORTION

I shouldn't have to explain this yet again, but public discourse during the recent Gaza war makes it clear I do: The international military and humanitarian law concept of "proportionality" has very little to do with the common meaning of the term: "corresponding in size or amount."

It absolutely does not mean that, if attacked, you can only fight back using as much force as was directed at you, use the same weapons the enemy used against you, shoot only as many bullets as were fired at you, or kill only as many of the enemy as their forces killed on your side.

The US Army's *Commander's Handbook on the Law of Land Warfare* summarises what the concept really means: "[it] requires a commander to refrain from attacks in which the expected loss or injury to civilians incidental to such attacks would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage to be gained."

In other words, it's about the proportion between expected civilian damage and expected military advantage. You can only tell if an attack is "disproportionate", and therefore illegal, if you know what the military objective of it was, the military means at the disposal of the commander ordering it, the military situation on the ground at the time of the attack and also the commander's knowledge of it. Casualty numbers alone tell you very little about an attack's proportionality and comparing casualty numbers between two warring sides tells you exactly nothing about it.

Moreover, the very concept of proportionality makes it completely clear that causing some civilian casualties and damage to civilian property is expected and legal in warfare – provided they were caused in pursuit of valid and legal military objectives, and one makes efforts to try to minimise such casualties as much as possible. Many commentators seem to assume any such casualties are automatically war crimes.

As former US military Judge Advocate and Harvard Law graduate David French recently wrote, "Under the laws of war, once Hamas initiated hostilities against Israel, then Israel possessed the legal right to not just defend itself against Hamas's attacks or to retaliate against Hamas's attacks, but to also *destroy Hamas as a military force*" and was therefore entitled to use whatever force was necessary to further that goal.

He also noted that Israel "sometimes even goes beyond the requirements of the law of war by, for example, warning targets of imminent strikes."

You know who else agrees with both these points? The former commander of the US Marine Corps, Lt. Gen (ret.) Richard Natonski, published in this edition (p. 21). He also says Israel adheres to the laws of armed conflict, and that claims otherwise are "wilful distortion" while noting that Israel's 'knock on the roof' and telephone warnings to minimise civilian casualties "exceed the law of armed conflict's requirements."

But French also put the damage to Gaza in perspective. He writes: "if you want to know what even the lawful, proportionate use of force can do to a city when a terrorist army digs in, I'd invite you to look at some of these before and after photos of Mosul after US and allied forces drove ISIS out of the city." And he shows the following two photos, displaying south-east Mosul in 2015, before the allied offensive, and the same area in July 2017:



The ugliness of urban warfare against dug-in jihadists: Mosul before and after the battle against ISIS

He notes that battle against ISIS in Mosul is estimated to have left some 30,000 people dead and displaced upwards of a million – yet there was "virtually no international outcry."

What happened to Gaza and Gazans is extremely tragic, and the world should be doing everything possible to prevent another similar round of conflict – which, above

all, requires disarming or defanging Hamas. Nonetheless, the next time you hear claims about alleged illegally “disproportionate” Israeli actions in Gaza, and people point to either casualty figures or pictures of destroyed buildings as evidence, be aware that these claims are based on either gross ignorance, wilful malice or both.

AIR

DECONSTRUCTION ZONE

Bassem Eid

A LETTER TO MY PALESTINIAN BRETHREN

I know that the 11 days of war were incredibly devastating and equally bewildering. Why did the world let the Israelis do this to you? I am writing to you, my Palestinian brothers and sisters, to open your eyes to the disinformation that your real captor, Hamas, is feeding you.

To my Palestinian brethren, I implore you: please do not let Hamas brainwash you into thinking it has “achieved” anything on our behalf.

Hamas is not a social justice movement and it certainly does not care about me or you. It is a criminal gang that only cares about increasing its own power at all of our expense. Your lives will start to improve only when the Hamas reign of terror finally ends.

Yes, I know that to some in the media Hamas has more or less achieved its goal in this vile destructive war it started on May 10. It had spread fake news about Sheikh Jarrah being the core of Jewish aggression. It has incited violent riots at Al-Aqsa by falsely claiming that the Jews are going to destroy Al-Aqsa, when that has never been true.

And then it exploited the situation it created by starting a war with Israel to then justify its rocket attacks.

All the while, Hamas showed Palestinians a clear contrast between its ability to act and Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah party’s inability to do much of anything.

It is vitally important for you to realise and remember that Hamas is the main cause of suffering for you, my fellow Palestinians in Gaza. It is Hamas that ignored warnings that water wells were growing too salty from over-pumping, leading to a point where Gaza’s tap water isn’t safe to drink. It is Hamas that diverted much of the massive humanitarian supplies meant for you that Israel has been allowing in daily in hundreds of trucks. It is Hamas

that has been stealing the cement and metal from the imports meant to build houses for you so that it could spend billions of dollars on a massive subterranean network of tunnels for its purposes only.

And when it came to war with the Israelis, Hamas deliberately used you as human shields, stationing rocket launchers and missile arsenals in your homes, apartments, office buildings and even hospitals – just as it did in 2014.

And Hamas has been carelessly shelling the most highly populated regions of Israel, with no specific target or strategy. Yet I know from my sources in Gaza that as many as 25% of all rockets launched by Hamas crashed within Gaza. That has resulted in Hamas killing as many as 50 of the civilians whose deaths it falsely blames on Israel.

Ask yourself, how exactly do our people benefit from any of this? And what is to be gained?

Palestinians living in those four buildings in Sheikh Jarrah will still eventually be evicted, a fact that has been known to those families for decades. But forget about Sheikh Jarrah for a moment. Think about the even greater number of Palestinians who are now homeless in Gaza because Hamas chose to hide weapons in residential buildings.

And when hostilities end, you can be sure that it won’t be the people of Gaza or representatives of your true interests, but the Hamas gang that will be cutting the lucrative financial compensation deals with Qatar and European NGOs “to rebuild Gaza.”

Remember who got rich last time after the 2014 war with Israel? Hamas will do the same exact thing: it will spend its next instalments of Qatari money to replenish its arsenal rather than rebuild homes, purchase coronavirus vaccines or provide social services for the people. And Hamas is sure

to continue to plot terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians. So Israel will have an even greater justification for restricting access to Al-Aqsa and maintaining the defensive blockade around Gaza: It is you who will suffer, not Hamas with its rebuilt fancy villas.

And the peace you so much deserve, which could have been possible when Israel withdrew entirely from the Gaza Strip in 2005 only to see Hamas set up an authoritarian military junta, will be even further out of reach.

I urge you to open your eyes and see past the Hamas deception. No matter how many Jews it manages to kill, Hamas will have achieved nothing that benefits ordinary Palestinians.

AIR



Palestinian mourners attend the funeral of members of the Ezz-Al Din Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of the Hamas movement, in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip (Credit: Abed Rahim Khatib/Shutterstock)

Bassem Eid is a Jerusalem-based Palestinian political analyst, human rights pioneer and expert commentator on Arab and Pales-

tinian affairs. He grew up in an UNRWA refugee camp. © IPT News (www.investigativeproject.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

GOING VIRAL

Little imagination is required to anticipate the reaction among South-East Asian governments to the eruption of hostilities between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The language of officialdom ticked all the necessary boxes, but the colour is found in the dramatic responses of the public, where social media hikes the volume up to 11.

As the fighting continued into its second week, the Muslim-majority nations issued a rare joint statement on May 16. Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Malaysia's Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, and the Sultan of Brunei attacked Israel's air strikes on Gaza and what they described as its "inhumane, colonial, and apartheid" policy toward the Palestinian people.

"We reiterate our solidarity with, and commitment to the Palestinian people, including their rights to self-determination, and the creation of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine," it added.

These sentiments were echoed vociferously in the streets where protesters waving Palestinian flags marched through several cities in Indonesia and Malaysia, but Malaysian officialdom took it a step further.

The Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) announced it would be looking closely at social media platforms for signs of pro-Israel bias. Saifuddin Abdullah, Malaysia's Communications and Multimedia Minister and head of the MCMC, took to Twitter to condemn "certain social media platforms that appear to be biased, because it has made too easy an effort to censor content that supports the Palestinian struggle," he said, without elaborating.

Such vigilance is only directed one way. McDonald's Malaysia was forced to deny channelling aid to Israel, labelling the claims a "lie and slanderous" amidst WhatsApp messages calling for the boycott of the brand. Head of McDonald's Malaysia Azmir Jaafar said the boycott is "unfounded" and that the company which operates McDonald's in Malaysia was fully taken over by Saudi Arabia's Reza Group with a local business partner in 2017, in which the company's equity is owned by Muslims.

Azmir added that the situation in the Middle East is indeed something to be very sad about, but this does not mean that "baseless and defamatory allegations can be thrown lightly."

Meanwhile, Malaysia's halal activists have launched a boycott of products they said were linked to Israel, starting with Coca-Cola. A video showing members of Malaysia's Islamic Consumers Association removing dozens of Coca-Cola bottles from a grocery store in Kuala Lumpur has been circulating online.

The five-minute video also showed the group, led by lead vigilante Nadzim Johan, 62, peeling the brand's labels off a drinks fridge and replacing them with a sign saying, "We do not sell Coca-Cola here." They tried to set those labels on fire outside the store before deciding to stomp on them, inviting others from the restaurant next door to join in the performance.

Coca-Cola's representative in Malaysia reacted to the video, stressing that the drinks were made locally. It also weighed in on the violence in the Middle East, saying that it was "deeply concerned." Other targets of the group include coffee chain Starbucks, sports brand Puma, and tech company Hewlett-Packard.

Also feeling the heat is former Malaysian beauty queen Larissa Ping. The Miss World Malaysia of 2018 drew backlash after calling out Malaysian keyboard warriors for cyberbullying Miss Universe Israel, Tehila Levi, on social media over Israel's actions against Hamas.

Malaysians began bombarding Levi, who is completing mandatory military service, with hateful comments after she appeared in the national costume round of the Miss Universe pageant while the hostilities continued.

"I'm so embarrassed and mad at our Malaysian keyboard warriors who cyberbullied Miss Universe Israel," Ping said on May 15 before deleting the comment. "It's leaving such a bad image on Malaysia and it might affect our own Malaysian representative," she added.

For her trouble, Ping was herself targeted as her social media page was deluged with profanities. One of the comments said: "Beauty without brains is useless, wouldn't it be better if you were bombed too?"

In Indonesia, one confused cyber warrior is facing six years in prison under Indonesia's Information and Electronic Transactions Act (UU ITE), with police alleging that he insulted Palestinians in a TikTok video, even though he claims it was a mix-up.

"H", 23, went viral with his TikTok video in which he called Palestinians pigs and said they should be massacred. He has since been charged with violation of articles under the controversial UU ITE.

In another video uploaded on TikTok, H asked his audience for forgiveness and said that he had misunderstood the Palestinian role in the situation. "I have made a mistake in what I said, apparently the coloniser is Israel. Israel f--- you, is what I meant, please forgive me for my error," he said.

Despite the apology, police confirmed that H has been arrested and that the legal process will continue.



BEHIND THE NEWS

ROCKET AND TERROR

On May 10, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and other Gaza militant factions started a major conflict with Israel and ultimately launched over 4,360 rockets toward Israel. Of these, nearly 700 fell inside Gaza, while about 90% of missiles on target to hit populated areas in Israel were intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system. However, 12 people in Israel were killed, and hundreds wounded.



Israel under fire

The IDF retaliatory operation, dubbed "Guardian of the Walls", struck over 1,500 targets, including rocket launchers and tunnels, and killed more than 200 militants from various groups. The Hamas-run Gazan Health Ministry claimed at least 248 Palestinian deaths in Gaza, though this figure makes no distinction between civilians and fighters or between casualties from errant Palestinian rocket fire and Israeli strikes. A ceasefire was declared on May 21.

During the conflict, new rockets and suicide drones of Iranian design were employed by both Hamas and PIJ, including Hamas' Ayyash missile with a range of over 200km and PIJ's Badr-3 rocket with a large payload.

Three rockets were fired from Lebanon towards Israel on May 13, and six more on May 17, but all fell into the sea or fell short. Three rockets were fired from Syria on May 14. On May 18, an armed drone launched by Iranian forces from either Iraq or

Syria was shot down by the IDF.

Earlier, 43 rockets had been fired from Gaza between April 23 and April 28. Palestinians had also recommenced incendiary balloon attacks from Gaza.

On May 2, a drive-by shooter in the West Bank killed one 19-year-old Israeli student and wounded two others. Two people were wounded in a stabbing attack in Jerusalem on May 24.

PALESTINIAN VICTIMS OF HAMAS ROCKETS

As noted, almost 700 rockets fired at Israel fell short and landed in Gaza, killing and injuring an unknown number of Palestinians. The IDF has publicly said that at least 17 Palestinians, including several children, were killed in this way on May 10 before Israel even commenced retaliatory strikes. The Palestinian NGO Defence for Children Palestine confirmed a rocket fired from Gaza caused the deaths of eight members of one Palestinian family on May 10.

UNREST INSIDE ISRAEL

During the Hamas-Israel conflict from May 10 until May 21, intercommunal violence between Arabs and Jews broke out in a number of Israeli cities, including Lod, Ramle, Haifa, Acre, Jaffa, Tiberias and Jerusalem. At least one Jew and one Arab died as a result of mob violence, with many seriously injured.

Rioters torched several synagogues, as well as homes, businesses and vehicles, threw rocks and fire-bombs and engaged in bashings and vandalism. There were several lynching attempts. Police made a total of 1,552 arrests, saying 70% of those arrested were Arabs and 30% Jews.

PFLP ALLEGEDLY STOLE EUROPEAN MONEY

Israel's security apparatus alleged in early May that the leftist terrorist group the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) had used its health organisation, the Health Work Committee, to divert millions of euros donated by European countries and organisations to fund terror activities over several years.

According to reports, the PFLP used multiple methods, including fraudulent financial documents, made-up projects and inflated salaries to obtain the European funds and then use them to pay families of terrorists, for recruitment and for propaganda.

CANADA: IRAN DOWNING UKRAINIAN AIRLINER WASTERRORISM

The Superior Court of Justice in Canada's Ontario province ruled on May 21 that the shooting down of Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 near Teheran on Jan. 8, 2020 constituted "an act of terrorism." The plane was hit by missiles fired by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) which, after initially denying responsibility, claimed it was an accident. Many of the 176 passengers who perished were Canadians.

Meanwhile, Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) agreed on May 24 to extend a three-month monitoring agreement reached in February for a further month. The agreement had provided that Iran would retain IAEA data and monitoring records relating to Iran's nuclear program. Teheran had said that unless Iran received sanctions relief by the time the deal expired, it would destroy the material without the IAEA being allowed to see it.

ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE LINKED TO SOLEIMANI KILLING

A May 8 report by Fox News on the assassination of IRGC Quds Force chief Qassem Soleimani in January 2020 claimed that Israeli intelligence was vital to the operation. According to the report, Israel had all of Soleimani's mobile phone numbers, which he switched frequently for security reasons, and worked with US operatives to track the numbers. Israel also reportedly tipped off the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) about a courier for Soleimani, who was going to pick up mobile phones for him, enabling them to plant bugged phones for him to purchase.

