



Commentary...

End the Cant and Hypocrisy By Isi Leibler

Anyone seeking a case study of the forces of good facing evil incarnate would not find a better template than our current confrontation with Hamas. And yet, having for years endured bias and the application of double standards from the amoral international community, we are pained that much of the global media continues relating to us in a malevolent and hypocritical manner. In lieu of being commended for defending ourselves against terrorists, we are portrayed as the heartless killers while the barbarians committed to murdering us are depicted as innocent victims.

Self-styled liberals refuse to face the brutal truth that that our Hamas neighbors have created a criminal society based on death and destruction. Like the Nazis, Hamas is committed to destroying the Jewish people and willing to transform its own citizens into martyrs to promote this goal. "A Palestinian who kills one Jew will be rewarded as if he killed 30 million," proclaimed Hamas legislator Fathi Hamad at a press conference. Whereas we grieve over the death of fellow Israelis and innocent Palestinians, Hamas celebrates the murder of both - the first as "apes and pigs," the latter as prized martyrs of Allah whom they gleefully exploit for propaganda purposes.

An independent state of Palestine is not Hamas's primary goal. Its charter unequivocally prioritizes the destruction of the Jewish state and killing as many Jews as possible: "The annihilation of the Jews in Palestine is one of the most splendid blessings for Palestine," said Palestinian cleric Muhsen Abu Ita recently on Al Aksa TV. Only last week on Hamas TV, masked women clad in explosive belts and holding rifles vowed to become "martyrs" and blow themselves up among the "apes and pigs." From kindergarten, their children are brainwashed to sanctify their lives by becoming martyrs to the cause of killing the hated Jews.

In our desperate quest for peace, we elected successive governments which tried to achieve "peace in our time" by appeasing these fanatical terrorists - even unilaterally dismantling Jewish settlements which were subsequently transformed into launching pads for intensified missile attacks on our civilians.

During the past year, our government entered into a truce with Hamas despite repeated proclamations by its leaders that they accepted a cease-fire only to regroup and obtain more sophisticated weapons from Iran to be employed at a time of their choosing. Even that "truce" was never honored and Hamas continued targeting Israelis.

When Hamas formally abrogated the "period of calm" and began intensifying missile attacks, Israel finally responded militarily. Despite unprecedented efforts to minimize civilian casualties, even warning Palestinian noncombatants in advance of an attack, civilian loss of life in war is inevitable. However, had the IDF, with its enormous firepower, been targeting civilians as the biased media alleges, tens of thousands would have fallen. Besides, in the midst of hostilities, would the truckloads of humanitarian aid to Gaza have been approved?

Most casualties could have been avoided had Hamas not deliberately located its missile launchers, weapons factories and arms caches in densely populated residential areas, schools, mosques, hospitals and homes, cynically utilizing women and children as human shields. Hamas representative Fathi Hamad openly told Al-Aksa TV: "Palestinians formed human shields of women, children, the elderly and the mujahedeen in order to challenge the Zionist bombing machine. It was as if they were saying to the Zionist enemy: We desire death like you desire life." Not surprisingly, those human rights

ISRAEL NEWS

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commemoration of the fourth yarzeit for
משה בועז ז"ל בן חיים יוסף
Boaz Zeifman z"l

בס"ד groups continuously castigating Israel refuse to concede that such behavior would qualify as war crimes under international law.

No country whose citizens are continuously under missile attack from its neighbor would match the restraint displayed by Israel. I take no pride in this because I believe that the government's failure to respond earlier was unconscionable. It emboldened Hamas terrorists, accustomed the world

to accepting that as long as many people were not killed, launching missiles against Israel was "tolerable" and effectively eliminated our deterrent capability. Moreover it doomed close to a million citizens in the South to becoming refugees in their own land as they took refuge from missile attacks which, by any benchmark, were acts of war.

Now, in a rare display of unity so far including even the most dovish Knesset parties, Israelis have affirmed that the outcome of this conflict must ensure that their citizens will never again be targeted by missiles. An imposed unilateral cease-fire with Hamas that fails to implement this would be akin to the US and its allies consummating an unconditional truce with a victorious Taliban in Afghanistan.

That is why international public opinion is so important. If the victims who defend themselves by killing Hamas terrorists and the perpetrators who target and kill innocent civilians are viewed as morally equivalent, that would represent a clear victory for the global jihadists.

