

Mr. President, You Need to Apologize to Israel

This summer, as Hamas was raining rockets on Israeli civilians, storing munitions in civilian buildings, and firing rockets from mosques, schools and clinics, the Obama administration had the audacity to say that it was “appalled” by Israeli attacks that unintentionally killed civilians, even calling them “disgraceful.”

In response, I observed that the administration holds Israel to a higher standard than it holds itself, demanding stricter rules of engagement for Israelis than Americans.

Now, as we drop our own bombs in Syria (and civilians die), the administration is further exempting itself from its own standards:

“The White House has acknowledged for the first time that strict standards President Obama imposed last year to prevent civilian deaths from U.S. drone strikes will not apply to U.S. military operations in Syria and Iraq,” Yahoo News reported.

“A White House statement to Yahoo News confirming the looser policy came in response to questions about reports that as many as a dozen civilians, including women and young children, were killed when a Tomahawk cruise missile struck the village of Kafr Daryan in Syria’s Idlib province on the morning of Sept. 23.

“The village has been described by Syrian rebel commanders as a reported stronghold of the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front where U.S officials believed members of the so-called Khorasan group were plotting attacks against international aircraft.

“But at a briefing for members and staffers of the House Foreign Affairs Committee late last week, Syrian rebel

commanders described women and children being hauled from the rubble after an errant cruise missile destroyed a home for displaced civilians. Images of badly injured children also appeared on YouTube, helping to fuel anti-U.S. protests in a number of Syrian villages last week.”

To be clear, I applaud the administration for loosening its absurd rules of engagement. When an enemy hides among civilians, the resulting civilian deaths are the enemy’s moral and legal responsibility, not ours. There must be no safe zones for jihadists, no place where they can lay their heads in peace.

Yet I can’t help but notice the double standard. If Israel’s acts of self-defense are “disgraceful,” then how does the administration describe our own strikes?

The administration’s rhetorical attacks on Israel were not only baseless as a matter of law, they were morally bankrupt. The president of the United States owes the men and women of the IDF—men and women who risked and sacrificed their lives fighting the same jihad—a heartfelt apology.

David French *is a senior counsel at the American Center for Law and Justice. This article is crossposted on National Review.*