AUSTRIA BANS HEZBOLLAH

In mid-May, Austria became the latest European country to ban all Hezbollah activity inside the country, joining a growing group of nations that no longer make a distinction between the organisation's so-called political and military wings.

On May 11, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced new US sanctions against seven operatives of Hezbollah's financial arm, and called on other countries to do more to restrict and disrupt the group's activities.

US, AUSTRALIA AND CANADA TO BOYCOTT DURBAN IV

Australia, the US and Canada have all announced they will not attend the UN conference on Sept. 22 to mark the 20th anniversary of the World Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa, colloquially known as "Durban IV". The US and Israel withdrew from the first Durban conference in 2001 because of pervasive anti-Zionism and antisemitism.

Israel was the only state singled out in the conference's final declaration as being associated with racism, while the NGO forum which accompanied the conference featured widespread antisemitism.

A US State Department spokesperson told the *Jerusalem Post* on May 4 that the US would not take part in Durban IV and said while Washington "remains deeply committed to combating antisemitism at home and abroad... [it] has always shared [Israel's] concerns over the Durban process's anti-Israel sentiment."

Australia's PM Scott Morrison announced on May 6 that Australia would not attend Durban IV, stating: "We will not associate Australia with one-sided and contentious language that singles out Israel or an event that champions such language. This is entirely consistent with my Government's very strong voting position on UN General Assembly resolutions,

in the Human Rights Council and elsewhere."

On May 7, Canada announced it also wouldn't attend.

ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN COVID NUMBERS

As of May 25, there had been a total of 839,367 coronavirus cases in Israel, up from 837,218 as of April 20, with a total of 6,406 deaths, up from 6,341.

Approximately 62.9% of the population had by then received their first dose of coronavirus vaccine, while 59.15% had been fully vaccinated.

In the Palestinian-ruled areas of the West Bank, there had been 305,777 cases, up from 282,270 a month earlier, and 3,470 deaths, up from 3,047. In Gaza, the number of cases rose to 106,994, up from 91,086 cases the previous month.



STRANGER THAN FICTION

EVEN WHEN YOU LOSE YOU WIN

While it is arguable that Hamas achieved some of its strategic aims in the recent conflict with Israel, it clearly suffered the worst of the damage, with Israel claiming to have killed more than 200 fighters and several top commanders, and destroyed countless Hamas military assets, from command centres to rocket factories to a considerable part of Hamas' vast tunnel network.

However, that didn't stop figures from Iran, Hamas' key sponsor, from stretching the truth rather blatantly in congratulating Hamas on its "military victory".

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh tweeted, "Congratulations to our Palestinian sisters & brothers for the historic victory. Your resistance forced the aggressor to retreat."

Similarly, the Iranian *Tasnim* news agency stated Israel was "forced to resort to Arab and international mediators for

a ceasefire by unofficially admitting their inability to continue the war." In fact, Israel resisted international pressure to cease its attacks until it had achieved its military aims.

The *Tasnim* article also claimed Israel's goal was to "kill civilians in Gaza in the first place, with the aim of pressuring the Palestinian resistance to surrender" notwithstanding that, as is well known, Israel generally warned civilians to flee before bombing buildings containing Hamas facilities, and that with Israel's fire power, if it had wanted to kill many more civilians, it could easily have done so.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Commander-in-Chief Major General Hossein Salami resorted to just making things up, telling a May 19 rally, "Their missile factory was destroyed and the Haifa refinery exploded, and the largest defence complex called Rafael caught fire, and the security of the Zionist regime has suffered an endless defeat."

In fact, there was no damage to the Haifa refinery, any Rafael facilities or any missile factories (Israel has more than one).

COVER STORY

HAMAS' WAR

THE CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE FOURTH GAZA CONFLICT

by Amotz Asa-El

It was a perfect storm. It lasted 11 days, raged across two fronts, involved four arenas of conflict and was by far the most complex, and possibly the most pivotal, of Islamist-ruled Gaza's four military bouts with Israel.

The first front was in Gaza – which fired more than 4,000 rockets and mortars at Israel and absorbed massive airstrikes and some artillery attacks in retaliation. The second front was in Israel's so-called mixed towns, where violence erupted among Arab and Jewish communities which have been living side by side since Israel's inception.

Meanwhile, besides the military and the diplomatic arenas where all previous Israel-Hamas confrontations had unfolded, this conflict involved some social and political settings that were not a significant part of the previous rounds.

The military collision was sparked when Hamas fired seven missiles at Jerusalem on May 10, after giving the Israeli Government an ultimatum to evacuate its forces from parts of Jerusalem. Those missiles fell several kilometres short of the Israeli capital's urban centre, but the *casus belli* was obvious – and what's more, that first salvo was followed by a heavy bombardment of towns across southern Israel with hundreds of missiles.

Israel responded with aerial attacks on military installations and targeted killings of Hamas commanders. The following day some 100 rockets were fired at greater Tel Aviv, causing schools to close all the way up to Netanya, 30 km north of Tel Aviv, and flights to Ben-Gurion Airport to be rerouted.

Hamas ended up firing more than 4,300 rockets, missiles and mortars, of which nearly 40% were intercepted by the Iron Dome system while more than half fell either

in open fields or on the Gazan side of the border. Many of the salvos targeted Ashkelon, the seaside city of 145,000 just 10 kilometres from the Strip's northern border, and Ashdod, the port city of 225,000 halfway between Gaza and Tel Aviv.

Hamas' rockets sent millions into bomb shelters and killed 11 civilians in Israel: eight in the south, one in Ramat Gan near Tel Aviv, and two – father and daughter Halil and Nadeen Awad – outside Lod, southeast of Tel Aviv. One Israeli soldier was killed by an anti-tank missile fired at a jeep along the Gaza border.

On the Palestinian side Hamas lost more than 200 fighters according to the Israeli military, including six senior commanders, as Israeli jets and drones struck more than 6,000 targets throughout the 365 sq. km Gaza Strip.

The IDF's efforts to avoid civilian casualties, most notably by dropping unexploding projectiles on high-rise buildings before knocking them down, were only partially successful. Hamas' strategy of firing from within densely populated streets resulted in several dozen civilian fatalities, including women and children, a tally for which there is no exact accepted total (despite media claims to the contrary). It is clear that some of the casualties were killed by the nearly 700 Palestinian projectiles that misfired and landed inside Gaza.

The fighting ended after both sides agreed, through Egyptian mediation, to cease firing without any preconditions or commitments. Now the question is how the fourth major round of fighting between Israel and Hamas since the latter's takeover of Gaza in 2007 will impact the future.

From the military point of view, the main event was

“From the military point of view, the main event was the IDF's demolition of the extensive tunnel system that Hamas has built in recent years”



(From top) Palestinian factions launch a large batch of rockets from the Gaza Strip towards Israel; Destroyed houses and cars due to a Hamas rocket attack in Petah Tikva, Israel (Credit: Abed Rahim Khatib/ Shutterstock)

the IDF's demolition of the extensive tunnel system that Hamas has built in recent years. The system, which Israeli intelligence called "the metro," was designed to shelter Hamas fighters from bombings and to provide fortified positions from which to battle an IDF invasion.

Realising this, the IDF sent 160 jets and created a troop build-up along the border to create the impression of an unfolding ground operation. When Hamas fighters rushed to the tunnels the IDF collapsed them with special bunker-busting bombs. Meanwhile, squads from special Hamas anti-tank units who emerged from the tunnels to prepare ambushes for the IDF were attacked on the surface. It is believed that this is how Hamas sustained most of its casualties.

While Hamas sees the lost manpower as replaceable, the exposure of the tunnel system's vulnerability means the loss of a strategic asset in which Hamas invested a fortune.

The tunnels also failed to serve Hamas as the offensive weapon they were originally meant to offer – with cross-border "attack tunnels" intended to lead terrorists directly into Israeli communities near Gaza. Not one such attack was attempted, apparently reflecting the efficiency of a system of underground walls and sensors which Israel built around the Strip.

Indeed, Hamas failed in all its efforts to diversify its offensive beyond missiles and mortars – explosive drones were quickly shot down, and an unmanned mini-submarine that was on its way to attack an Israeli destination was destroyed soon after beginning its mission.

Even so, Hamas is portraying this bout as a victory, not only because it survived 11 days of massive retaliatory fire, but because of this bout's political dimension.

Hamas' political assault was ignited in Ramallah and waged in Jerusalem.

In Ramallah, on April 29, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas cancelled what would have been the West Bank's first general election since 2005. Hamas was widely expected to emerge substantially strengthened from the election, if not win it outright.

In Jerusalem, meanwhile, thousands who flocked to the Temple Mount for Ramadan prayers clashed with police, both on the Temple Mount and around the Old City's Damascus Gate. The pretext was an impending court decision concerning seven houses in the east Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah whose Arab tenants face eviction by Jewish property owners.

Fuming at the cancellation of the election it expected to win, Hamas used the situation in Jerusalem to issue Israel an ultimatum to remove its police from both the Temple Mount and Sheikh Jarrah. It was the sort of demand no Israeli government would even begin to consider, and therefore obviously intended as a pretext for the violence Hamas planned to unleash.

The IDF and the Shin Bet secret service had reportedly warned the Government that Hamas was preparing for a major confrontation. However, no one predicted or expected the violence would involve Israeli Arab towns and mixed Arab-Jewish ones, inside Israel. Police were therefore caught completely off guard when mobs in Jaffa, Lod and Acre attacked passers-by, vandalised parks, burnt garbage dumps, bus stations and cars, and ransacked restaurants and shops.

Worse, in the working class town of Lod, whose 77,000 inhabitants are 30% Arab, three synagogues were torched, and four more were vandalised.

Worst of all, in several locations, there were lynching attempts against Jewish residents.

The rampages spread north, to Arab towns in the Galilee, and south, to Bedouin areas in the Negev. Extremist Jewish mobs soon entered the unpoliced vacuum and began attacking innocent Arab bystanders and shops. In Bat Yam south of Tel Aviv, there was an attempt to lynch an Arab passerby.

By the third day of the riots, police began regaining control of the situation, sending hundreds of Border Police and mounted police to patrol the mixed cities, while hundreds of suspected rioters were rounded up, with the

Shin Bet's involvement. Indictments soon followed and hundreds were charged with various felonies, from arson to attempted murder.

The urban violence was quelled – but the wounds it inflicted on Arab-Jewish communal relations are expected to take years to heal.

The circumstances that produced this violence also remain to be fully explored. There had been two previous serious outbursts of Israeli Arab violence – first in 1976, in response to land confiscations in the Galilee, and then in 2000, as the Second Intifada began.

However, neither of the two precedents was nearly as widespread nor as intense as what Israel faced this time around. The possibility that Hamas actually planned the riots within Israel, perhaps even managed them together with local allies, cannot be ruled out.

Moreover, the political timing of the riots was unique not only in terms of the cancelled Palestinian elections, but also in terms of a potentially historic coalition deal which had looked about to be reached in Israel.

When Hamas touched off the fighting, Israeli politicians were reportedly some 24 hours away from signing a ground-breaking agreement that would have created a coalition government that seemed set to reboot Arab-Jewish civic relations.

“The 11-day war that rained thousands of rockets on Israeli cities had hardly ended when Israel’s political cliff-hanger resumed in earnest”

Led for its first two years by the nationalist hi-tech entrepreneur and former defence minister Naftali Bennett, the coalition was to be centred on the liberal centrist Yesh Atid party. Its leader, former finance minister Yair Lapid, was to serve as foreign minister before switching jobs with

Bennett to become prime minister two years later.

Besides Bennett and Lapid's parties, another five parties were to be in this so-called “coalition of change.” This included

not only the left-wing Labor and Meretz parties, but also the United Arab List (Ra'am), a pragmatic Islamic party led by dentist Mansour Abbas, whose focus is on improving life in Israeli Arab towns.

The would-be coalition's members said their ideologically improbable grouping was meant to address the social tensions that had surfaced during Israel's two-year long political crisis.

The fight with Hamas brought that spirit of reconciliation to an abrupt end. “The coalition of change is no longer on the agenda,” Bennett said following consultations within his party, reasoning that such a configuration would be unsuitable for confronting the internal violence that had erupted within Israel.

Pundits suggested torpedoing the “coalition of change” may have actually been one of Hamas' goals, because from its fundamentalist viewpoint, a spirit of reconciliation between Israel's Arabs and Jews would have been a major setback.

Just where Israeli politics will now head is unclear. Technically, the mandate Lapid was given by President Reuven Rivlin to form a government expires on June 2. Practically, however, there appears to be no way he can form a coalition without Bennett, just as incumbent Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu can't form a coalition without Mansour Abbas, an option that Netanyahu's far-right partner, the Religious Zionism Party, flatly rejects.

Netanyahu, for his part, is reportedly still hoping to lure in another right-wing faction, New Hope, despite this party's vow not to sit in government under Netanyahu while he is on trial for corruption charges.

At the same time, Netanyahu is trying to convince Bennett and the Likud's satellite parties to go to a special election in which voters would directly elect a prime minister, but not a new Knesset. This idea, however, enjoys little support outside Netanyahu's party Likud.

Once Lapid's mandate to form government expires, the Knesset will have 21 days to try to crown a prime minister without the president's involvement, before new elections are automatically called.


And so, the 11-day war that rained thousands of rockets

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on Israeli cities had hardly ended when Israel's political cliff-hanger resumed in earnest, suggesting this stalemate is almost as permanent as Hamas' animosity to the Jewish state.

Even so, one ray of light flickered through the mayhem, encapsulating the many dramas of recent weeks. MK Mansour Abbas appeared alongside Lod's Mayor Yair Revivo outside one of the city's burnt synagogues, and vowed to take part in its reconstruction, before telling all those who blocked his path to Israel's corridors of power, from the Israeli far-Right to Hamas: "This is not Islam's way." 

THE GLITCH IN HAMAS' FOREVER WAR

by Haviv Rettig Gur

Hamas just concluded 11 long and painful days of war that inflicted on it enormous damage.

Many have noted how it successfully used its surprise May 10 rocket bombardment of Israeli cities to position itself as the undisputed leader of the Palestinian cause in place of decrepit old Fatah.

But that achievement was attained in the first day or two of fighting. Ten more days of sustained Israeli bombardment later, the terror group now faces the military version of a painful hangover.

Hamas was just forced to spend 11 days watching as Israel systematically disrupted its tactical innovations and demolished hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of its military infrastructure. The group has spent a decade building major new warfighting capabilities meant to challenge Israel on new and unexpected fronts. All proved ineffective or outright useless.

A crack naval commando force equipped with miniature submarines failed to produce a single significant attack and saw much of its infrastructure and equipment blown up from the air. The fast-moving anti-tank missile crews tasked with photogenically destroying Israeli military vehicles were identified and destroyed so quickly in the early days of the fighting that Hamas ordered them withdrawn from the battlefield. Strike drones able to precisely target Israeli installations were intercepted with despair-inducing efficiency. And the sprawling underground tunnel and bunker system dubbed "the metro" that offered Hamas fighters the ability to quickly manoeuvre across the urban battlefields of Gaza without exposing themselves to Israeli airstrikes only ended up providing Israel with cleaner military targets.

