

AN UNPRECEDENTED CRIME – AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Israel's blackest day, and the
unavoidable war against Hamas

INTO GAZA

What an Israeli ground campaign against
Hamas could look likePAGE 23

SOLIDARITY

How Australia's po-
litical leaders have
expressed support for
Israel in its time of
needPAGE 29

PERSEVERANCE REQUIRED

Why a premature
ceasefire would
cost lives, not save
themPAGE 25

REGION ON THE EDGE

Could Iran's proxies
escalate the Gaza war
into a wider conflagration?PAGE 26

WITH COMPLIMENTS

JAGEN

9 OXFORD STREET
SOUTH YARRA VIC 3141

TEL: (03) 9661 8250
FAX: (03) 9661 8257

TARRAWARRA

ESTATE

311 HEALESVILLE – YARRA GLEN ROAD,
YARRA GLEN, VIC 3775 +61 3 5962 3311
WWW.TARRAWARRA.COM.AU



EDITOR'S NOTE

This *AIR* edition is devoted almost wholly to the aftermath of the unprecedented mass terror attacks Hamas launched from Gaza into 22 Israeli civilian towns on October 7, leading to the murder of at least 1,400 people – among them children, the elderly and the disabled – and the kidnapping of some 220 hostages.

Amotz Asa-El describes the atmosphere in Israel today – characterised by shared sorrow and unprecedented social solidarity – while Ahron Shapiro brings together just a few of the myriad stories of victims, survivors, defenders and hostages from that day of horror. Plus, Aaron Poris takes us into Israel's main forensic labs, where the bodies of victims tell their own terrible stories.

Next, top US experts Robert Satloff, Dennis Ross and David Makovsky clarify what Israel seeks to achieve in its war in Gaza, and what might come after the overthrow of Hamas rule there. Also, academic Cary Nelson explains the disastrous implications of calls for an early ceasefire, while David Schenker explores the likelihood that the Gaza war could spread to include more Iranian proxies, such as Hezbollah.

Finally, don't miss Jamie Hyams' summary of reactions by Australia's political leaders, most of whom expressed solidarity with Israel, and Tzvi Fleischer on the worrying reactions to October 7 in the "moderate" Palestinian Authority.

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

Tzvi Fleischer

CONTENTS

FEATURE STORIES

ISRAEL'S BLACKEST DAY

AMOTZ ASA-EL

The overall toll of the Black Shabbat attack is by now infamous: an estimated 1,400 Israeli fatalities, of which at least 1,000 were civilians, including the elderly, children, disabled people and babies... in addition to more than 220 who were taken to Gaza where they are now held as hostages.**PAGE 12**

STORIES FROM A DAY OF HORROR

AHRON SHAPIRO **PAGE 14**

"TOO MUCH TO BEAR"

AARON PORIS **PAGE 18**

ISRAEL'S MISSION IN GAZA

And what should happen afterwards
ROBERT SATLOFF, DENNIS ROSS & DAVID MAKOVSKY **PAGE 21**

THE COMING SHOWDOWN IN GAZA

SETH FRANTZMAN **PAGE 23**

CEASEFIRE CALLS NAIVE AND DANGEROUS

CARY NELSON **PAGE 25**

CAN A WIDER WAR BE PREVENTED?

DAVID SCHENKER **PAGE 26**

SOLIDARITY – AND ITS DETRACTORS

JAMIE HYAMS **PAGE 28**

ESSAY: AN ABUSE OF HISTORY

Abbas and the Khazar claim
EHUD YAARI **PAGE 32**



ON THE COVER

An Israeli soldier inside the rubble of a house in Kibbutz Be'eri, near the border with Gaza, where at least 130 Kibbutz members were killed by Hamas in its attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip on October 7. (Image: AAP/ Abir Sultan)



REGULAR COLUMNS

FROM THE EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN

COLIN RUBENSTEIN **PAGE 4**

WORD FOR WORD **PAGE 5**

SCRIBBLINGS

TZVI FLEISCHER **PAGE 6**

DECONSTRUCTION ZONE

GEOFFREY S. CORN **PAGE 7**

ASIA WATCH

MICHAEL SHANNON **PAGE 8**

AIR NEW ZEALAND

MIRIAM BELL **PAGE 9**

BEHIND THE NEWS **PAGE 10**

NOTED AND QUOTED **PAGE 34**

IN PARLIAMENT **PAGE 36**

MEDIA MICROSCOPE

ALLON LEE **PAGE 38**

THE LAST WORD

ITZHAK HERZOG **PAGE 40**

HOW TO USE OUR INTERACTIVE EDITION

- Tap/click to return to the Contents page
- All listed articles link to their page.
- Best viewed in your desktop browser or the Books (iOS) or equivalent e-book reader app in portrait mode.

Australia/Israel Review

Published by the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC)

Editorial Chairman
Dr COLIN RUBENSTEIN AM**Editor-in-Chief**
Dr TZVI FLEISCHER**Staff Writers**
ALLON LEE, JAMIE HYAMS OAM, AHRON SHAPIRO, OVED LOBEL, TAMMY REZNIK, JUSTIN AMLER, AVIVA WINTON**Publishing Manager**
MICHAEL SHANNON**Correspondents**
ISRAEL: AMOTZ ASA-EL
NEW ZEALAND: MIRIAM BELL
EUROPE: ALEX BENJAMIN**National Editorial Board**
KEITH BEVILLE, RABBI RALPH GENENDE OAM, GARY HERZ, MIRIAM LASKY, STEVE LIEBLICH, RABBI DR JOHN LEVI AC, Hon. HOWARD NATHAN AM KC**AIJAC****National Chairman**
MARK LEIBLER AC**NSW Chairman**
PAUL RUBENSTEIN**Executive Director**
Dr COLIN RUBENSTEIN AM**Director of Policy and Research**
Dr TZVI FLEISCHER**Executive Manager**
JOEL BURNIE**Director of Public Affairs**
Hon. WALT SECORD**Senior Policy Analysts**
AHRON SHAPIRO, JAMIE HYAMS OAM, ALLON LEE**Policy Analysts**
OVED LOBEL, JUSTIN AMLER, AVIVA WINTON, GALIT JONES**Research Associate**
Dr RAN PORAT**Multimedia Designer**
AREK DYBEL**Digital Communications Producer**
ALANA SCHETZER**Digital and Policy Analyst**
TAMMY REZNIK**Events Coordinator**
HELEN BRUSTMAN OAM**Administration**
MELBOURNE: ROSEMARY SANDLER, RENA LANGBERG
SYDNEY: LOUISE DE MESQUITA**Israel Liaison**
PETER ADLER**Founding Chairmen**
ISADOR MAGID AM (OBM), ROBERT ZABLUD (OBM)**HEAD OFFICE****Level 1, 22 Albert Road,
South Melbourne, VIC 3205, Australia**
Telephone: (03) 9681 6660
Email: aijac@aijac.org.au**SYDNEY OFFICE****140 William Street
East Sydney, NSW 2011, Australia**
Telephone: (02) 9360 5415
Email: aijacsydney@aijac.org.au**SUBSCRIPTIONS**Please send all remittances, changes of address and subscription inquiries to our Melbourne office (above), or email: admin-aijac@aijac.org.au
ISSN No. 1442-3693
Print Post Approved – 100007869www.aijac.org.au**FROM THE
EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN**
COLIN RUBENSTEIN**ATROCITIES DEMAND HAMAS' RULE MUST END NOW**

Hamas' savage rampage of slaughter, pillage, rape, torture and murder on October 7 – which wiped out more than 1,400 people from 22 civilian communities and led to the kidnapping of 220 more – horrified and shocked all civilised people around the world. However, on a certain level, you cannot call it truly surprising. Anyone who has looked at Hamas' ideology and record – as we at AIJAC have – would know that it was morally capable of the unmitigated evil we saw on October 7.

That day put paid, once and for all, to the lie being peddled by some that Hamas has somehow moderated over the years. Today's Hamas looks just like the old Hamas – only better-armed and organised, thanks largely to considerable Iranian assistance with arms, training and funds.

Lest we forget, this is the group that dispatched waves of suicide bombers into Israeli cities for the decade following the 1993 Oslo Accords, killing hundreds of innocent people on public transport and at bus stops, in restaurants, cafes, bars, nightclubs, and shops.

Since the mid-2000s, Hamas has committed tens of thousands of individual war crimes by launching explosive-laden rockets into Israeli towns and villages – aiming to kill civilians. At the cost of untold millions of dollars, Hamas dug hundreds of kilometres of concrete-lined tunnels under Gaza, as well as into Israel to facilitate mass terrorist infiltrations – until the latter plan was foiled by the IDF's Operation Protective Edge in 2014.

Yet it managed to achieve the same goal at ground level on October 7 by disabling Israeli observation cameras and sensors with drones, perforating Israel's security fence with explosives and bulldozers, and sending heavily armed squads across the border *en masse* with orders to murder everyone they could find in Israeli towns and villages, except for a few hostages brought back as bargaining chips. Many of those murdered – men, women, children, babies, the elderly – were tortured first, or burned alive.

This traumatic event has been described as Israel's September 11. In reality, it was far worse. An Israeli was proportionally 25 times more likely to have been killed on October 7 than an American was on September 11. There is hardly a family in Israel not directly or indirectly impacted by what happened on that Saturday.

An Israeli State Commission of Inquiry into how this horror happened is inevitable, but we can already say that October 7 was the single most catastrophic military and intelligence failure in Israel's history.

Some pundits are insisting that it was the lack of a Palestinian state alongside Israel that fuelled Hamas' Islamist ideology, and thus led to this attack. This is completely upside down – this attack was the clearest demonstration possible as to why it has proven impossible to create a two-state resolution up to now, despite sincere efforts and repeated Israeli two-state peace offers.

Hamas-run Gaza has for the last 17 years been the closest thing to a fully-fledged Palestinian state that has ever existed – totally autonomous, sharing a border with not only Israel and Egypt, but the Mediterranean, and completely free of any Israeli presence.

Yet it is precisely in Gaza where terrorism flourished, where forces constantly developed and fired rockets at Israeli civilian towns and trained thousands of armed operatives for barbaric mass terror attacks like the one the world witnessed on October 7. Independent Gaza, ruled by Hamas, was not only a mortal threat to the lives of Israel's citizens, it developed into an existential threat to Israel's national existence, and Hamas also made

the lives of Gaza's residents a misery by stealing aid and initiating constant conflict. This is what necessitated Israel's blockade of Gaza to try to control the entry of arms and military equipment – obviously with limited success.

Imagine duplicating the Gaza situation in the West Bank – where the “Green Line” armistice line with Israel is more than six times longer than Israel's Gaza's border, much more mountainous and convoluted, and is immediately adjacent to all of Israel's main population centres. A majority of Israelis would be under constant threat of a repeat of what happened to the residents of the towns near Gaza. The threat would be exponentially greater than the already extreme threat from Gaza.

The only reason the West Bank poses no similar threat today is because there are Israeli troops there to stop such a situation developing.

Those who imagine that forcing an Israeli pullback to the 1967 lines would satisfy Palestinian demands and thus bring peace are being wilfully blind. Not only was Gaza not “occupied” when Hamas took it over and made it into a dedicated terror statelet, Hamas is absolutely clear that similar “armed resistance” would continue even if Israel were to give up every inch of the West Bank.

The increasingly weak Palestinian Authority (PA) which rules the West Bank is not much better as a candidate to run a future Palestinian state existing in peace alongside Israel. In the aftermath of October 7, the PA cheered on the

Hamas slaughter and spread antisemitism (see p. 6) – and it subsidises terrorists with its “pay for slay” program.

Despite the terrible events of recent weeks, AIJAC and the entire Australian Jewish community have been reassured and heartened by the bipartisan outpouring of support for Israel and Jews, at home and abroad, from Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Opposition Leader Peter Dutton and many other federal and state lawmakers.

Yet important as those supportive messages were in the immediate aftermath of the massacre, it's even more important they continue. Such support is needed not only to pressure Hamas to free the hostages, but also to allow Israel to complete what will likely be a long, complex and bloody military campaign to remove the Hamas threat from Gaza – where

the terror group has long illegally hidden its military assets in civilian neighbourhoods, homes, schools, mosques, and hospitals, or in the huge network of tunnels it built underneath them. Moreover, this operation could easily become a multi-front war if the Iranian-backed Hezbollah further escalates along Israel's northern border.

It is a very dark time – but the only hope to advance to a better one is for the rule of Gaza by bloodthirsty, Iranian-supported Hamas terrorists to be dismantled. Australia's long-standing bipartisan goal of helping achieve a two-state Israeli-Palestinian peace is simply inconceivable without this being achieved. We hope that Australia's political leaders will keep this in mind in the difficult weeks to come.

AIR

WORD FOR WORD

“Citizens of Israel, we are at war. Not an operation, not a round [of fighting,] at war! This morning Hamas initiated a murderous surprise attack against the state of Israel and its citizens.”

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu after the October 7 pogrom (Times of Israel, Oct. 7).

“There are moments in this life when pure, unadulterated evil is unleashed on the world. The people of Israel lived through one such moment this weekend... Like every nation in the world, Israel has the right to respond — indeed has a duty to respond — to these vicious attacks... These atrocities have been sickening. We're with Israel. Let's make no mistake.”

US President Joe Biden's address in response to the terror attacks in Israel (White House, Oct. 10).

“We want to bring Hamas to a state of full dismantlement — its leaders, its military branch, and its working mechanisms. That is why we are striking, and eliminating high ranking commanders

and members, destroying infrastructure, and acting with great determination.”

IDF Chief-of-Staff Lt.-Gen. Herzi Halevi (IDF on X, Oct. 24).

“I warn the US and its proxy Israel that if they do not immediately stop the crime against humanity and genocide in Gaza, anything is possible at any moment and the region will go out of control.”

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (BBC, Oct. 23).

“God willing, the cancer of the usurper Zionist regime will be eradicated at the hands of the Palestinian people and the Resistance forces throughout the region. #AlAqsaStorm.”

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on the October 7 pogrom (X, Oct. 8).

“Babies riddled with bullets. Young people hunted down and gunned down with glee. Families burned alive in a final embrace. Parents executed in front of their children. Children executed in front of their parents. We have to ask, where is the outrage? Where is the revulsion?”

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the UN (j24NEWS, Oct. 25).





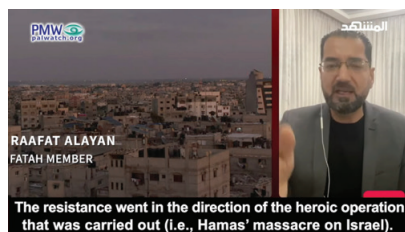
SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

THE “MODERATE” PA REACTS TO HAMAS’ SLAUGHTER WITH CHEERLEADING AND ANTISEMITISM

In the wake of the horrific orgy of mass murder and hostage-taking by Hamas in southern Israeli on October 7, many people naively urged that a two-state resolution should be rapidly created to end the bloodshed between Israelis and Palestinians. While they’re right in principle that a two-state resolution remains the only feasible way to end the conflict, they are completely misguided in thinking it can be achieved rapidly.

Most advocates of a two-state solution as the answer to October 7 concede that Hamas – whose leader Ismail Haniyeh followed up this pogrom by saying on *Al-Jazeera* that all Jews have to “Get out of our land... This land is ours, Jerusalem is ours, everything is ours” – is probably not going to be a partner for that two-state peace.



A Fatah leader praises the Hamas massacre (Image: Palestinian Media Watch)

Sadly, the other possible partner for any potential two state peace – the Palestinian Authority (PA) which controls the West Bank, ruled by President Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah party – has

also effectively eliminated itself as a viable partner by its behaviour since October 7. (This comes on top of the fact that Abbas turned down at least two viable deals and has rejected all attempts to renew negotiations for almost a decade – and is increasingly losing control even of the West Bank.)

Here are just a few examples (all sourced from Palestinian Media Watch) of PA and Fatah reactions to the October 7 massacre:

- Fatah’s military wing, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades, claimed to have participated in the attacks, predicting they would soon lead to Israel’s destruction, asserting on social media (Oct. 9), “We’re fighting with the rest of the resistance factions (i.e. terror groups) in ‘the Al-Aqsa Flood’ battle, by the power of Allah and with His help... the end of the thieving occupier’s imaginary entity is near.”
- Fatah Tulkarem Branch Secretary Iyad Jarrad said on Oct. 10 on official *PA TV*, referring to the attacks on Israelis: “We stand alongside our brothers in the Gaza Strip, because truly they are a source of pride, hero-

ism, and honour for the Palestinian people.”


- On Oct. 12, the deputy Chair of Abbas’ Fatah Movement, Mahmoud Al-Aloul, praised the “blood of the heroes” – i.e. dead Hamas terrorist “Martyrs” – on X, vowing that this blood will be a curse “that will remove this occupier, all those who stand behind it, and all those who do not support our people.”
- Al-Aloul also explained on the official PA news agency *Wafa* on Oct. 10 that “from the first moment everyone’s responses were united: This explosion (i.e. the Hamas terror war) is nothing but a natural response... and this is also the position of the Palestinian [PA] leadership.”
- Some PA figures denied any Israeli civilians had been targeted or killed in the attacks. *PA-TV* political commentator Mahmoud Khalouf had this to say of the attacks and Israel’s military response: “It is forbidden under any circumstances to respond to a military operation – military squads against military squads – with a genocide of unarmed [Palestinian] civilians.”
- Official *PA-TV* openly celebrated the terrorist attacks, describing them as a successful “military operation” and the Israelis kidnapped as “soldiers and settlers”. A reporter stated on Oct. 7, “Today Gaza landed a blow that this occupation will yet remember ... This occupation will know well that the Palestinian people is in its land and needs to take its right to self-determination by force.”

