

Is Israel's Response to Hamas Disproportionate?

While waiting to board my recent flight to the U.S., I struck up a conversation with a man on line next to me about his experiences in Israel, elated at recounting the experiences of his first trip here. He expressed regret that it took this long to get to Israel (he was probably five to 10 years older than me), and that he was eager to come back.

While discussing his trip, he also expressed his total sense of safety albeit during the war in which we are in the midst. He was proud that he chose to continue with his trip "when so many others were canceling" theirs. He observed how in watching the international networks in his hotels recounting the news, it was clear "even to" him that the gap between what they were reporting and the facts on the ground was often as different as night and day.

We each related suffering through a few instances of air-raid sirens, where we were and the circumstances of these, and I shared how a rocket from Gazan terrorists landed 300 to 400 meters from my house, leaving a black plume of smoke I had never seen before, preceded by two explosions that rattled my house, louder than the largest clap of thunder I had ever heard.

He wondered if this was one that the Iron Dome anti-missile system missed. I told him that was a question we wondered too, with a rocket landing a few hundred meters from my house more than a little close to home. When I shared with him that the Iron Dome is built to calculate where such rockets will land so as not to waste a terribly expensive counter charge to shoot down ones that will land in open spaces and not likely to hit populated area, he didn't know this. Either way, we agreed, this was too close for comfort.

I then shared something that met with an interesting response, and that's where the fun began.

While admiring the ingenuity to build a short-range missile-defense system that protects Israeli population centers and civilians, while terrorists in Gaza use their civilian populations to protect their missile and rocket stashes and launching sites, I said that the Iron Dome is also keeping the Palestinian Arab population safe as well.

"How?" he asked.

"Because if we didn't value life as we do, and invest the ridiculous amount of money that we do to protect our population, many of the thousands of rockets that have been fired at Israel would have hit their targets, and Israel would have had to go in with an iron fist, and the casualties would be much worse."

At this point, a woman carrying a reddish European passport standing next to him interjected that she disagreed with me. Ms. Europe quietly but firmly pointed out that what Israel has been doing in Gaza is a disproportionate response.

That was my cue to tell her what the reality is.

I observed that she clearly was not Jewish and had no idea what it's like to be targeted and victimized in "enlightened Europe" for one's religion.

I added that it was unacceptable to me that it was acceptable to her that Jews are targeted as we are, and that her only concern is for Israel's alleged disproportionate response. I noted that if Israel had wanted to have a disproportionate response, hundreds of thousands would be dead, because Israel certainly had the fire power, but Israel goes out of its way to limit civilian casualties, while Hamas and other terrorists go out of their way to inflict these.

I told her that Israel protects Arab civilians and provides ample time for them to get out of harm's way, broadcasting on radio and TV, dropping leaflets in Arabic to encourage people who would be in harm's way to leave, calling the homes of residents of buildings in neighborhoods that were targeted for housing Hamas terrorist leaders and the weapons they hide in their homes, schools, mosques, etc.

She countered, as if it were Israel's fault, that "they have nowhere to go," and doubting the veracity of what I was saying as if it were lies and propaganda. I told her, first of all, that Hamas spokespeople have actually gone on TV to tell their people in Gaza not to pay attention to the Israeli broadcasts and appeals to leave. Even that didn't seem to convince her. Or, more likely, she just didn't care. The facts are just too inconvenient for her narrative.

As for where they have to go, I said of course they can leave and go to areas not being attacked as told by the IDF, and maybe the U.N. and other Arab and European countries that have dumped so many billions of dollars into sustaining them in squalor would step up and protect them. I added that they could go to the bomb shelters that the terrorists built for them, just like we in Israel have.

"Oh yeah," I added. "The terrorist stole all the concrete to build themselves bunkers, storage for their weapons, and tunnels under Israeli territory from which to contact brazen terrorist attacks on us."

She countered that she had just come from a conference at Tel Aviv University as if to give herself some academic or other legitimacy to her views, and repeated through the conversation that she is entitled to her opinion.

Yes, I agreed. You're entitled to your opinion. But you are not entitled to make up facts.

I asked, how many people do we need to lose in your eyes for

Israel's response not to be "disproportionate?" 300? 500? 1,000? 5,000? If a Hamas rocket hit the special-education kindergarten where my daughter works, or maybe 10 targets like these, does that then make things equal and OK with you?"

Then I let out a salvo of arguments almost as great as the salvos of repeated rocket attacks against Israel. Bombarding her with facts and questions she shouldn't answer.

"Would you suggest we put our children and women in harm's way as human shields, the real crime against humanity, like they do? That it's not OK for us to protect ourselves?"

"And what about the nearly 300 victims of the civilian airplane that pro-Russian forces shot down? Is that not a real massacre? Where's your righteous indignation for those victims? Or what about in Syria where estimates are more than 150,000 have been massacred in their civil war. Where's your concern for these people? Or maybe it doesn't matter because these are not cases of Arabs being killed by Israelis."

Her discomfort was evident to all. One man next to me put his hand on my shoulder as if to give me support. Clearly I was in the center ring, especially because there's nothing better to do while waiting on line to board an airplane.

She kept muttering that she as entitled to her opinion.

It made her even more uncomfortable that rather than being one of the butchers—someone engaged in massacring others or supporting that—I told her that I weep for innocent Arab children living in fear, like my own children, and that the loss of one civilian life, especially a child, is a tragedy. Tellingly, Ms. Europe had no caring response for my children or any Israeli child.

This, of course, is the crux of her farce. Those who criticize Israel for such alleged "disproportionate responses" or a massacre and care nothing for real massacres that take place

around the rest of the world, base their “opinion” on a foundation of anti-Semitism, plain and simple. Reality just complicates that. And based on that worldview, it’s quite OK for Israelis to be attacked and have to defend themselves. In order to make our response at all justifiable, we need to have an equal number of deaths as the enemies who want to kill us.

I didn’t think of it until afterward, but wish I had and said it to her face: In the past, in your Europe, Jews were systematically murdered, tortured, humiliated and victims of genocide, particularly among enlightened people such as you, Ms. Europe. But we don’t do that anymore. We have our state, and it doesn’t matter what the world thinks and what people like you believe. We do not go like sheep to the slaughter anymore, and anyone who tries, will suffer the consequences. Period.

As I was sitting in the airport lounge before this encounter, the air raid siren app on my iPad sounded, indicating a warning in Rishon Le Zion, the city where my daughter lives and works. I texted her to be sure she was OK. She wrote back that she was fine, that just after she got off the bus to go to work is when the siren went off. I envisioned her running for cover or lying flat on the street somewhere, waiting a few minutes, and then went on to care for the special-needs 5-year-olds in her charge, as if that’s all perfectly normal. It’s not.

On the plane, a woman came up to me and thanked me for standing up for Israel. It made me feel good. But, as Ms. Europe sat a row behind me, it made me realize that people who have opinions to which they are entitled, and which are gross and wrong, are all among us. The reality needs to be shared, widely and passionately.

Killing Jews because we are Jews, or trying to do so, is not and never will be OK. I am grateful to be privileged to live in a state and era where we have an army to defend us and an

Iron Dome that keeps our children, and our neighbors' children, safe.

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