Regrettably, there are sectors of the international community who once again are burying their heads. While the [Canada,] United States, Germany, the Czech Republic and Australia hold Hamas responsible, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned Israel for invading Gaza and employing "disproportionate" force and harming civilians.

Other Europeans, led by the retiring head of the European Union, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, also accused Israel of responding in a disproportionate manner. One can only speculate how Sarkozy would have reacted had neighboring Belgium been launching thousands of missiles targeting French civilians. Or the Russians, whose response to the Chechnya uprising and mauling of Georgia hardly qualifies them to preach to anyone about proportionality.

Hamas is not a terrorist splinter group. It is the controlling authority in Gaza and determines what happens. Were it to curtail missile attacks and come to terms with the existence of a Jewish state, a cease-fire would instantaneously come into effect. Until then, it is responsible for every single Palestinian casualty.

Besides, since when is proportionality determined as tit for tat? And how does that apply to an entity which proclaims that its objective is to destroy the Jewish state? Would the inadvertent death of noncombatants become "more justifiable" if only more targeted Israelis were killed? Does Israel have to experience a mega massacre before implementing deterrence? What sort of sick thinking is this? As Barack Obama said in June when he visited Sderot, "If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I would do everything to stop that, and would expect Israel to do the same thing."

Today, as never before, we need the international community to act in a responsible manner. We therefore appeal to our friends and people of goodwill everywhere. Raise your voices now and support our struggle to overcome terrorism. Hamas is not merely another brand of Taliban. It is also the surrogate of Iran. If Western governments appease this criminal organization at the expense of the security of Israel, they strengthen the forces of global jihad, signal moderate Muslims that it is futile to resist the fanatics and expose citizens in their own capitals to increased bombing attacks. (Jerusalem Post Jan 6)

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Iran's Gazan Diversion? By Caroline Glick

Since the IDF commenced its ground operations in Gaza on Saturday night, I have been hungrily eyeing my hat.

On Friday I argued that the Olmert-Livni-Barak government is following the same defeatist strategy in Gaza today that the Olmert-Livni-Peretz government followed in Lebanon two and a half years ago. In 2006, the government supported a cease-fire that empowered outside actors - in that case the UN and Europe - to enforce an arms embargo against Hizbullah and to act as Israel's surrogate in preventing Hizbullah from reasserting control over South Lebanon.

In the event, as government critics like myself warned at the time, these outside actors have done nothing of the sort. The European commanded UNIFIL force in Lebanon has instead acted as a shield defending Hizbullah from Israel. Under UNIFIL's blind eye, Iran and Syria have tripled the size of Hizbullah's missile arsenal. And Hizbullah has taken full control over some 130 villages along the border.

In a similar fashion, today the government is insisting on the establishment of an international monitoring force, comprised perhaps of Egyptian, Israeli, Fatah-affiliated Palestinian, American and European officials that will monitor Gaza's border with Egypt and somehow prevent weapons smuggling. Like the cease-fire deal in Lebanon, this plan does not foresee the toppling of the Hamas regime in Gaza or the destruction of its military capacity. It ignores the fact that similar, already existing, theoretically friendly monitoring forces - like the US-commanded Multi-National Force Observers in the Sinai - have done nothing to prevent or even keep tabs on weapons transfers to Hamas.

STILL, IN spite of the government's continued diplomatic incompetence, there are reasons to think that Israel may emerge the perceived victor in the current campaign against Hamas (and I will be forced to eat my hat). The first is that Gaza is relatively easier to control as a battle space than Lebanon. Unlike the situation in Lebanon, IDF forces in Gaza have the ability to isolate Hamas from all outside assistance. The IDF's current siege of Gaza City, its control over northern Gaza, its naval quarantine of the coast and its bombardment and isolation of the border zone with Egypt could cause Hamas to sue for a cease-fire on less than victorious terms.

Indeed, this may already be happening. Hamas's leaders are reportedly hiding in hospitals - cynically using the sick as human shields. And on Monday morning, Hamas's leadership in Damascus sent representatives to their new arch-enemy Egypt to begin discussing cease-fire terms. Taken together, these moves could indicate that Hamas is collapsing. But they could also indicate that Hamas is opting to fight another day while assuming that Israel will agree to let it do so.

The second reason that it is possible that Hamas may be defeated is because much to everyone's surprise, Iran may have decided to let Hamas lose. Here it is important to note that the war today, like the war in 2006, is a war between Israel and Iran. Like Hizbullah, Hamas is an Iranian proxy. And just as was the case in 2006, Iran was instrumental in inciting the current war.

