

When Will Hamas Learn Terrorism Doesn't Pay?

The 25-mile strip of land, in-between the Mediterranean Sea and Israel's southwest border, known as the Gaza Strip, has been home to over 10,000 rockets launched at Israel since 2006 and, in return, has suffered billions of dollars of damage.

As a result of the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords, the territory was designated to be a part of a Palestinian State under the same Palestinian Authority that governs the West Bank. Hamas, however, won local elections in 2006, and subsequently kicked the Palestinian Authority out of Gaza in 2007. They have been ruling the area Hamas is a jihadist, Muslim Brotherhood organization that is labeled a terrorist organization by the United States, European Union, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, Japan, and Egypt.

Their charter calls for the destruction of Israel, and their spokespersons and clerics regularly espouse their commitment to this goal.

The primary reason that Hamas rules Gaza is not to provide a better life for its inhabitants, but to have a base from where they can build the military capability to destroy Israel. If their intentions were otherwise, Hamas would have used the \$100 million worth of cement and construction materials they received to build much needed housing for its ballooning population. Instead, Hamas chose to build an underground network of tunnels designed to deliver hundreds of terrorists inside Israel. Some of the tunnels were large enough for trucks to drive through them, and many were equipped with supplies for sedating and transporting kidnapped Israelis.

In fact, a major terrorist attack was being planned for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, on September 25. If Israel had

not entered Gaza and discovered these plans, over 200 terrorists would have sneaked into Israel through the tunnels intent on killing thousands of Israeli civilians and kidnapping others.

Hamas also demonstrated callous disregard for their people, allowing some 160 children who had been used for child-labor to die while building the tunnels and by executing some 17 men who had overseen the building of the tunnels so they could not provide intelligence to Israel. Life has little meaning to Hamas fighters who glorify death in the cause of Jihad.

Complicity of the UN

With inhabitants numbering around million people, Gaza is an overcrowded area with one of the highest population growth rates in the world. Most of the inhabitants are considered refugees by the United Nations, which provides them with schools, sustenance, hospitals and the like. Hamas does provide some social services, but the presence of the UN relieves Hamas of fighters who glorify death in the cause of Jihad.

Unfortunately, the U.N. also perpetuates the sorry state of affairs in Gaza. First, they refuse to treat Palestinian refugees like all other refugees, and provide for their resettlement, thereby keeping Palestinian refugees in an ongoing state of limbo. In addition, Palestinian refugees are the only refugee group whose children and grandchildren are also awarded refugee status.

So, while there are only 30,000 original refugees from 1948 alive today, the UN is caring for some 5 million Palestinians, keeping many in "refugee camps" rather than providing for their absorption into host countries.

Also, the U.N. in Gaza cooperates so fully with the Hamas government that at times the lines are blurred between the two. For example, the U.N. Development Program office in Gaza

allowed "non-U.N. employees," without any paper trail, to oversee the procurement and use of the concrete that was then used to build Hamas tunnels. When rockets were found in U.N. schools, they were conveniently turned back over to Hamas, and the U.N. published as fact the civilian casualty figures provided by Hamas.

Not only did Hamas control reports of civilian casualties, they controlled the foreign press itself! Now that journalists are safely outside of Gaza, some are complaining that Hamas threatened and prevented them from giving an objective report on the ground. So, they are putting footage on YouTube that proves Hamas fired rockets next to hotels and U.N. buildings, and that Hamas operatives wore civilian clothing so their casualties were counted as civilian.

There has been nary a word out of the U.N. denouncing any of this.

Israel's Military Operation

Hamas was behind the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens in June, and then launched some 200 missiles aimed at Israeli population centers, causing Israel to take military action to stop the rockets, destroy the tunnels, and restore calm. Over the course of the month-long operation Hamas fired over 3,000 rockets at Israel endangering the lives of 6 million civilians.

Israel uncovered over 30 tunnels and destroyed about half of Hamas' missile stockpiles that were found in homes, mosques and schools. Hamas alleges that out of the 1,800 people killed over 70 percent of them were civilians, but Israel says that some 900 combatants were killed while firing on Israeli troops in Gaza.

During Operation Protective Edge, Israel repeatedly stated that the people of Gaza were not their enemy. They went out of their way to warn the inhabitants of buildings and

neighborhoods with leaflets, text messages, telephone calls, and a “knock” on the building with an empty shell before they would fire at a target. Many missions were also aborted because civilians were seen in the vicinity.

The truth is, had Israel not gone to such lengths to save the lives of civilians, urban warfare in a city as densely populated as Gaza City would have resulted in tens of thousands of deaths. Nevertheless, the images of dead children broadcast on both TV and social media would drown out any attempts by the spokespersons of the Israeli government to explain their regard for civilian lives.

Everyone involved has paid a hefty price because of the terrorist regime ruling Gaza. While Hamas suffered a military defeat; the people of Gaza lost homes, businesses, and a future; and Israel’s reputation suffered greatly in the public arena of images vs. words. Unless the West places conditions on their funding—conditions like demilitarization of Gaza, an end of Hamas rule, and education to prepare the people for peaceful coexistence with Israel—it will happen all over again sometime in the future.

***Susan Michael** is U.S. Director of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. Visit them online at , creator of .*