

# Israelis Miraculously Uniting Against Inhumane Enemy

Since the brutal horrifying attack by the Iranian-backed Islamist terror organization Hamas on Saturday, more than 1,200 Israelis have been killed, most of whom were civilians murdered in cold blood.

Bodies continue to be found. Most recently, 40 babies. Some with their heads chopped off. It's inhuman. There are no words.

More Jews were murdered here in one day than the whole first week of the Yom Kippur War, another surprise attack 50 years ago this week. It is more Jews murdered on one day since the Holocaust. While we have had our share of wars and operations in the decades I am living in Israel, I don't remember anything that felt so much like the all-out war that it is, so gruesome.

Not in the 2006 Second Lebanon War, nor the 2014 month-long operation in Gaza. There are so many dead that officials are asking for help digging graves.

Despite everything, the country is united and remains strong. Volunteerism is high. Friends and neighbors, and my own relatives, are stepping in at hospitals, community centers and even in local markets. In some cases, where Palestinian Arabs have been the employees, they are not working now—and may never again.

So, volunteers are abundant, stocking shelves, helping patients, supporting one another. In other cases, volunteers are making up for the 300,000 who were called up into reserves. Astoundingly, of 300,000 called up, 360,000 showed up. Many more Israelis are struggling to find flights home to join their units. There was even reportedly a man standing at

the El Al counter in the US, paying for the ticket for any Israeli coming home to serve in the army.

It feels like a war because roads are comparatively empty. People are staying close to home to be with family, and just in case of an air raid siren. Lost in the gruesomeness of the inhuman attacks and slaughter, Hamas continues to fire rockets by the thousands.

Stores in malls are closed. Jerusalem's central bus station is operating, but like "a ghost town" according to friends.

Coming just after a month of holidays, scores of weddings have been postponed this week, or downsized to smaller at-home events with just immediate relatives. Some of the grooms are getting permission to get out of the army, only to go back after the ceremony.

The other day I went to the grocery store, knowing that things like milk, eggs, fresh chicken and even bottled water are in limited supply. My daughter asked me to pick up some things for her. Totally normal: diapers, wipes, cereal, cheese. Basics. She also asked me to pick up some things for her good friend. Of course. No problem. I didn't think twice.

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But then I did. I realized that it was not just that I was saving them a trip to the store, but that they were both home alone, both their husbands called up into the army. Both husbands leaving a wife and three children behind. Who knows for how long. A woman in my building is home alone with her four children. We're all looking out for one another.

In many families, adult children compete to be able to use the car. We have two so there's rarely a time that one of our six kids or their spouses is not using one of the cars. Now it's

harder because when my son-in-law was called up on Saturday, since it was Shabbat and there was no public transportation, we lent him one of our cars to go to war, as if he were just going to run errands.

Many friends who have work overseas are struggling with the conflict of whether to leave or not to leave Israel at this time, being away from their families, not knowing what is coming, but intuitively that things will likely get worse before they get better. Should they leave, not knowing when they will get back? Should I go on my planned book launch tour next month?

I have learned how easily one can suffer from PTSD. The sounds breaking the silence of our Shabbat, the day of rest, from the air raid sirens to cars driving on a day when usually there's no traffic, were jarring. But there's more. The other morning we woke up to heavy rain and thunder. The thunder was so loud that it sounded like explosions. Many were shaken.

I was at friends house and pointed out the air raid siren in the distance, and we should get ready to go to the bomb shelter. They corrected me that it was just the whining of their washing machine ending a cycle.

Gusts of wind through an open window can sound like an incoming rocket, or the "boom" of one landing in the distance. And then there was the morning where for 10-15 minutes there were thunderous roars of fighter planes overhead, sounding like they were right above us. As I write now, I hear that in the distance.

Israel's military response has been strong, but my sense is it's going to be stronger. We'll likely be sending in ground troops and artillery, putting our soldiers' lives at risk so as not to risk killing Palestinian Arab civilians with air strikes. This is all the more complicated because of the 100-plus hostages that Hamas disgustingly kidnapped, threatens to

execute, and which could happen for the “revenge” of trying to rescue them.

As much as all the videos of the massacre of Israelis that the Islamic terrorists brazenly filmed and released all over social media are vulgar, showing a lack of any ethics or civility, there are few more vulgar than the kidnapping of civilian hostages, including young children and elderly women. The Hebrew for kidnapped is *Hatufim*, which is also the name of a once popular TV show here, depicting something unimaginable.

Until now.

As good as Israeli intelligence is, despite clear failures this week, as much as there is no list of all the hostages from the terrorists, they surely are not all in the same place, making both fighting against the terrorists, and hopes to rescue them, all the more challenging. They literally have knives at their necks.

I will be hosting a webinar, “Fighting an Ethical War Against an Unethical Enemy” on Oct. 12 at 3:00pm Eastern, discussing many of the pains that we have suffered, and challenges that lie ahead. {eo}

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