Israel showed it had deeply penetrated the Hamas ranks, targeting a long list of mid-level commanders and



Despite the enormous damage to Hamas infrastructure in Gaza (top), Hamas leaders like Yahya Sinwar (bottom) spoke of victory (Credit: Abed Rahim Khatib/ Shutterstock)

then publicising the list.

And finally, there's the death toll. Putting aside any debate about either side's morals for a moment, purely on tactical grounds, the IDF prefers a low death toll on both sides: on the Palestinian side to keep the political window open for continued airstrikes, and on the Israeli side to avoid a narrative that it had failed in its primary duty to protect Israelis. Hamas needs higher death tolls – again, sticking to tactical considerations only – on the Palestinian side to hasten international pressure to close the Israeli attack window and on the Israeli side to show, in the grim logic of such confrontations, that it had inflicted some measure of pain on the other side in a war it had started.

The IDF emerged the clear winner in that contest. Hamas managed just 12 Israeli dead at the cost of massive damage to its expensive infrastructure. The total Palestinian death toll after thousands of Israeli strikes, according to Hamas' own reckoning and including both fighters and civilians, was 248. That math offers no comfort to the families of civilians killed in the Israeli strikes, of course, but in its cold, simple numbers it nonetheless reveals a level of surgical precision that may well be unprecedented in the annals of modern warfare.

'WHERE DID ISRAEL GO?'

Of course, none of that got in the way of Hamas declaring and celebrating its "victory", using the term in the way



pioneered by Hezbollah in 2006 that sees the mere fact of surviving a firefight with Israel, irrespective of the damage wrought to one's country or the lack of damage inflicted on the enemy, as a "victory."

Yet that strange standard for "victory" is not as ridiculous as it sounds. It flows from Hamas' strategic vision, which was not dented by the tactical failures of the past 11 days.

One doesn't have to search very hard to uncover that vision. Hamas talks about it constantly.

On May 19, Hamas deputy political chief Musa Abu Marzouk gave an interview to *Russia Today* in which he clarified what Hamas believed the war was about.

The current war, he said, "is not the final war" with Israel. There will be more.

"It's not like it was in Vietnam and elsewhere, where things ended up with negotiations. This is just one of a [series] of wars, and a war will come when we negotiate with them [i.e., the Jews] about the end of their occupation and their leaving of Palestine," Abu Marzouk said, according to a translation by Middle East Media Research Institute.

There would be no compromises allowing Israel to continue existing or the Jews to remain in the land, he assured. "Israel will come to an end just like it began, and our Palestinian people will return to their homes because injustice cannot last and people must get what is rightly theirs."

That end, he insisted, was no fantasy: "We are no dreamers. Until recently, they mocked Hamas' rockets and called them children's toys. I do not believe anyone is saying this today. Until recently, the whole world supported the white government in South Africa, but things have changed. Where did the Soviet Union go? Where did the Berlin Wall go? The day will come when people ask: 'Where did Israel go?'"

The interview is one of countless expressions of what amounts to Hamas' most fundamental belief about its enemy: that the Jews of Israel are an illegitimate usurper polity, the last vestige of European colonialism, and therefore doomed to failure like all other European colonial projects from the last century. Israel in Hamas' telling is not a people competing with the Palestinians for a single uncomfortably narrow strip of land. It is, like the Soviet Union, East Germany, or the South African apartheid regime before it, a thin patina of political institutions and concepts that will burn away in the harsh light of sustained resistance.

It may take a great many painful sacrifices to get there, of course.

But in the end, with a few more years of patient and painful sacrifice, and, crucially, an abiding refusal to compromise, the Jews will leave.

In Hamas' vision, the pain endured by Gazans over the past 11 days was a worthwhile price to pay for the great boon of sidelining accommodationist Fatah in the West Bank and reunifying the Palestinian ranks around that anti-colonial struggle.

THE BIG QUESTION

As Hamas comes to dominate the Palestinian national movement, the question that overshadows all others, the question with the power to determine the Palestinian future, and by extension the Israeli one too, is a simple one: Is Hamas' grand strategy correct? Will it work?

Palestinians believe Israeli Jews are dead-set on sweeping them out of the land. Polls in recent years found not only that most Palestinians believe Israel plans to demol-

"Hamas' most fundamental belief [is] that the Jews of Israel are an illegitimate usurper polity, the last vestige of European colonialism, and therefore doomed to failure like all other European colonial projects"

ish the Al-Aqsa Mosque on Jerusalem's Temple Mount, the cornerstone of Palestinian identity and religion, but about half of Palestinians believe Israel may succeed in doing so. The belief in Israel's malign designs on Al-Aqsa is no mere conspiracy theory. It's an expression of vulnerability, of the sense among many Palestinians that they could not stop Israel from destroying Al-Aqsa if it chose to.

Most Israeli Jews, meanwhile, are convinced Palestinian violence is not ultimately a protest at their misbehaviour or at unjust policies, but is rooted in the ideology described so clearly by Abu Marzouk: Incessant and remorseless violence until the Jews all flee from the country or are killed.

Israelis believe that partly because major Palestinian factions routinely say it. But they also believe it because they experienced it. The world may have forgotten the Second Intifada that began in 2000, in which relentless waves of well over 100 suicide bombings detonated in Israel's cities and left the Oslo-supporting left shattered and marginalised for a generation and counting. Israelis have not.

That wave of shocking, sustained violence began not three decades into a failed peace process, but in 2000, scarcely eight years into what most observers believed was a successful effort to that point. Israeli troops had left Palestinian cities starting in the mid-1990s, the Palestinian Authority was established, and Israeli, Palestinian and American leaders were in Camp David negotiating – so Israelis were told at the time – the final boundaries of the two-state solution. It was then that a paroxysm of violence and brutality suddenly swept over Palestinian society and dashed the hopes of a generation.

The point here is not that the Second Intifada is unexplainable. The point here is only to say that the Israeli experience of those terror waves did not see them as an attack on the occupation, but as an attack on an Israel trying to dismantle the occupation.

Israeli Jews do not feel as vulnerable as Palestinians; they do not believe the other side is likely to succeed. But the belief that Palestinians are trying to remove them drives the corollary belief that Palestinian violence is ultimately not an argument against Israeli policies, but against Israelis' existence. Palestinian terrorism, this mainstream Israeli view holds, is not unthinking and reactive. It is planned and purposeful, rooted in the strategy described by Abu Marzouk, a strategy that interprets any Israeli compromise or accommodation as evidence of weakness.

'HOW DO WE EXPEL THE JEWS?'

In the mid-1990s, two IDF major generals were coming to the end of their long and storied military careers. Meir Dagan had led everything from commando squads to armoured brigades and would later go on to serve as director of the Mossad. Yossi Ben Hanan, after serving as one of Israel's most successful tank commanders in the 1973 war, would go on to lead the armoured corps and the IDF's research and development arm – though he is most famous for a 1967 *LIFE* magazine cover photo of his 22-year-old self standing in the waters of the Suez Canal, a symbol of Israeli vitality and military success.

By the mid-1990s, the two grizzled veterans, newly released from their military duties, planned to travel together to Vietnam. Both were avid students of military history, including of the Vietnam conflict. They applied for visas and made a special request to the Vietnamese authorities: to meet General Vo Nguyen Giap.



Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Giap was one of the great strategic minds of the 20th century, a former schoolteacher who played a central role in developing the strategic thinking and organisational capabilities that transformed ragtag rural

provincials into a military force that would rout the most powerful nations in the world, from the Japanese occupation to the French and the Americans over three long decades of conflict culminating in the end of the Vietnam War in 1975.

Giap was also a ruthless and often tyrannical leader, murdering opponents of Vietnam's Communist movement and overseeing a guerrilla war that sacrificed hundreds of thousands of his own fighters to the cause.

Unexpectedly, the request was approved. Giap agreed to meet them. When the Israelis arrived in Vietnam, they sat down with the man who by then had spent decades as his country's defence minister. It was a long meeting, as Ben Hanan would later recall to Eran Lerman, a former top-ranked IDF intelligence officer and later deputy

national security adviser. Lerman, now at the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, told the story to this writer.

When the Israelis rose to leave, Giap suddenly turned to the Palestinian issue. "Listen," he said, "the Palestinians are always coming here and saying to me, 'You expelled the French and the Americans. How do we expel the Jews?'"

The generals were intrigued. "And what do you tell them?"

"I tell them," Giap replied, "that the French went back to France and the Americans to America. But the Jews have nowhere to go. You will not expel them."

THE WAR ABROAD AND THE WAR AT HOME

It's no accident that Giap's final observation stuck so vividly in Ben Hanan's mind, or in Lerman's.

There is a profound tragedy here for the Palestinian cause. Even as it gains overseas support at levels unseen since the 1970s, those supporters, largely ignorant of the strategic discourse within the Palestinian national movement, spent the recent conflict lining up squarely behind the very party that has driven the Palestinian cause into a brick wall.

Each side in this conflict believes the other is engaged in an eliminationist war. That renders both all but immune to foreign pressure. Palestinian behaviour didn't change when the Trump Administration cut desperately needed US aid. Will Israeli behaviour change if progressive US lawmakers like Senator Bernie Sanders halt the sale of missiles to Israel? If Sanders' condition for the sale is that Israel not strike at Hamas in the future, even as the terror group barrages Israel's cities, would Israel agree to sit idle in the next war, or will it find alternative sources for its missile supply?

After the latest conflict, Hamas celebrated its ability to send Israelis scurrying to bomb shelters. A colonialist tyrant, after all, survives by projecting an aura of strength. Hamas believes its job is to puncture holes, ceaselessly and mercilessly, in that self-assurance.

But Israeli Jews do not see themselves as an artificial

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colonialist entity doomed to fall. They believe they are a people with nowhere to go and facing an unappeasable foe. Just as Palestinians are unified and mobilised by Israeli pressure, so Israeli Jews are unified and mobilised by Palestinian pressure. A sense of vulnerability and unjust victimisation may be a liability to a colonialist enterprise, but to a wartime population that believes it is defending its home, it is a strategic boon, a gift that Hamas continually confers on Israeli morale.

And that's the tragedy in a nutshell. The Palestinians have two basic strategies: relentless anti-colonial-style violence on the one hand and international diplomatic and economic pressure on Israel on the other. It has not yet dawned on Palestinians, nor on the foreign supporters eager to carry their banner, that the two strategies cancel each other out, that Hamas is constantly clarifying to Israelis the dire consequences of their acquiescence to international demands.

A Palestinian polity increasingly dominated by Hamas now appears set to go down that self-defeating rabbit hole for a good few years. As both sides begin preparations for the next war promised by Abu Marzouk, the safe money, as always, is on the pessimists. Things are going to get a lot worse before they start getting better.

AIR

Haviv Rettig Gur is the Times of Israel's senior analyst. © Times of Israel (www.timesofisrael.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

HOW TO STOP HAMAS' RE-ARMAMENT

by Yaakov Lappin

As the truce in Gaza takes hold, Israel and the international community must employ multiple approaches to prevent Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) from

once again using a quiet period to rearm themselves, a former Israeli defence official has said.

Col. (res.) Shaul Shay, who served as the deputy head of Israel's National Security Council and is today a senior research fellow at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, told *JNS* that setting this goal would be a good example of translating military success during the latest escalation.

Until now, the formula in place allowed Gaza's terror factions to exploit truces to build up their military-terrorist capabilities, noted Shay, who also served as the intelligence officer for the IDF's Southern Command.

"In the past, the principle was that quiet will be met with quiet, allowing Hamas and PIJ to be immune from [Israel Defence Forces] strikes so long as they did not fire or take an initiative against Israel."

He called for a new formula that enabled a "freezing of the situation in terms of force build-up" in Gaza. While seeking the demilitarisation of Gaza was not realistic, he noted that there are levers available to Israel to stop the factions from rearming.

The first is a new level of supervision by Israel and international elements that will operate in Gaza over all reconstruction activities. While Israel has an interest in civilian reconstruction, this must be conditioned on a freeze of Hamas' arms program, he said.

"In order to rebuild Gaza, materials like cement, metals and other construction material will be needed to replace destroyed buildings. But these same materials can go into rebuilding the 'metro,'" said Shay, referring to the network of hundreds of kilometres of underground tunnels built by Hamas for military purposes, of which Israel destroyed some 100 kilometres in the recent conflict.

"There must be an international mechanism set up in Gaza that will monitor the entry of materials and how they are used," he added.

In addition, material that can be used to create rocket engines and warheads must be kept out of Gaza through a strict supervision system that monitors what comes into the Strip. This mechanism must identify and exclude industrial material that can be used to create rockets.

The third component, according to Shay, is further clamping down on weapons-smuggling into Gaza, such as anti-tank Kornet missiles and Grad rockets.

"There must be a tightening of supervision to discover tunnels linking Sinai to Gaza," he said. "Egypt has done excellent work on this compared to past years, and the scope of smuggling has decreased, but there are still some gaps that need to be further decreased."

The same is true for goods entering Gaza from Israel, which require the strictest inspection, while the Israeli Navy must continue its ongoing efforts to prevent boat smugglers from bringing in weapons-building materials.

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While Israel and Egypt have cracked down on smuggling, they still need to stop the import of weapons like these Kornet anti-tank missiles (Credit: Abed Rahim Khatib/ Shutterstock)

“Beyond that, there has to be a wider strategy, in which aid money [primarily from Qatar] no longer goes directly to Hamas, but goes to the Palestinian Authority. More monitoring of this money is needed because if Hamas gets it, it chooses what to spend it on,” explained Shay. “Of course, Israel needs to stop Iranian and Turkish funds from reaching Hamas, and work on disrupting those financing channels.”

The United States and European Union can help lead this strategic change, enabling a significant improvement of life in Gaza, investments in the building of industrial zones, and improvements in employment, health and energy; however, all of this must be conditioned on a full stop of terrorist activities, said Shaul.

‘THIS INFRASTRUCTURE WAS BUILT WITH INTERNATIONAL FUNDING’

According to IDF assessments, 90% of the know-how on weapons-building among Hamas and PIJ members originates from Iran, with weapons engineers travelling to Iran and being trained in production in past years. That knowledge was then used to create rocket production centres throughout the Gaza Strip.

The IDF has kept a close watch on the number of rockets in each organisation’s arsenal, as well as their ranges and warheads.

Standard explosives such as C4, TNT and RDX (royal demolition explosive) material are used in the warheads. Sewer pipes are often used for engine parts, as is fibreglass. The IDF has called on international aid organisations to only bring plastic pipes into Gaza and to avoid all metal pipes, which Hamas cuts out of the ground and uses to make rockets.

Rocket propellant is often made out of chemicals imported into Gaza, including salt.

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities on May 10, Hamas had an estimated 15,000 rockets – most of them made in Gaza – with ranges of between 12 to 150 kilometres.

It also had a number of projectiles imported from Iran, including Grads and Fajr 4 and Fajr 5 type rockets, and M302 rockets that originate from Syria.

