

Special Report 123, Israel Under Attack



(Released Israeli abductees and their families)

Hamas' Ceasefire Proposal

On May 6, 2024, Hamas announced it had “accepted the Egyptian ceasefire proposal”. On May 6, the Lebanese *Al-Akhbar* daily affiliated with Hezbollah published the text of the agreement Hamas “accepted”.

In the first phase, Israel is to immediately release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners viewed by Hamas to be key figures, at the rate of 30 prisoners per child or elderly person released by Hamas and 50 per every female soldier. Hamas is authorized to determine which prisoners Israel must release; on the other hand and “if possible”, Hamas will release 33 Israeli abductees, including women children, the elderly, the sick and the wounded, “dead or alive” – three per week. No indication of how many abductees are still alive is to be provided, leaving Hamas the freedom to murder all and any such. The conditions under which remaining Palestinian prisoners are held in Israel are to be “significantly improved”.

At commencement of the second phase, Israel must declare an end to the war and withdraw from the Gaza Strip, following which Hamas will release all remaining live Israeli abductees, civilian and military. Israel must release 50 Palestinian prisoners for every one released, under terms described above.

Hamas is free to commence military resurgence, rebuild its military infrastructure and import weaponry. It is to enjoy worldwide, unrestricted freedom of movement, and all Gazans, civilian and military, are free to return to their homes.

The UN, specifically UNRWA, is to be involved in the implementation of the agreement. The UN, Egypt, Qatar, and the US, are to guarantee it implementation, and UNRWA is to be authorized to distribute aid throughout all stages of the agreement.

In the third and final stage, Gaza will be fully restored, Israel must compensate all individuals harmed by the war, and Israel and Hamas will exchange the bodies of the dead, Hamas carefully omitted the word “all” (all bodies) from the original proposal, leaving the option of withholding some or bargaining again.

In other words, Hamas demands Israel's complete capitulation while conceding nothing but a release of the abductees, "dead or alive". No restrictions are imposed on Hamas' future military buildup, there is no undertaking to work for peace. As if to say October 7 never happened – until it happens again.

Israel cannot and will not accept such terms.

Israel has Entered Rafa

Why

- Because Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, murdered 1,200 Israelis, torturing, beheading, mutilating and raping as they rampaged through farms, villages and townships.
- Because Rafa is Hamas' last military stronghold, from which it could stage a resurgence and reenact the atrocities of October 7, as it has vowed to do again and again and again.
- Because Hamas is holding, under horrific conditions, 133 Israeli abductees, some of them wounded, sick and elderly in need of withheld medical support; some of them women subject to daily sexual harassment; an increasing number of them dead or dying, their bodies rotting under Hamas' heartless intransigence.
- Because Hamas has refused to negotiate in good faith. Instead, it insists on Israel's complete capitulation.
- Because the US and other western countries, by their criticism of Israel and, in some cases, withholding or threatening to withhold political and military support from Israel, emboldened Hamas' intransigence, robbing Israel of any other means to pressure Hamas and bring about an end to the suffering of both Gaza civilians and the suffering of the abductees.
- Because Israel's physical existence is at stake, Hamas' attack is part of a multi-front attack planned, funded, equipped, engineered and supported by Iran. No country and no people will willingly submit to their destruction. Following 2,000 years of suffering, climaxed by the Nazi killing machine, we have vowed: NEVER AGAIN.

Will the West repeat its mistake when the Nazi machine breathed death and destruction on the Jews? Will *you* remain passive, commiserate with us in our pain but do nothing to bring it to an end? Will you stand idly by as we face another holocaust? Will you not support this morally legitimate aspiration for life, peace and tranquility? Please contact your representative in Congress and demand what you know is only right.

How

- Carefully. While there are undoubtedly instances of misdeeds on the part of individual Israeli troops – as there are in any war – the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have done more than any army ever to safeguard the life and wellbeing of Gaza civilians in spite of their enthusiastic support of Hamas. This, in the teeth of Hamas' doing all in its power to increase the suffering of the population and the number of civilian casualties by using civilian home and facilities from which to fight; by stealing food, water, fuel and medicines from the population and hoarding it for the use of its forces; by launching missiles from or in close proximity to civilian safe zones.