Iran prepared Hamas for this war. It used Hamas's six-month cease-fire with Israel to double both the range and the size of Hamas's missile arsenal. It trained Hamas's 20,000-man army for this war. And as the six months drew to a close, Iran incited Hamas to attack.

So too, in 2006, Iran incited Hamas to attack Israel. That war, now known as the Second Lebanon War, was actually a two-front war that began in Gaza. Ordered by Iran, it was Hamas that started the war when its forces (together with allied forces in Fatah), attacked the IDF position at Kerem Shalom on June 25, 2006 and kidnapped Cpl. Gilad Schalit. Israel fought a limited war against Iran's Palestinian proxies in Gaza for 17 days before the country's attention moved to the North after Hizbullah attacked an IDF position along the border and abducted Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser.

Israel's leaders today warn against a possible Hizbullah attack. In the North, municipalities are readying bomb shelters and air raid sirens ahead of such a possibility. Most of the IDF reservists called up over the weekend are being sent to the North ahead of a possible Hizbullah attack.

But in contrast to the situation in 2006, today Iran seems to have little interest in expanding the war and so saving Hamas from military defeat and humiliation. Speaking on Hizbullah's Al Manar television network on Sunday, Saeed Jalili, the head of Iran's National Security Council, its chief nuclear negotiator and a close advisor to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, essentially told Hamas that it is on its own.

In his words, "We believe that the great popular solidarity with the Palestinian people as expressed all over the world should reflect on the will of the Arab and Islamic countries and other countries that have an independent will so that these will move in a concerted, cooperative, and cohesive manner to draft a collective initiative that can achieve two main things as an inevitable first step. These are putting an immediate end to aggression and second breaking the siege and quickly securing humanitarian aid to the people of

Gaza."

In other words, Iran's response to its great enemy's the war against its proxy is to suggest forming a commission.

There are many possible explanations for Iran's actions. First there is the fact that war is an expensive proposition and Iran today is in trouble on that score. In the summer of 2006, oil cost nearly \$80 a barrel. Today it is being traded at \$46 a barrel. Iran revised its 2009 budget downward on Monday based on the assumption that oil will average \$37 a barrel in 2009.

Over the past several months, Iran has been begging OPEC to cut back supply quotas to jack up the price of oil. But, perhaps in the interest of weakening Iran, Saudi Arabia has consistently refused Iran's requests. To date, OPEC's cutbacks in supply have been far too small to offset the decrease in demand. And the loss of billions in oil revenues may simply have priced Iran out of running a two-front terror war.

Then too, Washington-based Iran expert Michael Ledeen from the Foundation for Defense of Democracies argued on Monday in his blog at Pajamas Media website that Iran's apparent decision to sit this war out may well be the result of the regime's weakness. Its recent crackdown on dissidents - with the execution of nine people on Christmas Day - and the unleashing of regime supporters in riots against the Egyptian, Jordanian, Saudi, Turkish and French embassies as well as the home of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi lends to the conclusion that the regime is worried about its own survival. As Ledeen notes Teheran may view another expensive terror war as a spark which could incite a popular revolution or simply destabilize the country ahead of June's scheduled presidential elections.

THERE IS also the possibility that Iran simply miscalculated. It believed that ahead of Israel's February 10 elections, the lame-duck Olmert-Livni-Barak government, which was already traumatized by the 2006 war, would opt not to fight. This would have been a reasonable assumption.

After all, in spite of Israel's sure knowledge last summer that Hamas and Iran would use a cease-fire with Israel to increase the size of Hamas's missile arsenal and expand the range of its projectiles while building up its forces, the Olmert-Livni-Barak government agreed to the cease-fire. And then, when Hamas announced that it would not extend the cease-fire past its December 19 deadline, Defense Minister Ehud Barak sent emissaries to Egypt to conduct "indirect" negotiations with Hamas in which Israel essentially begged the terror group to reconsider.

But then Israel responded with great force and Iran was left to make a decision. And for the moment at least, it appears that Iran has decided to let Hamas go down. As far as Iran is concerned, even a Hamas defeat is not a terrible option. This view is likely encouraged by Israel's current suggested cease-fire. After all, international monitors stationed along Gaza's borders will not serve as an impediment to future Iranian moves to rebuild Hamas.