“This infrastructure was built by the Hamas leadership with international funding. Instead of going to the people of Gaza, the money went to rockets,” an IDF official said last week. “It’s been happening since 2007,” the source said.

According to figures from the research department of the Alma Research and Education Centre, prior to the outbreak of the latest conflict, Hamas could launch 400 to 500 rockets per day for an extended period of time (Hezbollah can fire four times more than that), while PIJ was able to fire around 150 rockets per day.

AIR

Yaakov Lappin is an Israeli military and strategic affairs analyst. He is an associate researcher at the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, and is Israel correspondent for the Jewish News Syndicate (JNS.org). © Jewish News Syndicate, reprinted by permission, all right reserved.

WHAT THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION NEEDS TO DO NOW

by Robert Satloff

With a welcome ceasefire in the Hamas-Israel conflict, achieved with a strong assist from Washington, the Biden Administration will have to decide whether to revert to its pre-crisis strategy of relegating Arab-Israel diplomacy to the backwater of US priorities. Keeping distance from this issue made sense when the conflict seemed frozen and little was likely to change, even with substantial US involvement. Now, however, Gaza has turned a static situation fluid. While the Biden Administration can certainly sit and watch as these changes play out, the wiser course would be to assess its options for actively shaping outcomes that will affect larger US equities in the region.

THE STAKES IN GAZA

At its core, the mini-war reflected a Hamas decision to embarrass its rival, the Palestinian Authority (PA), by “defending” Muslim holy sites from Israeli police incursions. Pummelling cities with rockets was the group’s way of showing that confrontation, not accommodation, would compel Israel and the wider world to pay attention. In this effort, the group registered some success in both intra-Pal-



estinian and international terms, as reactions from foreign capitals and certain sectors of Congress suggest. All the while, Hamas was coldly indifferent to the price that the people of Gaza suffered along the way.

At the same time, one should not isolate the Gaza conflict from the confluence of two larger regional clashes: first, between the radical Sunni Islamist bloc (i.e., Turkey, Qatar, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, and others) and the Sunni anti-Islamist bloc (Egypt, Jordan, other Gulf monarchies); and second, between Iran's "axis of resistance" (Syria, Hezbollah, the Houthis, various Shi'ite militias, Hamas, etc.) and the anti-Iran coalition (the Sunni anti-Islamist bloc plus Israel). As the rare Sunni group that sits in both radical camps, Hamas connects these clashes; indeed, Gaza is one place where they converge. For the United States, this adds an additional layer of strategic interest to ensuring that Hamas and its patrons do not reap political benefits from the hostilities with Israel.

Operationally, this translates into three main objectives for the post-conflict period. The first is to roll back or at least limit any political gains Hamas made through its resort to force. The second is to bolster the PA as the legitimate government and representative of the Palestinian people. Although there is much to critique in PA President Mahmoud Abbas' leadership, the US has an interest in reversing the perception of Hamas benefitting from its use of violence and the PA suffering because of its restraint. Third, Washington needs to continue building on the major new factor – Arab-Israel normalisation via the Abraham Accords – by integrating Arab states into efforts that actively support the first two goals.

More specifically, the US and its partners should take the following steps:

- **Connect Hamas directly with the people's suffering by framing the next phase as "reconstruction or rockets":** Given the swell of global sympathy for the people of Gaza, urgent humanitarian relief such as food, water, medicine, and emergency housing should proceed immediately, without onerous conditions. But reconstruction is a different story. This time, rebuilding Gaza should be conditioned on intrusive monitoring measures that chip away at Hamas' local authority and conclusively deny the group the ability to rearm and reconstruct its tunnel network – lessons learned from the failed oversight efforts that followed the 2014 conflict. These objectives cannot be achieved without several prerequisites: a much larger and more

effective deployment of monitors; a system that does not permit parallel gateways into Gaza (e.g., the alternative Egyptian route for goods, which Israel recently allowed); in-person supervision of goods from entry to end-user rather than relying on video monitoring; a customs regime whose benefits flow principally to the PA, not Hamas; and a firm commitment to stop all imports if a diversion is discovered.

- **Pair support for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank so that the PA's policy of restraint and cooperation is rewarded, not Hamas' policy of violence and confrontation:** A 1:1 principle should apply – for every dollar of reconstruction assistance that flows to Gaza, a dollar of development aid (not PA budgetary support) should flow to the West Bank. This will help bolster Abbas, whose standing has suffered for years and who was recently pummeled after he cancelled legislative elections.

- **Engage an "Arab Peace Coalition" in support of these efforts:** All of Israel's past, present, and future Arab peace partners should be asked to assist – "first generation" peacemakers in Cairo and Amman, "second generation" peacemakers in the Abraham Accords states, and potential future peacemakers in Riyadh, Muscat, and elsewhere. Many of these governments



Mahmoud Abbas and his Palestinian Authority are deeply flawed, but there is no alternative to seeking to strengthen them in post-conflict diplomacy (Credit: Abed Rahim Khatib/ Shutterstock)

harshly criticised Israel's initial actions in Jerusalem, but they were generally silent once the conflict shifted focus to Gaza. Although much of their support will be financial as they monetise their vocal backing for the Palestinian cause, their role goes beyond donations. Having Arab capitals rally to assist the people of Gaza as well as the people and government of the West Bank would have a salutary impact throughout the Palestinian arena. Taken together, individual and collective actions by an Arab Peace Coalition would have multiple benefits: bolstering the legitimacy of Arab peacemakers in the eyes of Palestinians; addressing widespread sympathy for the Palestinian cause among each government's domestic constituency; and counteracting the two-faced role currently played by Qatar, whose financial support to Hamas was short-sightedly okayed by Israel in recent years as a way to buy (or, more accurately, rent) calm.

- **Create a quiet forum with Israel and Jordan to address operational issues in Jerusalem, including the PA when appropriate:** Resolving disputes over management of Muslim holy sites should be part of this mandate, without touching questions of sovereignty or political control. The parties share a strategic interest in calm and cooperation to prevent minor

disputes from exploding into major conflagrations. To meet this objective, Israel will need to recognise that Jordan can play a helpful, constructive role on these issues, and the two leaders – Binyamin Netanyahu and King Abdullah II – must overcome their deep personal animosity.

DEFINING THE US ROLE

This is a substantial agenda, far more involved than the Biden team originally envisioned for itself. It requires sustained diplomatic muscle – a proven diplomatic trouble-shooter who can marshal the capacities and competing interests of the US interagency process, talk authoritatively in regional capitals, cajole potential donors in Europe and elsewhere, and engage directly with local leaders such as Netanyahu and Abbas, who will see political landmines in the most minor technical issues.

Yet preventing a repeat of this mini-war may require more than just beefing up the US diplomatic team. The most effective Gaza monitoring system would be a new civilian unit of technical, developmental, engineering, and border-control experts modelled on the Multilateral Force & Observers in the Sinai – that is, a US-organised and led

“The most effective Gaza monitoring system would be a new civilian unit of technical, developmental, engineering, and border-control experts modelled on the Multilateral Force & Observers in the Sinai”

international body with contingents from a number of friendly countries. Such an entity would be able to inspect where it pleases, operate an import licensing system with speed and efficiency, and have the backbone to suspend imports if it discovered diversions.

To be sure, neither Israel nor Hamas would welcome this idea at first – the former because of fears it might set a precedent

for international monitoring in the West Bank, the latter because a serious monitoring operation would erode the group’s power. Still, if the goal is to prevent another round of fighting, this is the Cadillac solution; other options (e.g., an improved version of the post-2014 UN operation) would be less effective.

The Biden Administration does have the option to ride out the current crisis, support the flow of humanitarian goods to Gaza, and then essentially revert to its hands-off posture. Yet any honest assessment must recognise that failing to engage fully in this effort would likely ensure another Hamas-Israel war sometime in the future, with more lethal weapons and a higher body count.

AIR

Dr. Robert Satloff is Executive Director of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. ©Washington Institute, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

PREPARING FOR HEZBOLLAH

by Lt. Gen. Richard Natonski and Jonathan Ruhe

With a ceasefire announced in Gaza, it’s crucial to apply the lessons learned to a likely future conflict with Hezbollah, and probably Iran, in Lebanon and beyond.

Hezbollah’s arsenals are an order of magnitude more potent than anything in Gaza, including at least 130,000 rockets and missiles that will do what Hamas conspicuously has yet to accomplish – namely, overpower Israel’s world-class multi-layered air defence network.

US President Joe Biden’s welcome decision on May 22 to replenish interceptor stocks for Israel’s short-range Iron Dome air defences – which were called upon more than ever in the latest flareup – is only a small glimpse of what Israel will need to defend itself in the next war.

In addition to Iron Dome, Washington must ensure adequate US-Israel co-production of David’s Sling and Arrow air defence systems that will be crucial for defending against Hezbollah’s and Iran’s much more sophisticated, powerful and longer-range projectiles, including precision munitions.

Since Hezbollah’s last war with Israel in 2006, Iran has assiduously rebuilt its primary terrorist proxy into a genuine juggernaut. Hezbollah now possesses more firepower than 95% of the world’s conventional militaries, and more rockets and missiles than all European NATO members combined.

As is the case with terrorist groups in Gaza, the vast majority of these are unguided short-range rockets.

Hezbollah also has thousands of more powerful unguided medium- and long-range rockets, many of them ranging all of Israel, compared to several hundred at most in Gaza that can reach central Israel. These longer ranges allow Hezbollah to disperse its arsenal throughout Lebanon, covering a much greater area than Gaza.

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And unlike anything in the arsenals of Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah wields dozens or hundreds of precision missiles. Teheran also tries to proliferate technology to convert Hezbollah's plentiful unguided rockets into precision weapons, and it assiduously attempts to make Syria, Iraq and Yemen into additional launchpads.

Because Iron Dome focuses on projectiles threatening built-up areas, Israel's challenges will grow proportionally with the precision munition stocks of Iran, Hezbollah and other proxies around the region.

This encircling "ring of fire" from Lebanon and elsewhere could overwhelm Israel's multi-layered air defences with barrages larger than anything yet seen. To be sure, Iron Dome held its own in recent Gaza conflicts. It did so even as the rate of incoming fire increased from 200 rockets daily in 2014 to as many as 400-500 per day in 2021, including 130-rocket barrages, and even as fully half of the recent rocket launches threatened populated areas (up from 20% in 2014).

But Hezbollah will launch as many as 3,000 rockets, missiles and drones daily at the outset of the next war – nearly as many as in the entire 2006 and 2014 wars – and then at a sustained rate of around 1,000 per day.

And finally, Hezbollah has gained valuable battlefield experience since its last war with Israel. It learned brutal combined-arms warfare in Syria, including in dense urban cauldrons like Aleppo, and now boasts advanced unmanned aerial vehicles, air defence, anti-tank, subterranean and other capabilities. Unlike Gaza terrorist groups, whose threats of cross-border incursions were minimal in the last conflict, Hezbollah will deploy these assets not just defensively, but also offensively in concerted ground invasions against northern Israel.

The ensuing conflict will greatly strain Israel's Defence Forces (IDF) and population.

In all probability, the IDF would conduct an immediate combined-arms ground operation into Lebanon on a much larger scale than in 2006 or in Gaza in 2014.

With air defences shielding IDF installations, Israel's critical infrastructure and cities will depend on passive defence measures and luck. Thousands of rockets and missiles will target industrial, electricity, water and transportation chokepoints, and Israel's densely-populated coastal heartland. The result could be mass casualties, enormous physical destruction and severe disruptions to basic services.

Though damage to Israel likely will be unprecedented, this conflagration will resemble Gaza and Lebanon conflicts in one key respect. Like Hamas, Hezbollah illegally and intentionally puts civilians in harm's way, emplacing its extensive military assets near and underneath apartments, schools, mosques and hospitals.

When IDF operations target these sites, Hezbollah will exploit the widespread misunderstanding of the law of



Israel's Iron Dome passed a test this conflict, but a future war with Hezbollah could overwhelm it (Credit: Isranet)

armed conflict, disingenuously portraying Lebanese casualties and damage as the result of disproportionate and indiscriminate Israeli firepower – all while Hezbollah launches tens of thousands of unguided rockets indiscriminately at Israeli civilians.

Unlike with Gaza, the war's sheer intensity will undermine continued IDF precautions, like "knock on the roof" and telephone warnings, that exceed the law of armed conflict's requirements.

Like Hamas, Hezbollah will try to delegitimise Israel because it knows it cannot prevail militarily. As in 2006 and 2014, its adversaries will try to generate political and popular pressure on Israel to terminate legitimate operations prematurely.

Both before, but especially during, this incredibly intense large-scale war, US support for Israel's freedom of action in legitimate self-defence against shared threats from Iran and its proxies will be more important than ever. This includes ensuring Israel has the necessary tools for its ongoing interdiction campaign against Teheran's proliferation of precision missiles and other game-changing capabilities to Hezbollah and proxies in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere.

Because this next war will be fought in the court of public opinion as much as the battlefield, American leaders also should proactively educate media and international audiences – including the United Nations – on the law of armed conflict, the IDF's adherence to it and its wilful distortion by Hezbollah, Hamas and US adversaries. This will be crucial to ensure ultimate Israeli success in a major conflict against shared Iranian threats, and to mitigate the appeal and effectiveness of similar strategies against legitimate US military operations in the future.

AIR

Lt. Gen. Richard Natonski, USMC (ret.), former Commander of US Marine Corps Forces Command, serves on the Hybrid Warfare Task Force at the Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA), where Jonathan Ruhe is Director of Foreign Policy. © JINSA (www.jinsa.org), reprinted by permission.

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Antisemitism rampant

The return of the anti-Jewish mob

by Ben Cohen

The left-wing French parliamentarian Danièle Obono stormed out of a live TV debate on May 13 about the latest round of Israeli-Palestinian hostilities hosted by the French-language channel of the Israeli broadcaster, *i24 News*. Obono took exception to another panelist characterising the political party Obono belongs to, *La France Insoumise* (“France Rising”), as not merely anti-Zionist, but blatantly antisemitic and pro-Islamist as well.



Danièle Obono (Credit: Jacques Billaudel/ Flickr)

Upon hearing this, Obono declared that she was not being asked a question and was just being insulted instead. She removed her earpiece and left the set, refusing entreaties to sit back down and continue the discussion. As Obono made abundantly clear to both the presenter and the studio manager who asked her to remain, calling the party she supports “antisemitic” had crossed an unacceptable boundary.

Obono’s decision to walk rather than fight her case was entirely consistent with the approach of a large sector of the political left to the Israeli-Palestinian issue. They wear the label of anti-Zionism with pride; they advocate a single state of Palestine between the Mediterranean Sea and the River Jordan; they push for a comprehensive boycott of the Jewish state and no other country; they declare solidarity with Palestinian terrorist groups; they depict Jews not as an indigenous nation to the Middle East but as extraneous colonists; they vilify Israel by comparing its actions to the slaughters perpetrated by the historic enemies of the Jewish people; and yet, suggest to one of its representatives that any of this might be “antisemitic,” and they will react as though you spat in their face!