There were also some blatantly antisemitic responses to the massacre from PA-affiliated sources:

- The Telegram channel of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades on Oct. 7 called for the murder of all Israelis, and referred to Jews as “sons of apes and pigs” – a traditional Muslim slur against Jews based on a story from the Koran: “Allahu Akbar, come to Jihad, come to Jihad... today is your day. Break into the settlements, strike the sons of apes of pigs, kill everyone who is a settler, slaughter everyone who is Israeli.”
- Even more frighteningly, on Oct. 18, the PA Ministry of Religious Affairs issued instructions to imams for the sermon they were to deliver in all the mosques of the West Bank on Friday Oct. 19 – and it included an instruction for all of them to preach to their congregations a religious saying calling for the genocide of all Jews. The sermon guidance instructions falsely blamed Israel for the explosion at the Al-Ahli hospital, claiming this was “one of the greatest crimes in the modern age.” The instructions then went on to quote an infamous *Hadith* (tradition attributed to the prophet Muhammad): “The Hour [of Resurrection] will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them until the Jews hide behind rocks and trees, and the rock or a tree will say: ‘Muslim, O servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind

me; come and kill him.’” The same *Hadith* predicting that Muslims are fated to murder all Jews is quoted in the Hamas charter.

As for PA Head Mahmoud Abbas, virtually his only attempt to distance himself from the attacks was a weak statement on Oct. 15 that “Hamas’ policy and actions do not represent the Palestinian people.” However, Fatah officials attempted to explain away the statement as a response to American pressure. Moreover, hours after the above statement was made, it was removed from the website of the official *Wafa* news agency and replaced with one that did not mention Hamas or its actions.

In other words, it is a sad and inconvenient fact that, since October 7, it is not just Hamas that has effectively ruled itself out as a partner for a two-state solution with Israel. By any reasonable standard, the PA has also shown it is too hateful, too murderous and too extreme for any such agreement to be reached, or to provide anything remotely like stable peace if it somehow were. 



Geoffrey S. Corn

THE FALLACY OF EQUAL CONDEMNATION

War, especially in places as densely populated as Gaza, is awful. No matter how hard military forces try to avoid inflicting death and suffering on civilians, that outcome seems inevitable. But while the rules of war demand that both sides respect the law equally, there is simply no requirement for equality of condemnation for that suffering. Yet again, the near-obsession to condemn both sides of the conflict for war crimes is on full display. The immediate international assumption that Israel was responsible for the tragic hospital incident, an assumption subsequently discredited based on compelling evidence, is the latest example of this phenomenon.

Legal responsibility for civilian suffering cannot be validly assessed simply by asking which side dropped the bomb. In this conflict especially, that responsibility falls at the feet of Hamas – the side that not only deliberately attacks civilians, but uses its own civilians as camouflage and human shields.

The barbaric actions of Hamas when it attacked Israel generated what is arguably unprecedented condemnation around the world. No one needed a degree in international law to understand these actions were war crimes of the greatest magnitude. And while Hamas operatives are not conducting operations on behalf of a state, they are bound to the identical rules of war, or the law of armed conflict,

that applies to Israeli armed forces. This “equality of application” is a bedrock principle of the law – the law applies equally to both sides.


This principle is not impacted by why each side fights; it is focused exclusively on how they fight. Even if one side believes it is fighting for a just cause and the other is not, the law of armed conflict regulates the conduct of all sides. This may seem illogical, but any other approach would exacerbate the humanitarian suffering of war.

Sadly, this principle of equal application often fails, and Hamas is a prime example. It has confirmed what Israel and many experts have known for years: a complete disregard for the most basic rules of war. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) will try to mitigate civilian risk, while Hamas will try to exacerbate it.

Even worse, Hamas knows that the IDF’s respect for the law is a tool it can leverage to gain tactical and strategic advantage. One need only consider its demand that civilians in Gaza ignore Israeli calls to evacuate. Hamas knows that the presence of civilians will substantially complicate IDF combat operations in Gaza. Why? Because, unlike Hamas, the IDF will try to mitigate civilian risk. Hamas knows that the presence of those civilians will either result in attack cancellation or the difficult decision to attack the target because the importance of the attack outweighs the collateral risk to civilians.

If the attack is cancelled, the target is spared; if the attack is conducted, the unavoidable civilian casualties will be exploited in the strategic information war. Either way, Hamas wins, but only if the instinct for equality of condemnation ignores a credible assessment of who bears true responsibility for civilian harm.

The current focus on humanitarian suffering in Gaza also demonstrates this instinct. The decision to cut off resources allowed into Gaza was quickly condemned as a war crime. In fact, the legality assessment is far more complex than simply highlighting the impact on civilians. This is not to say that Israel should be indifferent to that impact; it should seek (and is seeking) to offset the impact of such measures when doing so will not compromise its military objectives. But to immediately and almost automatically equate civilian suffering that is incidental to efforts directed at weakening and defeating enemy forces with the intentional murder, mutilation, and attack on civilians reveals not only a misunderstanding of the law that regulates war but a false equivalency of condemnation.

The instinct that fairness demands equality of condemnation is invalid. True fairness demands accusations of war crimes are based on credible facts and an accurate understanding of the law. 

Geoffrey S. Corn is the George R. Killam, Jr. Chair of Criminal Law and Director of the Center for Military Law and Policy at Texas Tech University School of Law and a Distinguished Fellow at



the JINSA [Jewish Institute for the National Security of America] Gemunder Center for Defense & Strategy. © JINSA (JINSA.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

ACROSS THE SPECTRUM

The shocking Hamas onslaught upon Israel and the resulting military response prompted a wide range of responses across Southeast Asia. Reviewing the reactions, some appear motivated by political and religious ideology, others by pragmatism and direct people-to-people connections.

In the former camp is Indonesia. President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo, leader of the world’s most populous Muslim-majority country, urged an end to the bloodshed, and added, “The root cause of the conflict, which is the occupation of Palestinian land by Israel, must be resolved immediately in accordance with the parameters that have been agreed upon by the UN.”

Jokowi said his government was working to protect Indonesian citizens in Palestinian territories, especially 10 in Gaza. The foreign ministry said there were 275 Indonesians in Israel and Palestinian areas, with most of them visiting for religious purposes.

On the street, several hundred citizens in Jakarta – many holding Palestinian flags – protested outside the US Embassy, where they denounced Israel as the “real terrorist”, prayed to “expel Zionist Israel from Palestinian soil” and set Israeli flags ablaze. Several Islamic organisations were involved, reportedly including members of the banned Islam Defenders’ Front.

“Today we hear the call of jihad,” a female protest leader told the crowd. “If Allah says we have to fight against the Jews, we are ready to go to Palestine.”

Likewise, Malaysia’s immediate response to Hamas’ attacks was to reiterate its “solidarity with the struggles of the Palestinian people.” In a post on X (Twitter), PM Anwar Ibrahim said, “The confiscation of land and property belonging to the Palestinian people is done relentlessly by the Zionists. As a result of this injustice, hundreds of innocent lives were sacrificed.”

Anwar did not comment about the atrocities carried out by Hamas terrorists against Israeli civilians.

Meanwhile, after Friday prayers on Oct. 13 in Kuala Lumpur, a crowd of around 15,000 assembled to condemn Israel. According to the *Malay Mail*, protesters wore Palestinian keffiyeh scarves and held aloft placards reading Israel cuak (“Israel is frightened”). It reported that two effigies draped in the Israeli flag were also set ablaze amidst chants

of *Hidup Palestin* (“long live Palestine”) and *Hancur Zionist* (“crush the Zionists”).

The usually rancorous Malay political dialogue was suspended for rare unanimity, with prominent politicians from across the political spectrum, including former prime ministers Muhyiddin Yassin and Mahathir Mohamad, plus leaders from the Islamist party PAS, the ethnic Chinese-oriented Democratic Action Party, the United Malays National Organisation and several members of PM Anwar’s cabinet in attendance.

“For decades they have suffered,” Muhyiddin told the crowd. “Today’s gathering is a testament to our unwavering stance, regardless of political affiliations or whether you are Muslim or non-Muslim, we must make our stance known against the atrocities of the Zionist regime imposed upon the Palestinians.”

For its part, communist-ruled Vietnam said that it was “profoundly concerned” and broadly took a stance that appeared much closer to the position of powers such as China and Russia, which did not squarely side with Israel.

Other countries in region could see Hamas’ violence for what it was.

Singapore said it strongly condemned Hamas’ rocket and terror attacks, while new Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin denounced them as inhumane, extending his “deepest condolences to the government and people of Israel”.

The Thai foreign ministry further called upon “all parties involved to refrain from any actions that would further escalate tensions and [condemned] any use of violence and indiscriminate attacks.”

Among foreign countries, Thailand is perhaps the most affected in terms of lives lost and in the number of people taken hostage. An estimated 30,000 Thais live in Israel, many working as farm labourers – 29 were killed by Hamas gunmen, according to the Foreign Ministry, which said another 17 Thai citizens were being held hostage by Hamas and another 16 had been injured.

The Philippines is similarly affected. There are approximately 40,000 Filipinos in Israel, but only 25,000 are legally documented, according to labour and migrant groups. Three Filipinos have been killed in the violence, while two remained unaccounted for and 20 others were rescued by Israeli forces, Philippines officials said.

At the political level, the Philippines’ long history of support for the Jewish state was reflected in the words of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr: “My heart is heavy upon hearing confirmation of the deaths of two Filipinos in Israel. The Philippines condemns these killings and stands firmly against the ongoing terror and violence.”

However, a later televised comment that if he were Israeli PM Netanyahu, he would turn Gaza into “the world’s biggest cemetery,” drew criticism from Muslim leaders in the nation’s south.

Miriam Bell

NIGHTMARE AT THE MUSEUM

The evening after New Zealand's October 14 general election, the Auckland War Memorial Museum lit up its exterior in blue and white in solidarity with Israel, following the Hamas terror attacks a week earlier.

It initially said it condemned all acts of violence and terrorism, and that lighting up the museum was "an expression of hope for peace."

In doing this, the Museum joined many landmarks around the world, including the Sydney Opera House, 10 Downing St, the Brandenburg Gate, the EU Headquarters, and the Eiffel Tower, that had done the same.

Shortly after the museum was illuminated, around 100 pro-Palestinian supporters turned up in protest, covering up the lights to block out the display.

While the "protestors" described the event as peaceful, according to eye-witness reports from people who turned up to see the light display, antisemitic rhetoric was very much present.

That has happened at other such events, such as at the Sydney Opera House. But it was what followed that makes New Zealand unique.

The next day the Museum's chief executive David Reeves issued an apology for the lights. He said it was meant to be "an expression of hope for peace," but the approach was wrong, and he apologised for "the distress and hurt caused to members of our community."

NZ Jewish Council spokesperson Juliet Moses said that to the best of her knowledge that has not happened anywhere else in the world.

She described the Museum's actions as a "betrayal", which had further hurt the Jewish community.

New Zealand's Holocaust and Antisemitism Foundation said the Museum's apology for expressing solidarity with Israel in the wake of the worst slaughter and atrocities against Jews since the Holocaust was shameful.

After the virulently antisemitic protests at the Sydney Opera House, many prominent figures in Australia condemned what had happened and spoke out in support of the Jewish community. That did not happen in New Zealand.

Moses said part of the reason for the silence on the incident from those outside the Jewish community could be the post-election limbo the country was currently in.

The centre right block of the National and ACT parties won the election, but a tight majority means they cannot form a government until special votes are counted.

Moses said while that might help explain the silence from National and Labour, both of which have condemned

the Hamas attacks, it did not apply to media or civil society leaders, who could do much to set the tone.

In her view, there was more at play than just the post-election interregnum.

"We just don't have people in authority in New Zealand who speak out about issues such as the shambles at the Museum. We've seen this before – in the response to my saying all forms of terrorism should be condemned at the counter-terrorism *hui* ["Assembly"] in 2021, for example."

At the *hui*, Moses referred to a pro-Hezbollah rally held in Auckland as part of this call and was accused of Islamophobia and racial insensitivity.

Adding to this, the Green Party and Te Pati Maori have not been silent in the post-election period, with both parties saying nothing justified the IDF's "indiscriminate" bombing of Gaza.

Te Pati Maori has also called for the expulsion of the Israeli Ambassador, and accused Israel of colonial occupation, instituting an apartheid regime and genocidal rhetoric.

Moses said there was a tendency for New Zealand media to go along with this version, without offering counterbalancing information or opinion.

As an example, Moses cited a *Radio NZ* interview with Te Pati Maori co-leader Debbie Ngarewa-Packer, where the host allowed Ngarewa-Packer to speak at length without challenging her.

The Jewish community had been left shocked, devastated, grieving, and fearful about the events in Israel, as well as the reaction here and around the world, she said.

Going forward, strong political and civil society leadership was needed, Moses said.

Israel Institute of NZ co-director David Cumin agreed, noting that New Zealand politicians had been out of step with other liberal democratic nations.

Politicians must show leadership in unequivocally condemning terror, and not use inflammatory language to demonise Israel, he said.

"It would be great if MFAT (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade) officials would be replaced with people who take terror seriously, even when the victims are Israelis, and do not recommend funding UNRWA schools that teach children to glorify the murder of Jews.

"And who also do not apparently block the designation of Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorists for a dream of reinvigorating trade with Iran.

"It is disheartening when some people are still demanding evidence of butchered Israeli babies, and people (including journalists) who seem more inclined to believe Hamas than the IDF about the al-Ahli Arab Hospital bombing," he said.

**This reporter understands representatives of the Holocaust Centre of NZ will meet with representatives from the Museum; and that Jewish community officials have met with government agencies, including MFAT.*

BEHIND THE NEWS

ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

Between Oct. 7 and Oct. 25, more than 7,512 rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles were fired from Gaza toward Israel, about 4,000 on Oct. 7 itself.

On that day, more than 1,400 Israelis, mostly civilians, were butchered across a wide swathe of territory following a mass invasion from Gaza by terrorists from Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups. Some 4,600 people were injured. Three hundred and eight IDF and security personnel were killed on Oct. 7 or in the two weeks which followed. Those murdered on Oct. 7 included at least 32 US citizens, 24 Thais, 21 French nationals, 17 British nationals, ten Nepalese, and nationals of at least 19 other countries, including Australian grandmother Galit Carbone.

According to the Israeli Government, at least 222 hostages are confirmed to have been taken into Gaza. Four were released on Oct. 20 and Oct. 22. At least eight German nationals, 17 Thais, four Portuguese, two Italians, and two Mexicans have been confirmed as having been taken hostage, while 11 US nationals, nine French nationals, 15 Argentinians and numerous nationals of other states remain missing, with many believed to be hostages.

More than 200,000 Israeli citizens, from both the area around Gaza and northern Israel, have been displaced from their homes as a result of the conflict. Israel continues to launch hundreds of airstrikes daily as it prepares for a ground operation into Gaza to destroy Hamas, and several Hamas politburo members and senior commanders have been killed in targeted strikes.

While the Hamas-run Palestinian

Ministry of Health claims that more than 6,500 Palestinians were killed in Israeli airstrikes between Oct. 7 and Oct. 25, the Ministry was caught peddling highly inflated casualty tallies in the early days of the war (see below) and there is no reason to believe these figures are credible.

In the West Bank, more than 100 Palestinians have reportedly been killed since Oct. 7, mainly in clashes with the IDF. At least two airstrikes have been conducted and one Israeli border police officer was killed in the ongoing battles there.

CAPTURED DOCUMENTS SHOW HAMAS INTENTIONS

Documents found on a Hamas fighter killed on Oct. 7 show an extremely detailed and well-planned operation – with operatives given detailed maps of towns, military bases and infiltration routes and specific instructions about all elements of the attack. Instructions included orders to specifically target civilians for murder or hostage-taking, the latter focussing especially on children. One document said the goal was to “kill as many people as possible.”

Some of these captured documents, coupled with the massive arsenal and food supplies brought into Israel by the terrorists and recovered by the IDF, also suggest Hamas’ original plan was to invade as far as Kiryat Gat, a town over 25km away from Gaza, and then to try to hold territory and hostages inside Israel for at least a month – although other documents indicate plans to take hostages back to Gaza immediately. Captured Hamas operatives also revealed in interrogations that they were specifically instructed to torture, behead, mutilate and rape

Israelis, and one said they were told “whoever brings a hostage back [to Gaza] gets \$10,000 and an apartment.”

UNITY GOVERNMENT FORMED IN ISRAEL

On Oct. 11, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu from the Likud party and Benny Gantz, leader of the National Unity party, agreed to form an emergency unity government in the aftermath of the mass terror attacks on Oct. 7. It was also agreed that Gantz, a former IDF Chief of Staff and Defence Minister, would join Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant in an Emergency War Cabinet which will oversee Israel’s response to Hamas’ deadly attack. Gantz’s party colleague Gadi Eisenkot, another former IDF Chief of Staff will attend war cabinet meetings as an observer, together with Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer of Likud. Three other National Unity MKs will be appointed ministers and will join the wider security cabinet.

It was also agreed Yair Lapid of *Yesh Atid* (“There is a Future”), the current Opposition Leader, would have a place reserved for him in the war cabinet if he wants to join it, but Lapid has said he will support the Government from outside for now. Gantz said of the new unity arrangement: “This isn’t a political partnership, this is a shared fate. We are lending a shoulder and are enlisting in the war.”

CLAIMS IRAN GAVE GO AHEAD TO HAMAS ATTACK

Iranian, Hezbollah and Hamas sources told the *Wall Street Journal*

(Oct. 9) that Iranian officials assisted in planning Hamas' surprise attack against Israel on Oct. 7 and explicitly gave the go ahead for it during a meeting in Beirut on Oct. 2.

According to the report, Hamas began coordinating its attack with Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officers in August, and the details of the operation were ironed out in meetings in Beirut between Hamas, the IRGC and Iran's Lebanese proxy Hezbollah.

Responding to this report, both US and Israeli officials said they had yet to see conclusive evidence of Iran's direct involvement in the attack, while acknowledging that the long and close relationship between Teheran, Hamas and Hezbollah meant Iran certainly had some role in it.

A later *Wall Street Journal* report (Oct. 26) said up to 500 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad fighters had received specialised combat training in Iran in September, under the auspices of the Quds Force, the IRGC's foreign operations arm.

ANOTHER FRONT ON THE LEBANON BORDER

In Israel's north, Israeli infantry and artillery units have been reinforcing the border with Lebanon after the Iran-backed Hezbollah terrorist group dramatically escalated cross-border attacks there following Hamas' Oct. 7 attack. Hezbollah has fired dozens of anti-tank guided missiles, rockets and mortars at Israeli military positions and towns since Oct. 7, while also repeatedly sending gunmen – some affiliated with Palestinian terror groups – to infiltrate northern Israel. Several drones have also been intercepted over northern Israel.

