

Israel: Nation Under Siege

The nation of Israel is different from any nation on the earth, as it has been in an existential battle for survival from the moment of its birth in 1948 until this very day. It is a nation under constant siege, and without constant vigilance (and the mercy of God), it would be wiped off the map.

Tell me another nation on the planet that needs every young person, both males and females, to serve in the military for two to three years immediately after high school. Or that requires all men until the age of 40 to serve in the reserves—meaning, to go back into the military if needed. (The only exceptions to these rules are ultra-Orthodox Jews, who are exempt from military service.)

I write these words this week from Israel, where I have been since Sunday, June 9, and everywhere you turn, there is the reality of war.

Getting off the plane, I was met by an airport employee named Yehudah, a young man who was born in South Africa and immigrated to Israel six years ago. As a reservist, he recently served in Gaza for more than 190 days and will soon be deployed again.

When I asked him how he felt about going back into a war zone, he didn't have much to say. He has no choice in the matter, and it's for the good of the nation. These are the realities of war.

After I spoke at a gathering of believers Monday night, I met another young man, dressed very casually but carrying his rifle on his back. He has been deployed in the northern border in Lebanon, where Israeli troops are at war with Hezbollah and will soon be returning. But as a soldier, he cannot go anywhere without his gun.

He told me that his unit was just hit in a drone attack but thankfully, without any casualties. He too is about to return to the warfront.

A woman introduced me to her son, whom I had not seen in years. He is in his 30s and was just returning from several months' deployment as a reservist. When he is needed again, he will return. It is his duty, if not a sacred privilege, to protect his country during a time of war.

And then there are the ongoing internal terror attacks, be they car rammings, stabbings, shootings or bombings.

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A headline from Feb. 22, 2016, selected at random out of an almost infinite number of choices, gives an idea of the realities of life in Israel: "Israeli Military Chief: All Off-duty Combat Soldiers Must Carry Their Weapons."

The story then explains, "Off-duty Nahal soldier Tuvia Wiesman was not carrying a weapon when he went to the assistance of terror victims and was himself stabbed to death."

Welcome to life in Israel.

The Jewish Virtual Library states:

From the Oslo Accords (Sept. 1993) until September 2000 – nearly 300 Israelis were killed in attacks.

During the Al-Aqsa Intifada (Sept. 2000 – Dec. 2005), another 1,100 Israelis were killed.

Since September 2000, Palestinian terrorist attacks have claimed at least 1,429 Israeli lives. Hundreds more have been wounded.

The only reason you can walk the streets of Israel in safety

or live without constant fear of annihilation is the ceaseless vigilance of the Israeli military and security arms of the government. Otherwise, Israel's sworn enemies would have wiped the tiny nation off the map decades ago.

And what happens when there are serious, inexcusable lapses in security? Oct. 7 happens, becoming an inspiration for future terror attacks.

As reported by the Times of Israel, Nov. 1, 2023, "A senior member of Hamas has hailed the systematic slaughter of civilians in Israel on Oct. 7, vowing in an interview that if given the chance, the Palestinian terror group will repeat similar assaults many times in the future until Israel is exterminated."

In a similar spirit, Iranian leaders have called for Israel's extermination.

As reported on May 22, 2020:

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, launched into a lengthy anti-Israel diatribe on Twitter Friday as he marked Quds Day, a holiday held in Iran toward the end of the month of Ramadan meant to express support for Palestinians and opposition to Israel's existence.

The leader, in 25-unthreaded tweets, compared Israel to a "cancerous tumor" and the coronavirus, as he called for the nation to be "uprooted and destroyed."

Yet this is nothing new.

Rather, it is what Israel has faced since the announcement of the U.N. Partition Plan in 1947.

As summarized by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs:

On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted

Resolution 181 calling for the partition of Mandatory Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. The Jews accepted the plan with a mixture of joy and hesitation, while the Arabs rejected it and launched a war to forcibly prevent its implementation.

And what happened the day after Israel announced its independence in May 1948? The Jewish Virtual Library explains:

On May 15, 1948, the day the British Mandate over Palestine ended, the armies of five neighboring Arab states invaded the new State of Israel, which had declared its independence the previous day. The invasion, heralded by an Egyptian air attack on Tel Aviv, was vigorously resisted. From the north, east and south came the armies of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Transjordan, and Egypt.

Israel has been under siege since its modern rebirth, and it remains under siege to this day.

For good reason, both Jews and Christians point to the words of Psalm 121, reminding us that “he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (v. 4, NIV).

If not for divine mercy, Israel would not be.

Dr. Michael Brown () is the host of the nationally syndicated *The Line of Fire* radio show. He is the author of over 40 books, including “Can You be Gay and Christian?”; “Our Hands are Stained with Blood”; and “Seizing the Moment: How to Fuel the Fires of Revival.” You can connect with him on Facebook, X or YouTube.