The events of recent weeks suggest to me that a response like that of Obono’s to an accusation of antisemitism is becoming outmoded. The charge has historically been regarded on the left as an insult largely because of the postwar taboo on openly identifying as an antisemite. But that legacy of the Nazi era is fading, along with our memories of the Holocaust. For a new generation much younger than Obono and other leaders of her LFI Party, casually hating Jews because they are Jews is as legitimate



There have been several gang attacks on visibly Jewish people in New York over recent weeks – as well as in other cities (Credit: Isranet)

an expression of solidarity with the Palestinians as waving a Palestinian flag on a march, posting “boycott” stickers on Israeli goods in grocery stores, disrupting campus meetings addressed by Israeli speakers and sharing “Israel Apartheid Week” memes on social media. They are not insulted by the term “antisemite.” They simply dismiss it as a word of no value because it is wielded by the “f--- Zionists” (a pejorative much heard on our streets lately) with whom they are locked in eternal conflict.

The mutation of antisemitism that the latest fighting between Israel and Hamas has given us a glimpse of hasn’t been seen in almost a century. It is one of the most disturbing forms that Jew-hatred takes; semi-organised mobs of mainly young men deliberately targeting individual Jews or Jewish-owned businesses with verbal abuse and physical violence. We associate such images with the Nazis most of all, but there are slightly more recent instances of such antisemitic violence. Throughout the Arab world in the late 1940s and ’50s, Jews were subjected to pogroms and other atrocities as a prelude to their mass expulsion and expropriation from these countries.

History is full of horrible ironies, and this is one of them. The mobs we have witnessed attacking Jews in cities on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean are overwhelmingly composed of members of the various Arab and wider Muslim communities; in European demonstrations, for example, Turkish and Algerian flags can be spotted alongside Palestinian ones. The same impulse that drove the eventual expulsion of nearly 800,000 Jews from the Arab world is now coming back to haunt us in the very countries where we sought our freedom.

The impulse that I am referring to is failure. In the Arab countries during the first decade of Israel’s existence, persecution of local Jews was one feat that could be accomplished, and indeed, relished, amid the humiliating battlefield defeats inflicted by the nascent Israel Defence Forces on the Arab armies. The legacy of that domestic campaign of antisemitism has travelled with us to different conti-

nents and vastly different political contexts. What remains the same is the conviction that Arabs are being disempowered, robbed and murdered by Jewish conspiracies, and that ordinary Arabs are therefore justified in taking their anger out on ordinary Jews in response.

This leads them to a simple conclusion – and one that was also widespread after Israel’s stunning victory in the 1967 Six-Day War: The Jewish state might have a powerful military, the Jews might control the banks and the media, but both will eventually taste defeat. Until then, the task of Arabs and Muslims is to make life as unpleasant for Jews, whether in Israel or outside, as possible.

Hence, the antisemitic spectacles around the globe that have accompanied the latest fighting in the Middle East: a motorised convoy through North London’s Jewish neighbourhoods threatening to rape the community’s daughters; pro-Palestinians driving by diners at a Los Angeles restaurant before getting out and beating Jewish ones: hundreds of protestors joyfully chanting the insult “S*** Jew!” at a pro-Palestinian demonstration in the German city of Gelsenkirchen; seven *keffiyeh*-wearing assailants kicking a *kipah*-wearing Jewish man in the road in New York City’s Times Square in broad daylight.

The mobilisation of young Arabs and Muslims living in the West – many of whom were born after the 9/11 terror attacks, and have grown up with their worldviews formed and filtered through social media – in the service of the Palestinian cause is a comparatively new element in this century-old conflict. It is also a highly unpredictable one. All that is certain is that the Middle East’s longest hatred is becoming an acute challenge for domestic policy, more than it ever was at the international level.

Ben Cohen is a New York City-based journalist and author who writes a weekly column on Jewish and international affairs for Jewish News Syndicate (www.jns.org) © JNS, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

IRAN’S ONE MAN PRESIDENTIAL RACE

by Omer Carmi

Iran’s presidential campaign offered up a “May surprise”, with the Guardian Council announcing on May 24 that several prominent candidates had been disqualified from running in the June 18 vote. Although mass disqualifications are nothing new for the regime, some of the names on this year’s chopping block were unexpected: only seven of the 40 candidates who met the minimum registration criteria earlier this month were ultimately

approved to run, and the finalists do not include high-profile figures such as former Majlis (Iranian Parliament) speaker Ali Larijani, Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri, or former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

So far, Larijani and other disqualified candidates have announced that they accept the council’s judgment and will not ask Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to overturn it. Yet other prominent figures have been openly critical. Larijani’s brother Sadegh, a former judiciary chief, called the decision “indefensible.” Disqualified reformist Mostafa Tajzadeh went further, arguing that “no responsible citizen



Ayatollah Ebrahim Raisi: slated to be President and then likely Supreme Leader (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

should surrender” to the Council’s move, then declaring that the decision aimed to topple the “republican” part of the Islamic Republic. Even Ebrahim Raisi – the frontrunner who stands to benefit most from the disqualifications – expressed concern, noting that he has been trying to make the election more competitive and participatory. Yet his statement was probably self-serving, meant to build his legitimacy and counter mocking public references to the race as “Raisi vs. Raisi” – and, perhaps, preserve his chances of succeeding Khamenei down the road.

WHO’S ON THE FINAL LIST?

The seven candidates who made the cut lean heavily

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toward the conservative side of the map, with two minor non-conservative names added as a fig leaf for the regime's latest power move. The most prominent conservative is Ayatollah Raisi, the judiciary chief who is now widely seen as Khamenei's favourite candidate after weeks of implicit endorsements and the withdrawal of various senior conservatives (e.g., former Basij chief Ali Reza Afshar, former defence minister Hossein Dehghan, former oil minister Rostam Ghasemi).

Four other top conservative/hardline figures do appear on the final list, at least for the time being: former Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) chief and current Expediency Council secretary Mohsen Rezaei, former Supreme National Security Council secretary Saeed Jalili, former Majlis member Alireza Zakani (who was disqualified from two past presidential contests), and deputy Majlis speaker Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi. If history is any indicator, however, most will likely withdraw before the finish line and unite behind Raisi as the main conservative candidate.

Two non-conservative candidates made the list as well: Abdolnaser Hemmati, the Central Bank Governor who is affiliated with the late Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's party but is seen as more of a technocrat than a political leader, and reformist Mohsen Mehralizadeh, who served as vice president under Mohammad Khatami. Neither of them has a strong constituency or presence in Iranian politics, especially compared to the candidates who were not allowed to run.

MAKING ROOM FOR RAISI

The most important and surprising of the council's cuts was Ali Larijani, whose political pedigree and name recognition run deep in Iran. His family is one of the country's most prominent, with strong ties to both the clerics of Qom and the political elite in Teheran. He has also served the Islamic Republic in numerous senior capacities since the 1980s – as an IRGC officer, minister of Islamic guidance, national broadcasting chief, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, chief nuclear negotiator, and, most recently, three-time speaker of parliament. He qualified to run for president in the past (winning around 5% of the vote in 2005), and remains part of the regime's top echelon today.

Since registering for this year's election, Larijani has been very active on social media outlets, posting several times a day and lashing out at some of his hard-line rivals, including Raisi and Jalili. Some have suggested that his pragmatist turn is aimed at appealing to President Hassan Rouhani's base of younger, more educated voters, who generally do not want to see Raisi become president.

“At the moment, the regime seems willing to alienate some of its core supporters just to make sure that Raisi wins at all costs”

The official reason for Larijani's disqualification was not published – according to some reports, the Guardian Council has attempted to place the blame on his daughter for allegedly studying in the United States. Far more likely, however, his noteworthy track record and potential as a powerful compromise candidate are what got him disqualified.

The council also removed other hurdles for Raisi by cutting key reformist-affiliated candidates such as Jahangiri, Tajzadeh, and Mohsen Hashemi Rafsanjani (son of the former president). In response to the council's final list, the reformist front's spokesperson, Azar Mansoori, tweeted that they would not support any candidate because all the reformists had been disqualified.

As for Ahmadinejad, he failed to make the cut much like the previous election; although this decision was expected, the regime reportedly deployed security forces to his neighbourhood just in case the announcement went over poorly.

SECURING RAISI'S FUTURE COULD ERODE REGIME LEGITIMACY

When the Guardian Council disqualified prominent figures in past elections, it usually tried to balance the cuts by allowing other less “risky” compromise candidates to run. The idea was to give pragmatist voters someone to align with and lessen the chance of embarrassingly low turnout. In 2013, for example, the elder Rafsanjani was barred from running as a powerful pragmatist candidate, but the “safer” Rouhani made the cut and eventually won.

Various wildcards may yet minimise domestic blowback to the Council's announcement. For instance, Khamenei might decide to reinstate certain disqualified candidates as he has occasionally done in the past, or he may just rely on popular interest in the simultaneous municipal elections to ensure a respectable turnout.

At the moment, however, the regime seems willing to alienate some of its core supporters just to make sure that Raisi wins at all costs. One potential explanation for this risky approach lies in the numerous signs that Raisi is gradually being groomed to succeed Khamenei as Supreme Leader. Winning next month's vote could boost his executive pedigree for that position, while losing a second presidential race in a row could end that possibility altogether. Either way, the regime may wind up further undermining its domestic legitimacy.

AIR

Omer Carmi, a former visiting fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, previously led IDF analytical and research efforts pertaining to the Middle East. © Washington Institute, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

TEHERAN'S FRIENDS IN AUSTRALIA

by Ran Porat

In the previous edition of the *AIR*, I uncovered some of the activities and main leaders of the Australian branch of Iran's international propaganda organisation, the "Arab and Islamic Union in Support of the resistance option" (in Arabic: Al-Tajamu Al-Islami Wa-AlArabi L-Da'am Khiyar Al-Muqawama, or Al-Tajamu for short).

Further investigation into this organisation unearthed a network of additional operatives affiliated with Al-Tajamu. As a central Al-Tajamu figure, fired Sydney University academic and fervent anti-Israel and anti-Western activist Tim Anderson acts as an important axis of this network, cultivating activists to assist in disseminating propaganda messages in Australia largely dictated by the Syrian and Iranian regimes. Many within this network seem to have been recruited into it by Anderson when they were students at the University of Sydney.

Exploiting the right to freedom of speech in this country, the Al-Tajamu network promotes support for murderous regimes and terrorists, and in some cases, also disseminates antisemitic tropes.

Right-Hand Man

Tim Anderson's former student, Jay (José) Tharappel, is another Al-Tajamu operative and acts as Anderson's right-hand man. Following a visit by the two to North Korea in 2018, Tharappel published an article expressing gushing admiration for the regime in Pyongyang, even justifying its authoritarian nature: "A country that endeavors to credibly stand up to the United States must necessarily be authoritarian for the simple reason that they are a nation at war, and cannot be one where the population are timid, beaten, and demoralized," he wrote.

Tharappel is a leading figure in the Yemen Solidarity Council, which supports Iran's proxy in Yemen, the Houthis. He is also an Associate Member at Anderson's supposedly "academic" outfit, The Centre for Counter Hegemonic Studies (CCHS).

On social media Tharappel promotes Iran-backed conspiracy theories, for example, claiming that the civil war in Syria is "a sophisticated NATO-GCC-Israeli backed campaign intended to bring Syria to its knees. The plan failed because Syria resisted."

Tharappel attacked AIJAC's call to list the entirety of Hezbollah, the Iranian proxy Lebanese terrorist organisa-

tion, as a terrorist entity in Australia in his August 2020 blog post "State-Sponsor of Terror Lobbies Govt to Bully Aussies." In it, he argued that "AIJAC [is] pushing for the criminalisation of Australians solely based on the interests of Israel" and that "Israel – the state AIJAC defends – spent the last decade aiding al-Qaeda & Islamic State."

Just like Anderson, Tharappel is a welcome commentator on Iran's state propaganda channel *Press TV*. Like Anderson, Tharappel recently used his social media pages to spread Iranian lies about the supposed guilt of Australian Kylie Moore-Gilbert, who was jailed in Iran for two years after being falsely accused of espionage before being freed late last year.

Hands Off Syria

Anderson is heavily involved in the Hands Off Syria organisation in Australia – another propaganda tool for



Several members of the Al-Tajamu network at a 2017 demonstration in Sydney, including Jay Tharappel, Hanadi Assoud, Hussein Dirani and Tim Anderson. (Source: Hanadi Assoud's Facebook feed)

promoting Al-Tajamu messages. These two organisations often work together and spread apparently coordinated messages.

Hands Off Syria declares on its website that it "support[s] Syria against a 'civil' war that is funded, armed and planned by the western powers and their regional allies with a view to wiping out all resistance to imperialism in the Middle East." The Facebook page of this organisation, run by Anderson's CCHS, regularly features fake news from official Syrian sources, conspiracy theories about the US, Israel and the West and propaganda messages directly from Damascus.

One of the leading activists in Hands Off Syria is Hanadi Assoud. In 2013, she defended Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad and his regime on the Al-Jazeera media network run by the Qatari regime, which is affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Two years later, Assoud proudly celebrated Assad's "landslide victory in presidential poll securing 88.7 %," announcing that "It is up to the Syrian people and not up to foreign political groups to choose the country's leader."

She conveniently omitted the facts that elections are not free in any sense in Syria, that the regime at the time controlled only a fraction of Syrian territory and the elections only occurred where they had control, and no candidate other than Assad had any chance of winning.

Assoud is a supporter of the Australian branch of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) – a pro-Assad party inspired by European fascism that calls for a “greater Syria” and has a history of terrorism and violence. In February 2021 she participated in the annual SSNP conference in Sydney, attended also by the head of Al-Tajamu’s Australian branch, Hussein Dirani.

Assoud delivered a speech at the Australian-Iranian Friendship Association (AIFA) 2021 event to celebrate the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, in which she praised Ayatollah Khomeini’s character and policies.

Another activist tied with Anderson’s network is Syrian-born pro-Assad propagandist Maram Susli, now residing in Perth. Susli is known mostly by her online identity “Partisan Girl”, and she promotes anti-Israel and anti-West conspiracies, while also publicly engaging with US and Australian far-right leaders. She pushes the official Al-Tajamu line on her Twitter account, where she shares posts by Anderson, and is also routinely interviewed by *Press TV*. In April 2017, Susli was a presenter at the pro-Assad “After the war on Syria” conference at the University of Sydney, which also featured lectures by Anderson and Tharappel.

Another person in the outer ring of supporters surrounding Anderson is self-proclaimed pro-Assad and pro-Palestinian activist Marlene Obeid. She has worked alongside Anderson and supported his causes, for example with regards to Syria, as part of her role in the Stop the War Coalition organisation.

Recruiting to the Al-Tajamu network – an example

Evidence suggests that prior to being sacked in 2018 from the University of Sydney for superimposing a swastika over an Israeli flag during a lecture, Anderson used

his role at the university to actively recruit students to the Al-Tajamu network.

During my investigation, I have found several former Anderson students who later became involved in his propaganda work for Iran and Syria. For privacy reasons, their details are not being included in this article.