At least six Israeli soldiers, over 40 Hezbollah operatives and six Palestinian terrorists were killed in these exchanges as of Oct. 25.

Due to the escalation in the fighting, Israel has evacuated all towns and

villages along the Lebanon border, including the northern city of Metulla, and there are reports Lebanese towns near the border have also been evacuated.

Meanwhile, on Oct. 19, the Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen fired approximately 30 drones and five cruise missiles apparently aimed at the Israeli city of Eilat. All were intercepted by the US Navy.

BIDEN VISITS ISRAEL, US SENDS CARRIER GROUPS



US President Joe Biden visits Israel on a solidarity mission on Oct. 18 (Image: Flickr)

US President Joe Biden became the first American president in history to visit Israel during wartime when he flew into the embattled country on Oct. 18 for a one-day solidarity visit. This followed visits by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin the previous week.

In a meeting with Israeli PM Netanyahu, Biden stated that he would give Israel "whatever it needed" in its battle against Hamas and said that he had "come to Israel with a simple message. You are not alone."

Biden also stated that the US had moved "military assets to the region."

The *USS Gerald Ford* carrier strike group was sent to the eastern Mediterranean Sea on Oct. 9. It was announced a few days later that the *USS Dwight D. Eisenhower* and its strike group would also be moved to the eastern Mediterranean, but that was altered on Oct. 21 when Austin announced that the *Eisenhower* would instead be deployed to the Persian

Gulf.

Austin also said that he ordered a Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) anti-missile battery and Patriot missile defence system battalions to the Persian Gulf and that he had placed unspecified additional US forces on "prepare to deploy orders." Austin had previously ordered 2,000 troops to be prepared to deploy to the Middle East.

FALSE HOSPITAL STRIKE CLAIMS CAUSE INTERNATIONAL VIOLENCE

Soon after reports based solely on claims from the Hamas-run Gaza Ministry of Health spread globally that Israel had bombed Gaza's Al-Ahli hospital on Oct. 17 and "killed at least 500 civilians," Israel, US and European intelligence agencies and neutral experts concluded that the cause of the blast was in fact a Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) rocket that had failed and fallen in the hospital car park. Israel also released a recording of an intercepted phone call between two Hamas members blaming the PIJ rocket for the casualties. Actual casualties have been estimated by different intelligence sources to be anywhere from as few as 50 to 100-300.

Despite the story being quickly proven fictitious, Arab and Muslim leaders took the opportunity to vehemently condemn Israel, riots broke out across the Middle East, and Israeli embassies and consulates were the targets of violent demonstrations in Turkey and Jordan. Israel was forced to evacuate its embassies in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Bahrain and Turkmenistan as a result.

In addition, an ancient synagogue in Tunisia was destroyed by a mob, a synagogue in Berlin was firebombed, and a synagogue in Melilla, a north African enclave of Spain, was besieged by a mob with worshippers inside.

COVER STORY

ISRAEL'S BLACKEST DAY

A COUNTRY TRAUMATISED AND TRANSFORMED

Amotz Asa-El

The 7th of October, 2023, the Saturday to which Israelis now refer as the Black Shabbat, will be recalled universally as a landmark in military history.

The attack that caught Israel off guard was not only as unexpected as history's most memorable surprise attacks, but also arguably the first-ever military-scale deployment of terrorists – a 40-kilometre-wide offensive that unleashed more than 2,500 armed men on three cities and 17 villages via fleets of pickup trucks, commando boats, paragliders, motorcycles and drones.

The towns attacked were scattered along the Gaza Strip, ranging between a few hundred metres to 20 kilometres from the border fence, with most infiltrations concentrated within five kilometres. The highest number of casualties was counted outside Kibbutz Reim, five kilometres east of the central Gaza Strip, where 3,500 young Israelis had gathered for the all-night Supernova dance festival.

Scores of gunmen fired shoulder missiles, hurled hand grenades, and sprayed the party-goers with submachineguns, in addition to using the ensuing stampede to seize women and rape them. By the end of the week, the volunteers of Zaka, a disaster-victim identification non-profit organisation, had identified 260 victims' bodies at the festival. In terms of a single location, it was the biggest terrorist attack in Israel's history.

The overall toll of the Black Shabbat attack is by now infamous: an estimated 1,400 Israeli fatalities, of which at least 1,000 were civilians, including the elderly, children, disabled people and babies who were murdered as part of the battle plan – in addition to more than 200 who were taken to Gaza where they are now held as hostages. This is besides the carnage of hundreds of burnt houses, scorched farms and property looted or destroyed.

The factors that enabled this attack to be a complete surprise are also clear, on two levels: the technical and the mental.



Scenes from a terrorist invasion (Images: Shutterstock/ Anas Mohammed)

Technically, the sensors along the border fence were disabled by drones assembled with Iranian knowhow, thus blinding most of the system that might otherwise have detected the approaching assault. The opening of the attack with a heavy barrage of rockets further overloaded the system, and also enhanced the mistaken impression that this was but a variation on the countless waves of rocket attacks of the past, possibly peppered with sporadic, small-scale infiltrations.

Even more debilitating was a mental failure. No one in Israel imagined this kind of mass multipoint infiltration with thousands of armed fighters, a novelty in the history of terrorist attacks, which have almost all previously been launched by relatively small groups acting against relatively narrow locations, even if some of those were large skyscrapers. The idea of a broad attack on an entire region some 40 kilometres wide, inhabited by tens of thousands of residents, never crossed anyone's mind.

In these regards, then, the attack that Hamas carried out was, from its point of view, a spectacular success. However, in other respects – tactically, strategically, socially and culturally – Hamas' ploy appears to have failed.

Hamas' plan, as described by some captured operatives, was to penetrate as deep inland as Kiryat Gat, a city 23 kilometres northeast of the Gaza Strip, and then to hold on to at least some communities captured for a long period of time, and thus create the impression Hamas had conquered – or “liberated” – Israeli land.

This part of the plan, like the successful parts, was not completely unrealistic, considering that the attack was timed for the morning of the Simchat Torah holiday, a Jewish festival when synagogues joyously celebrate the completion of the annual reading of the five books of Moses. The holiday meant there were fewer units along the fence, and they were understaffed, as many soldiers and officers had been given the weekend off.

Even so, this part of Hamas' plan failed. The Israeli army took a few precious hours to send in a sufficient number of units to confront the invaders, but even the numerically inferior units of the IDF and local police they met sufficed to kill hundreds of the invaders and fend off the rest.

This tactical failure is now overshadowed by Hamas' strategic failure – namely, the miscalculation of Israel's response.

At this writing, the method and duration of the IDF's counterattack have yet to become known, but its size is evident. Israel has mobilised 300,000 reservist troops, in addition to the standing army's estimated 175,000 – though a portion of that has had to be positioned along the Lebanese border, where the Iranian proxy Hezbollah has been sporadically attempting to infiltrate Israel, firing rockets and anti-tank missiles into Israel to assist Hamas.

The size of the force Israel assembled may have defied Hamas' apparent assumptions, which included a belief that this year's large, intense demonstrations against the Government's plans for judicial reform meant that Israeli society was falling apart.

“Hamas' attack united Israel, a reality that became evident first and foremost by the reservists' response to their sudden enlistment”

In fact, Hamas' attack united Israel, a reality that became evident first and foremost by the reservists' response to their sudden enlistment. Manpower officers reported that practically anyone called up showed up, and in fact many who were not called up presented themselves as well.

The urge to enlist surfaced as soon as news of the invasion broke on social media networks as the fighting was joined by civilians who rushed on their own volition to the western Negev with their private weapons to see how they could help.

The civilian rescue efforts defied Israel's political divisions. One of the citizens who rushed to the scene was Yair Golan, a leader of the left-wing Meretz movement. A retired major-general, the 61-year-old Golan drove through the fields surrounding the Supernova festival site, searching for and finding young people who were hiding from the terrorists and driving them to safety, even while the area was still swarming with armed gunmen.

Two other retired generals who had also been among the Netanyahu Government's critics, Noam Tibon (62) and Yisrael Ziv (66), also rushed to the scene to join the fighting, killing some terrorists and also helping to evacuate wounded soldiers.

At the other end of the political spectrum, meanwhile, the army reported that 2,000 ultra-Orthodox men, whose community generally prefers that they study in religious academies rather than serve in the military, have approached recruitment centres and requested to be enlisted.

Israel's politicians joined the national trend toward working together, and set up an emergency war cabinet in which Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, and Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer of the Likud are joined by Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot – both former IDF chiefs of staff – from the opposition National Union faction. Opposition Leader Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid (“There is a Future”) party said it would support the Government without joining it.

In terms of civil society, the Israeli sense of outrage and determination is so omnipresent and powerful that thousands of citizens have sought myriad ways to volunteer in the service of what is perceived here as one of the most testing moments in Israel's history.

Hundreds of families and scores of hotels have volunteered to host attack survivors, and other residents evacuated from towns along the Gazan and Lebanese borders. Thousands have prepared meals for the soldiers and offered clothes, gadgets and equipment.

In the Tel Aviv Fair Grounds, myriad ad-hoc organisa-

tions are deploying thousands of volunteers through a computerised centre established by volunteers overnight. The vast Expo compound, which contributed many of its pavilions free of charge, has been divided into sections that absorb donated goods and send them off with volunteers who drive them with their own vehicles to wherever the computers say soldiers need them.

A separate operation provides rides for the soldiers themselves to or from their bases. Another section finds and deploys trucks filled with donated food. Another part matches displaced residents from the frontline area with people looking to host them. Another links attack victims with psychologists.

The centre also collects, and offers to relatives, information about missing people, and also offers daycare for toddlers and zoom classes led by citizen volunteers to teach kids while schools across the country are shut. An entertainment section recruits and sends singers and artists to the front line. And the list goes on.

The question that this jamboree effectively raises – why is the Government not doing all this – is only one of many Israelis will doubtless ask once the current war ends. Right now, however, this solidarity represents a secret weapon that Israel's citizens have developed with breakneck speed, and one Hamas had clearly not expected.

Finally, Hamas did not foresee the effects of its massacre on the Jewish people more broadly. Reports of Jewish

families being pulled out of their houses and mowed down with submachineguns, of babies being snatched from their mothers' arms and children being murdered in front of their parents' eyes, have shocked Jews across six continents, striking a deep chord in Jewish hearts, minds and souls.

The consequent feeling in Israel is that not only Israelis from across the political spectrum, but the entire Jewish nation, sees Hamas' conduct and mindset as something akin to the reincarnation of Nazi hatred and barbarity. It is a cost Hamas likely underestimated – and in due course, one Hamas is likely to find it cannot afford.

AIR

PERSONAL STORIES FROM A DAY OF HORROR

Ahron Shapiro

Hamas' surprise invasion, involving more than 2,500 heavily armed terrorists from the Gaza Strip infiltrating southern Israel, began at approximately 6:30am on October 7.



HENROTH GROUP

PROPERTY DEVELOPERS and INVESTORS
Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane

DIRECTORS: JOHN ROTH and STANLEY ROTH
Suite 604, Eastpoint Tower
Level 6, 180 Ocean Street, Edgecliff NSW 2027
Ph: (02) 9302 5333

These terrorists entered 22 Israeli towns and villages and massacred more than 1,400 Israelis and others, injuring thousands more, while at least 220 people were taken hostage into Gaza. As it occurred on both a Sabbath and a Jewish holiday, perhaps it was inevitable that the Israeli media has come to refer to the day as “Black Shabbat”.

Many of the corpses showed signs of torture and rape, while reportedly hundreds more bodies were either so badly mutilated or burned beyond recognition that they are requiring forensic tools for further identification. Some may never be identified.

It was a bloodbath so heinous that, as the *Australia/Israel Review* goes to press, the final death toll has yet to be determined. Meanwhile, as a result of the slow process of identifying some of the dead, the exact number of Israelis currently held in Gaza, and their identities, also remain unclear.

This catastrophe stands alone in Israel’s history in terms of loss of life inside Israel’s borders. Previously, the largest number of Israelis killed in a single terror attack was 38, perpetrated by 11 PLO terrorists in the 1978 Coastal Road Massacre.

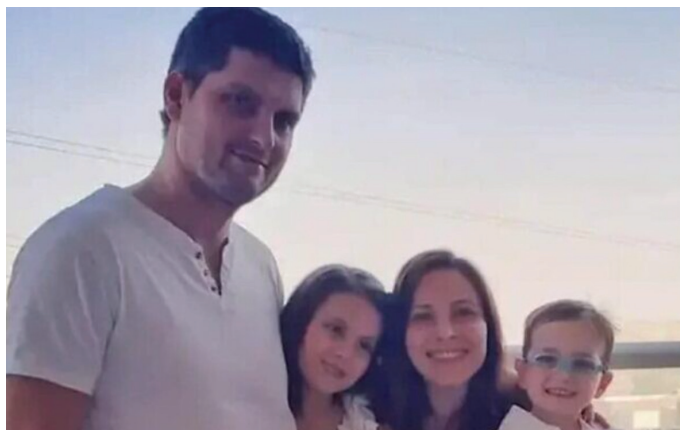
Given the scope of the event, it would be futile to try to tell even a fraction of the myriad human stories that made up the horror of October 7 for the inhabitants of those 22 Israeli communities. However, below are just a few glimpses into some of their experiences grouped into four categories: the massacred; the abducted; the heroes; and a final brief note about survival and hope.

THE MASSACRED

In a widespread terror attack where more than 1,400 people were killed, it’s difficult to choose which stories should take precedence. However, it makes sense to begin with the massacre at the all-night Supernova Music Festival – the place where the single largest number of people were murdered, and one which stands out for the cowardice and barbarism on display by the marauding terrorists.

Out of approximately 3,000 attendees at the festival, some 260 were slaughtered by Hamas jihadists, who bore down on the festival site in ISIS-like pickup trucks which covered the distance from the perforated border fence in just seconds, and in motorised paragliders. There were widespread reports of torture and brutal rape carried out over several hours, and countless victims were wounded, kidnapped or both. Unlike in a kibbutz or city, nobody had access to weapons or was in a position to defend themselves, except for a small number of ordinary police on site for crowd control.

Almost everyone who tried to escape by car was gunned down after Hamas blocked the road and strafed



The Kapshiter family

the cars caught in the ensuing traffic jam. The only place to hide for many fleeing concert-goers was a nearby wooded area, though many were hunted down and mercilessly murdered there, too.

Gad Liebersohn, 21, told *JTA*: “For two hours I’m hiding and hearing people getting kidnapped and women getting raped, and without end you hear people dying, begging for their life, women begging for their life. And you can’t make a sound, because they’ll find you too, kidnap, kill you too.”

Elsewhere, entire families lost their lives to their bloodthirsty killers.

All four members of the Kapshiter family were shot dead in their vehicle while returning from Park Ashkelon to their home in the Negev town of Dimona. Parents Dina and Evgeny and their children Aline, eight, and Ethan, five, had spent the Simchat Torah holiday on a camping trip, according to the *Times of Israel*,

as a treat for Ethan’s birthday. At the time of Hamas’ terror infiltration, a barrage of rockets was used as cover. The family heard the sirens and made the sensible decision to pack up their tent and head home – unfortunately, their route took them straight into an ambush.

Similarly, other families were almost completely wiped out.

At Kibbutz Kissufim, Itay and Eti Zak and their 15-year-old son Sagi were burned to death by Hamas terrorists while taking refuge in the bomb shelter of their home. The only surviving member of the family, eldest son Hadar – who was out of town at the time – told the *Washington Post* that his little brother “was everything” to him, adding with a sunken gaze, “It’s a living hell. That’s what I feel right now.”

When terrorists infiltrated Kibbutz Nahal Oz, Ariel Zohar, 12, had been out jogging and sheltered from the attack in a separate building from the rest of his family. His parents Yaniv and Yasmin, his sisters Tehelet and

“Given the scope of the event, it would be futile to try to tell even a fraction of the myriad human stories that made up the horror of October 7”

Keshet, and his grandfather Haim Livne, whom they were visiting, were all murdered.

Even the elderly and disabled weren't spared.

Carmela Dan, 80, and her 12-year-old granddaughter, Noya Dan, who was on the autism spectrum, were initially reported as missing from Kibbutz Nir Oz and there was initially some hope that they had been kidnapped, as so many others in the community were.

When a photo of Noya, dressed up as a Hogwarts student and holding a copy of a Harry Potter book, found its way to author J.K. Rowling, she tweeted her support for Israel and for Noya's safe return. Unfortunately, their remains were eventually identified.

"My grandmother had a full life," Shmuel Harel wrote on Facebook about 90-year-old Jina Semiatiz of Kissufim, who he said still kept busy in the kibbutz's children's house, as well as in the local small grocery store. "We spoke to her [on the morning of the attack], she said she was in the reinforced room hiding and afraid."

Hamas terrorists pulled her out of the room and put a bullet in her head.

Finally, while Israeli Arabs weren't especially targeted in Hamas' attack, they were shot on sight apparently as "collaborators" all the same. *Ynet* detailed the sad fate of Osama Abu-Madigam, a farmhand on Moshav Mitvahim. When confronted, Abu-Madigam addressed them in Arabic but the terrorists dismissed him as "more Jewish than a Jew" before killing him and critically wounding Abu-Madigam's five-year-old son Attallah. Israeli Arabs suffered 21 dead on October 7. Nine still remain missing, including a father and his three children.

THE ABDUCTED

While Hamas attempted to take hostages wherever they attacked, Kibbutz Nir Oz, more than most other communities, was seized quickly by the terrorists before the IDF could respond.

For this reason, I have chosen to focus on three cases of kidnappings at this kibbutz, a place where Hamas had the time and opportunity to be selective about who they killed and who they kidnapped. Their choice of hostages says volumes.

Shiri Silberman-Bibas (30), Ariel (4) and Kfir (10 months)

What more can be said about a mother who was kidnapped together with her toddler and infant sons on a video that has been aired on news programs worldwide?

"I can only hope they're together," Shiri's cousin Yifat Zailer told *CBS News*, in one of the many interviews her relatives have given since the kidnapping. "I hope they didn't separate her from her children. I hope."