ALAS, THERE is another possible explanation for Iran's apparent decision to abandon a vassal it incited to open a war. On Sunday, Iranian analyst Amir Taheri reported the conclusions of a bipartisan French parliamentary report on the status of Iran's nuclear program in Asharq Alawsat. The report which was submitted to French President Nicolas Sarkozy late last month concluded that unless something changes, Iran will have passed the nuclear threshold by the end of 2009 and will become a nuclear power no later than 2011. The report is notable because it is based entirely on open-sourced material whose accuracy has been acknowledged by the Iranian regime.

The report asserts that this year will be the world's final opportunity to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. And, as Taheri hints strongly, the only way of doing that effectively is by attacking Iran's nuclear installations.

In light of this new report, which contradicts earlier US intelligence assessments that claimed it would be years before Iran is able to build nuclear weapons, it is possible that Iran ordered the current war in Gaza for the same reason it launched its war in 2006: to divert international attention away from its nuclear program.

It is possible that Iran prefers to run down US President George W. Bush's last two weeks in office with the White House and the rest of the world focused on Gaza, than risk the chance that during these two weeks, the White House (or Israel) might read the French parliament's report and decide to do something about it.

So too, its apparent decision not to have Hizbullah join in this round of fighting might have more to do with Iran's desire to preserve its Lebanese delivery systems for any nuclear devices than its desire to save pennies in a tight economy.

And if this is the case, then even if Israel beats Hamas (and I eat my hat), we could still lose the larger war by again having allowed Iran to get us to take our eyes away from the prize. (Jerusalem Post Jan 5)

The Gaza War Follows Us By Rachel Sapirstein

We have 45 seconds from the time the missile leaves Gaza and reaches us. The tracking system lets each area know that a rocket is due to land in its vicinity. Then the siren wails. It may not land on your doorstep or penetrate your roof, but it is somewhere around.

I know all of this because we got notices from the Home Front Command, the regional council and our own Neveh Dekalim council. The first two were slipped under our door; the latter, via e-mail.

Today we even were visited by the army, which has taken over the community center. Reserve soldiers, both English speakers, knocked on our door, introduced themselves and asked me how I was feeling and could they come in for a chat about security.

My first reaction was to say, "You pulled us out of our home instead of cleaning up the mess we lived under for five years." My second reaction was my general politeness when people come to my door. I invited them in.

I assured them that I don't feel very secure in this cardboard house.

The two young men felt uncomfortable especially when they informed me that Home Front Command was planning on bringing in large sewer pipes.

Yes, you read that correctly, sewer pipes, made of thick concrete, for our protection.

The pipes would be distributed to each cul-de-sac. When the sirens wail, we would run outside, crawl into our very own sewer pipe and wait five minutes or at least until we hear the explosion. Then we crawl out and return to our cardboard homes.

I stared open-mouthed in disbelief. From our homes in Gush Katif to cardboard caravillas in a refugee camp to a sewer pipe. We have certainly hit rock bottom. I laugh as I write this. I have tears in my eyes as I write this. I was assured that the pipes would withstand an explosion close by but not a direct hit. Our bit of security.

THE SOUTH has become a war zone. We went to Ashkelon yesterday. The health clinic I visited was practically empty. The mall in which it is located was mostly closed. Even the pharmacy, open when we arrived, was closed when we left at 4:30 p.m. Except for a shop selling mobile phones, all was dark and deserted. A large city lives under the shadow of massive rocket attacks. Children can no longer go to school. Social and cultural events are cancelled.

Our local grocery and greengrocer are still well stocked. Mail is delivered. Electricity is still on. For how long? This afternoon the sirens wailed. We heard three explosions in the distance. Friends are calling offering us a place of refuge. An emergency committee is being formed. I volunteer for it.

A reporter for a Danish newspaper called. Would I meet with him and give him my take on the war. I agree, and he is thrilled to be entering a war zone. Journalists are not allowed into Gaza, but those who lost interest in us after our expulsion are interested once again now that the war has reached us.

I keep thinking of a motto from our days in Gush Katif: "Those who flee from Gaza will find Gaza coming to them." (Jerusalem Post Dec 31)
The writer is a former English teacher who blogs about the Gush Katif community.

How We Got Here By Nadav Shragai

When the prayer for the welfare of Israel's soldiers was said in Shabbat services this weekend and the congregation asked that they be "crowned with victory and salvation," the words took on a concrete meaning. At such times, a sane public seeks success for its soldiers and those who send them into battle, and puts aside its differences.

