

Hamas ' No Good, Evil, Cynical, Illegal and Immoral Ploy

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Hamas is a Palestinian-Arab-Islamic terror group whose goal to destroy Israel using threats, fear, hostage taking, violence and murder as its currency.

Hamas took control of Gaza following a violent and bloody coup in 2007, killing many top Palestinian Authority/PLO leaders and expelling the rest. Since then, Hamas has used Gaza as a base from which to threaten Israel, launch tens of thousand of rockets at Israeli cities and take as many Israelis hostage as possible, dead and alive.

One of the hostages that Hamas has held since 2014 is Avraham "Avera" Mengistu. Mengistu is a 36-year-old Ethiopian Israeli man who crossed into Gaza on Sept. 7, 2014. Why any Israeli (or anyone else for that matter) would purposefully cross into Gaza is a mystery, but his family has said he is mentally unstable which certainly answers part of the question. He was detained and interrogated by Hamas, and has been missing since then.

This past week, in a show of brazen cynicism and lack of any human decency, Hamas released a video supposedly of Mengistu, which has been under scrutiny by Israeli security establishment, his family and throughout Israeli media. It's not clear if the video is really of Mengistu, or if it is, when it was filmed. As there has been no sign that he is alive for years, if it is confirmed to be him and recent, it would be the first sign in years that he is still alive.

The IDF Spokesman Brig. Gen. Ran Kochav said that authenticity

of the video is thought to be reasonably reliable, although the possibility that it is not actually Mengistu in the video cannot be ruled out. He explained that "The level of reliability of the video has been examined by the security establishment over the last few hours," he said, before adding that the IDF "will not conduct talks on the matter of the captured and missing citizens in the media. I will not refer specifically to the reliability and authenticity of the video. We have an estimate, and, let's put it this way, we estimate that the level of reliability is reasonable."

Commenting on the video, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that Israel has known Mengistu is alive for some time which, if true, means that the video tells us nothing new.

While "reasonable reliable" is the IDF and security establishment assessment, when the video was released, one of Mengistu's brothers stated that he and his family were not sure it was him. Of course, the family hopes it is him and that, if recent, it's a sign that he is alive and reasonably well.

However, it's been eight years since his family has seen him and it is impossible to know for sure whether it is really him or not, or if it is recent.

Causing doubt is the fact that if it were recent and Hamas wanted to document that, they would have had Mengistu refer to some current event, or even have him hold a current newspaper.

All this underscored that Hamas is a cynical, immoral and inhumane terror group, with no regard for human decency or suffering, not of Israelis and not of Palestinian Arabs in Gaza. Hamas has been holding hostages for years including the remains of two soldiers killed in combat, in gross violation of international law.

Since Mengistu was captured by Hamas, which could have returned him to Israel at any time, it has tried to extort

concessions from Israel for his return, that of an Arab Israeli citizen held hostage by Hamas Hisham al-Sayed and the remains of two Israeli soldiers, Oren Shaul and Hadar Goldin. Their model is the “successful” negotiation for the return of kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

Shalit was taken captive in June 2006, and held hostage for more than five years. Eventually Israel agreed to release 1,027 Palestinian Arab terrorists in exchange for Shalit, a deal that was celebrated by many for the government ensuring that Israel would always strive to return missing and kidnapped soldiers. But the deal was also widely criticized by many for letting any terrorists free, much less setting that “price” as a precedent.

Hamas is clearly trying to use the seating of a new Israeli government this month, and the induction of a new IDF Chief of Staff this week, as a way to play with the emotions of Israelis and try to leverage similar concessions.

Of course, if the video is real and Mengistu is alive, that’s important. However, it’s not only the very nature of deliberately taking citizens hostage and holding them as bargaining chips that is immoral and illegal. The whole idea of releasing a video that is deliberately cryptic and just plays on emotions is no less evil.

Unlike the video which may show new information, this Hamas tactic is not new. Not only do they happily hold Israeli citizens hostage, they hold millions of Gazans hostage as well. Nobody can leave Gaza without going through a Hamas checkpoint and getting “approval” to do so, not even for medical care in Israel.

Hamas uses Gaza’s population as a human shield for it’s terror operations, building infrastructure, hiding weapons, sheltering terror leaders, firing rockets, all from the back yards or under the feet of average Palestinian Arabs in Gaza.

Schools, hospitals and mosques are the preferred real estate behind which Hamas openly hides its operations, knowing that Israel will not strike the heart of civilian areas that risk massive collateral death and damage, all while blaming Israel for doing exactly that.

The UN, Red Cross and other international humanitarian and diplomatic groups have been impotent to not caring about Hamas illegally holding Israeli hostages, or the well being of Palestinian Arabs in Gaza unless Israel can be blamed for their suffering.

The time has come to hold Hamas accountable, to cease the weapons and funding from Iran and other Arab states, and free Gaza from the clutches of the terrorists who hold millions of Arabs hostage, along with Israelis like Avera Mengistu. {eo}

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