

Danger to Israel: Hamas' Covenant With Death

This is part one of a three-part series on the tension between Hamas and Israel.

I remember our own brief history with rockets in Tel Aviv. In 1991, Saddam Hussein lobbed exactly 39 Scud missiles—mostly into the Tel Aviv area—and 39 times we had to run for our lives. Once we and our two kids, ages 13 and 11, had just gotten into our car to go to a national prayer conference in Jerusalem.

We had driven only 100 meters from our house when the sirens went off. We left the car in the middle of the road, doors ajar, and raced towards the house. That was the end of the prayer conference for us.

After that, our two children absolutely refused to wear pajamas to bed. For years, they went to bed fully clothed because during that short period of 41 days, numerous times they had to jump out of bed in the middle of the night and race to our safe room, waiting for the “boom.” What was crazy about the whole thing was that if a day or two passed without a Scud, tension began to build as the city waited for the next Scud to hit.

Now imagine: In the south of Israel, since 2001, more than 12,800 rockets and mortars have been launched by Hamas and their affiliates from Gaza. That's about three rockets every single day for 11 years. ()

But Hamas' rockets don't fall according to an orderly timetable. There may be quiet for three or four days or a week or two, and then out of the blue, the sirens wail. The heart stops, the adrenalin kicks in, and the mind focuses on finding the closest safe place to hide. On any one day 10 or 20 or 50

rockets can explode as adults and children race over and over and over to their shelters or somewhere.

Children from southern Israel explain that as they walk down the street they are always checking out which building near them might have a strong wall facing away from Gaza in case they are caught on an open street. Today, 1,000,000 Israelis live in the line of constant fire.

Natal, a trauma center for victims of terror and war, says that 70 percent of the children in one town are suffering from post-traumatic stress, while many have trouble functioning at all due to anxiety. Those who have the resources have moved away. The poor have no other place to go.

When Israel retaliated with a major offensive twice in the last five years, Israel was forced by U.N. members to agree to a ceasefire before she could dismantle the terrorist network meaning that the day will come when it will happen again.

Israelis are far from perfect. But after living here 45 years, and understanding the dynamics, I am convinced that Israeli soldiers are as moral as any army in the world. The well-known British journalist Melanie Phillips wrote: No other army in the world goes to such lengths to avoid civilian casualties. Yet no other army in the world is accused by western commentators as is the IDF, of targeting not just civilians but babies and children.

Who are the Gazans?

To trace how this irreconcilable situation evolved, let's take a cursory look at Gaza's modern saga. Britain conquered the Gaza strip along with the rest of the Holy Land seizing it from the 400-year rule of the Ottoman Empire in 1917. But only 31 years later, Britain pulled out of the Holy Land, totally disgusted with the unsolvable Arab-Jewish conflict, and left it for the UN to figure out what to do.

The U.N. decided to divide the tiny strip west of the Jordan River between Arabs and Jews. Jews said "yes." Arabs said "no."

War ensued with the Arab nations intent on destroying the new Jewish state. But the Arabs failed and Israel's poorly equipped and undertrained army succeeded in gaining another 60 percent of the land in dispute. The U.N. demanded a cease-fire. Lines were drawn where the armies stood. Suddenly, Gaza became Egyptian.

In 1948 Gaza was a backwater area of some 60,000 to 80,000 poverty-stricken peasants living in the most primitive of conditions. Unfortunately, Egypt had little interest in the 25 mile by 5-6 mile strip along the Mediterranean and did nothing to build up its infrastructure or its economy.

Egypt was more interested in wiping Israel off the map, and after blockading Israel's shipping in the Red Sea (an act of war) once again its President Gamal Abdel Nasser stated his plans to throw the Jews into the sea. War ensued again in 1967. This time, Gaza became Israeli, as Israel pushed all the Arab states that had invaded her back to their own capitals and conquered the entire area west of the Jordan River.

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