And if, despite the cannons' roar, silence is a luxury, it is not because Hamas murderers and innocent civilians are dying, or out of fear that more Palestinians will join the circle of violence and terror. These fears are the product of the school of hypocrisy that is unmoved by eight years of rocket fire at an Israeli population and by the hatred the Palestinians have been instilling in their children for a generation.

The public deserves a reminder of how we got to this stage, though not in order to trumpet things that should be said, including that this war was expected and avoidable; that we warned that rockets would fall here, that Hamas would gain power, that the expulsion would weaken us and strengthen our enemies.

This reminder of the colossal failure known as the "disengagement" is necessary because, absurdly, there are those who would use the results of the war against Hamas to promote additional uprootings and withdrawals in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert spoke of this during the Second Lebanon War, to describe the fruits that victory there would produce. Uzi Dayan, Benjamin Netanyahu's new acquisition for Likud, explained with great candor, a year after the Gaza disengagement, "if we do not restore deterrence and provide a

security response to the Qassams, we will not be able to carry out the separation in Judea and Samaria." The left continues to hew to this equation even now, in war.

As in the disengagement and in the uprooting of the Jews from Gush Katif, the left has not said goodbye to its dream of uprooting more Jews and giving exclusive control of more territory to the Palestinian Authority - even after the number of rockets and mortar shells fired into Israel in 2008 from the Gaza Strip was almost 13 times the number fired in the year preceding the disengagement, (3,520 compared to 281, data provided by the military establishment and published in Makor Rishon, January 2, 2009).

Even after being burned once with the disengagement, the left is not twice shy - they still seek to uproot Jews from the mountain ridges from which one can see Tel Aviv and its environs; and from Jerusalem, in which one does not even need a Grad, a Qassam or a mortar, where a rifle or a machine gun is sufficient to turn residents' lives into hell.

Kadima, Labor and even Likud have not thoroughly taken to heart the main lesson of the Oslo Accords and the Gaza disengagement: that not even the slightest fragment of our security can be given into Palestinian hands, not to Hamas and not even to the Palestinian Authority, whose future is in grave doubt. They were also a full partner during many different periods of terror against us and their interest in peace is conditioned upon the constant erosion of our vital interests.

In any other country, the public would have sent home the architects of the Oslo disaster and the captains of the disengagement, but sitting on the presidential throne today is one of the champions of Oslo who still insists it was not a mistake. The foreign minister is the chairman of Kadima, which was a full partner to the disengagement and is convinced that it is not folly, while the positions of prime minister and defense minister are filled by two patrons of the tahadiyeh, which enabled Hamas to improve its range to reach Ashdod, Be'er Sheva and Kiryat Malakhi.

If fate has decreed that this is the team that is now leading us into war, the minimum we can ask from it is to bury plans that would lead us to similar catastrophes in other places and to focus on a single mission: eradicating Hamas and removing the threat hanging over the people of Israel. (Haaretz Jan 6)

A Mideast Glick Check By Kathryn Jean Lopez

Caroline Glick is no stranger to the Corner crowd. She's senior contributing editor of the Jerusalem Post and the senior fellow for Middle Eastern Affairs at the Center for Security Policy. She's also author of *Shackled Warrior: Israel and the Global Jihad*.

I asked Caroline a few questions this morning about the current Mideast violence. Here's the conversation.

Q: What exactly started this latest flare-up?

A: The fighting in Gaza today started about three weeks ago when Hamas renewed its rocket, mortar, and missile assault against Israel. Last June, Israel foolishly agreed to a six-month ceasefire with Hamas. Hamas used the time to have Iran double the size of its missile arsenal and double the range of its missiles, and to build up its Iranian-trained, armed, and financed Hezbollah-style army of 20,000 men. Hamas called its renewed offensive "Operation Oil Stain." On December 17, Hamas attacked Israel with more than 80 missiles, rockets and mortars.

It took Israel ten days to finally respond to Hamas's assault, which for the first time put major cities like Ashdod, Yavne, Beersheva, and Gedera under assault.

What is interesting about this latest round of fighting is that the world paid little attention to what was going on when it was only Hamas attacking Israel. People only started paying attention when Israel's government said enough is enough and started defending its territory and citizens.

Q: Is the media here in the U.S. or internationally remotely fair?