She tearfully added, "I try not to think about the worst, this is the only thing that keeps me going. But every day that goes by..."



Yaffa Adar

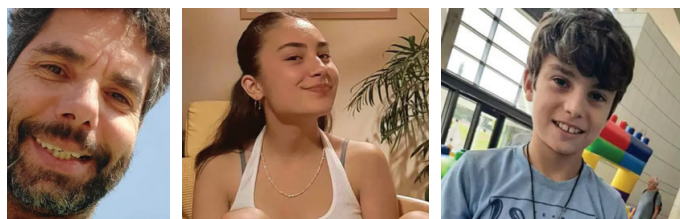
Yaffa Adar (85)

Her granddaughters Orian and Edva wrote in *Yedioth Ahronoth*: "Our grandmother is an amazing, sharp and brilliant woman, who loves her family and this country very, very much. She lived in the kibbutz for about 60 years, since our father was a child."

They added, "apparently, the whole country found out that she was kidnapped before us, because we only saw the video in which she appears [many hours after it had been posted]. It finished us to see her like this, and to know that she is going through this hell. Then the race against time began – because our grandmother has no time, she has no time for wars and deals. If they don't bring her back today – now – she will come back dead."

Ofer (50), Sahar (16) and Erez (12) Calderon

Ofer, his daughter Sahar, and son Erez are relatives of Carmela and Noya Dan, who were among the murder victims from the kibbutz (see above). Of the three missing members of the Calderon family, only Erez has been spotted alive in a Hamas video posted to social media, apparently taken in Gaza.



Ofer, Sahar and Erez Calderon

Sahar and Erez's older sister Gaia, who was in Tel Aviv at the time of the attack, said at a press conference, weeping uncontrollably: "They took half my family. My little 12-year-old brother Erez... He was born 12 years ago. He hasn't had time to live."

THE HEROES

Israel's police force, which had taken damage to its reputation in the face of rising violent crime in the country in recent months, redeemed itself on October 7,

according to recent polls. Fifty eight members of its ranks lost their lives in the line of duty on that day. In many cases, those officers were already on the job when the terrorists arrived, making them the outmanned and out-gunned first responders to the terror onslaught. In other cases, they sped into the danger zone independently of the IDF in a valiant attempt to meet the threat.

One such hero was Chief Superintendent Avi Amar, a senior officer in the Yoav unit of the southern district and father of six. He was shot dead by terrorists while defending Kibbutz Be'eri. Earlier that morning, Amar and his squad of officers battled terrorists in Sderot, Kfar Aza and the roads in-between. At Kfar Aza a photo was taken of Amar comforting a soldier.

Commander M. from Yoav's unit told *Yedioth Ahronoth*: "During the fighting, a soldier came to us from Kfar Aza and broke down crying [from the shock of seeing the atrocities]. Avi immediately knelt down on the road, hugged him and said to him: 'Don't worry, we'll get through this, I'm watching over you.'" Amar was killed shortly afterwards.

Meanwhile, the IDF has reported 308 soldiers, officers, reservists and civil defence volunteers killed in fighting since October 7. It has not released information about any IDF personnel potentially held captive in Gaza. Stories of heroic and selfless sacrifice among these ranks abound.

Corporal Matan Abergil, a member of a Golani infantry regiment, was travelling in an armoured personnel carrier in Kibbutz Nir Am when terrorists lobbed a grenade inside. Abergil saved the lives of six comrades by using his body as a shield. According to the survivors, Abergil's last words were "I tried to do everything to protect the people of Israel."

In Kibbutz Nir Oz, where terrorists killed at least 25 people and 75 are missing and presumed kidnapped, Eran Smilansky, a potato farmer and civil defence volunteer, killed six terrorists and wounded two more.

"I was so afraid to shoot," Smilansky told *Ynet*, "because I was afraid they were IDF soldiers. They were disguised – their commandos looked like our naval fighters. A terrorist opened the door, looked at me, and then I shot him in the chest... I jumped out of hiding and shot another one as well. They were hit but managed to escape and called for reinforcements. From a window I saw a squad of six terrorists arrive. I saw they had grenades and that they planned to bomb my house. I told myself I had no choice but to just open fire... I knelt down and just shot at them through the window, single shots but in rhythm. They fell one by one."

Among IDF veterans, even former IDF Deputy Chief

of Staff Yair Golan was credited for donning a uniform, checking out a rifle from an IDF armoury and using his own car to rescue survivors of Hamas' attack on the Supernova music festival who had taken refuge in nearby farmlands.

"It's an area I know intimately," Golan told media afterwards. "I don't need to navigate there with a map, and where I saw that it was okay to enter – where there was a certain, but not hysterical, risk involved, I went in and made my modest contribution."

Back at Nir Oz, Yaron Maor, an ordinary civilian, initially hid with his wife and children in his home's bomb shelter, but then decided to go out and fight. He ambushed terrorists with a handgun, killing at least two of them and wounded or killed two others after they broke into his home. He took cover twice from grenades before retreating to the bomb shelter only after arsonists began to torch his home.

He told an Israeli radio program that the terrorists had already withdrawn when help arrived.

"A Border Police anti-terror unit (Yamas) force [approached and] was sure that I was a terrorist. When I saw all the lasers on me, I shouted 'Hear Israel, our Lord our God, our Lord is one', [the Hebrew prayer *Shema Yisrael*] so that they would know that I was Jewish [and not shoot me]."

According to a *Times of Israel* story, nurse Michal Elon risked her life to save a wounded soldier. Visiting the IDF's Zikim training base with her rabbi husband and eight of their ten kids to provide Shabbat programs for the recruits there, she and her family were taken into the large base shelter when the attacks began.

Hearing of a female soldier who had been shot in the face nearby, she left the shelter and attempted to begin treating her. However, a terrorist quickly found Elon, killed a soldier escorting her, and shot her through the arm, stomach, and chest. Elon nonetheless managed to make it back to the shelter, and hold out there until she

"Shlomo Ron, 85, one of the founders of Kibbutz Nahal Oz, saved his wife, two daughters, his grandson and his nurse, who were all hiding in a bomb shelter"

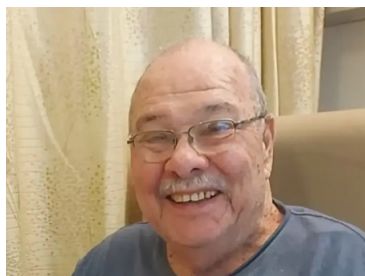
With Compliments

gleneagle
securities

Level 27, 25 Bligh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

www.gleneagle.com.au





Shlomo Ron

Oz, saved his wife, two daughters, his grandson and his nurse, who were all hiding in a bomb shelter. When it became clear to him that terrorists were hunting down everyone they could find, he made the decision to stay put in his favourite armchair, hoping that the terrorists would believe nobody else was home, shoot only him, and move on to the next house. This is exactly what happened. While relating the story to *Ynet*, Shlomo's niece eulogised him as "a man of peace, of life and softness and beauty."

STORIES OF SURVIVAL AND HOPE

For every Israeli who was killed, there were several others who were also attacked, who witnessed the carnage but somehow survived. A website, october7.org, has begun collecting, organising, and translating the stories.

Meanwhile Israeli society – which had been sharply divided politically before the attacks – has almost entirely set aside any differences and united behind the war effort through volunteering opportunities, donations and housing some of hundreds of thousands of Israelis displaced by the attacks.

As the *Times of Israel* reported on Oct. 22, "around 15,000 Israelis have answered the clarion call of movements that metamorphosed overnight from activists against the government's divisive judicial reform proposals to coordinators of a massive infrastructure to rescue and support fellow citizens in distress" (for more on this see p. 12).

AIR

could be evacuated to hospital. The wounded female soldier also survived.

Stories also emerged of people who sacrificed themselves to save their families. Shlomo Ron, 85, one of the founders of Kibbutz Nahal

"TOO MUCH TO BEAR": IDENTIFYING THE REMAINS

Aaron Poris

Stifling the urge to retch became a difficult task as I walked through the lower levels of Israel's National Centre of Forensic Medicine (Abu Kabir) in Tel Aviv. The smell of rotting human remains, much of which was completely unrecognisable as human due to the brutality of the attack, was at times too much to bear.

In light of the growing international interest in (and denials of) the Palestinian terror group Hamas' October 7 massacre in southern Israel, representatives of the global press were invited to see the horrors for themselves.

Forensic pathologists, including Israeli staffers as well as volunteers from abroad, were visibly disturbed by the evidence before them. Despite every effort to remain objective and detached – as called for by the profession – many broke down in tears throughout the day.

During the initial press conference, the forensics team showed images from their investigations. Among the images were those of charred hands with marks that revealed where the victims' hands were bound behind their backs with metal wire before they were burned alive.

Perhaps the most disturbing image in the slideshow was a completely charred mass of flesh, which at first glance could not be seen as ever having belonged to a human. It was only after a CT scan was done that experts could see the inhumanity of the image.

Two spinal cords – one belonging to an adult, one to someone young – a parent and child bound together by metal wires in a final embrace before being set alight.

"When you do this job downstairs, you get detached," Dr. Chen Kugel, the head of Abu Kabir, told *The Media Line*. "But then you learn the stories and connect to the people. It's hard not to feel the tragedy. It's so big. And when I go to the Shura camp [where deceased bodies in Israel are first collected] and see containers like you'd see at the port – but they're all full of bodies... And you hear the stories – that behind their charred bodies, something terrible happened – it's very difficult. I've seen many things in my 31-year career, but the magnitude and the cruelty [here] is terrible," Kugel added.

"The proportion of bodies we've received who are charred is high," Kugel explained. "Many have gunshot wounds in their hands, showing they put their hands up to their faces in defence. Many were burned alive in their homes... We know they were burned alive because there is soot in their trachea, their throats – meaning they were still breathing when set on fire."



THE CUSTOM MADE
RUG & CARPET
SPECIALISTS

DESIGNER
RUGS

Established 1986

SYDNEY | MELBOURNE
BRISBANE | AUCKLAND

1300 802 561
designerrugs.com.au

The single mercy, Kugel said – if there is one to be found – is that the burned victims likely died from carbon monoxide and soot inhalation before the fire killed them.

Kugel also explained that the age range of the victims spans from three months to 80 or 90 years old. Many bodies, including those of babies, are without heads.

Asked if they were decapitated, Kugel answered yes. Although he admits that, given the circumstances, it's difficult to ascertain whether they were decapitated before or after death, as well as how they were beheaded, "whether cut off by knife or blown off by RPG," he explained.

Kugel was far from the only one who got emotional when discussing the evident travesty. "We disassociate because we need to work, but from time to time it gets to you," Dr. Nurit Bublil, head of Abu Kabir's DNA laboratory, told *The Media Line*.

"Yesterday, I opened evidence from a house in a southern kibbutz, and there was a popular recipe book covered in blood... I have this same book, and it makes you take a moment and think, it could have been my kitchen, my children, my parents, me. You can't avoid it," she said.

Additionally, Israel's small population gives rise to the fact that no one is far removed from the wake of the massacre. "My sister has a close friend of hers who is still missing," said Bublil, as she stood beside a blood-stained mattress from a baby's crib. The DNA from the mattress will be used to try to identify a brutally disfigured and unaccounted-for infant.

"I got the message today from my neighbour," Bublil continued. "She asked if I could help because her good friend's husband, father, two nephews, and father-in-law's wife were all murdered too and have yet to be identified."

This is the crux of the forensic pathology centre's current mission in which roughly 200 experts are participating. Forensic pathologists, anthropologists, radiologists, and more from Israel as well as from the US, Switzerland, New Zealand, and elsewhere around the world have come not simply to determine the victims' causes of death but to identify the bodies for burial.

Fighting back tears, Israeli forensic pathologist Dr. Hagar Mizrahi explained that "as you know, the Jewish people must bury their dead as soon as possible."

But as of this writing, nearly two weeks have passed since the massacre, and some 350 bodies remain unidentified. "So, the people here at Abu Kabir are doing their best to help and identify the most severe cases that arrive."

950 BODY BAGS

Four places around the country are currently working to identify and release bodies for burial.

The Israel Police headquarters in Jerusalem is handling all the antemortem samples and personal items for DNA comparisons. The Israel Defence Forces is working on one-one DNA comparisons using their data on soldiers, including fingerprints, dental records, and DNA. In addition, Abu Kabir is working to collect DNA samples and identification for the most severe cases. It's also where all the DNA samples from other locations come for additional testing. And the Shura camp near Ramla in central Israel is where all the deceased are initially collected. Shura currently has some 950 body bags in its possession.

The word "bags" is written here instead of "bodies" be-

cause it's not clear how many victims there are within them.

"More than one person's remains may be in a single bag," Kugel explained, "and one person's remains may be in multiple bags." When looking at remains, he added, "We know there are multiple people because we see double. For example, if you see two bones from the left maxilla, then it couldn't be from the same person."



Bodies litter the ground at a bus stop in Sderot (Image: Alamy Live News)

And in many cases, bones without so much as a speck of extractable DNA are all that's left. For that reason, Kugel said that some victims' families would be right to fear the worst.

"We hope that with CT and biopsies, we can bring the unidentified down to less than 200. But some people, we will never find. We will never identify them. And people need to be prepared for this."

Speaking personally, Bublil said that she wants the world to know that "generally, Hamas enjoyed the killing."

According to Bublil, "This was not combat, or a military conflict, or a state conflict, or a political conflict. [Hamas] enjoyed the murders so much that they did everything they could do to celebrate the killing. They celebrated burning houses with civilians inside who didn't do anything to them. They enjoyed grabbing an 18-year-old girl from a party, a festival, dragging her to a car, and taking her to Gaza. And who knows what happened [to her] in between. They enjoyed and celebrated the death. ... These are monsters. They're not human."

AIR

© Jerusalem Post (www.jpost.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

Arnold Bloch Leibler
Lawyers and Advisers

70^{abl}
YEARS

When it matters most

For over 70 years, we have proudly partnered with our clients to protect their legal position, commercial objectives and private family interests.

www.abl.com.au

MELBOURNE +61 3 9229 9999
SYDNEY +61 2 9226 7100

QUALITY APARTMENTS BUILT FOR A LIFETIME



Meriton is renowned for building large, luxurious apartments of the highest quality, uniquely designed by industry-acclaimed architects and built by our highly skilled and experienced construction teams. We pride ourselves on the highest levels of workmanship to bring you award-winning developments.

Apartments for sale | Apartments for rent | Meriton Suites



MERITON

Sydney | Gold Coast | Brisbane | Melbourne | Canberra

meriton.com.au

Israel's Mission in Gaza

And what should happen after

Robert Satloff, Dennis Ross and David Makovsky

In describing the aims of Israel's war against an organisation that perpetrated the worst mass murder of Jews since the Holocaust, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu declared, "We will crush and destroy Hamas." Precisely what that means in practice, however, is not clear.

Prominent Israeli voices – ministers, officials, and generals past and present – have offered a range of potential objectives, from disarming Hamas and stripping it of the capability to ever mount such an attack again, to retaking the Gaza Strip nearly two decades after ceding it to Palestinian control. Some current officials (such as Intelligence Minister Gila Gamliel) have said it is too early even to define these goals, noting that this should be done only after battlefield victory. But it is difficult to see how Israel will know it has achieved victory without defining it in advance and preparing for the day after.

True, Israel's desired outcome may be forcibly scaled back by the unpredictability of war, following the adage that no military plan survives contact with the enemy. Yet it still makes sense to define an outcome now and begin planning for it even if circumstances may force change along the way. Having a clear, feasible objective will dull the critique that this war is intended solely as retribution for Hamas' barbaric attack; it will also provide a banner around which Israel's allies can advocate its cause, and an umbrella under which vulnerable Arab peace partners can wait out the fighting.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Israel's most logical objective is to end Hamas control of Gaza, since only that outcome will prevent the group's leaders from rising out of the rubble of war to declare victory just by surviving Israel's bruising might. Other outcomes are unlikely to meet Jerusalem's three most critical needs:

1. To guarantee Hamas cannot launch attacks in the future.
2. To restore Israelis' confidence that their government and army can provide for their security.
3. To re-establish Israel's deterrent power in the eyes of friends and adversaries around the Middle East.

Ending Hamas rule does not mean eliminating every Hamas supporter or every sign of the group's influence. But it is a big goal, especially given two formidable complications on the ground – namely, Hamas and other groups are holding more than 200 hostages, and ending Hamas rule would require enormous military effort throughout Gaza over an extended period, both on the surface and

against the group's vaunted, booby-trapped tunnel system.

In a war with a goal so defined, victory will not be swift or easy. America's role should be threefold:

1. To help Israel achieve that objective at the lowest possible cost of injury to Palestinian civilians.
2. To deter Israel's other enemies so it can focus on achieving success as quickly as possible.
3. To help Israelis and Palestinians start planning now for the governance vacuum that would result from ending Hamas rule, so that destabilising actors do not fill the void.

Given these needs and objectives, the following general principles should govern planning for the postwar situation:

From a US perspective, Israel should leave Gaza as soon as the military task is complete and avoid reoccupying the area. At the same time, it would be a mistake for Israel to destroy Hamas and then leave Gaza as an ungoverned space without a clear sense of what comes next. With help from other actors, Washington has a unique role to play in ensuring that a plan is ready to be implemented once the IDF withdraws, such that Israel is confident about what will fill the vacuum of its departure.

The ultimate goal should be for the Palestinian Authority (PA) to return as Gaza's legitimate government. Yet the PA lacks the will and ability to do that job in the foreseeable future – it does not want to be seen as re-entering the Strip on the backs of Israeli tanks, and it is not in any shape to take on additional governmental responsibilities in Gaza given its failings in the West Bank.

Therefore, the situation demands the establishment of an interim administration to run Gaza until the PA is able to assume that role. The duration of this interim period depends on



Israel's most logical war objective is simply to end Hamas control of Gaza (Image: Shutterstock)

meaningful, substantive PA reform, without which neither local Palestinians nor international donors would have confidence in the PA's ability to extend its authority to Gaza. Such reform would also have the crucial benefit of boosting the PA's legitimacy in the West Bank.

