

Pro-Israel Groups Say Self-Defense Motivated Gaza Offensive

Israel was forced into launching airstrikes in Gaza last Saturday to defend against Hamas rocket attacks in southern Israel, leaders say.



[] Christian and Jewish observers say Israel was forced into launching airstrikes last Saturday to defend against Hamas rocket attacks.

Christian political analyst and commentator Mike Evans said on Monday that the mainstream media has ignored Israel's main rationale for airstrikes in Gaza. "The answer is quite simply one that most do not want to hear," Evans said. "Self-defense."

He said it isn't right for media outlets to give suspicious treatment of the actions taken by Israel, now in its fourth day of air raids on Hamas command centers, training camps, and rocket manufacturing and storage facilities.

"We must ask ourselves if we would allow al-Qaeda to take up residence in Brooklyn and randomly fire rockets into New York City," Evans said, seeking to compare a hypothetical case of domestic terror with the situation in Israel. "Israel cannot be expected to react any differently than would the government of the United States under identical circumstances."

Evans pointed out that Hamas—a recognized terrorist group that Palestinians, in free and internationally monitored elections, voted into power in 2006—violently seized control of Gaza in 2007 and since January 2008 has launched more than 2,500 cross-border rockets and mortar bombs into Israel. "It is

vital that the international community and the Arab world turn its attention to Hamas as the perpetrator and put pressure on it to halt attacks on the civilian population of Israel."

On Tuesday, the Jewish leader of an influential pro-Israel Christian lobby told Charisma his group is pleased with America's reaction to Israel's offensive in Gaza. "The Bush administration has so far stood with Israel," said David Brog, executive director of Christians United for Israel. "They have publicly recognized that it was Hamas which violated the ceasefire and that Hamas is responsible for the renewal of violence."

Brog said he encourages Christians to contact the White House and thank President Bush for standing with Israel. "Our basic point is that every sovereign nation has a fundamental right to try to stop missiles from being fired into its territory," he said. "If you support Israel's right to self-defense, you need to speak up, because Israel's critics are most certainly speaking up."

In a YouTube video launched on Tuesday, Earl Cox, founder and co-host of Frontline Jerusalem, issued an urgent global plea asking Christians from all time zones and nations to wholeheartedly pray for Israel. He urged believers to intercede for three hours on New Year's Day, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., for God to protect "His land and His people."

"We feel that prayer is probably the most important thing that anybody can do right now," Cox said. "The No. 1 prayer is for God to lay His hand of blessing on Israel and for protection of those [Israeli] soldiers."

Tzipi Livni, minister of foreign affairs for Israel, told parliament on Monday that Israel has been under attack from Gaza for nearly a decade. "We did everything we could to prevent a deterioration of the situation," she said. "We have conducted ourselves with unsurpassed restraint. We grinded our

teeth, bit our lips, unturned every stone, to prevent the need for widespread action.

“However,” she said, “our responsibility is to the safety of our children, their right to walk to school and kindergarten. Israel is making it plain yet again today that its desire for peace is not a sign of weakness.”

Livni said the global community is in a situation right now that splits leadership between moderates and extremists and everyone is being forced to choose a side.

“The world is divided, between those who believe in live-and-let-live and those who try to impose their beliefs upon others,” she said. “Between people who wish to live in peace and people for whom hate, incitement, terror and violence are their daily routine, the basis for educating their children, and the voices emanating from some of their mosques.”

Evans, best-selling author of books dealing with Middle East conflict, including *The Final Move Beyond Iraq*, said Israel's military has demonstrated great restraint over the years on its southern border with Gaza, while civilians have grown accustomed to the wailing of warning sirens, alerting them to run for shelter every time rockets are launched from Gaza toward Israeli schools, shopping malls and homes.

“Children in the area grow up with the fear that they could be the next target,” he said.

Evans said Hamas is known for practically inviting civilian casualties by launching rockets from residential areas. Even though Israeli forces target only Hamas militants and warfare—and casualties in Gaza are largely terrorist-related—he said Hamas tactics put civilians in the line of fire, which is why Israel is currently sending humanitarian aid such as food, medications and electricity to innocent bystanders in Gaza.

" Hamas is not above using innocent Palestinian [blood] to achieve its radical agenda," he said. "It is obvious these leaders have no regard for the sanctity of life and will go to any lengths to achieve their fundamentalist aims. This heinous conduct exposes women and children ... and places the onus for any deaths directly on Hamas."

Livni also drew a distinction between the terrorists in charge in Gaza and the people under their rule. "Israel is acting against Hamas and not against the Palestinian population," she said. "Israel would like to reiterate to anyone with complaints about the [safety of the] population, to redirect them to the party directly responsible for the population's situation—Hamas, which is holding the population hostage."

Livni said Israel's current struggle is not an isolated one and called on the West to show solidarity with the forces of freedom. "Israel is standing on the frontlines of the Western world's war against terror, and we expect support for doing the right thing and fighting the war of the entire free world."

David Rubin, founder of Shiloh Israel Children's Fund, a nonprofit group based in Israel that supports victims of terrorism, echoed Livni's sentiments. "Israel is once again at war against a terror organization," he said. "Please remember that the Islamic terror groups are targeting the world. We just happen to be on the front lines." —Paul Steven Ghiringhelli