

Israel Still in Agony 1 Year Later

One full year after Oct. 7, 2023, the nation of Israel is still traumatized and many of its people are still in great pain. One full year later, there are still scores of hostages languishing in Gaza, if not dead, and their families remain in daily agony. One full year later, the war with Hamas continues, but now there is also war with Hezbollah in Lebanon, as well as possible war with Iran itself. One full year later, rather than sympathy for Israel growing, it is hatred for Israel that is growing.

One year ago, the unthinkable happened on Israeli soil. A mass pogrom took place within the borders of this tiny state, the one place that was supposed to be safe for Jewish people. The nation's vaunted security systems failed miserably, and babies were slaughtered, women were raped, the elderly were executed and whole families burned alive.

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I remember waking up the morning of Oct. 7 to the news that Hamas terrorists had flooded Israel and that as many as 100 Israelis had been killed. "Impossible," I thought. "Not today, in Israel. This cannot be." Then there were reports that several soldiers had been taken hostage. This, too, was unthinkable, with horrific potential consequences.

After all, Israeli Defense Forces soldier Gilad Shalit had languished as a hostage in Gaza for five long years before his release, which required Israeli releasing 1,027 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for his life—and one of those prisoners was Yahyah Sinwar, the mastermind of the Oct. 7 massacre. What would Hamas do with several Israeli hostages?

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But as that dreadful day unfolded, the news was far more devastating than anything we could have imagined. This is what I wrote one year ago as more reports came in:

Heartbreak. Shock. Agony. Devastation. Confusion. Rage. These are just a few of the emotions flooding the hearts of millions of Israelis in the midst of an unprecedented terrorist attack by Hamas. This is a time to stop and pray for the merciful intervention of God.

What makes this attack all the more insidious is that it comes almost 50 years to the day of the infamous Yom Kippur War in 1973. At that fateful time, Israel was attacked in the midst of 24 hours of prayer and fasting on the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

The current attack, on Oct. 7, 2023, did not just come on Saturday, the Sabbath, but on what is called Simchat Torah, "the joy of the Torah," the greatest day of celebration on the Jewish calendar. This is the culmination of the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), a day of singing and dancing and rejoicing.

But this day, instead of dancing there is wailing and mourning. Bloodshed has filled the land.

First there were reports of a limited number of casualties. Then shocking news of as many as 40 Israelis killed and 700 wounded. Then reports of more than 100 dead and 900 wounded. And the battles still rage as I write, with reports of Israeli soldiers taken hostage by Hamas.

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