CONTOURS OF AN INTERIM ADMINISTRATION

A proposed Gaza Interim Administration (GIA) should have three main components: (1) a civilian administration, (2) a public safety/law enforcement apparatus in which Arab state contingents play a central role, and (3) an international coalition for reconstruction and development.

The civilian administration of post-Hamas Gaza should be led and run by Palestinians. Under the leadership of a Palestinian "Chief Administrator," the departments of a fully functioning local government – health, education, transportation, judiciary, social welfare, etc. – would be run by a mix of technocrats from Gaza, the West Bank, and the Palestinian diaspora, as well as significant local personalities from Gaza towns and clans. During the tumultuous interim period, the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) could continue to provide existing food, health, and education services – no more and no less than in the past. Its long-term status could be reviewed in the context of the PA's eventual return to the area.

Public safety and law enforcement could be directed by a consortium of the five Arab states which have reached peace

agreements with Israel – Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco. Only those Arab states would have Israel's confidence, which is essential for this effort to succeed. Special care should be taken to ensure that this is not viewed as an "occupation force", which both the contributing nations and local Palestinians would reject. Instead, it should be presented and structured as a "public safety force". To that end, contributing states should send police or gendarmerie detachments, not regular military units. Moreover, the force should be commanded by an officer from a country that has no territorial connection to Palestinian areas, such as Morocco. Liaison offices could then be established with the Israeli and Egyptian militaries, the latter of which would have a special role reflecting Cairo's unique status as Gaza's direct Arab neighbour. These offices would provide a forum for cooperation on border issues and the flow of goods and people.

"Washington has a unique role to play in ensuring that a plan is ready to be implemented once the IDF withdraws, such that Israel is confident about what will fill the vacuum of its departure"

International donors, UN and other international aid agencies, and international NGOs, would work with the Gaza civil administration under the umbrella of a new agency responsible for repair, reconstruction, and development. This should be an Arab-run effort, perhaps chaired by the UAE, which is a peace partner with Israel, holds the financial resources to be a substantial donor, and has the global reputation and professional acumen to manage such an operation. This agency would oversee the immediate repair and reconstruction of utilities and other public works, as well as identify major projects, raise funds for them, and execute major project development. Billions of dollars would be needed for projects such as creating a new Gaza port and building new industrial zones to provide employment options. (Israel is unlikely to readmit Gazan workers anytime soon after some apparently played a role in the October 7 Hamas assault, either directly or by providing intelligence for the attackers.) Saudi participation in the repair/reconstruction effort would also be important for the plan's overall success, and could be framed as part of Riyadh's commitment to reopen a path to Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.

Although Arab administrators, officers, and officials – including Palestinians – should take the lead in all these efforts, there is also a vital role to play for the United States and other supporters of a peaceful, constructive, hopeful future for Palestinians. Numerous actors – from European partners to specialised UN agencies – will be at the table, but only America can mobilise and organise this effort and ensure that all its elements are implemented.

With Compliments

R L Webb
Nominees
Pty. Ltd

Property, investment,
development & finance

Part of the US role is financial; part is lending expertise to the processes of administration and reconstruction; part is ensuring smooth relations between Israel and the three legs of the GIA; and part is providing international legitimacy for the entire effort.

Regarding legitimacy, the best option would be to secure a UN Security Council mandate for this plan, though Russia and China would likely aim to complicate such efforts. The Security Council could also empower the Arab League to authorise this plan as an intermediate actor, but there too, actors such as Syria, Lebanon, Algeria, and Tunisia may get in the way. Alternatively, this effort could be placed within the mandate of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, which may not require further Security Council action.

Ultimately, however, it might be necessary to build the GIA as a coalition of the willing. If it has strong support from major international actors and backing from the most influential Arab states, the initiative will have a reasonable chance to move forward.

Throughout, a necessary but sensitive issue will be ongoing liaison between the GIA and Israel. In a world where Hamas is no longer a political or military force in Gaza, Israel should be willing to allow the seaport and Egyptian land border to operate with a much less intrusive inspection system for the movement of goods and services. After all, the blockade that Israel sustained to varying degrees over the years did not prevent the group from acquiring what it needed to mount the terrible attacks of October 7 – rather, it produced enormous public ill will and opportunities for corruption. Still, Israel has a critical role to play at least early in the transition, when it can help with electricity provision, fuel, and the transit of goods – recognising that the long-term goal should be for Gaza to provide these goods itself.

Intimate liaison with the GIA's civil governance, public safety, and reconstruction legs is essential to giving Israel confidence that the new system will not allow the re-emergence of Hamas or the growth of another, potentially even more radical movement. At the same time, Israel would need to retain as much of an over-the-horizon presence as possible given that the IDF will have just operated in virtually every corner of the Strip rooting out Hamas.

The GIA should also have an organic link to the PA, even though it will operate independently within the framework described here. The GIA's initial mandate could spell out a limited duration – say, three years – after which its operation should be open for renewal and linked directly to the process of PA reform. Two colliding principles are at work here: that “nothing is as permanent as the temporary” and that “it is better to get it right than to get it over.” The United States and other major actors will be responsible for finding the right balance in this regard.

CONCLUSION

These principles are not carved in stone. Rather, they should be viewed as springboards for serious discussion of governance in post-Hamas Gaza, and as ideas that will almost certainly morph in different directions with input from various international and Middle East actors and under the impact of events on the ground. With Israel poised to begin ground operations in Gaza, some may believe it is premature to focus on post-war architecture. Yet now is precisely the right moment to begin this exercise so that a well-crafted plan is ready once military operations transition to political outcomes. If key actors wait for the battlefield fog to clear before engaging on these issues, it may be too late.

AIR

Robert Satloff is the Segal Executive Director at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Dennis Ross, the Institute's counselor and William Davidson Distinguished Fellow, formerly served as US point man on the Israel-Palestinian peace process. David Makovsky, the Institute's Ziegler Distinguished Fellow and director of its Koret Project on Arab-Israel Relations, formerly served as senior advisor to the State Department's special envoy for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. © Washington Institute (www.washingtoninstitute.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

THE COMING SHOWDOWN IN GAZA

Seth Frantzman

Israel is readying itself to face off against Hamas and other groups that have had time to fortify the Gaza Strip. This is not the first time Israel has operated on the ground in Gaza; Israel sent troops into the area in 2009 and 2014 and, prior to the withdrawal of its army, operated in the small region for decades. But this time is different. The October 7 attacks, which resulted in the massacre of more than 1,400 Israeli civilians and more than 300 soldiers and police, show that Hamas has become deadlier.

To understand the challenges involved, it's important to examine the environment that Israel will soon confront. Though the Gaza Strip is small (about 363 square kilometres), it's not an unbroken urban landscape. Built-up areas are numerous, particularly around Gaza City and Khan Yunis in the south, but so are fields, beaches, and areas that were once villages that have now merged into towns and cities. The area is densely populated, containing about two million people, many under 18. Israel has encouraged the civilian population to flee south, toward the Egyptian border. How many will do this and what effect it will have



IDF training at its Urban Warfare Centre (Image: Flickr/ IDF)

on the situation is not yet clear, but a humanitarian crisis is easy to imagine.

The issue of civilians is a major concern. Israel has improved the use of precision munitions in its warfighting over the years. Conflicts in Gaza, in particular, have become less harmful to civilians since 2009. Israel prefers to strike infrastructure, such as tunnels, rocket-launch sites, or command and control centres. Israel has used large numbers of small drones, as well as advanced technology in previous conflicts. This is part of the Israel Defence Forces' Momentum Doctrine, which is intended to bring more intelligence to front-line units and enable "multi-dimensional" units to engage in "combined arms" warfare – a jargon-filled way of saying that Israel uses more technology to network together infantry, tanks, airplanes, and drones.

The new networking technology is supposed to make fighting in the urban environment less challenging. Over the years, I have spent time covering IDF drills in which soldiers assault mock-urban towns. This includes bringing together infantry, helicopters, tanks, and drones. Technology can help spot threats, such as men with RPGs, or it can help identify changes in the environment. No simple solution exists to the problem of enemies hiding out in rubble or using tunnels, but Israel is not the first nation to fight in an urban setting. Not only has Israel trained for this; it has also learned from partner countries such as the US, which gained urban-combat experience in places like

Iraq and Syria during the war on ISIS.

Nevertheless, the challenges for Israel will be made more acute if civilian suffering in southern Gaza intensifies or if it appears that the battle is damaging too much civilian infrastructure. Driving tanks down streets and using bulldozers inevitably churns up the pavement and destroys things. Israel has already used many thousands of munitions in air strikes. It will be moving, therefore, into an already-damaged environment.

As Israel confronts Hamas and other groups in Gaza, such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad, it will be dealing with an enemy that has studied its tactics carefully. Hamas knows that Israel has advanced technology and tools like drones. Hamas itself uses small quadcopter drones, which it has armed with small munitions, and it has developed larger drones in recent years.

On Sunday, Oct. 15, the Israel Defence Forces unveiled captured weapons and documents from Hamas terrorists found in the wake of the October 7 attack. In the stockpile: operational plans, satellite phones, encrypted numbers, and other systems. "So far, hundreds of documents and certificates, hundreds of mobile devices, means of communication and cameras have been collected," the IDF said.

The material left behind and found on Hamas members also includes weapons, munitions, and various types of explosives – from RPGs and AK-47s to anti-personnel mines and other converted munitions used to blow open the doors of homes or attached to cars as booby-traps.

Hamas also has SA-7 anti-aircraft systems and TC-6 round metal anti-tank mines. Hamas brought into Israel a large number of mines designed to harm civilians and destroy vehicles and buildings, suggesting that the group has been thinking systematically about its method of terror and warfighting.

Hamas has generally not been successful in the past at these kinds of operations. If it has been stockpiling munitions in Gaza, even if those munitions are old, it's plausible that the group has considered how it will defend the Strip. Hamas could melt into civilian areas and use hostages as shields – it took about 220 hostages on October 7. How Hamas will defend the area remains to be seen, but Israel will face many challenges, regardless of what the terror group does next.

AIR

"Hamas brought into Israel a large number of mines designed to harm civilians and destroy vehicles and buildings, suggesting that the group has been thinking systematically about its method of terror and warfighting"



Future and an adjunct fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD). Reprinted from City Journal © FDD (FDD.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

CEASEFIRE CALLS ARE BOTH NAÏVE AND DANGEROUS

Cary Nelson

Two to three thousand members of highly organised murder squads cross an international border and set about murdering civilians in as gruesome and indiscriminate a manner imaginable.

In fact, the wanton indulgence in blood lust exceeds anything that had been foreseen or imagined. With that barbaric mission completed in a day, some in the international community immediately begin calling for a ceasefire. The critical point to make is that a ceasefire keeps Hamas in power. The consequences of that must be faced.

Those urging a ceasefire stand behind what appears to be the most basic humanitarian motive: prevent further loss of life; end the massacre of innocent civilians. And then the *coup de grace* is delivered in hypocritical feel good rhetoric: everyone should respect international humanitarian law. Except that Hamas never has and never will honour international humanitarian law.

Meanwhile, no reprisals for murdering men, women, and children are to follow. No sanctions. No punishments. No accountability. The barbaric intimacy of so many of the killings is to be met with stability, frozen in time. We are all to accept what happened and move on.

Fools, hypocrites, dreamers, and antisemites alike stand in solidarity. Except that if the crimes are allowed to stand unanswered they will be repeated or more likely horrifically reinvented within a few years at most. A new standard for monstrous assault on Israelis will be in place.

Keep in mind that many in the international community have advocated the normalising of repeated rocket barrages from Gaza into Israel. Since Iron Dome protects most Israelis, destroying the rockets in midair, that should suffice. Intercepting Hamas rockets constitutes the moral limit of Israel's right to defend itself.

Israel has but this one chance to demonstrate that

organised, wanton, antisemitic murder sprees will not be tolerated. If it fails to do so, these new forms of Hamas butchery will become Israel's new normal.

Eliminating the invading killers will be the limit of Israel's internationally acceptable response. If Israel wants to draw a line and establish that what Hamas did is absolutely unacceptable, it must respond in a way that is different in kind, not just degree. Simply increasing the number of air strikes will not suffice. The Hamas pogrom presents Israel with what really is this time an existential threat. It has to be treated that way.

The literal and psychological safety of Israel's border communities requires nothing less. While some would return to a demolished kibbutz out of bravery and bravado, most families would not subject their children to the resulting risk. Moreover, the credibility of previous IDF and

government assurances that the danger has passed, that Israelis are now safe, is now null and void. Israelis were obviously not safe, despite being told otherwise. There will need to be a definitive material difference in the status of Hamas if Israelis are to feel safe again. Deterrence regarding Hamas has lost its credibility both within Israel and to Israel's supporters internationally.

As others have noted, decades of wishful thinking about the meaning of the Hamas Charter must come to an end. Hamas is not and never will be a partner for peace. The Charter's call to kill Jews by any means possible has only one meaning: the literal one.

All this suggests that the IDF had and has no choice but to invade Gaza, despite the certainty of planned Hamas ambushes and a substantial number of Israeli deaths. Will an invasion have unforeseen and dreadful consequences? Certainly. Unplanned and disastrous events will happen. Social media will be awash with lies and conspiracy theories. Hamas will continue to lie, and many in the international media will embrace those lies.

The strategy of urging Gazan civilians to move south may somewhat limit noncombatant casualties. Establishing a safe zone for noncombatants near Rafah will certainly help, but several thousand more civilians are sure to die in Gaza. Israel will need to invent new ways to protect civilians. It owes that both to noncombatants themselves and to a principled effort to sustain its moral integrity and the public perception that a just war is under way. Civilian deaths will nonetheless complete the predictable shift in international opinion from sympathetic horror to outrage at Israel that was already under way within a week of



IDF preparations near the Gaza border (File image: Isranet)

October 7. But both Israel itself and its allies must have a sound factual basis for understanding that Israel has done its best to limit casualties. That conviction must be sustainable now and in the future.

It is impossible for now to estimate what success the IDF will have on the ground. And, while speculation about post-Hamas political arrangements is important, there can be no guaranteed plans and no secure predictions. Until and unless Hamas is eliminated, we cannot estimate what the people of Gaza can contribute toward a new political option for themselves. Hamas, however, has been delegitimated for a future leadership role anywhere. It cannot run in either West Bank or Gaza elections. The international community needs to be pressed to accept that new reality.

At the same time, the less time the IDF remains in Gaza the better. One month's occupation feels like a long one. The IDF will have to reserve the option of declaring victory and withdrawing, especially if a substantial portion of Hamas leadership has been eliminated and massive military infrastructure destroyed. It may well not be possible to know in advance exactly what level of success will be required to restore Israel's sense of security.

That problem extends beyond the failure of intelligence and the bankrupt character of past reassurances to extend to the absence of adequate rapid military responses and the absence of adequate social services since the assault. It is impossible to estimate how long the present Israeli Government can survive.

At the same time, the kind of continuing work done after the massacre at the Munich Olympics will likely be required. A ground invasion will not be the end of the campaign. Israel will also need to provide a different level of border security, including less exclusive reliance on technology. And interdiction of weapons smuggling will have to be enhanced.

In the meantime, every effort must be made to counter the inevitable inclination to suppress or avoid detailed knowledge of what Hamas did. Conventional standards for what photographic evidence is acceptable for mass audiences will have to be partly, though not entirely, set aside. Visual documentation must be accompanied by clear moral

and political analysis of the ways this assault was unlike anything we have seen in Israel before. There are risks of normalisation here as well, along with the risk of fueling a pornographic lust for antisemitic gratification. And I believe there are videos too graphic to share.

In a documentary about the supernova concert assault, CNN appropriately withheld Jewish cell phone footage of Hamas grenades going off inside a small roadside shelter crammed with fleeing concertgoers. The Israeli who turned on his cell phone camera did not survive but the cellphone did. At the same time, the Hamas's own joyous documentation of murder needs to be shared. There is both a short-term and a long-term need for documentation. The lessons of Holocaust education are applicable once again.

AIR

Dr. Cary Nelson is Jubilee Professor of Liberal Arts & Sciences emeritus at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His most recent book is Israel Denial: Anti-Zionism, Anti-Semitism, & The Faculty Campaign Against the Jewish State. © Fathom Magazine (www.fathomjournal.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

CAN A WIDER WAR WITH IRAN AND ITS PROXIES BE PREVENTED?

David Schenker

A key element of the Biden Administration's response to the war in Gaza has been the deployment of significant forces to the Middle East. So far America has dispatched, among other assets, two aircraft carrier strike groups, their associated guided-missile destroyers and a Marine Corps expeditionary unit capable of conducting amphibious operations. According to America's defence department, this armada is intended as "a strong signal of deterrence to any actors who might be thinking of entering the conflict," an oblique reference to Iran and its regional proxy forces.

America's display of force in the Mediterranean is impressive, to be sure – and there is more to come: the Pentagon says it will send a THAAD air-defence missile system and Patriot missile battalions to the region. But it remains unclear whether this muscle-flexing is actually curbing the involvement of other actors, or will prevent the war from spreading. For America's deterrent threat to be credible, it will have to act decisively against emerging provocations.

Since the war started, Iran's Lebanese proxy militia, Hezbollah, has been engaged in a calculated campaign of escalation along Israel's northern border. The group

With Compliments from

Yorklet
Pty. Ltd.

PRIVATE PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

PO Box 1068
Caulfield North VIC 3161



The world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford steams alongside USNS Laramie during a fueling-at-sea in the eastern Mediterranean Sea on October 11, 2023 (Image: US Navy)

has targeted Israel Defence Forces (IDF) positions with anti-tank missiles, disabled observation posts, attempted border infiltrations, and allowed if not encouraged Hamas and other Iranian-backed groups to fire rockets across the frontier.

Israel has responded, at times lethally but with restraint, in an effort to slow escalation. For its part, Iran has seemingly been hesitant to order Hezbollah into a full-scale war, preferring instead to preserve its most effective deterrent against potential Israeli military action aimed at Iran's nuclear program. Nevertheless, fears are growing that the current skirmishes could lead to miscalculation and another costly Hezbollah-Israel conflagration like the one in 2006 – a 34-day conflict in Lebanon, northern Israel and the Golan Heights.