- Intelligently. First by protecting Egyptian interests by inserting its forces between Gaza and the border with Egypt, thus forestalling a mass breach of the border by civilians fleeing the fighting. Second, by taking over the border crossing which served as Hamas' most prominent symbol of sovereignty and one of its most important channels of weaponry and finances, eliminating Hamas' control of it. Third, by calling upon the civilian population in restricted, designated areas to relocate to safe zones where Israel has prepared accommodation, field hospitals, stocks of food, water, fuel and medicines, and only then attacking Hamas positions in the areas vacated.
- With determination. Israeli troops are ferreting Hamas and Islamic Jihad (IJ) militants out of their tunnels and attack shafts, out of civilian homes and privileged facilities such as schools, clinics and mosques. Our losses are painful but lower by far than those imposed on Hamas and IJ as the IDF steadily advances, destroying command and control positions, tunnels, attack shafts and launch pads. Unlike Hamas, we weep over every soldier lost, as well as over the suffering of Gaza civilians. But we vow to continue to fight until our peace and security are ensured, every abductee is returned and Hamas' capability to attack us is clearly and completely dismantled.

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A friend whom I hold in high regard drew parallels between Israel's war in Gaza and the American Civil War. I disagreed, and he asked me why. The following, with typos removed and syntax (hopefully) improved, is my answer.

I'm glad to have this conversation with you. Not only am I happy to be challenged by your comments, and thereby encouraged to think through issues, but I'm happy for the contact with a long-term friend whom I love and respect.

You invited me to explain in what ways do I see a contrast, rather than a parallel, between Israel's present conflict in Gaza and the American civil war. That is a helpful challenge. It serves to clear waters successfully muddied by Hamas and its supporters – actually, by Iran, its proxies and many of their young, misguided supporters on US campuses and in US and European streets.

This much needs to be clear: Israel's war is decidedly *not* against the Palestinians, the majority of whom do not live in Gaza but in the West Bank, under autonomous rule; it is against Hamas, a murderous terrorist organization that suppresses the Palestinians living under its control; is driven by antisemitic hatred and a religious Islamic fundamentalism that brooks no compromise; is funded and trained by Iran to serve its interests rather than those of the Palestinians, and that engaged in a medieval, barbaric and unprovoked attack against innocent Israeli civilians, the greater majority of whom are in support of Palestinian national aspirations. Herein lie the major differences. But allow me to spell some of them out:

- The American Civil War was a conflict between member States of the same national union; the present war in Gaza is between a State and a terrorist organization, recognized to be such by most democratic countries, that took control of Gaza by force, killing and maiming elected Palestinian officials and suppressing their own people, disallowing freedom of association, free elections and the freedom of religion. Which American side, if any, most reminds you of Hamas?

- The American Civil War was (originally, and largely to the end) motivated by conflicting economic concerns and over the right of secession. Only later, as a moral rallying point, did it become a struggle over slavery; the present war in Gaza is over the sheer right of Israel to exist. The Hamas charter calls for the eradication of Israel and the slaughter of Israelis, neither the North nor the South sought to eradicate the other. Which American side, if any, most reminds you of Hamas?
- The American Civil War was initiated by the north in response to a number of States seceding from the Union; the war in Gaza was initiated by Hamas' horrific attack and as an act of self-defense. Which American side, if any, most reminds you of Hamas?
- Despite General Sherman's scorched earth policy, the American Civil War was not accompanied by the kind of barbarism that characterizes Hamas' conduct; Hamas engaged in torture, rape and the abduction of civilians of all ages – even babies – as bartering chips. Civilians were beheaded. Families were tied together with barbed wire and shot. Women were gang-raped before being killed. Babies were killed in their cots or placed in hot baking ovens. Which American side, if any, most reminds you of Hamas?
 - The American Civil War did not involve the cynical use of a civilian population as human shields, nor were facilities such as hospitals, houses of worship and others generally used as firing positions; Hamas hides among a population for which it cares not a whiff, and systematically uses such facilities for its war purposes. Which American side, if any, most reminds you of Hamas?
 - The American Civil War was one of internal conflict in which other nations (France, for example) had an interest; the war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas is the product of Iran's implacable interests, which largely conflict with those of the Palestinians, and in which Hamas serves as a proxy.

I could draw further contrasts but perhaps these suffice.

I support Palestinian aspirations for a State of their own. I deem this to be the only morally acceptable resolution of the conflict between our two nations, and I oppose the Netanyahu's Government's policy on this issue. But I have no qualms saying that Israel's war against Hamas is morally justified, and that Hamas as an organization must be eradicated for the same reason and on the same grounds that the Nazi party had to be eradicated. I sincerely and deeply regret the loss of civilian life in Gaza and the suffering of the civilians there. But these were premeditatedly engineered and enhanced by Hamas. There is no way Israel could avoid them. Nor has any war – just or otherwise – been conducted, that did not involve civilian suffering and casualties. Israel has and will continue to do more to reduce both than has any military at any time in human history, and that includes the US by a long shot.

Sincerely,

Baruch