

Israel: A Not So Happy New Year

Celebrations will be heard for miles this week, echoing off the Samaritan mountains, and in cities and villages for miles away. There will be music, dancing, hugs and kisses, but no alcohol because it's forbidden by Islam.

No, the celebrations will not be for the New Year, but for another cycle of Israel's releasing convicted Arab terrorists, the third time in 2013.

Celebrations will no doubt also include speeches blaming Israel for all their problems, replete with the lies and hate that are infused throughout Palestinian Arab society, and celebrating the returned murderers and their crimes as national heroes. In Ramallah, it will be the closest to a ticker tape parade that Americans use to honor their heroes, but with a perverse, quite gross, and even obscene choice of heroes.

In Israel, this latest round of terrorists being released, all in order to coax the Palestinian Arab leadership to maintain peace talks, is met with sadness, frustration, grief, opening of old wounds, and protests. As Israel marks the New Year, for thousands it will be anything but happy. While the released terrorists, and their crimes, are celebrated in Palestinian society, in Israel, family and friends of their victims will grieve. It's important to note who some of the terrorists victims are, at least so that the human tragedy is not lost:

Yosef Farhan

Sara Sharon

Yoram Cohen

Shlomo Yehiya

Haim Mizrahi

Yosi Hayun

Shai Shoker

Ronnie Levy

Yosef Zandani

Yigal Shaham

Binyamin Meisner

Steven Frederick Rosenfeld

Isaac Rotenberg

Yeshayahu Deutsch

Baruch Yaacov Heisler

Simcha Levy

Moshe Beker

Moris Eisenstatt

Amnon Pomeranz

Avraham Kinstler

Hayim Weizman

Hayim Mizrahi

Annie Ley

Zalman Shlein

Avraham Cohen

Menahem Dadon

Israel Tennenbaum

Reuven David

Isaac Rotenburg

Yehoshua Deutch

Baruch Heizler

Simcha Levi

Ian Sean Feinberg

Moshe Beker

Avraham Kinstler

David Dedi

Chaim Weizman

Zalman Shlein

Shmuel Geresh

This is only a partial list of the victims who were murdered. They were mothers, fathers, grandparents, children, brothers, and sisters. Some were Holocaust survivors living their golden years in the Jewish homeland after surviving unspeakable horrors as young people. Some were young people in the prime of their lives.

In addition to those murdered, the terrorists were also responsible for dozens more injured, some gravely. Not all were Israeli. One French tourist in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Among those released, in some cases multiple terrorists were arrested and convicted of the same crimes. Many of the murders took place in the terrorists' place of work, often with their Jewish Israeli employers and co-workers as the victims. While

each is reprehensible, some of the murders were particularly gruesome.

Not all Palestinian Arabs will be celebrating however. But they also won't be able to mourn and grieve, and certainly not protest in public, as Israelis do. Many of the released terrorists were responsible for the murder of dozens of other Arabs who they believed to be cooperating with Israel, a thuggish societal phenomenon worth a story in and of itself.

But despite that they were not Israelis or Jews, and whether they did in fact work with Israeli authorities or not, they were human beings all the same. Their murders were vile and evil, and the terrorists who were found guilty of these murders used them to instill terror among other Arabs as well.

Yet, it's Israeli Jews who are expected to pay the highest price. I was in the U.S. during the release of the first group of terrorists and asked by journalists what I thought. In addition to sharing the grief of those whose loved ones were maimed and murdered, my main response was that this was especially perverse as we are freeing terrorists who actually murdered our fellow citizens, not for peace (which as painful as it is I could make the case for), but to coax those who claim they want their own state to negotiate with us. If they really wanted a state, it seems that they would do everything possible to negotiate in any way, and any place, possible.

It says a lot about the nature of the society that wants to be an independent state that needs to extort Israel to release terrorists, who they celebrate. It raises as many questions as it does hairs on the back of my neck about how sickening this all is.

Equally sickening is that the world gobbles up the Palestinian Arab lie that Israel is the obstacle to peace, and continues to expect Israel to give, and give, and give some more. I know this is rhetorical, but I wonder if the U.S. were able to

capture and imprison terrorists responsible for the murder of Americans in Benghazi, Afghanistan, Germany, on airplanes and cruise ships, and even on American soil, would it let itself be extorted in any way at all to releasing the terrorists? Even President Obama who vowed to close Guantanamo has had to realize that it's just not possible.

Rubbing salt in the wounds, John Kerry, who is arm-twisting on behalf of the Obama administration, is scheduled back in Israel again as Israel in the wake of releasing the latest group of terrorists. To be an honest broker, he will have to be perceived as pressuring both sides, but the simple plain fact is that until the Arabs recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, in peace and security, there cannot be peace.

The ball is squarely in their court. Obama and Kerry would be smart to realize this, and give the Arabs a harsh wake up call that their wish to have a separate state has an expiration date, and that the world will not support and finance it without their taking responsibility for their future, in peace and without threatening Israel.

Send your message to Washington that strengthens Israel, that the U.S. should not pressure Israel to make dangerous concessions, by contacting the White House 202-456-1111, president@, and @, and to your senate and congressional representatives as well.

And of course, please pray for Israel, for the victims, and the families of the victims.

Jonathan Feldstein is the director of Heart to Heart, a unique virtual blood donation program to bless Israel and save lives in Israel. Born and educated in the U.S., Feldstein emigrated to Israel in 2004. He is married and the father of six. Throughout his life and career, he has been blessed by the calling to fellowship with Christian supporters of Israel and

shares experiences of living as an Orthodox Jew in Israel. He writes a column for Charisma's Standing With Israel. You can contact Jonathan at firstpersonisrael@.