However, one example that can be disclosed involves a former Anderson student named Mia Shouha. A University of Sydney student at the time, Shouha took to Facebook to defend Anderson in December 2018 soon after he was fired from the university. She argued that Anderson only “used a legitimate point of academic inquiry in evoking the fascistic nature of this state actor as an occupying force; subjecting an occupied people to intense misery, direct oppression and theft of land ever since its establishment.”

According to her own testimony, Anderson inspired Shouha to become an anti-West activist: “Earlier this year [2018] I directly asked Dr Anderson

what I could do to fight against Western imperialism, which has visited so many independent actors and post-colonial states in my lifetime alone. From Afghanistan to Iraq, Venezuela, Libya, Syria and, increasingly so, Iran. He advised me to channel my frustration into academia and to raise a critical voice to such violence through objective investigation.”

It comes as no surprise that at the same time that Shouha was in contact with Anderson at the university, she used social media to promote, in July 2018, the conspiracy theory that the West is behind the Islamic State terrorist organisation, decrying: “The continued policy of demonising the legitimate government [of Syria] beyond all measure, arming and funding Al Qaeda and Daesh embedded militant groups and their media campaigns to the tune of millions of pounds and imposing harsh sanctions on a nation whilst apparently wanting to save these people from their ‘dictator’ [Bashar Al-Assad].”

Similarly, in October 2020, Shouha criticised Israel’s failure to publicly recognise the Armenian genocide to make a point about Jews and the Holocaust more generally. She argued: “On Holocaust Remembrance [sic.] Day they [the Jews] say “never again”. Remember that it’s conditional. #palestine #armenia.”

The existence of the Al-Tajamu network within Australia is a potentially dangerous phenomenon and deserves exposure. These individuals are tied into the official propaganda channels of the world’s foremost state sponsor of terrorism. Parroting and amplifying the agendas of oppressive foreign regimes, and abusing Australia’s democracy to spread lies and conspiracy theories, should not be regarded as the same thing as exchanging and debating legitimately differing views about world affairs.

“The Al-Tajamu network within Australia is a potentially dangerous phenomenon and deserves exposure. These individuals are tied into the official propaganda channels of the world’s foremost state sponsor of terrorism”



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The Knock

How the IDF invented a unique way to prevent civilian casualties

by Yaakov Katz

December 2008 was the turning point. After a year of incessant rocket fire, the Israeli Government decided enough was enough. It was time to go back into the Gaza Strip and do everything possible to take down Hamas.

While a ceasefire had been in effect for six months, sporadic rocket fire – Kassams and mortars – continued to rain down on Israel. Nevertheless, the Government had initially preferred quiet. The situation was tenuous but the residents of the south were, for the first time in years, able to leave their homes with some measure of safety. The Government wasn't going to put that at risk so quickly.

In November, though, the calculation changed. The IDF received intelligence that Hamas was digging a terror tunnel across the border into Israel similar to the one that had been used two-and-a-half years earlier to kidnap Gilad Shalit, a soldier in the Armoured Corps. Shalit was still being held by Hamas somewhere in Gaza at the time and the IDF decided that the “ticking tunnel” – as it was being called – had to be destroyed.

An elite IDF force from the Paratroopers' Brigade was sent across the border near the home under which the tunnel was being dug. In a subsequent firefight, a few Palestinian gunmen were killed. At one point, a large bomb went off in the home, bringing

down the structure and collapsing the tunnel.

The Hamas response and rocket onslaught was immediate. Dozens of Kassams, Katyushas and mortar shells pounded the south. A rocket attack led to an Israeli Air Force bombing and then more rockets and more airstrikes.

Only a handful of people knew that at the same time as Israeli diplomats were trying to salvage the ceasefire with Egyptian assistance, the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) and the IAF were busy building a bank of Hamas targets – headquarters, arms caches, command posts, tunnel openings and rocket launchers. Homes, schools, hospitals, mosques –

everything was being used by Hamas to hide their weapons and everything was being added to the IDF list.

On December 27, what would become known as “Operation Cast Lead” was launched with the bombing of 50 different targets by dozens of IAF fighter jets and attack helicopters. The planes reported “Alpha Hits,” air force lingo for direct hits on their targets. Some 30 minutes later, a second wave of 60 jets and helicopters struck another 60 targets, including underground rocket launchers – placed inside bunkers and missile silos – that had been fitted with timers.

In all, more than 170 targets were hit by IAF aircraft throughout that first day. Palestinians reported more than 200 Gazans killed and another 800 wounded.

Operation Cast Lead would be remembered as the first large-scale war in Gaza since Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Strip three years earlier.

Ahead of the operation, Israeli intelligence agencies knew they had to adapt. Since the withdrawal from Gaza three years earlier, they no longer had a physical presence on the ground inside the now Hamas-controlled territory. While they could use spies and electronic sensors to identify targets, they would not be able to know – in real time – what



After 2007, Hamas' placing of its military assets in civilian areas and buildings required the IDF to develop a new repertoire of tactics to minimise civilian casualties (Credit: Isranet)



The IDF has had to learn to tailor the type of weapons it employs to the target, including developing bombs that can penetrate floors to destroy basement arms caches (Credit: Isranet)

was happening inside a specific target.

What the IDF knew was that Hamas was storing its weapons in homes, in apartment buildings and under schools, mosques and hospitals. If a war erupted, Israel had to find a way to attack the targets while, at the same time, minimising civilian casualties and collateral damage.

Recognising the challenge, the Shin Bet did something new: it created lists of phone numbers belonging to the owners of the homes, office buildings and hospitals throughout the Gaza Strip. It was a Sisyphean effort never undertaken by another military, but Israel knew it didn't have a choice.

While collecting the phone numbers was difficult, their use was supposed to be simple. The IDF knew that there were basically two categories of targets. The first were terrorists: Palestinians perpetrating an attack or in the midst of planning one. Those people were not going to get called before being attacked. To successfully hit them, Israel needed to retain the element of surprise even if that meant some innocent civilians would unfortunately be caught in the crosshairs.

The second category included the homes, apartment buildings, offices, mosques and other civilian buildings where Hamas and Islamic Jihad had

stored their weapons, set up command posts or used as cover to hide a cross-border terror tunnel. These were the targets that would get phone calls in order to give the people inside the opportunity to leave.

"We identified thousands of targets thanks to our agents on the ground," explained Victor Ben-Ami, a 30-year veteran of the Shin Bet, who was involved in the effort. "We had a list of warehouses, factories and buildings with the understanding that the enemy had a tactic it was using to do everything it could to blend in and hide within civilian infrastructure."

The intelligence, Ben-Ami recalled, was incredible. "We knew what floor the target we were looking for was located, what colour it was, what was there, where the air-conditioning machine was located and more," he explained.

But because Israel knew that civilians would be inside the buildings, the IDF and Shin Bet created a new operational doctrine. Before attacking, it would take the extra precaution of contacting the building owner or occupant.

The callers had a standard text they read in Arabic that went something like this: "How are you? Is everything okay? This is the Israeli military. We need to bomb your

home and we are making every effort to minimise casualties. Please make sure that no one is nearby since in five minutes we will attack." The line would then go dead.

In every case, an Israeli drone would be hovering above, watching what was happening in the home and nearby. Once it saw people running out of the building, IAF headquarters would give the fighter pilot or attack helicopter the green light to drop their bomb.

Not everyone in the IDF saw eye-to-eye on this new tactic. Col. Pnina Sharvit-Baruch was head of the International Law Department of the Military Advocate General Unit as Operation Cast Lead was in the planning stages.

Almost every target was brought to her for approval. In one discussion, one of the other officers around the table suggested skipping the warning stage and attacking the building even at the cost of killing or wounding innocent civilians. The building, the officer explained, had been turned into a military target by Hamas and



Former top IDF international law expert Pnina Sharvit-Baruch

if people were inside they too were military targets.

The argument was immediately and vehemently shot down by all the participants. "That was the definite fringe minority," she recalled.

In discussions with combat units, Sharvit-Baruch stressed two reasons why this new tactic was critical for Israel. The first was ethical. Israel, she explained, does not callously attack civilians when they can be spared.

“It is our moral obligation,” she affirmed.

The second reason was of political and diplomatic significance.

“A lot of dead civilians deteriorates the conflict and creates diplomatic international pressure and continues the conflict,” she said. “It harms our interests.”

Ben-Ami agreed.

“Whether we like it or not, this is who we are and how we do things,” he explained. “There is no plan that doesn’t take civilians into consideration. This is who we are.”

For the most part the tactic worked. A building would be brought by the Shin Bet to the Southern Command’s Attack Centre where it would be added to the list of targets. There, on the second floor of a plain-looking grey structure in the Beer-sheba-based headquarters, the IDF soldiers and Shin Bet analysts would discuss what to do and how to attack.

The IDF officers would allocate the necessary attack platform and ensure it was available. Once the mission was approved, an Arabic-speaking intelligence officer would call the owner. The drone would show that the people inside the building had left, the soldiers in the IDF command centre would count the number of people who had left, ensuring the number matched up with the intelligence they had received, and they would then give the IAF the green light to attack.

The type of bomb used was adapted based on the target. If it was a private home with an arms cache hidden in the basement, the bomb needed to be capable of penetrating the roof and other floors and only detonate once it hit the basement. If the target was on the second floor, it needed to be a bomb that could be launched into a window and just destroy the second floor but nothing

else. Success was often measured by the number of secondary explosions, caused by the amount of explosives hidden under the home.

For the first 40 strikes, everything worked smoothly. Some officers privately wondered among themselves

“The IDF knew was that Hamas was storing its weapons in homes, in apartment buildings and under schools, mosques and hospitals. If a war erupted, Israel had to find a way to attack the targets while... minimising civilian casualties”

why the Palestinians didn’t go to the roof and try to prevent the bombing.

“We knew that if they did that we would have to call off the strike,” one of the military planners at the time recalled.

Then one day, the officers’ fears came true. One of the Palestinians, whose two-storey home was a known Hamas weapons storage centre, told the Israeli intelligence officer that he would not leave. Word was circulating around Gaza about the new tactic and people knew that exiting the building would mean not having a home to return to.

The family climbed to the roof, knowing a drone was above, and started making indecent gestures at the Israeli aircraft.

A disagreement broke out in the command centre. Some of the officers thought Israel needed to go ahead with the attack.

“If we don’t attack we will lose deterrence,” argued one of the officers.

Others pushed back. The Jewish state, they said, couldn’t strike a building while knowing there were still civilians inside. The commander of the Southern Command was updated and the issue eventually made its way up to the chief of staff. Both agreed the strike could not go forward.

The next day, another Palestinian refused to leave his home and the surveillance drone showed he had also climbed up to the roof. The commanders in the Attack Centre watched the live feed with curiosity.

In truth they didn’t know what to do.

On the one hand, they were dealing with a legitimate military target. Yes, it had been a house or an apartment building. But once it was being used for military purposes it had morphed into a military target according to the laws of war. The question now was about “proportionality” – a rule prohibiting attacks that may cause loss of life in excess of the military gain from the attack. This was a legal question that required constant consultations with Sharvit-Baruch and her team of lawyers.

Zvika Fogel, a retired brigadier-general, was in the war room that day. A reservist, Fogel had served as deputy commander of the Southern Command in the early 2000s. When Operation Cast Lead broke out, Fogel was called up to run the Attack Centre. Every target had to be signed off by him, whether a home, mosque or terrorist on a motorbike fleeing a just-used rocket launcher.

This war hit close to home for Fogel. On Jan. 5, an IDF Merkava tank shot a shell at a building in the Jabalya refugee camp in northern Gaza. The tank crew had mistakenly identified movement in the structure as Hamas terrorists when they were actually Israeli infantry soldiers from the Golani Brigade. Three troops were killed; 24 more were wounded.

Fogel oversaw the evacuation of the wounded. As he was overseeing the complex operation, Fogel had no clue that one of the wounded was his own son Dor who had been inside the building when the tank shell struck. Thankfully, he sustained only light injuries.

After the first time one of the telephoned Palestinians refused to leave his home, Fogel gathered his men in the Attack Centre for a consultation on what to do. The home was a legitimate target and had been authorised by Sharvit-Baruch’s team. On the other hand, Fogel knew that attacking would incur too many civilian casualties and whatever tactical gain Israel

might achieve from the bombing, it would be for nought.

Fogel was highly motivated to find a solution. In 1996, he was commander of an artillery brigade operating in Lebanon during Operation Grapes of Wrath, started with the objective of stopping Hezbollah rocket fire into northern Israel.

Israel was determined to fight and push Hezbollah far from the border. But seven days into the operation, artillery shells fired by another unit to provide cover for an elite commando team operating in Lebanon accidentally hit a UN compound where Lebanese civilians had sought refuge. Over 100 civilians were reported killed.

While Fogel had not been involved in the assault, what happened next taught him a lesson. Later that day, in New York, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1052, calling for an immediate ceasefire. Israel, which started the operation with a legitimate cause – to defend its own people – came under harsh international criticism. Within days, the operation was over.

Now, 12 years later, Fogel was again fighting in an operation that had been launched to defend Israeli citizens and again was facing a similar problem to that in Grapes of Wrath. Civilian casualties would undermine Israel's legitimacy to act. The world would condemn the country and the Government would ultimately succumb to the pressure and stop the IDF.

A couple of days later, when another Palestinian refused to evacuate his house, one of the officers on Fogel's team came up with an innovative idea. He suggested sending an F-15 or F-16 to dip low over the home in



An IDF F-15: One of the main platforms used for precision attacks – and the preceding “roof knocking” (Credit: Isranet)

Gaza, to break the sound barrier and try to scare the people inside.

Another officer had a different idea. The house was next to an empty field.

“Why don’t we have a helicopter fire some warning shots into the empty field right next to the house,” the officer suggested.

The Southern Command officers liked the idea and tried it out. It worked and the residents fled the building. The problem was that the IDF would not always have empty lots next to structures it wanted to attack. It needed to come up with a better method.

“It was kind of like what we would do with a terror suspect who refused to leave his home in the West Bank,” the former Nahal Brigade officer who was stationed in the Attack Centre explained. “We would first fire a standard 5.56 mm machine gun bullet at the door. If that didn’t work, we would fire a heavier cannon and if that didn’t work, we would throw a grenade.”

After a few more times, the IDF had refined the tactic. It selected a missile developed by Israel Aerospace Industries known for being small, accurate and capable of being configured to carry a limited amount of explosives.

After calling and encountering a refusal to leave the home, the air force will first fire one of these missiles on the roof. It will usually be fired into a corner, far from where people might be standing. In some cases, the missiles can be configured to burst in mid-air, minimising even more the chances of casualties.

Once the Palestinians experience “roof knocking,” in almost all cases they flee the building. After the Israeli drones verify the people have left, the Air Force then drops an even heavier bomb, destroying the structure.

While the IDF doesn’t say much about the weapons it uses, pictures of unexploded ordnance circulated online by Gaza residents show a missile with “Mikholit” written on it on Hebrew next to a stamp of Israel Aerospace Industries’ MBT Missile Division. *Mikholit* in Hebrew is a small paintbrush, like the kind an artist would use for precise painting.