Iran, which for years sponsored, trained and equipped Hamas for what culminated in the slaughter of some 1,400 people in southern Israel on October 7, has positioned itself as the defender of the Palestinian people. Even before the tragic explosion at the Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza on Oct. 17, the so-called “Arab Street” was boiling. As Palestinian civilian casualties mount, Iran will come under increasing pressure to follow through on its threats.

In anticipation of an Israeli ground offensive in Gaza, Iranian proxies are becoming increasingly aggressive, and not only on the Lebanon-Israel border. On Oct. 19, an American destroyer in the Red Sea downed four cruise missiles and 15 drones launched by Iran's Houthi proxy militia in Yemen, which were apparently headed towards Israel. The same day, Iranian-backed militias in Iraq fired a salvo of rockets and drones, hitting two American bases in the country. And in southern Syria, Iranian proxies attacked with drones an American garrison – retained to help rebel militias in the area fight Islamic State – and an oil facility housing American soldiers.

These Iranian-sponsored operations are an unmistakable warning to Israel and America. But is Iran really prepared to make maximum use of its proxies?

How far the Islamic Republic goes in mobilising its client militias will be dictated by the success or failure of the IDF ground operations in Gaza – though escalation could result either way. If the Israeli operations go well, Iran could seek to broaden the conflict. If they go badly, it may look to exploit perceived weakness. It is also possible that the leaders in Teheran choose instead to limit the conflict, preserving their proxies' capabilities to deter Israel from attacking Iran itself.

Ultimately, though, the key to avoiding a more regional conflict lies in Washington. American naval assets are positioned in the Mediterranean to deter a broadening of the war, but is the superpower's threat to intervene viewed as credible? Perhaps it is bluster, but some Hezbollah affiliates are openly mocking the bolstered American regional presence. Other Iranian proxies are ramping up operations targeting American forces in Syria and Iraq.

If the Biden Administration hopes to prevent more fronts from opening, America's threat to intervene has to be seen as credible. The Biden Administration hasn't said it yet, but Iran is responsible for the war in Gaza. And if the war spreads, it will only happen because Iran gives the order. To discourage that from happening, America will have to respond decisively to attacks against its forces across the region. More important, instead of just focusing on the proxies, it will have to hold Iran directly accountable for the actions of its clients.

One way to do this is by increasing economic pressure. In mid-October America's Treasury Department imposed a series of financial sanctions on Iran's ballistic-missile and drone programs. Beyond that, the Biden Administration should make clear that the US\$6billion (A\$9.43 billion) released to Iran in September as part of a deal to release five American detainees will be frozen in Qatar indefinitely. It could also roll out sanctions against companies linked to Iran-backed Iraqi militias. This step, along with measures to further restrict Iraq's access to dollars – expanding rationing announced by America last year to combat corruption and money-laundering – would help curtail Iran's sanctions-evasion activities.

More effective than financial tools, however, is military might. American reluctance to employ force in the region has allowed, if not invited, Iranian adventurism. To be sure, establishing and maintaining deterrence could itself risk an escalation. Iran and its proxies are well aware that America wants to avoid another armed entanglement in the Middle East – another factor undermining the credibility of American threats. Unfortunately, to forestall a widening of the war in Gaza, Washington may have no choice but to engage militarily.

AIR

David Schenker is the Taube Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, director of its Rubin Program on Arab Politics, and former assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern

affairs. This article was originally published on the Economist website. © Washington Institute (www.washingtoninstitute.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

AUSTRALIAN SOLIDARITY – AND ITS DETRACTORS

Jamie Hyams

The effect in Australia of the horrendous October 7 Hamas terrorist atrocity and aftermath was exemplified in Federal Parliament, with well over half of all members and senators addressing the issue.

On Oct. 16, the first sitting day after October 7, Prime Minister **Anthony Albanese** (ALP, Grayndler) moved:

“That the House—

(1) unequivocally condemns the attacks on Israel by Hamas, which are the heinous acts of terrorists, and have encompassed the targeting and murder of civilians, including women and children, the taking of hostages, and indiscriminate rocket fire;

(2) stands with Israel and recognises its inherent right to defend itself;

(3) condemns antisemitism and recognises that generations of Jewish people have been subjected to this hateful prejudice;

(4) calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages;

(5) recognises that Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people, nor their legitimate needs and aspirations;

(6) acknowledges the devastating loss of Israeli and Palestinian life and that innocent civilians on all sides are suffering as a result of the attacks by Hamas and the subsequent conflict;

(7) supports justice and freedom for Israelis and Palestinians alike;

(8) supports international efforts to establish and maintain humanitarian access into Gaza, including safe passage for civilians;

(9) reiterates Australia’s consistent position in all contexts is to call for the protection of civilian lives and the observance of international law;

(10) supports Australia’s engagement with countries in the Middle East and beyond, at all levels, in support of the protection of civilians, and the containment of the conflict;

(11) supports the Government’s ongoing efforts to provide consular assistance to affected Australians and to facilitate the departure of those who want to leave the region;

(12) acknowledges what has unfolded is deeply distressing for many in the Australian community, close to the heart of many, and it is important that we maintain respect for each other here at home as people express their views;

(13) condemns all forms of hate speech and violent extremist activity, including Antisemitism and Islamophobia;

(14) recognises an attack on any religion is an attack on all religions and that we all share a responsibility to unite, condemn and defeat such an attack on our common values and way of life;

(15) notes that undermining social cohesion and unity by stoking fear and division risks Australia’s domestic security; and

(16) affirms in the strongest possible terms that hateful prejudice has no place in Australia.”

Mr Albanese said, “the evil committed by Hamas in Israel has chilled every Australian heart. We have all been profoundly shocked by the scale and wantonness... [Australian Jews] are not alone; your fellow Australians stand with you... There is no question that Israel has the right to defend

itself against a terrorist organisation and to take strong action against it, but we join the calls... for Israel to operate by the rules of war... The awful antisemitism... at the Sydney Opera House is beyond offensive; it is a betrayal of our Australian values.”

Opposition Leader **Peter Dutton** (Lib., Dickson): “[The attacks were] the embodiment of evil... Israel has every right to defend itself and its people. Israel has every right to deter future attacks and other acts of aggression... It’s particularly repugnant that some Australians have decided to... celebrate Hamas’ attack...”

Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister **Richard Marles** (ALP, Corio): “Hamas has an ideology of terror, and its acts... have been of the most profound evil. Israelis and Palestinians have a right to exist in peace and security. Israel has a right to act in its defence... we add our voice to the international call that the rules of war be respected.”

National Party Leader and Shadow Agriculture Minister **David Littleproud** (Maranoa): “Our party stands in unity and in solidarity with... Israel and its people... Israel has every right to defend itself against the appalling threats presented by an ISIS-like organisation like Hamas, which has no regard at all for human life.”

Attorney-General **Mark Dreyfus** (ALP, Isaacs): “Today we mourn the greatest loss of Jewish life in a single day since the Holocaust... Australia unambiguously supports the right of Israel to defend itself today.”

Greens Leader **Adam Bandt** (Melbourne): “There is much [in the motion] that we could support, but, on the eve of a looming invasion that is likely to be not just a humanitarian catastrophe but a war crime, Australia cannot stay silent and back that invasion.” He moved an amendment to omit paragraph (2), and substitute:



“condemns war crimes perpetrated by... Israel, including the bombing of Palestinian civilians, and calls for an immediate ceasefire between all parties and an end to the war on Gaza, recognising also that for there to be peace there must be an end to... Israel’s illegal occupation of the Palestinian Territories.”

Minister for Employment and the Arts **Tony Burke** (ALP, Watson) condemned the attacks, but added, “There are legitimate aspirations for the Palestinian people. It’s legitimate to want to live freely: free of occupation, free of endless checkpoints, free of a legal system which differs in the different ways that military courts do. All of that is further away now...”

Deputy Opposition Leader **Sussan Ley** (Lib., Farrer): “we stand with people of Jewish faith in this country and abroad... and we stand against these acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas and support Israel taking the strongest possible action to ensure this can never happen again.”

Josh Burns (ALP, Macnamara): “Israel... has an obligation to protect its citizens, just as Australia does... We must stand against terrorism, against antisemitism and against hatred in all its forms.”

Former Prime Minister **Scott Morrison** (Lib., Cook): “... we will support... Israel’s right to self-defence... this should and must include all efforts to eradicate Hamas from Gaza and dismantling the capability of Hamas to conduct terrorist attacks...”

Industry and Science Minister **Ed Husic** (ALP, Chifley): “Hamas must absolutely be held to account. Innocent Palestinians should be protected... They should be able to get out of harm’s way. They should be preserved as well, in the sense of not being targeted.”

Julian Leeser (Lib., Berowra): “Antisemitism is always accompanied by an indifference to antisemitism. In too many places... the brutal terrorist acts were met with statements of false equivalence...”

Adam Bandt’s amendment was then put and defeated, with only the four Green MPs, and independents **Andrew Wilkie**, **Kylea Tink** and **Sophie Scamps** voting in favour. The original motion was then passed with only the four Greens opposing.

Foreign Minister and Leader of the Government in the Senate, Senator **Penny Wong** (ALP, SA), moved the same motion in the Senate. She said, “The Senate must condemn these acts of evil perpetrated by a hateful group bent on the destruction of... Israel and the eradication of Jews... We unequivocally condemn these attacks. We call for the immediate release of hostages. Australia stands with Israel and always will... Israel has a right to defend itself, to re-establish its security, to prevent such attacks from taking place again... We join... calls... for Israel to operate by the rules of law.”

Shadow Foreign Minister and Opposition Senate Leader Senator **Simon Birmingham** (Lib., SA): “Australia... must support efforts by Israel to defend... against this and the risk of future atrocities... The gross antisemitic scenes on the steps of the Sydney Opera House stain our nation in shame... The coalition is unequivocal in the belief that, in exercising its right to self-defence, Israel has the right to remove the threat that Hamas presents... Hamas are responsible for the current loss of Israeli, Palestinian and other innocent lives.”

Greens Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Senator **Jordon Steele-John** (WA) condemned Hamas’ “blatant war crimes”, but added, “...Israel... is now engaged in a ruthless campaign of collective punishment...” He accused Israel of “war crimes” and “apartheid”, and described Israel’s call for Gaza residents to evacuate south for their own safety as “an act of collective punishment and a forced population transfer that would constitute one of the most significant humanitarian disasters and contraventions of international law in the 21st century,” before moving the same amendment **Adam Bandt** had moved in the House.

AUSTRALIAN LANDMARKS ILLUMINATED IN SOLIDARITY WITH ISRAEL

In aftermath of the October 7 Hamas mass-murder terror attack, landmarks across Australia, like landmarks in many countries across the world, were lit up in the blue and white colours of the Israeli flag in a show of solidarity with the Israeli people.

Below are the examples we are aware of:

ACT

- Federal Parliament, Canberra

NSW

- Sydney Opera House

Queensland

- Story Bridge, Brisbane
- City Hall, Toowoomba
- Victoria Street Bridge, Toowoomba

South Australia

- Parliament House, Adelaide
- Adelaide Oval
- Adelaide Railway Station

Tasmania

- Tasman Bridge, Hobart

Victoria

- Melbourne Cricket Ground
- National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- Old Treasury Building, Melbourne
- Flinders Street Station, Melbourne
- Melbourne Town Hall
- Federation Square, Melbourne
- Royal Exhibition Dome Promenade, Melbourne

Western Australia

- Optus Stadium, Perth
- Matagarup Bridge, Perth



Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and National Party Senate Leader, Senator **Bridget McKenzie** (Vic.): “[I] defend the right of Israel to defend itself from the existential threat... Hamas has repeatedly used its own people as human shields. This moral distinction underscores a fundamental difference between a nation that values human life and a terrorist organisation that uses it as a bargaining chip.”

Many House members and senators spoke on the issue over the following days. When the Senate voted on Oct. 18, only the Greens supported **Jordon Steele-John**’s amendment, and only the Greens opposed the motion. The Greens then moved “That the Senate opposes Israel’s invasion of Gaza.” Again, only they supported that motion.

Below are short excerpts from some of the speeches.

Senator **Lidia Thorpe** (Ind., Vic.), who didn’t vote, said, “For 75 years now, Palestine has been under brutal occupation. The state of Israel was founded on Palestinian land in 1948,” and accused Israel of apartheid and “attempted genocide”.

Minister for Home Affairs **Clare O’Neil** (ALP, Hotham): “[Hamas] have committed heinous, inhuman, disgusting crimes against Israelis. They have also committed disgraceful crimes against Palestinians. They... are using innocent people who live in Gaza as human shields.”

Allegra Spender (Ind., Wentworth): “Israel has an inherent and fundamental right to defend itself and safeguard its citizens against those horrifying acts of terror.”

Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs **Tim Watts** (ALP, Gellibrand): “There is absolutely no context that can justify the violence and depravity that we have seen perpetrated by Hamas against civilians.”

Minister for immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs **Andrew Giles** (ALP, Scullin): “Innocent Israelis, and Palestinians too, have suffered and will continue to suffer unspeakable atrocities...”

Greens Deputy Leader Senator **Mehreen Faruqi**: “The major parties have refused to condemn Israel’s genocidal mission.”

Shadow Defence Minister **Andrew Hastie** (Lib., Canning): “The violence inflicted by Hamas... was brutal and evil. And why?... simply because they were Jews who chose to live in the national homeland of the Jewish people.”

Senator **Raff Ciccone** (ALP, Vic.): “Those trying to draw some false moral equivalence are providing cover for the most horrific expression of antisemitism.”

Shadow Minister for Home Affairs and Cybersecurity Senator **James Paterson** (Lib., Vic.): “While Israel uses the IDF to defend the citizens of Israel, Hamas uses the people of Gaza to defend itself... No democracy could accept the ongoing risk of another attack like this... That is why Israel

must eliminate Hamas.”

Minister for Climate Change and Energy **Chris Bowen** (ALP, McMahon): “In all the barbarity... the most disturbing element of Hamas’ attack is that... Hamas was... hoping that Israel would attack back in a way which would receive international opprobrium. They were actually trying to provoke an attack on the people that they claim, or pretend, to represent.”

Other members and senators who made statements unequivocally supported Israel and its right to defend itself, with many also expressing concern for Gaza’s civilians, were Coalition members **Melissa McIntosh**, **Paul Fletcher**, **Russell Broadbent**, **Michael McCormack**, **Keith Wolahan**, **Sam Birrell**, **James Stevens**, **Barnaby Joyce**, **Phillip Thompson**, **Aaron Violi**, **Henry Pike**, **Luke Howarth**, **Garth Hamilton**, **David Gillespie**, **Keith Pitt**, **Karen Andrews**, **David Coleman**, **Michael Sukkar**, **Scott Buccholz**, **Jason Wood**, **Anne Webster**, **Alex Hawke**, **Rick Wilson**, **Bert van Manen**, **Michelle Landry**, **Jenny Ware**, **Terry Young**, **Dan Tehan**, **Nola Marino**, **Andrew Willcox**, **Melissa Price** and **Tony Pasin**, Coalition senators **Dean Smith**, **Andrew Bragg**, **Michaelia Cash**, **Andrew McLachlan**, **Jonathan Duniam**, **Claire Chandler**, **James McGrath**, **Hollie Hughes**, **Slade Brockman**, **Sarah Henderson**, **Wendy Askew**, **Paul Scarr**, **Matthew Canavan**, **Richard Colbeck**, **David Fawcett**, **Matt O’Sullivan** and **Linda Reynolds**, ALP members **Mike Freedlander**, **Matt Thistlethwaite** and **Sam Rae**, ALP senators **Deborah O’Neill** and **Helen Polley**, cross-bench MPs **Bob Katter** and **Andrew Gee**, and cross-bench senators **David Van**, **Jacqui Lambie** and **Pauline Hanson**.

Those who strongly expressed condemnation of Hamas and sympathy for Israel, but also used their speeches to implore Israel to abide by international law, with some giving equal emphasis to the plight of those in Gaza to the Israeli victims, were: ALP members **Sharon Claydon**, **Michelle Ananda-Rajah**, **Anne Aly**, **Julian Hill**, **Joanne Ryan**, **Andrew Leigh**, **Alicia Payne**, **Graham Perrett**, **Susan Templeman**, **Andrew Charlton**, **Patrick Gorman**, **Sally Sitou**, **Josh Wilson**, **Peter Khalil** and **Jason Clare**, ALP senators **Helen Polley** (who made two speeches) and **Glenn Sterle**, as well as Coalition MP **Mark Coulton**, crossbench members **Zoe Daniel**, **Zali Steggall** and **Monique Ryan** and crossbench senators **Malcolm Roberts** and **David Pocock**.

Condemning Hamas, but then devoting most of their speech to criticising Israel, with some accusing it of war crimes, were Greens senators **Janet Rice**, **David Shoebridge**, **Penny Allman-Payne**, **Larissa Waters** and **Nick McKim**, Greens MPs **Max Chandler-Mather** and **Elizabeth Watson-Brown**, ALP members **Maria Vamvakinou**, **Tony Zappia** and **Ged Kearney**, ALP Senator **Fatima Payman** and independent member **Sophie Scamps**.

The issue also arose in all six state parliaments, and the NSW, Victorian and South Australian parliaments passed motions expressing solidarity with Israel. These will be covered in next month’s *AIR*.



An Abuse of History

Abbas and the Khazar claim

Ehud Yaari

Chairman Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority has recently publicly raised a long discarded historical claim used to deny Israel's right to exist, a right recognised by his predecessor Yasser Arafat as a key component of the Oslo Accords thirty years ago. In an August 24 speech to Fatah's Revolutionary Council convened in Ramallah, Abbas asserted that Ashkenazi Jews – whose ancestors led the Zionist drive to establish the Jewish state – are not the descendants of the ancient Hebrew tribes, the Children of Israel of the Old Testament, and therefore have no claim to the contested land.

While also claiming that Hitler killed the Jews “only because they dealt with usury and money,” Abbas adopted the academically refuted theory that European Jews originated instead a millennia ago from the Khazar Empire located in contemporary southeastern Europe, whose royal dynasty and aristocracy are reported by medieval sources to have converted to some form of Judaism.