A: When the media are only interested in what is going on when Israel defends itself, the answer is no, they aren't fair. They don't pay any attention when hundreds of thousands of Israelis are relegated to bomb shelters for weeks and months on end. They don't care that Israeli children can't go to school or day care because Hamas is targeting schools and day-care centers. They only cover the story when Israel finally decides to put an end to this crazy situation where our children are growing up underground. And this is appalling.

From CNN's coverage of events here, for instance, you could easily come away from the news thinking that Israel is attacking Gaza for no reason. The European media, and much of the U.S. media dismiss the significance of Hamas's missile, rocket, and mortar campaign against Israel by noting that these projectiles are relatively primitive and have no guidance systems. But this misses and indeed distorts the entire point. Hamas doesn't need advanced

weapons. Its goal is not to attack specific military targets. Its goal is to attack Israeli society as a whole and terrorize our citizens. That's what makes it such an outlaw.

In fact, this random bombing of civilian targets is the very definition of war crimes. Due to their random nature, every projectile launched against Israel by Hamas is a separate war crime. And that's the real story. But again, outside of publications like National Review and the like, the Western media have ignored this basic truth and worse, they have turned the criminal nature of Hamas's campaign into a justification for it.

Q: What does the fighting mean for the future of Hamas-led Gaza?

A: There are four possible outcomes for Israel's current campaign — two would be positive and two would be negative. The best outcome would be for Israel to overthrow Hamas's regime and destroy its capacity to wage war against Israel or threaten Israel in any significant way. To achieve this goal, Israel would have to reassert control over Gaza. Since the Israeli government has already stated that Israel will not reassert control over Gaza, and since reasserting control would be extremely embarrassing for the current leadership, which led Israel out of Gaza with promises of peace three and a half years ago, it is fairly clear that this outcome will not be forthcoming.

The next best outcome would be something analogous to the end of the 1991 Gulf War. Although the U.S. left Saddam Hussein in power after that war, it asserted control over the no-fly zones and set up a clear sanctions regime that by and large prevented Iraq from rearming and apparently prevented Iraq from reconstituting its weapons of mass destruction programs.

Here too, chances that this outcome will prevail are not great because the Israeli government has already stated that it is unwilling to reassert control over Gaza's border with Egypt which is where most of Hamas's weapons are imported from.

The third possible outcome, which is already not a good one, would be for Israel to end its current campaign and just walk away with Hamas still in charge. In due course, Hamas would reconstitute its military forces and missile arsenals and reinstate its campaign against Israel. The positive aspect of such a future is simply that subject to domestic political constraints, Israel would be able to go in and bomb Hamas anytime it felt that threatened. Israel would be under no international obligation to avoid defending itself, beyond the regular anti-Israel pressure.

The fourth, and worst possible outcome is that Israel reaches some sort of internationally sponsored ceasefire agreement whereby foreign powers -- the EU, the U.S., Egypt, Turkey, or whomever -- agree to form some sort of international monitoring mechanism to oversee Gaza's borders with Israel and Egypt. The reason this would be the worst outcome is that Israel's experience with such forces in Lebanon and in Gaza itself has been wholly negative. These international forces will never fight Israel's battles for it. Instead they inevitably shield terrorists from Israeli attack while ignoring the terrorists' moves to rearm, reassert political control over their populations and reinstate their assaults against Israel. Moreover, because these international forces fear the terrorists they shield, they tend to side with them against Israel and blame Israel for any violence that takes place.

Unfortunately, this is the outcome that the Israeli government is now pushing for in its diplomatic contacts relating to the war in Gaza.

Q: A lot of critics say that Israel is just going too far in its attacks. What do you make of the charge?

A: The interesting aspect of this claim is what it tells us about the success of anti-Israel propaganda. For instance, Richard Falk, the Jewish anti-Semite who the U.N.'s Human Rights Council appointed to act as its rapporteur against Israel began accusing Israel of committing war crimes against the Palestinians in Gaza the moment Israel began its campaign. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch systematically fabricate international "law" backed by "eyewitness" reports from Hamas supporters in order to accuse Israel of breaking the "law" every single time it takes any steps to defend itself, no matter how restrained.

Israel has done nothing in its campaign against Hamas that could be considered going "too far." It has done nothing in its campaign that could be considered "disproportionate." It has targeted military targets and terror operatives.