The missile looks exactly like one developed by IAI called “Sledgehammer” which the company says has

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a range of 20 km, can carry 15 kg warheads and weighs just 30 kg.

Development of the roof-knocking tactic was similar to the way the air force adapted to the use of civilian targets in the 1970s in Lebanon. These were the days before Hezbollah when the IDF was fighting against the PLO, which was regularly shelling northern Israel from Lebanon.

At the time, the term “collateral damage” was not as prevalent as it is today. The IAF had just come out of the Yom Kippur War badly beaten – over 100 aircraft were lost – and needed to adapt to a new urban battlefield in Lebanon while rebuilding its morale and deterrence.

“In the war, we were sent to hit runways where there isn’t collateral damage to worry about,” explained retired Brig.-Gen. Uzi Rosen, a former head of the IAF’s Operations Division. “You would take 10 bombs and statistically one would land where it needed to. You didn’t care if they didn’t hit exactly because the target was a runway. Same when you attacked a Syrian battalion on the Golan Heights.”

After the war, as fighting intensified in Lebanon, Israel found itself facing a new type of enemy – PLO fighters hiding with their Katyusha rockets inside apartment buildings. It presented the IDF with a new tough dilemma.

On the one hand, not attacking meant that within a day or two those same rockets would rain down on Israeli civilian neighbourhoods like the border town of Kiryat Shmona. On the other hand, Israel really didn’t have precision-guided munitions yet in its arsenal. Civilians were always around the apartment buildings and attacking would mean extensive collateral damage.

One officer under Rosen came up with the idea to take regular bombs,

remove the explosives and fill them instead with cement. This way, the bombs wouldn’t explode but would just cause damage. In other cases, the IAF took 250 kg bombs and removed half the explosives to minimize the radius blast.

The cement bombs were used on hundreds of targets, sometimes successfully and sometimes not as much. But it was all the IAF had until the 1980s, when laser-guided munitions as well as the Maverick – a bomb that used an electro-optical television guidance system – came into service.

All of this was done on the fly and in the midst of battle. During the three weeks of Operation Cast Lead, the IDF would go on to drop more than 2.5 million leaflets warning civilians to leave their homes and make more than 165,000 phone calls warning civilians to distance themselves from military targets. The roof-knocking tactic was used dozens of times.

It didn’t go unnoticed. In a report published by the United Nations, Israel’s use of roof-knocking was harshly criticised, with investigators concluding

that the “technique is not effective as a warning and constitutes a form of attack against the civilians inhabiting the building.”

One case that drew international condemnation was in July 2018 when two Palestinian teenagers were accidentally killed in a roof-knocking operation on an empty building in Gaza. In a reconstruction of the incident, B’Tselem found that the IAF had fired four warning shots at the building and that the first one had killed the boys as they sat on the roof taking a selfie with their legs dangling over the edge.

The attack, B’Tselem said at the time, showed how roof knocking was not just a warning but was a real attack and therefore needed to conform to international rules of law.

Israel has rejected this assumption.

“Even if warning shots are considered an ‘attack,’ it is incorrect to view them as an attack ‘against civilians’ because they are not fired at civilians, since the objective of their use is to avoid harm to civilians,” explained Sharvit-Baruch, the IDF legal expert.

Despite the criticism, Israel has continued in the years since Cast Lead to use roof-knocking in its Gaza operations, out of a combination of tactical and strategic interests.

Tactically, commanders recognise the need to minimise collateral damage and civilian casualties. Strategically, Israel’s political and military leaders know that when there are fewer casualties, there is less of a chance of a wider escalation with Hamas. Both are clear Israeli interests.

With the International Criminal Court in The Hague now investigating Israel’s 2014 war in Gaza, Israel will once again have to defend its tactics and explain what precautions it takes to minimise civilian casualties, an effort in which roof knocking plays a critical role.

When looking back on the day in 2009 when the IDF came up with roof knocking, it illustrated a determination to adhere to a level of morality not often seen in the midst of battle.

Israel could have taken the easy way out and attacked without phone calls or warning strikes. But it didn’t. The IDF officers and soldiers in the command centre adapted to an evolving situation without having a thoroughly thought-out or carefully crafted doctrine for what to do, nor special technology that would guarantee success.

But, they had their objective – to adhere to Jewish values of going the extra mile to protect civilian life – and they acted accordingly. That is the story of roof knocking.

AIR

Yaakov Katz is the Jerusalem Post’s editor-in-chief. © Jerusalem Post (www.jpost.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.



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NOTED AND QUOTED

THE MONTH IN MEDIA

CAUSES AND CONSPIRACY THEORIES

One of the dominant media themes throughout the 11 days of the Israel-Hamas war was the claim that Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu had orchestrated the crisis because his political rivals were on the brink of creating a government without him for the first time in 12 years.

This view was popular on the ABC, where academic and pro-Palestinian activist Lana Tatour appeared three times on various programs on May 11 pushing this line.

On ABC TV “Mornings”, Tatour said, “this is a classic Netanyahu move, if you will, in which escalating the situation to stay in power and so Hamas has been firing rockets into Israel now.” Over the following days, this view was heard many times.

The counterview was occasionally heard, such as on May 14 when *Washington Post* Jerusalem Bureau chief Steve Hendrix told ABC *Newsradio* the idea was “outrageous and outlandish.”

In the *Sydney Morning Herald* (May 14), Gwynne Dyer called Netanyahu and Hamas “objective allies” who would seek to win political points over their rivals from the fighting.

On May 21, *Crikey*’s Guy Rundle went one step further, arguing that “Even the sudden flare-up of the Sheikh Jarrah issue had a suspicious timing... Was the hard policing of Arab protesters, the encouragement of settlers and radicals, designed to create a situation which would test not Palestine’s President Mahmoud Abbas but US President Joe Biden?”

News Corp’s Sarah Blake’s May 16 report said, “there are other factors at play here,” citing the potential political boost Netanyahu might gain. Yet, it had nothing to say about Hamas’ calculus.

More rationally, in the *Sydney Morn-*

ing Herald (May 13), *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman said neither Israel, surrounding Arab countries nor the Palestinian Authority (PA) were seeking a war. He said PA President Mahmoud Abbas’ decision to postpone planned elections, “which Hamas probably would have dominated, means it is stuck. What does Hamas tend to do when it is stuck? Fire rockets at Israel.”

PRETEXTUAL

In the *Daily Telegraph* (May 18) AIJAC’s Jamie Hyams explained the events used by Hamas to justify starting a war with Israel.

According to Hyams, “the claimed motivation was a decades-long legal case, nearing its end, where Jewish landowners in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem are trying to evict Palestinians who live on their land. The Palestinians had been granted protected tenancy but have been refusing to pay the minimal rent required. The Temple Mount confrontation involved Palestinian worshippers arming themselves with rocks, firecrackers and firebombs and, after services, attacking the police as well as Jews worshipping at the Western Wall, which is below the Temple Mount. Israeli forces responded with riot suppression measures and hundreds were injured. The Palestinians portrayed this as Israel attacking innocent worshippers and exploited video of stun grenades accidentally entering the open doors of the Al-Aqsa Mosque itself to claim Israel had deliberately ‘attacked’ that holy place.”

TRUTH AS THE FIRST CASUALTY

As the war progressed and the Palestinian death toll increased, the

media focused on whether Israel was carefully targeting Hamas’ assets or punishing Gazans.

On *Channel Ten*’s “The Project” (May 16), Human Rights Watch researcher and former ABC Middle East correspondent Sophie McNeill claimed that “The death toll is higher on the Palestinian side because of this Israeli pattern of an excessive use of force.”

But in the *Age/SMH* (May 20), Israel Defence Force spokesperson Jonathan Conricus explained that a cluster of civilian deaths in Gaza happened after Israeli jets hit Hamas’ tunnel network, causing the houses above to collapse.

An AP report in the *Age/SMH* on May 13 said that Israel gives “warning shots” to “allow... civilians to evacuate buildings” – which is pretty inscrutable – but at least quoted Conricus saying minimising civilian casualties was Israel’s priority.

SAVING LIVES IS UNFAIR

A large amount of coverage was also dedicated to the disparity between Palestinian and Israeli casualties, with Israel’s Iron Dome missile defence system that intercepted 90% of Hamas’ rockets heading for civilian towns saving countless Israeli lives.

An *Age/SMH* (May 14) report stressed that in Gaza “there are no air raid sirens or safe houses” and noted Israel’s accusation that Hamas uses civilians as human shields against retaliatory strikes and sets up command centres inside residential buildings. But it failed to point out the obvious fact that, after 14 years of ruling Gaza, Hamas chooses to dig tunnels for military use, rather than provide reinforced shelters for civilians like Israel does.

An “explainer” in the *Age/SMH* (May 20) sneered that Iron Dome is

“a big-tech solution to the low-tech rockets built by Hamas in the streets and tunnels of Gaza, and one part of Israel’s sweeping security apparatus of surveillance drones and checkpoints that monitor the 2 million Palestinians blockaded inside Gaza.”

TOWER OF IRE

The May 14 targeted strike on the al-Jalaa Tower which housed the Gazan offices of *AP* and *Al Jazeera*, but which Israel said also housed a Hamas military intelligence technology division that disrupted GPS reception and de-

veloped technology for rocket production and other weapons development, brought widespread media accusations that Israel was endangering journalists and trying to prevent them reporting what was happening in Gaza.

But the scepticism was uncalled for, as the *Daily Telegraph* reported on May 13 when Israel targeted another 12-storey building, “Hamas... said the tower block” was “a residential building” but “AFP reporters said it also houses the offices of several Hamas officials.”

Moreover, as *AP* reporter Fares Akram’s eyewitness account published

in the *Age/SMH* (May 17) noted, his boss was told by the IDF “to go back into the building and make sure everyone’s out... As far as I knew, no people had been hurt.”

On *Sky News* (May 16), *Australian Financial Review* senior writer Aaron Patrick said this is a “military conflict with belligerents on both sides” and if Israel believes Hamas was using a building such as al-Jalaa Tower, then “I think you’ve got an argument under the rules of war” that it’s a “legitimate” target and the fact Israel gives civilians and journalists warnings and “time to get out” proves “it’s just not as bad



AND OUT OF IN PARLIAMENT

Prime Minister **Scott Morrison** (Lib., Cook) answering a question at a Federal Budget lunch – May 14 – “... Israel unquestionably has the right to defend itself and its people. Unquestionably. And, equally, Palestinians need to be able to live safely... we stand strongly and always have with the nation of Israel... Indiscriminate attacks with wanton disregard for civilian casualties perpetuate the cycle of violence and bloodshed.”

Julian Leeser (Lib., Berowra) – May 25 – “... democratic Israel has every right to defend its citizens, prevent attacks and destroy the source of such violence... we would expect our government to protect our citizens in this way too. Unfortunately much of the commentary has painted Israel as the villain, because it had fewer casualties. Many of the Palestinian casualties were, tragically, human shields used in a Hamas propaganda war.”

Julian Hill (ALP, Bruce) – May 25 – “After the latest violence, though, it’s important not to lose focus on the barriers to peace. Chief amongst them are Israel’s settlement policies...”

Graham Perrett (ALP, Moreton) – May 24 – “... 700,000 Palestinians were forced to flee from their homeland during the 1948 Palestine war... the brutal extinguishment and sacking of more than 400 Palestinian villages—the first steps in that long journey to the establishment of what would appear to be a semi-apartheid state.”

Anne Stanley (ALP, Werriwa) – May 24 – “The world has seen further escalation of violence with the bombing of al-Aqsa Mosque... the use of banned weapons, tear gas and guns fired at worshippers at one of Islam’s holiest sites during the holiest month of the year is unsettling.”

Ken O’Dowd (Nat., Flynn) – May 13 – “The core of the problem is that Palestinians do not live in freedom and dignity. To live under apartheid-type rule is inexcusable... in 1948 the Jewish military depopulated and destroyed Palestinian cities, towns

and farming communities, and it’s still happening today.”

Maria Vamvakinou (ALP, Calwell) – May 13 – “I... [express] my deep concern at the current outbreak of hostilities in Palestine and, in particular, the situation in Jerusalem... Anyone who has walked its ancient streets knows how much pride of place Jerusalem has amongst the Palestinians...”

Senator **Janet Rice** (Greens, Vic.) – May 13 – “Minister, do you agree that this latest devastating outbreak of violence stems from the unlawful and unjust occupation of Palestine by the Israeli government?”

Senator **Mehreen Faruqi** (Greens, NSW) – May 12 – “I... express my solidarity with the Palestinian people who, for generations, have had to pay the price of settler colonialism taking their land, homes and lives... Israel’s state sanctioned, apartheid violence against protesters must end... From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.”

Josh Burns (ALP, Macnamara) – May 12 – “... there is no justification for targeting innocent civilians or using them as human shields. There is no justification for... Hamas, recognised by Australia as a terrorist organisation, firing a barrage of rockets and missiles at Israel, at civilian populations... many of these rockets fired by Hamas have misfired or fallen short and killed innocent Palestinian people.”

Senator **Janet Rice** (Greens, Vic.) – May 11 – “Israel has used a raft of discriminatory residency regulations and planning frameworks to reduce the Palestinian population in Jerusalem.”

Senator **Susan Lines** (ALP, WA) – May 11 – “This violence has erupted because Israel will not halt forced evictions from... Sheikh Jarrah... Seventy-three years after Nakba, life for Palestinians remains poor. Some 5.6 million Palestinians remain refugees... Other Palestinians live inside what is now Israel. They live as second-class citizens...”

Senator **Raff Ciccone** (ALP, Vic.) – May 11 – “Israel truly is the miracle in the desert. Its formal re-establishment all those years ago facilitated the return of the Jewish people to their homeland, who together have created a state that they can be incredibly proud of.”

as everyone says.” Fellow panellist Gemma Tognini said pro-Palestinian demonstrators should ask themselves why Hamas’ leader is “lobbying for this war from the safety of Qatar.”

DAVE’S DEBUNKINGS

Dave Sharma, Liberal MP for Wentworth, lent his expertise as the former ambassador to Israel to respond to many of the absurd claims made against Israel.

On *ABC RN* “Drive” (May 17), Sharma explained that “what has prompted or provoked this conflict is, of course, Hamas’... firing of rockets against civilian populations within Israel” and that “from my own experience” Israel’s Defence Forces “are very careful... but they’ve faced an incredible dilemma in Gaza, because Hamas is embedded very deeply into civilian infrastructure. They’ve got command posts in the hospitals, they’ve got rocket launchers in schools, they’ve got intelligence posts in hotels used by the international press, for instance... Israel... try to limit or avoided or minimise it altogether by providing warnings in advance, urging people to evacuate... the building. But of course... mistakes do happen.”

In the *Sydney Morning Herald* (May 21), Sharma’s wife, Rachel Lord wrote of experiencing Hamas’ rockets fired at Israel during the 2014 Gaza war. Lord said, “as an international lawyer with a background in human rights and the laws of armed conflict... I took a pretty dim view of Israel until I lived there. After four years in the country, I recognised the situation was far more nuanced than many understand. Now I don’t have a firm position on who is right and who is wrong. I can’t help but think that people who do are generally those without real life experience of the conflict.”