“The truth that we should clarify to the world is that European Jews are not Semites. They have nothing to do with Semitism,” he declared. “The story began in 900 CE, in the Khazar Kingdom on the Caspian Sea. It was a Tatar kingdom that converted to Judaism. [In the 11th century], this empire collapsed, and all its population fled to the north and to the west. They left for Russia and Western and Eastern Europe. There they spread, and are

the forefathers of Ashkenazi Jews.”

Such claims are not new – indeed they have a pernicious history of their own – but separating myth from fact when it comes to the Khazars is key to delegitimising this claim.

It should be noted that Abbas has his facts about the Khazar empire wrong: the Khazars were not Tatars – rather they were a Turkic people – and their conversion took place, according to most historians, sometime between 740 and 865 CE.

Regardless of the historical inaccuracies about the Khazar dynasty itself, the statements are the product of a more recent and dangerous historical trend, reviving the case offered by the late Syrian president, Hafez al-Assad, against the justification of

a Jewish homeland. These assertions follow in the vein of numerous Arab writers who have produced a number of volumes over the past five decades identifying the Ashkenazi communities as refugees from the destruction of the Khazar Qaganate by Prince Svyatoslav of Kiev c.965 CE.

Promoting this narrative has not just been the effort of Palestinian and Syrian politicians; many Egyptian, Saudi, and Lebanese intellectuals have also been drawn to a narrative that deprives contemporary Jews of history connecting them back to the land. Books dealing with the subject are still on sale all over the region and these theories are widely available across the internet.

This approach is deeply rooted in a widely popular theme of Soviet antisemitism, prevalent in many of the institutions where a number of Arab intellectuals studied. In a state where history became subservient to the reigning ideology, Soviet historians depicted the conversion of the Khazars as a humiliation for the Russians, poisoning their values and beliefs and sowing corruption in society. In a famous article published in *Pravda* (1951) under the pseudonym “Ivanov” – posited to be Stalin himself – an argument was put forth that it would be



Mahmoud Abbas in his ahistorical speech of Aug. 24, dedicated to negating any Jewish claim to the land (Image: Middle East Media Research Institute)

“shameful” to accept that a Jewish empire governed the vast area between the Caspian and the Black Seas before the appearance of the early Russian princes. This became the official interpretation of the Khazars, mixing dangerously with contemporary accusations of a “Jewish nationalistic plot”. Abbas would have acquainted himself with these concepts while writing his Holocaust-denying Ph.D in Moscow twenty years later.

In practice, such claims linked the Russian Jewish community to a past deemed ignoble by the state while dampening serious academic research on this topic even today. Excavations in Khazar sites were prohibited; findings were stored in museum cellars, never to be displayed or were described as relating to other cultures, oftentimes preventing later research into their actual beliefs and societies. The main Khazar fortress of Sarkel was drowned under an artificial lake on the Don river. And the race to discover the legendary Khazar capital Itil believed to be somewhere in the Volga Delta (or sunk under the water by the rising level of the Caspian) is now mostly undertaken by “unofficial” archeological teams. Meanwhile, large amounts of artifacts from graves (Kurgans) are smuggled to western Europe for private collections.

Some unscholarly publications by Jewish writers with non- or ex-Zionist arguments have also had significant influence in promoting the view that Ashkenazis have Turkic rather than Jewish roots. Foremost among them is still Arthur Koestler’s *The Thirteenth Tribe* (1976) and more recently, to a much lesser extent, Shlomo

Sand’s *The Invention of the Jewish People* (2008). In the Arab world and especially among Palestinians, these controversial publications were perceived as an admission among some Jews that the argument has its merits.

But from an academic standpoint, the theory that European Jewry is an offshoot of the converted Khazars has been repeatedly rejected by comprehensive genetic studies as well as linguistic research. As for the connection between the Khazars and Judaism, historical documentation traces a flow of Jews – not of Turkic origin – from the Byzantine Empire to the Khazars’ famously tolerant domains because of religious persecution. And as for conversions, the greatest scholar of early Russian history, the late Omeljan Pritsak from Ukraine, reached the

conclusion that at most just 30-40,000 Khazars may have converted. Such a number could not explain the rapid growth of east and central European communities. Moreover, archeological evidence connecting the Khazars to Judaism is exceptionally thin. Except for a few tombstones with Menorah imprints in Kerch, Crimea, and Taman peninsula, no Jewish traces have been found in Khazar domains. The origin of coins found in Sweden with the words “There is no God but Allah and Moses is his envoy,” used to link Khazars to a conception of Judaism, are still under debate among academics.

Instead, much of the connection between Khazars and Judaism comes from medieval documents originating from outside of Khazar lands. Well respected historians – notably professors Moshe Gil and Saul Stampler – are of the opinion that the whole medieval literature concerning the purported mass conversion, both Jewish documents and Muslim travelers’ accounts, reflect uncorroborated fictional traditions or even fabrica-

tions and fantasies rather than the reality of the day.

Of course, there are those who cannot ignore the substantial body of evidence indicating that some Khazars chose to practice a form of Judaism. On the other hand, there is no doubt, for example, that Muslims were the majority in Itil and constituted the main military force of the Kagan.

The breathtaking story of the Khazar Empire, which has fed the imagination of generations of Jews searching for a model of sovereignty and sparked furious indignation in Russia, is again being employed as a political weapon: a pseudo-historical explanation why Israel should not exist. In the Arab world, the myths surrounding the Khazars are used to emphasise, as one Saudi columnist

wrote, that “Arabs and Jews are not cousins” and that “today’s Jews have nothing to do with Abraham.”

Meanwhile, the lesson of this current episode with Abbas should be that more research is called for to throw light on this half-forgotten chapter of history to refute such claims. Only more accurate information can help remove the Khazars from the shadows of mystery and antisemitism and place them instead in the correct historical context. But whatever the historical reality, the Khazars are not related to the current conflict. Abbas has chosen to bark up the wrong tree.

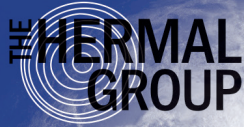
AIR

Ehud Yaari is an Israel-based Lafer international fellow of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a Middle East commentator for Israel’s Channel Two television, a former associate editor of Jerusalem Report and is also the author of eight books on the Arab-Israeli conflict. © Washington Institute (washingtoninstitute.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.



ASHWATER
PROPERTY
GROUP

Property Investors & Managers
204-208 St Kilda Road, St Kilda, VIC 3182
☎ : 0418 357 660



We
make
what's
next

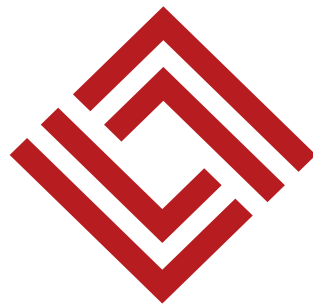
The cutting edge of
engineered timber.

Our appetite for smarter
solutions means we are forever
on future's cusp. As it moves
relentlessly forward, so do we.

The result is GLT, CLT and
mass timber components that
look stunning, have peerless
inner strength and impeccable
sustainable credentials.



cusp.com.au



Lascorp

Investment Group (Aust) Pty Ltd

Specialising in retail and shopping centre investments,
syndication and management.

29 Claremont Street, South Yarra, VIC 3141

P 03 249 0000 **E** mail@lascorp.com

lascorp.com

NOTED AND QUOTED

THE MONTH IN MEDIA

IT'S ISRAEL'S FAULT!

The roll call of commentators who blamed Israel for the October 7 Hamas massacres was long.

Former Australian Ambassador to Lebanon Ian Parmeter claimed on the *Canberra Times* website (Oct. 10), “the current situation, in which hardline militants are contained in Gaza, while Israeli forces curtail the actions of Palestinians living in Israel and the West Bank, has suited the Israeli government for many years. It has been able to ignore Arab and international pressure to negotiate a two-state solution or to acquiesce in a one-state solution.”

However, Parmeter undermined his own argument in the *Australian Financial Review* (Oct. 18) by conceding that rejecting the 1947 UN Partition Plan “was one of the major mistakes the Palestinians made because if they had accepted that plan they would have a state.” He might at least have also mentioned the three two-state peace deals the Palestinian leadership turned down more recently.

On *ABC TV* “News” (Oct. 8), anti-Zionist writer Antony Loewenstein justified the violence by blaming the blockade of Gaza, saying “eventually people will snap, people will break. You cannot... expect Palestinians simply to lie down and accept it.”

The partial blockade of Gaza would have ended years ago if Hamas had renounced violence and recognised Israel’s right to exist.

In the *Canberra Times* (Oct. 11), Ali Kazak, former PLO envoy to Australia, asserted that “every drop of Palestinian and Jewish blood shed is on the hands of the United States, Australian and Western politicians who closed their eyes to the aggression, occupation, ethnic cleansing, and violation of international laws and resolutions car-

ried out by Israel against the Palestinian people for more than 75 years.”

Kazak effectively justified Hamas’ actions saying “what does the world expect Palestinians to do in these circumstances?”

On *ABC RN* “Late Night Live” (Oct. 10), Sydney University’s US Studies Centre Professor Brendon O’Connor said claiming the massacre was “unprovoked” is “wrong. I mean, I think there’s a context here that in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank, that life for Palestinian people has obviously been terrible.”

LET’S FORCE HAMAS AND ISRAELIS INTO ONE STATE!

Hamas’ massacre was used by Bob Bowker, a former Australian ambassador to Jordan, Egypt and Syria, to demand a “one-state solution”. He wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Oct. 8) in the wake of the massacre “our focus... should now be on encouraging and assisting Israel and the Palestinians to create... a single political entity that provides for equality between Jews and Palestinians.”

Two weeks later, as the reality of October 7 hit, Bowker acknowledged on *Radio 3AW* (Oct. 24) that “the despicable behaviour of Hamas has set the case for the Palestinians back for a generation at least.”

CHANGING THE SUBJECT

Pro-Palestinian activists commenting on the October 7 massacre essentially denied or avoided uncomfortable questions about it.

In the *Age* (Oct. 14) and *Sydney Morning Herald* (Oct. 15), Palestinian Australian playwright Samah Sabawi ignored Hamas’ massacre and instead condemned Israel’s attacks on Hamas

assets in Gaza, implying Israel was deliberately targeting civilians. Sabawi accused Israel’s Defence Minister Yoav Gallant of calling all Palestinians “human animals”, when he had clearly meant the Hamas terrorists involved in the massacre.

On *ABC TV* “News” (Oct. 8), Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) President Nasser Mashni’s tactic was to ignore the massacre, saying to discuss it was to “take yesterday out of context.” He then proceeded to craft a narrative of Palestinian victimhood stretching back 75 years.

At the very end of the interview, when asked if APAN “condone[s] the violence and bloodshed being inflicted upon Israelis by Hamas,” Mashni would only say, “we condemn all violence.”

On *Nine Network*’s “Today Show” (Oct. 12), Mashni questioned whether antisemitic slurs heard at the Sydney Opera House pro-Palestinian protest really even happened, saying, “I’ve been advised by another senior journalist that nobody’s been able to verify the veracity of that audio.”

Sky News’ “Outsiders” (Oct. 15) showed footage of Mashni addressing a Melbourne rally, saying, “we’d also like to thank members of the Jewish community for standing here with us today... These are real Jews, not the filth we’ve got over there.”

Speaking to *Sky News*’ Erin Molan (Oct. 13), Egyptian-Palestinian-Australian activist Randa Abdel-Fattah had to be coaxed to “condemn the violence that Hamas” perpetrated, but added, “I don’t see them as a terrorist organisation.”

Abdel-Fattah falsely claimed statements that Hamas beheaded babies were “actually refuted by Israeli authorities” and a photo of a “burnt baby was exposed as AI intelligence.”

Despite Molan screening a clip from the Sydney Opera House that included chants of “Gas the Jews” and “F—k the Jews,” Abdel-Fattah insisted with a straight face, “I didn’t hear anything.”

RALLY DRIVERS

Channel Nine’s Davina Smith treated Sydney Opera House protest co-organiser Assala Sayara as though she was the one who had been racially abused when interviewed the day after (Oct. 10).

Smith asked Sayara, “last night was quite a night... how is the Palestinian community feeling today?” No questions were asked about the antisemitic chants nor the evident joy some protestors took in celebrating the slaughter of Israeli civilians.

On *ABC RN* “Breakfast” (Oct. 12), AIJAC’s Colin Rubenstein said of the event, “we saw the most shameful sort of antisemitism we’ve witnessed in Australia for many a year... Australians understand... there’s a right to protest, but there’s not a right to inflame hatred and there’s not a right to incite violence and there’s certainly not a right to support effectively... a terrorist organisation... like... Hamas.”

WHAT ROLE IRAN?

The question of Iranian involvement in the massacre was high on the agenda.

In the *Australian* (Oct. 19), academic Shay Khatiri explored the relationship between Iran and Hamas, pointing out that Iranian General Esmail Qaani, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ Quds Force, met with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad officials in April and June.

Concurrently, Iran and the US were in discussions about a prisoner swap and the release of US \$6 billion of Iranian money, he wrote, and “Iran began to claim responsibility publicly

for the uptick in Palestinian violence in Israel. It was a ruse to pull Israel’s attention and military and intelligence resources away from the Gaza border.”

On *ABC Radio* “Saturday Extra” (Oct. 14), veteran Israeli analyst Ehud Yaari said “this is not an Israeli-Palestinian [or] Israeli-Hamas confrontation. What we are confronting now is a regional confrontation about the landscape of the Middle East.”

He said Israel has no choice but to remove Hamas from power, saying, “slaughtering babies, decapitating babies, raping young girls and then burning them... We cannot tolerate such an entity next door... I know your Foreign Minister, Penny Wong, is calling for restraint. Would she call for restraint vis a vis the Nazis... the Japanese... ISIS?... We are going to do it. We are trying to do it as humanely as possible... We are calling on the population of Gaza to remove themselves from the areas of future fighting.”

BARNES MAKES HAY

The death toll in Gaza resulting from Israeli airstrikes on Hamas’ assets ahead of a largescale ground invasion saw mounting accusations Israel was guilty of war crimes.

On Oct. 16, *Hobart Mercury* columnist Greg Barnes said, “Israel’s cutting off power, water and much needed supplies to... Gaza... amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity.” Barnes’ column on Oct. 23 insisted that Israel’s counter-terrorism operations against Hamas targets in Gaza were a “disproportionate response”.

Responding in the *Mercury* (Oct. 25), AIJAC’s Jamie Hyams said Barnes was wrong, and explained why Israel’s actions qualify as a proportionate response according to international law; “Hamas, cynically, embeds its military infrastructure deep within its civilian population, a war crime known as perfidy. Under international law, it therefore bears the blame for

resultant civilian casualties. It hides weapons and fighters in homes, apartments, mosques, schools and even hospitals. Its military headquarters, for instance, is actually in tunnels under Gaza’s main hospital.”

He said if the world adopted Barnes’ interpretation of what constitutes a war crime, then “no country attacked by an enemy that embeds itself within a civilian population can respond with effective military action. This would simply give terrorist groups like Hamas impunity, which surely cannot be international law’s intention.”

Hyams said claims “Israel’s... restriction of food, water and fuel” amount to war crimes is wrong, because “nothing in international law requires a country at war to actively assist its enemy, and Gaza does also border Egypt.”

He noted Israel had restored water to parts of Gaza and was allowing the entry of humanitarian assistance.

A LEGAL CATCH-22

In the *Daily Telegraph* (Oct. 24), AIJAC’s Colin Rubenstein challenged “the claim that Israel urging Gazan residents to evacuate the strip’s northern area is somehow a war crime.”

He said the “purpose is to protect these residents from becoming collateral damage in Israel’s planned ground incursion. The catch-22 being imposed on Israel is clear – Israel cannot invade Gaza to fight Hamas, it is claimed, because this will inevitably kill Gaza civilians in neighbourhoods where Hamas has embedded itself. And it also can’t ask these civilians to leave.”

On *SBS TV* “World News” (18-10-23) retired Israeli Major General Yaakov Amidror, a past AIJAC guest, was asked “how can you justify the sheer number of civilian casualties there will be with this operation?”

Amidror replied that, “[Australia] fought in the Second World War... Why... bomb... German cities... when not all of them were supporters

of Hitler? We are not responsible for the people of Gaza. We are responsible for the citizens of Israel. But unlike you in the Second World War and in other places, we...[gave] civilians more than a week to leave the area. Hamas stopped them. So, if you have any complaint about civilians who might be killed, ask Hamas.”

On *Sky News* (Oct. 20), Ehud Yaari explained how Israel tries to protect civilians, while Hamas seeks to put them in harm’s way, saying, “we are calling people on their phones... distributing leaflets... saying to them, move out in time before we are coming in... [to] reach... the tunnels where most of the... military leadership of Hamas and Islamic Jihad are hiding now.”

On *ABC RN “Drive”* (Oct. 19), former Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer complained about the double standards applied to Israel, whose critics insist it must follow international law but largely ignore “the crimes of Hamas and of Hezbollah firing rockets into civilian targets in Israel” and “us[ing] civilians as human shields... I would have thought that was an egregious war crime to use civilians in that way.”

DIVIDED WE FALL

AIJAC’s Tzvi Fleischer in the *Nine Newspapers* (Oct. 11) said, “There seems little doubt that the intense divisions inside Israel over controversial judicial reform proposals over the

past year – leading to unprecedentedly large protests against Benjamin Netanyahu’s government on a weekly basis – were a contributing factor that led Hamas to plan and then launch its brutal attacks on Israel on Saturday... Tehran believed the months of protests against the Netanyahu government were evidence that the country was weak.”

THE LYONS LINE

ABC global affairs correspondent John Lyons’ many TV, radio and online reports from Israel showcased his belief Israel is the impediment to peace.

His Oct. 18 online article implied Israel kills Palestinians without justification, saying, “about 200 Palestinians



IN PARLIAMENT

Zoe Daniel (Ind., Goldstein) – Oct. 18 – “My question is to the Prime Minister. Considering the situation in Israel and Gaza, many members of the Goldstein community and other diverse communities are feeling anxious, insecure and unsafe. When can vulnerable institutions in our communities, including synagogues and schools in Goldstein and surrounds, expect to get access to fast-tracked grants promised by the government or other support?”