The fact of the matter is that Israel is held to standards that are discriminatory while its enemy — an illegal, openly genocidal terrorist organization — is defended and shielded from attack by the media, by self-proclaimed human-rights activists and by hostile foreign leaders like British Foreign Minister David Miliband and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan. Luckily, with some one million Israelis now under assault, Israel has decided that we just aren't going to pay attention to their obscene attacks on our right to self-defense this time around.

Q: Would you caution Israel at all?

A: Absolutely. I think it would be a grave error for the government to agree to any sort of international monitoring mechanism of Hamas. If the government doesn't want to see this war through to a complete rout of Hamas, and doesn't want to retake Gaza's border with Egypt, then it would be best for us to just weaken the group as much as possible while we have troops on the ground and then walk away to fight another day. We cannot trust the kindness of foreigners to do for us what we will not do for ourselves.

Q: What does the future hold for the Palestinians in Gaza?

A: Their future right now doesn't look too attractive. These are people who overwhelmingly supported Hamas in the 2006 elections. They supported Hamas when it expelled Fatah from Gaza in 2007. And they supported Hamas when it began shelling Israel's main port city Ashdod and big cities like Beersheva with missiles. By throwing their lot in with a genocidal terrorist group, Gazans, and indeed Palestinians as a whole, have made clear that they prefer the ravages of war to the blessings of peace. Until they change their minds, it is hard to see how they can expect to prosper morally, politically or economically.

Q: What does the fight in Gaza tell us about the prospects for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process?

A: It tells us that such a process is both irrelevant and counter-productive. It is irrelevant because even in the event that there is a faction in Palestinian society that is willing to make peace with Israel, that faction will never bring about a broader rapprochement or even remain in power for long. What Hamas's current war against Israel, its alliance with Iran and its popularity in Palestinian society tell us is that as a society, the Palestinians are not interested in peaceful coexistence with Israel regardless of what Israel's borders are. They prefer to remain at war with Israel and to be led by terrorists. So even if the current Fatah leadership is really ready to finally lay down its arms, prosecute terrorists and reconcile with Israel, it cannot lead Palestinian society or the larger Arab world to the same conclusion.

Gaza also shows us that pushing a peace process is counter-productive. In the context of such a process, Israel is expected to hand over land to Fatah. In the history of Israeli land giveaways to Fatah since 1994, there has never been a case where these transfers led to a moderation of Palestinian behavior or feelings towards Israel. To the contrary, such Israeli moves have only radicalized Palestinian society that has come to see every Israeli concession as proof that Israel is collapsing.

Three and a half years ago, Israel gave its greatest concession to date when it removed all its military personnel and forcibly expelled ten thousand of its citizens from their homes and farms in Gaza and transferred the area to Fatah. Rather than moderate the Palestinians, this massive Israeli concession was seen as proof that Israel would soon disappear. Convinced that Israel's destruction was at hand, the Palestinians elected Hamas, the group most identified with the cause of Israel's destruction to lead them.

So even though Israel may make concessions to people who claim to be "moderate," the fact is those concessions only strengthen "extremists" and so weaken Israel while strengthening jihadist groups dedicated to its destruction. Obviously, this is not something that engenders peace and stability. Rather, such "peace processes" engender only war and instability.

Q: What should the U.S. response to the fighting be?

A: Just as the U.S. supports all its allies -- from Pakistan to India to Britain to the Philippines -- in their fights against terrorist groups, so the U.S. should be supporting Israel without qualification in its fight against its terrorist foes. And indeed, just as the U.S. tells its other allies not to go wobbly in their fights against terrorists, so the U.S. should be encouraging Israel to stay firm and not try to cut a deal with its terrorist foes.

Q: Any advice to Obama?

A: The thing that concerns me about President-elect Obama's views of Israel and the Middle East is that they are heavily influenced by his advisers, many of whom are Clinton-administration veterans. And these advisers — people like Richard Haass, Aaron Miller, Dan Kurtzer, and Martin Indyk, to name just a few — have built their careers championing the failed and dangerous peace process.

If Obama fails to recognize the folly of these advisers and replace them with men and women who use reality as their guide for policymaking, not only will he strengthen terrorist enemies of the U.S. like Hamas and Iran, he will weaken and endanger U.S. allies like Israel. So my advice to the incoming president would be to dump his Middle East team and replace it with advisers who have a clue.

To paraphrase someone you might have heard of once or twice, I'd rather have U.S. policy on the Middle East determined by the first 100 names in the Boston phone book than by this team whose policies have brought about the death of thousands in their pursuit of a fantasy of peace. (National Review Jan 5)