EDITORIAL EXCESSES

Trying to find the root causes of this latest bout of fighting, the *Sydney*

Morning Herald (May 14) naively said, “The issue, as always, has been Palestinian resentment at the spread of Jewish settlements in the territories Israel has occupied since 1967 and the lack of equal rights for Palestinians and Jews... this disaster might convince both sides to recommit to serious negotiations.”

A *Canberra Times* editorial (May 19) incorrectly blamed both sides for the continuation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and falsely claimed that “Arab Israelis [live] a marginalised existence within the Jewish state that rivals apartheid.”

NEGLECTED TRUTHS

An op-ed from AIJAC’s Colin Rubenstein published in the *Canberra Times* (May 19) noted, “it is the PA that has actually blocked peace initiatives, having refused generous offers of a state in 2000, 2001 and 2008. According to US envoy Martin Indyk, in negotiations in 2014, Abbas simply walked away when Netanyahu was ‘sweating bullets’ to make a deal. It is Abbas who has refused to talk since then.”

On May 20, News Corp columnist Andrew Bolt said Hamas’ refusal to build bomb shelters in Gaza as it launches “yet another missile war against Israel... it knows must fire back to defend itself” tells “us all we need to know about the Hamas terrorist group that runs Gaza, and how it plays naive Western journalists like a fiddle.”

He asked, “Doesn’t this show Hamas actually wants Palestinian women and children to die to create anti-Israel propaganda?”

CAUSE HAS NO EFFECT

On *Sky News* (May 19), *Australian* foreign editor Greg Sheridan lambasted media coverage of the fighting, saying “Hamas has fired rockets in response to Israeli bombardments.”

He correctly noted that “Hamas initiated this conflict with... rocket attacks on Israeli civilians” and is

proscribed as a terrorist organisation by Australia, adding that “the idea that Israel can just stop, that would mean that Hamas could initiate these strikes anytime it liked, turn them on for a day or two, and then turn them off. So that would give it tremendous power to disrupt Israel all the time.”

After the ceasefire, Sheridan wrote in the *Australian* (May 22) that Hamas wanted to prove its “bona fides” as “the most militantly anti-Israel force,” while its patron “Iran wanted to see how effective Iron Dome was when huge numbers of rockets... were fired in rapid succession... Iran has in mind an eventual conflict involving one of its other regional proxies, Hezbollah, based in southern Lebanon.”

MERCURY RUNS HOT

At the start of the fighting (May 10), anti-Israel columnist Greg Barns spun a tale in the Hobart *Mercury* of Palestinian victimhood. He said Israel “rounded up and killed thousands” of Palestinians in 1948, and cited a recent Human Rights Watch report that accused Israel of practising apartheid. He also claimed that “whenever their [sic] have been negotiations to resolve issues between the Israelis and Palestinians the cards are stacked against the latter who lack resources and diplomatic firepower to contend with the incessant Israel lobby.”

A published response in the *Mercury* from AIJAC’s Judy Maynard (May 13) noted that nearly two million Israeli Arabs “have the same rights as their Jewish fellow-Israelis” and the 1948 war only occurred because of attacks launched by Arab forces and countries against Israel, something which also applies to Hamas’ actions today.

NOT FRAN’S FAN

After the war, speaking to former US Ambassador Tom Pickering (May 24), *ABC Radio National* “Breakfast” host Fran Kelly pushed an assumption that Israeli PM Netanyahu would benefit from the war and blamed “Israeli

forces going into the al-Aqsa Mosque, throwing their weight around basically, with various sort of... authoritarian behaviour in the mosque [as] one of the root causes of the tensions.”

Pickering didn't think Netanyahu was likely to benefit from the war and also stressed his belief that “it doesn't appear that there is a one state outcome to” the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

CYNICAL DIPLOMACY

Speaking to Kelly on May 17, Izzat Salah Abdulhadi, head of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, cynically exploited a war launched by PA nemesis Hamas from a territory the PA doesn't even control, saying “we need international protection of Palestinian people. We don't want to repeat this every year.”

Talking to Israel's Acting Ambassador to Australia Jonathan Peled, Kelly was much more aggressive and suggested Israel's responses were not proportional, and immoral, when whole families die in air strikes.

Peled said it was easy “to judge and criticise Israel from the comfort and safety of our homes here in Australia” and noted that “many of the missiles and rockets... that were fired from Gaza... never reached Israel, but hit their own population.”

He dismissed the accusation that Israeli forces hit al-Jalaa Tower to silence the media by noting that “today, with social media... there is really no point in trying to censor media. It just happens to be unfortunate that a media building was also being used... for terrorist needs.”

Peled denied that the Sheikh Jarrah property dispute, which was still before the courts, “gives any kind of remote justification for Hamas in Gaza [to] send... thousands of rockets on Israelis, and by the way, trying to target Jerusalem as well. So you can't be calling to defend Jerusalem and be attacking it and shooting missiles at it at the same time.”

Kelly implied that Israel would not be interested in even “an immediate

humanitarian ceasefire for some hours to allow those who are wounded and displaced... to leave?” Peled replied, “Why not?,” questioning her assumption.

The claim that Israel was preventing a ceasefire was also conveyed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (May 21) by Oxfam representative in Gaza Asmaa Abu Mezied who said, “Should Israel cede to international pressure for a ceasefire, that only begs the question: how long will it last before, once again, we must live through this torment?”

In fact, as the *Age*/*SMH* reported on May 15, Hamas actually rejected an Egyptian proposal of a three-hour humanitarian hiatus.

A TARGETED RESPONSE

On May 20, Matthias Schmale, Gaza Director of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), disagreed with Kelly's suggestion Israel was not trying hard enough to avoid civilian casualties.

He responded that “they are not directly targeting UN installations or civilian installations. As far as I know, you know, nothing has been reported to me that suggests there were deliberate strikes” and said that Hamas were “firing from within very built-up areas, you know, where civilians are living. So that bit they have to be questioned whether that's not reckless at minimum.”

Earlier, on May 18, Martin Indyk, former US Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations, explained to Kelly that “the only reason that you don't have those kinds of casualties on the Israeli side is because they have this Iron Dome anti-missile system that protects much of their public.”

PIE IN THE SKY

On *Sky News* (May 15), anti-Israel activist Antony Loewenstein implied that the fighting involving Gaza was initiated by Israel and described Hamas as “a convenient enemy of

Israel” which doesn't threaten its “existential reality.”

On *Sky News* (May 17), former Labor foreign minister Bob Carr blamed the “remorseless spread of settlements on occupied Palestinian land... that is smothering a two-state solution” — which doesn't explain why Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas rejected an offer of a Palestinian state in 2008 that included the equivalent of 100 percent of the West Bank, Gaza and a capital in east Jerusalem.

HUMAN RIGHTS WRONGS

An SBS online story (April 27) quoted AIJAC's Jamie Hyams accusing Human Rights Watch (HRW) of “cherry-pick[ing] evidence to support a pre-formed conclusion” in its report that said Israeli policies towards Palestinians on the West Bank and Israeli Arabs amounted to apartheid.

Hyams explained that “Palestinians [have] been offered a state of their own many times.” He also appeared on *SBS TV* “World News” the next day to talk about the report.

On April 28, Nine Newspapers quoted AIJAC's Colin Rubenstein denouncing the report as a “textbook example of a biased organisation knowing what conclusion it wants to reach and then writing a report to substantiate it.” Rubenstein added that “all Israeli citizens, regardless of race, colour or creed, have the same democratic rights” and any security restrictions faced by Palestinians were “to prevent a repeat of the Second Intifada in 2000-05, which saw over 1000 Israelis murdered.”

On an ABC website (April 16), NGO Monitor's Gerald Steinberg revealed that “In 2012, the heads of HRW accepted a secret donation of US\$470,000 from a Saudi billionaire who was himself... involved in certain human rights abuses. The money was conditioned on an agreement that the organisation refrain from criticising Muslim majority countries for violating LGBTQ rights.”

MEDIA MICROSCOPE

Allon Lee

ONE SIDE NOW

As Hamas' latest war rolled on, an "open letter" exhorted Australia's media to "DoBetterOnPalestine" by avoiding "both siderism that equates the victims of a military occupation with its instigators" and to "make space for Palestinian perspectives, prioritising the voices of those most affected by the violence."

It was signed by hundreds of media workers, including, controversially, a number of SBS and ABC employees. The ABC and SBS have a statutory duty to cover both sides of any issue, but the letter effectively urged them not to.

Mercury columnist Greg Barns smeared "so-called progressive media" – the ABC, Nine Newspapers and the *Saturday Paper* – for being "shamefully silent on these issues" on May 24. Yet his outrage towards the ABC is misplaced – it already seems to be doing what the letter demanded.

It is true that the May 12 *ABC TV* "Mornings" report from ABC Middle East correspondent Tom Joyner correctly explained how the conflict started: "Hamas sent a volley of rockets into Israel... Hamas issued an ultimatum to Israel... or face the consequences... they came good on their threat and that's when the first volley of rockets was sent."

Yet later that day on *ABC TV*'s "7pm News", Israel was falsely made to look like it had fired the first shot.

On May 17, *Sky News* host/News Corp columnist Andrew Bolt noted that Joyner had apologised on Twitter to a pro-Palestinian group who criticised his use of the word "clash", which implied "that both sides are equally to blame."

Meanwhile, on *ABC Radio* "PM" (May 14), Joyner said Israel isn't letting journalists into Gaza so "we can't get in there to see for ourselves what's going on." Of course, he didn't mention the alternate entry to Gaza through Egypt.

On *ABC TV* "7pm News" (May 19) Joyner said Israel authorised an aid convoy to cross into Gaza "but just five trucks managed to enter before shells were launched nearby," without making it clear the shells were launched from Gaza and landed near the convoy.

Also helping render absurd claims Palestinian voices are missing at the ABC was *ABC Radio National*'s "Rear Vision" (May 16) program which included no less than three Palestinian voices: journalist Daoud Kuttat, veteran Palestin-

ian spokesperson Hanan Ashrawi and "Electronic Intifada" website founder Ali Abunimah.

Kuttat railed against the Oslo peace process, blaming Israel for how "the Second Intifada broke everything up." US expert commentator Jonathan Schanzer provided the sole balance, explaining that the Second Intifada "was very much launched by Yasser Arafat."

"Helping render absurd claims Palestinian voices are missing at the ABC was *ABC Radio National*'s 'Rear Vision' (May 16) program which included no less than three Palestinian voices"

Both siderism also wasn't an issue on May 19, when an online ABC report on local community reactions to the Gaza war canvassed three Palestinians and two Jews highly critical of Israel, with the Executive Council

of Australian Jewry's Alex Ryvchin as the only mainstream Jewish voice. The piece was compiled by one of the letter signatories.

On May 24, whilst interviewing US born Palestinian academic and activist Rashid Khalidi, *ABC Radio National* "Late Night Live" host Philip Adams effectively told listeners he wants Israel dismantled, saying, "We would love to see, of course, a creation of a democratic sovereign binational state in all of Palestine, with rights for all."

On May 15, *ABC Radio* "AM" host Linda Mottram interviewed controversial BBC correspondent Jeremy Bowen who misattributed the slogan that Palestine was "a land without a people, for a people without a land" to early Jewish Zionists and told an anecdote that has long since been debunked claiming rabbis in the late 1800s visited Palestine and sent a telegram warning the land was "married to another man." He also talked about "horrible pictures" he'd seen on social media of Jewish youths attacking Arabs, but said he hadn't seen any in reverse, even though they were all over social media!

In another choice example of the ABC not bothering with "both siderism", on *ABC Radio* "PM" (May 18), Mottram interviewed former Australian diplomat Bob Bowker to discuss a series of highly dubious assumptions, with Mottram asserting in the introduction that Israel is guilty of "inequitable treatment of Arabs." Bowker spoke of the "fundamental inequity of the system as Israel runs it at the moment" and said "the right of Jews to be the dominant players in Israel" cannot continue, amidst a factually dubious claim that Palestinians and Israeli Arabs already outnumber Jewish Israelis.

If even this parade of one-sidedness was apparently not enough for the letter's signatories, nothing will be.

THE LAST WORD

Jeremy Jones

NOT QUITE HUMAN

I will remember the first time I was told publicly and clearly that, because I am Jewish, I have fewer rights than any other human being.

I had been invited to speak at an international conference in Asia devoted to world peace.

Due to a variety of circumstances, I was allocated a spot on a coveted plenary panel, together with two prominent political figures and a diplomat from a global power.

In my speech, I urged all those present, many of whom would never have heard a relatively mainstream Jewish position, to consider that the best way to advocate for the Palestinians was to think of them, and also Israelis, not as props to further political agendas but as real human beings who had no personal interest in maintaining hostility with their neighbours.

When it was time for questions, all of them were directed to me, despite challenging presentations by my distinguished co-panellists.

The first question came from a person from Iran identified as a serious leader of Shi'ite Islam.

He explained that, in his educated, informed, theological and political opinion, it was simply not accurate to describe Israelis as human beings.

The moderator of the session was taken aback and apologised, and I requested permission to ask a question in return.

I asked him also if he really believed that there were human beings of different intrinsic value and if his issue was with Jews, not simply with the one state in the world with a Jewish majority.

His response was that Jewish people are essentially the enemies of humanity and could not be considered equivalent to others.

I thanked him for his honesty, repeated his comments so that everyone present could hear, and watched as he nodded his head to confirm the accuracy of my interpretation.

I then continued fielding questions on the different options available to those who sought a peaceful future for Israelis and

Palestinians.

The Iranian's comment was made in front of an audience of a few hundred and appeared to be a bit of virtue signalling, with the most unvirtuous of content. During May this year, I received numerous messages from Muslim friends and contacts around the world which implied that I as a Jew, was not only not entitled to peoplehood but that the world would be a better place if all Jewish people were returned to the status of second, third or fourth class citizens of the world.

Some forwarded videos of various people identified as Jews (without verification in most cases) who pushed a narrative which went against foundational Jewish teachings.

Others forwarded allegations that Jews commit and/or support genocide and apartheid, and/or

confirm stereotypes promoted in the notorious antisemitic forgery, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*.

Most of my interlocutors have been willing to hear what I have to say about the various items they have been forwarding and more often than not were grateful to hear my opinions on them. That said, some maintain that there is one group who are oppressed and one which is the oppressor, and to act as if there is nuance must be rejected because it complicates this simplistic paradigm.

Not directed at me personally, but possibly the most offensive behaviour visible through my news feed was that by veteran BBC journalist Jeremy Bowen.

In an act of arrogance and bullying, he tweeted an article offering one Israeli journalist's opinion of Judaism, and then instructed "every Jew" to read this explanation of "Judaism", identifying "racism, hate and violence" as Jewish values.

Disregard for a moment the odds that Jewish people don't know what we think and believe, but consider the likelihood of the same person sending an email highlighting what he saw as the most negative features of Islam, instructing "All Muslims must read this!"

I suppose we should be grateful when BBC reporters, like Iranian theologians, show their double standards, lack of ethics and contempt for Jews so publicly and blatantly.



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