Prime Minister **Anthony Albanese** (ALP, Grayndler) – answering the question: “The Albanese Government is committed to ensuring that people of all faiths can live in Australia free from violence and discrimination. The \$50 million Securing Faith-Based Places program grants will improve security at religious schools and preschools, places of worship, and faith based community centres. Grants have been approved in every state and territory across different faith communities, including the Jewish community and the Islamic community, who are both feeling particularly vulnerable at the moment... I see our diversity as a strength. But we need to cherish it and we can’t take it for granted, and that’s why we need to work... with all community leaders to make sure that harmony is maintained in this nation.”

Opposition Leader **Peter Dutton** (Lib., Dickson) – on the same question: “To the Islamic communities here in our country, to people of Jewish faith, to people of any faith: they deserve to live in our country unencumbered by racism, by prejudice or by attacks otherwise, and this parliament has and always will stand for those principles.”

Peter Dutton – Oct. 19 – “I think it would also be in our country’s best interest, Prime Minister, to go [to the US] via Tel

Aviv and provide support to the Israeli leadership... it is important for us to be able to stand with Israel at this time, as other world leaders have done. That should be to priority, frankly, of any international travel at the moment so that we can seek to be part of an alliance to keep the pressure down on those who seek to have a wider conflict in the region.”

Shadow Minister for Home Affairs and Cybersecurity Senator **James Paterson** (Lib., Vic.) – Oct. 23 – Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee - Estimates - Department of Home Affairs: “...while we don’t know where whether the IRGC is directly personally responsible for Hamas’ attacks on Israel, we do know that the IRGC and the Iranian Government are among the largest state sponsors of terrorism in the Middle East. Other than Hamas, they also support the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah and other terrorist actors in the region. It would be deeply unfortunate if they were escaping the usual sanction for that behaviour by a technicality that they are a state entity. It doesn’t seem like we should be allowing a loophole like that to prevail.”

Senator **Paterson** – Oct. 24 – Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee - Estimates - Attorney-General’s Department: “Is there any activity that the IRGC could engage in that would be enough for the Government to change its policy, take action, and list them as a terrorist organisation?”

Senator **Anthony Chisom** (ALP, Qld) – answering the question: “I think the department has talked through the complexities of this. We’ve covered this off in previous estimates as well. I would note that the IRGC has been a malignant actor and threat to international security for a long period of time now... The reality is that they are a state actor. It’s not something that is possible under the current legislation.”

(For the extensive parliamentary debates regarding the condolence motion in the wake of the murderous Hamas pogrom against Israel on October 7, see p. 28.)

had been killed by the Israeli security forces in the year before the war – about four a week on average. This was business as usual under occupation” without noting that the overwhelming majority were armed members of terrorist groups or people killed whilst carrying out acts of violence.

He claimed “the Israeli army regularly takes children as young as 12 from their homes at night to unknown locations [on the West Bank], before they are placed on trial in an Israeli army court,” but failed to say they were arrested for committing actual crimes.

Accusing the IDF of “carpet-bombing 2.3 million people” in Gaza in response to the massacre, Lyons said, “for a country that says it does not target civilians, Israel certainly is killing a lot of them” – obviously accepting the statistics provided by the Hamas-run health department.

Another online piece by Lyons (Oct. 23) claimed Israel cannot destroy Hamas because it is an “idea” and “what sustains the business model of all [Palestinian terror] groups is Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and blockade of Gaza.”

Lyons continued his long-standing practice of pretending that Israeli governments have never offered to create a Palestinian state and had those offers rejected by their Palestinian counterparts. Moreover, the terror groups he refers to, such as Hamas, are Islamist and they have a theological commitment to ending Israel’s existence through violence.

On *ABC TV* “The World” (Oct. 11) Lyons claimed that Palestinians are provoked into terror by Jews “insist[ing] that they should be able to go to the [Al Aqsa] mosque [on Temple Mount].” Jews want to visit Temple Mount, their holiest site, where the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock were built, but do not want to enter those Islamic buildings.

SARAH’S SCALPS

ABC TV “7.30” host Sarah Fergu-

son refused to let Hamas spokesman Basem Naim’s blatant lies go through to the keeper on Oct. 18.

Naim claimed Hamas had “offered... a hand of peace 30 years ago by signing the Oslo agreement to achieve the minimum of our human rights of a basic of an independent Palestinian state.”

Hamas of course has always opposed Oslo and waged a war of terror against any moves towards peace with Israel.

Naim initially denied that Hamas’ terrorists killed civilians on October 7, saying, “we are committed to the international humanitarian law” and targets in Israel were “military compounds... where most of them are soldiers and officers.”

Ferguson said international journalists who visited the massacre sites confirmed they were civilians. Naim conceded that “in the middle of the confrontation, there was some civilians [but] the clear instruction was not to kill civilians.”

Those deaths, he insisted, were caused by “other Palestinian groups” and “even simple, ordinary people” who entered Israel after the fence was destroyed.

On Oct. 10, Ferguson had interviewed Palestinian propagandist Mustafa Barghouti who suggested the massacre was being exaggerated.

Earlier, the *Australian* (Oct. 15) reported that documents found on the bodies of Hamas terrorists revealed that “written orders carried by Hamas fighters sent to attack Israeli towns and settlements... contained the same chilling command: Kill as many people as possible.”

UNCIVIL COVERAGE

The most egregious example of biased coverage of the October 7 massacre was seen in the initial coverage by *SBS TV*’s dedicated Arabic language program, “News in Arabic”.

In its first bulletin after the massacre, broadcast on Oct. 9, Hamas’

invasion of Israel was lionised as an “unprecedented military escalation... the first time in history that the front witnessed a Palestinian ground incursion into Israeli cities.”

The program strongly implied that the Israelis killed were combatants who fell fighting Hamas. No concrete examples were given of how Israelis died and the only Israeli testimony was of an apparently uninjured woman saying she and three others were shot at whilst travelling in their car.

A Hamas spokesperson was heard claiming that “according to international law, settlers are not civilians” and therefore legitimate targets. No counter opinion was included to explain there is no such “international law” or that the Israelis massacred were not “settlers” but people living on territory that has been Israel’s since 1948.

The following night’s episode was no better, claiming the previous 24 hours was “the most violent and most brutal for civilians” – meaning in terms of “deaths and injuries among Palestinians,” not Israelis. The word “massacres” was used, but only in relation to Israeli strikes on Palestinian targets. An Israeli woman was included calling Hamas’ actions “unjustifiable”, but adding it’s only because “they are hurting, frustrated, desperate people.” Only at the end of the episode was an expert quoted admitting that the majority of those killed in Israel were civilians.

Following a complaint by AIJAC to SBS management, later “News in Arabic” programs included more balance and context.

Nonetheless, on Oct. 19, “News in Arabic” downplayed and misrepresented Hamas’ brutal slaughter of 1,400 Israelis, claiming that “violence escalated in the Gaza Strip after Hamas kidnapped 260 Israeli civilians attending a music festival in early October.” The 260 people at the music festival were of course murdered, not kidnapped.

MEDIA MICROSCOPE

Allon Lee

THE MEDIA'S HOSPITAL HANDPASS

A massive blast that engulfed the car park of the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza at 7pm (local time) on October 17 marked a pronounced drop in the sympathetic coverage that Western media outlets extended to Israel following the massacre by Hamas terrorists of more than 1,400 Israelis, most of them civilians, alongside acts of rape, torture and kidnapping, on October 7.

As AIJAC's Oved Lobel wrote on the Sky News website (Oct. 24), "far too many Western media organisations appeared to uncritically accept as indisputable fact a claim that Israel had bombed a hospital in Gaza, killing up to 500 Palestinian civilians. The sole source? The Gaza Health Ministry. That is, Hamas. The same Hamas whose officials continue to claim that they did not kill any civilians on October 7 despite broadcasting and livestreaming the slaughter themselves."

Very quickly "photographic and video evidence... clear[ly showed] that the rocket had actually fallen on the parking lot next to the hospital, and the hospital itself was largely undamaged. As for fatalities... One European official estimated 50 or less."

Australia was just waking up when the blast happened and it appears that meant that, unlike overseas, most local reports had time to include Israel's claim it was an errant rocket fired by Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) which caused the blast.

The *Guardian Australia's* live feed on Oct. 18 implied it was likely Israel's fault, citing Middle East correspondent Bethan McKernan's opinion that "the scale of the blast appears to be outside" PIJ's "capabilities". The next day, however, the paper conceded Israel didn't appear responsible.

An ABC News "X" post at 6.30 am on Oct. 18 tiptoed around the issue of responsibility, asserting that "an Israeli air strike has killed hundreds of Palestinians at a Gaza hospital... health authorities in the besieged enclave say."

An *SBS TV* "News in Arabic" report (Oct. 18) strongly implied Israeli culpability, twice claiming "a guided missile... targeted" the hospital. The report included footage of IDF spokesperson Daniel Hagari's briefing, with the reporter saying, "the Israeli army... point[ed] the finger at the Islamic Jihad movement." It did not include any of the extensive evidence Hagari offered to prove that blast was caused by a PIJ rocket. Subsequent editions did not report on the growing consensus the blast was not Israel's fault.

In contrast, the corresponding episode of *SBS TV* "World News", noted Israel presented "some new imagery which suggests that the explosion took place in the hospital car park rather than in the hospital itself and questioned the fact that there doesn't appear to be a crater in those images. They also presented what they say are intercepted communications between Hamas militants acknowledging that the blast was the result of a rocket misfire [by Islamic Jihad]."

The ABC's coverage, especially on TV, seemed allergic to properly sharing and evaluating the evidence Israel presented to clear its name.

On Oct. 18, *ABC RN* "Breakfast" host Patricia Karvelas asked, "Does Israel's right to defend itself extend to bombing hospitals?" implying it was the culprit.

ABC TV "7pm News" (Vic) that night included Hagari saying, "this is the responsibility of Islamic Jihad," but the report didn't say what Israel's evidence was. In the following edition, ABC Middle East correspondent Allyson Horn said, "Israel says the blast occurred when a rocket launched by the Islamic Jihad group misfired, releasing video and audio to back up its claim." However, no details or examples of the video or audio were aired.



ABC Global Affairs Editor John Lyons appeared fiercely determined not to offer any opinion on the responsibility for the hospital explosion (Image: ABC/ Twitter)

The webpage of *ABC TV* "7.30" that night promoted a report with the misleading tagline, "What do we know about the Gaza hospital blast so far?" The item briefly noted both sides blame the other, but this was not its main focus.

ABC Global Affairs Editor John Lyons, reporting from Israel, seemed very averse to discussing the evidence regarding responsibility for the blast.

Instead, Lyons relied on a stock answer which framed Israel's attacks on Hamas positions in Gaza as excessive. On *ABC Radio* "PM" (Oct. 18) he said that "after drop-

ping 6,000 bombs over the last ten days, which Israel has done, in the Muslim and Arab world, they certainly are taking the version or believing that it was Israel.”

On Oct. 18, *ABC TV* “The World” host Beverley O’Connor twice tried to elicit Lyons’ opinion, but he again refused to say, deflecting to speak again about the “6,000 bombs” Israel had dropped and the Arab reaction.

The nearest Lyons came to expressing a definitive answer was in response to a question from *ABC Radio* “This Week” host David Lipson (Oct. 20), who mentioned the growing consensus a PIJ rocket was responsible, and asked, “what do you make of this tragedy?”

Lyons’ response was messy, saying, “I think there is serious doubt. I mean, both sides are claiming the others did it. The Israelis have presented what looks, on the face of it, compelling evidence that it wasn’t one of its rockets. I think in a way, until there’s an examination [we] will never know.”

A five-minute item on *ABC Radio* “PM” (Oct. 19) was one of the few instances where the Israeli evidence was properly reported on and evaluated by the ABC.

Canadian academic Michael Armstrong said, “my first impression is that’s not a bomb blast... The aftermath we see looks much more like a rocket hit than a bomb.”

Also included was Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) analyst Nathan Ruser, who had said on his “X” page that the “photos of the scene are, to me, not consistent with an airstrike and are not consistent with claims that 500+ people were killed.” But none of this appeared in the radio spot. Instead, Ruser was merely quoted saying, “independent reporters and eyewitnesses” cannot speak freely in Gaza and “people... bend facts and... reality to support what they believe is the overall truth.”

ASPI analyst Malcolm Davis’ commentary on *ABC TV* “News” (Oct. 18) that Israel was not likely to “attack... a hospital full of civilians right at the point when it’s in their strategic interests to ensure as much international backing as possible,” was picked up by other media outlets.

Finally, IDF spokesperson Peter Lerner was given ample time to explain why Israel did not cause the blast during an interview with *ABC TV* “7.30” host Sarah Ferguson on Oct. 19.

Meanwhile, a rambling article on the ABC website (Oct. 19), co-authored by former ABC Middle East correspondent Eric Tlozek and social media producer Maryanne Touak – who shared a post on her Instagram account that blamed Israel for the blast and accused it of genocide – looked at some of the competing claims, but ignored the intercepted audio between the Hamas terrorists and didn’t quote any experts.

By stark contrast with the ABC, evening news programs of *Channel 7*, *9* and *10* (Oct. 18-20), had no issue broadcasting the audio and video evidence provided by Israel.

However, on Oct. 18, *Channel 10*’s report falsely claimed the “hospital left a burning shell” while *Channel 9*’s Melbourne newsreader Peter Hitchener claimed as fact “800 people, many children, killed” and “a hospital blown apart.” Reporter Bret McLeod said “hospital reduced to a burning wreck” – all factually incorrect.

On *Sky News* (Oct. 19), Izzat Abdulhadi, the Palestin-

ian Authority’s representative in Australia, clashed with host Peter Stefanovic after Stefanovic asserted that, whether it was an Israeli strike or misfiring PIJ rocket, ultimately the blast happened because terrorists

“routinely” fire rockets at Israel from adjacent to schools and mosques, which increases the chances of misfires or Israel responding to the source of the attack.

Abdulhadi rejected this as “Israeli propaganda.” Stefanovic replied, “I’ve been to Gaza and I’ve seen all this myself.”

Writing in the *Australian* (Oct. 21), former *Age* newspaper editor Michael Gawenda said too many in the media were failing their ethical requirements of “fact-seeking and fairness”, as seen in the uncritical acceptance of Hamas’ claims that Israel had deliberately carried out a massacre at the hospital.

He criticised his former employer for running an op-ed with the headline, “This is a massacre: Basic humanity has to be restored in Gaza.”

Gawenda said “a massacre is the deliberate killing of defenceless human beings. That was the headline *The Age* considered appropriate for this piece of commentary, based entirely on the Hamas story of what had taken place, and given prominence on *The Age* website. And it was still there, prominently displayed on Thursday when it increasingly was clear that the explosion... was the result of a misfired missile by the terror group Palestinian Islamic Jihad.”

In the *Daily Telegraph* (Oct. 20), former MP and Australian Ambassador to Israel Dave Sharma took issue with politicians who had too readily accepted the Hamas claims, writing, “they should wait for the facts before pronouncing judgement. And in this conflict, our politicians would be well-advised to attach more credibility to Israel... than Hamas.”

On Oct. 25, the *Australian* editorialised that “too often... [when] Israel has been under attack, commentators have readily accepted the claims of terrorist groups [but] treated whatever Israel says with disdain.”

“The ABC’s coverage, especially on TV, seemed allergic to properly sharing and evaluating the evidence Israel presented to clear its name”

THE LAST WORD

Itzhak Herzog

“NOT SINCE THE HOLOCAUST”

The following is the full text of a statement made by Israeli President Itzhak Herzog to the Israeli people on Oct. 9.

As President of the State of Israel, I speak to you now from our capital city Jerusalem under the dark shadow of war, as my nation continues to endure a savage attack from a cruel and inhumane enemy. To my mind, not since the Holocaust have so many Jews been killed in one day. And not since the Holocaust have we witnessed scenes of Jewish women and children, grandparents – even Holocaust survivors – being herded into trucks and taken into captivity.

Hamas has imported, adopted and replicated the savagery of ISIS. Entering civilian homes on a holy day and murdering in cold blood whole families. Young and old. Violating and burning bodies. Beating and torturing their innocent victims – Jews and Muslims and other faiths.

The brutality. The inhumanity. The barbarity of monsters – not humans – monsters.

Over the past days, I have spoken with leaders from around the world who expressed their deep outrage at the attack, including [US] Vice President [Kamala] Harris, [US] Secretary of State [Antony] Blinken, the heads of the EU, the UN, NATO and others closer to home, like my friend, President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed.

I call on all nations around the world:

First, most importantly, make clear and loud condemnations of Hamas' actions. Just as you condemned the abhorrent and unspeakable actions of ISIS because

today, they are one and the same.

Second, those nations that have yet to do so: Designate

Hamas in its entirety as a terrorist body.

Third, make clear that Hamas carries full responsibility and accountability for the well-being of the hostages it has taken and demand their immediate return to Israel.

And fourth, support Israel – in words and in deeds.

Israel for its part will continue to defend itself.

The Government of Israel, Prime Minister [Binyamin] Netanyahu, the IDF and all the Israeli security agencies have my full support. We will act with full force and un-

wavering commitment to eliminate this threat to our people. We will pursue all those who perpetrate and support such grievous acts against us.

I know the Israeli spirit will overcome. Unfortunately and sadly, there are hundreds of bereaved families all around the country and thousands of injured being treated in hospitals around the country. Today and yesterday, I met some of the wounded in Asaf HaRofeh Shamir Hospital and Beersheva's Soroka Medical Centre, some of the best medical centres in the world.

If you ever want to witness the great spirit of my nation, the great spirit of the nation of Israel, you can see it in hospitals and elsewhere around the country. You will find a people united and committed to

prevail, together, and come out victorious.

Let there be no mistake by any in the region who may consider operating against Israel. Israel is a very strong country and will employ all its might and strength to defend itself and its people.

I pray for the swift and full recovery of the injured, I pray for the bereaved families, and I pray for the wellbeing of those taken hostage. And through all this, with the solidarity and support of our brothers and sisters in Jewish communities all around the world, with our friends and allies all around the world, I know that Israel will emerge stronger, more resilient and united.



Israeli President Itzhak Herzog: “The Israeli spirit will overcome” (Image: Wikimedia Commons)



9 771442 369017 >

Australia \$7.95 (inc GST)

AIR